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Basically, I'm saying if something is wrong in the book, it's their fault.

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Even our winged porcine hero couldn't have done it alone. Thank you.

Cover and illustrations by Chris Jones.

For Kelly

TRIAL OF THE CLONE

BY ZACH WEINERSMITH

RULES OF PLAY

THE BASICS

Trial of the Clone is basically the same as those books you read as a kid, whose name is now copyrighted. The one big addition is that you can interact with your environment.

As such, you have a list of stats and information to keep track of. Almost everything you get will have a one time effect or will provide some modification to your wits, charisma, or fighting ability.

Items and Aspects

Items are listed in your item box. Some are single use, while others are retained until you're explicitly told otherwise. Most have explicit effects, though some have effects you only experience if you're in the right scene. To keep track of them, simply write the name and effect on your item sheet.

Aspects are listed in your aspect box. They are qualities of your personality. From a gameplay perspective, they're more or less the same as items - some provide simple effects, while others require you to go to the right scene. The big difference is you tend not to lose aspects. Also, if you get the same aspect twice, the effects don't stack.

When you acquire an item or aspect, if it has an effect, that effect is listed to the right. If it has no effect, you'll still want to keep it, since it may do something unforeseen later. There is no limit on how many items or aspects you may have.

Some items must be "equipped" to provide their effects. You may equip no more than two items at the same

time. You may change which items are equipped at any time, except during combat.

Short version: Items and aspects affect stats and stuff you can do. List them on the provided box when you get them. Some items must be equipped to use them. You may equip two items at a time.

Main Stats

Your big three stats are wits – a measure of intelligence and creativity, charisma – a measure of your likability, and fighting – your combat skill. You also have health points (HP) which indicate how close you are to death.

Short version: You have 4 stats to worry about - wits, charisma, fighting, and health.

Structure

The book is broken up into 5 acts. Each act is made up of individual scenes, denoted by number. You may not move between acts, except by going from the final scene of one act to the first scene of another. In order to keep the book from being gigantic, scene numbers are listed at the top of each page, like a phonebook. To find a scene, consult the top of the page to see if you're on the right page, then locate the appropriate scene.

When you have finished an act, you will be given certain bonuses to apply to your stats.

Short version: The book is divided into separate acts and separate scenes. No jumping between acts. Between acts, you get points!

GAMEPLAY

Random Numbers

At the bottom corner of each page is a random number. During fights, and in occasional other situations, you will need to select a random number. To do so, flip pages like a flipbook until you stop on a random page. The number in the lower corner is your random number. If you plan to cheat, we recommend dog-earing all the pages with high numbers.

Short version: To pick a random number, flip to a random page and look in the lower corner.

Battles

There are three types of battles: fighting, wits, and charisma.

Fighting battles proceed by exchanges of damage between you and your opponent. You always attack first. To attack, pick a random number and add it to your fighting score. That much damage is done to your opponent. Then, your opponent attacks. To calculate this, pick a random number, add it to the opponent's fighting score, and lose that many health points. Repeat until one of you is dead. Health points are restored at the end of each act.

For battles of wits, pick 3 random numbers. If any one of those numbers plus your current wits score is higher than your opponent's wits score, you win.

Charisma battles are the same as battles of wits, only you care about your charisma score instead.

Occasionally there are combined battles. In these cases, you must win in both types of fight before advancing. Order does not matter.

If you lose a battle, usually that means you lose the game because you die, or because you were so dumb or unlovable that you can't carry on with your mission. However, make sure to double check. There are many occasions where you continue on even if you lose.

Short version: For fighting, trade (fighting value +

random number) attacks with your opponent till you or he run out of HP. For wits or charisma battles, pick 3 random numbers. If (wits or charisma + random number) is ever greater than your opponent, you win. Otherwise, you lose. If you lose, sometimes you still get to go forward.

Winning and Losing

Much like life, there are lots of ways to lose and only a few ways to win. When you lose, you return to the beginning of the act you're currently in, minus all bonuses and items accrued so far in the act. If you plan to cheat, we recommend keeping fingers in your last few choices so you can always go back and pretend you didn't make the stupid choice.

Short version: If you lose, go back to the top of the act, minus bonuses and stuff.

Initial Stats

At the beginning of the game, every player has 20 max health, 1 fighting, 0 wits, and 0 charisma.

If a stat alteration would take any stat below zero, just keep it at 0. Believe it or not, you can't have negative charisma.

ASPECT

EFFECT

INVENTORY

<i>ITEM</i>	<i>EFFECT</i>

STATS

HEALTH POINTS/MAXIMUM HEALTH



CHARISMA

FIGHTING

WITS

WEAPONS

CURRENTLY EQUIPPED

A large, empty rectangular box with a light gray background, intended for listing currently equipped weapons.

ACT 1

1

You are zero years old, suspended in a warm, moist sac. You've been sitting here happy and stupid for, if your marks on the wall are correct, approximately 9 months.

Behind you, a slit of unbearable brightness appears and draws your gaze. You want to turn away, but an overwhelming sense of purpose and meaningfulness propels you to this mystical opening. In a triumphant burst, you leap headlong into the light.

You find yourself in the waiting arms of a physician. Instinctively, you whirl around, knowing that behind you is someone who will love you unconditionally as long as you live.

Your vision unblurs and you find a plastic gestation vat into which a young technician is already squirting a syringe of clone sperm. The first emotion you feel in your life is disappointment. Interestingly, it'll also be your last emotion, and about 80% of the emotions in between.



Sixteen years later, it is your birthday.

Your entire life has been spent in the confines of a small space-orphanage near Ritni Otvor IV. In the early 28th century, philanthropy became fashionable among the wealthy, and there was a shortage of orphans to adopt. Hence, your existence. By the time you were synthetically gestated, the wealthy had moved on to fighting for access to healthcare for wiener dogs. Hence, your sad existence.

Despite being the only child in the orphanage during your cutest years, you were passed over time and time again. Some cited your hair, others your physique, others your conversation. However, when exit surveys were filled out, by far the most common sentiment was simply "Meh."

1 – 2

Now that you are 16, you are legally unadoptable. Father Nadezda fills out some forms, notes that you are “now unadoptable for 2 reasons,” and grimaces at your eyebrows. As you reflexively cover them, he explains that you will be sent to the Silene Monastery at Skubnuti Prime. He hands you a strange golden note, which you are not to open.

Go to Scene 17.

2

You slice off his head with your plasmaster. The air is warm with the savory sick smell of charred human flesh. “Ha!” you shout, as you turn toward the other bad-siders. “Nice try, but I’m a clone. I don’t have a father.”

A few of the nearby monks try to stifle laughter.

“... right?”

“I’m sorry” says an elderly monk. “You were never a clone. It was a lie. But, in the plus column, you’ve passed the test.”

Your eyes widen. Your throat contracts. Your face clenches, forcing hot tears down your cheeks. You taste their warm bitterness, whose warmth somehow fills your stomach with ice.

Then everyone bursts out laughing. *PRANKED. They totally got you! Of COURSE you don’t have a father! STUPID CLONE!*

Everyone wallows in the hilarity as many hands slap you on the back and wish you could’ve seen your face when you thought you murdered your father.

“HAHAHAHA!” cackles the head monk. “You’ll never have any family!”

“Ohh... you... totally got me!” you squeak.

Later that night, you shower. And shower. And shower. But the blood won’t come off. It’s in your skin, in your muscles, in your bones, in your soul. As these thoughts swim through your semi-conscious mind, a bad-

sider bursts in and, laughing, tells you about the itching powder in your soap. “BOOYA! We got you twice!”

-3 HP.

Go to Scene 21.

3

+3 WITS FOR GIVING IN TO EVIL.

You proceed to court. When it is time for the defense to argue, you open the hatch in your attorney’s cage. He sniffs the edges curiously, then claws his way out.

He stands upright, straightens his tie, and smiles.

“Friend,” he begins, in a genteel yet homely accent.

“My client pleads guilty!”

Everyone gasps.

“If he were a liar, he would try to plead not guilty.

Since he pleads guilty, my client is not a liar. If my client is so ethical as to never lie, how could he stoop to murder? Thus, it is clear from my client’s guilty plea that he is completely innocent.”

Everyone in the jury nods in agreement. You see the lawyer for the prosecution go red with fear. She stands.

“Objection! The prosecution would like to point out that if the client is found not guilty after a single day in court, all of our book deals will be less lucrative, and will not have sequels where we follow up with him after his years in prison!”

For the first time, you see emotion in your attorney’s eyes. He turns toward you, then toward the prosecuting attorney, who holds open a briefcase of cash. He turns toward the jury.

“On the other hand...” he begins.

Just then, a dark handsome figure appears in the doorway. He flexes one of his pecs, which causes a legal brief to fly from his coat pocket to his right hand. He

3 – 5

flexes the other pec, which puts reading glasses onto his face. Only one man could possibly be so sexy: The Vice President of the United Vassals of the Empire.

“If I may,” begins the Vice President.

Go to Scene 56.

4

You finish section one and request an instant answer from the computer.

“B-”

You pass to section 2. It is a single logic puzzle.

“In a jar are 20 marbles, mixed up. 10 are black and 10 are white. How many do you have to pull before you are guaranteed to get a pair of the same color?”

Write your answer below, then go to Scene 7.

5

You enter the exam room. As this exam is graded on a curve, everyone in the room is your enemy. And they are powerful enemies indeed.

No, not the attractive muscular students in the middle of the room. They are weak. As you walk, you know who you fear—in the back, the 4-foot tall girl adjusts her spectacles and grins at you, making an aggression display of her orthodontia, which glistens in the artificial light. In the front, the boy with the sweater vest stretches out his 85 pounds of academic brawn, clicking his mechanical pencil to the tune of Ride of the Valkyries. In the corner,

a wildly overweight redhead with an intimidatingly dense constellation of acne blows his nose on a pink monogrammed hanky, then releases his calculator from a Star Trek themed bandoleer.

Your lower lip quivers wussifully as you take a seat.

The first part of the exam is multiple choice questions - the test designer's moron stepchild. Yes!

BATTLE: WITS: EXAM PART 1

WITS: 4

If you win, go to Scene 4.

6

You had assumed the psybrary was a high tech way to download information directly into your brain. Turns out it's a cute name for the kids' section of a regular library. Just to be certain, you talk to the sweet middle aged lady in overalls and pigtails who works the front desk.

With the kind of smile that usually accompanies a repressed urge to murder, murder, and murder a third time, she explains that you can indeed download information directly into your brain... through your eyes... by reading!

She tells you reading is an adventure. You flick her off, tell her her face is an adventure, then walk away. "Nice one," you mutter to yourself.

Then you notice something strange. All the children here are popping ADHD medication like clockwork every 5 minutes. And not only are they constantly using drugs, it seems like their mothers aren't even watching them!

If you seize the opportunity to beat one up and take his delicious drugs, go to Scene 36.

If you suck it up, read your books, and take the damn test, go to Scene 64.

7 - 8

7

“Three, fool! I didn’t specify two consecutive pulls of the same color!”

If you got it right, go to Scene 35.

If you got it wrong, go to Scene 62.

8

+3 CHARISMA FOR WINGING IT.

You go to the Silene Cathedral and immediately wish you’d decided to be a warrior monk instead of a doctor. Being a doctor, you wasted all of your time drinking. The monks waste all their time smoking weed.

They sit around the small smoke-filled room passing large waterpipes and telling stories about other times when they sat around the small smoke-filled room passing large waterpipes.

As you go for toke number 42, you accidentally drop and break your bong. Everyone laughs about how you must not have a good booleon ratio. You ask what booleons are, which prompts more laughter.

“Man,” begins one monk in the traditional manner, “all things in reality are made of booleons. Booleons come in yes form and no form. People with a good ratio of yes-booleons to no-booleons tend to have better luck. People with really good ratios have strange powers, and so they join the monastery. That’s why you’re here with us.”

In a phrase that could stand in for almost every conversation at the monastery, you respond with “Maybe it’s just the weed talking, but whoooooaaaaaaa.”

You spend the night in a drug-induced stupor followed by a drug-induced torpor.

-3 WITS.

You awaken, clean the spittle and Twinkie crumbs off your face, and leave the monastery. “Time for sur-jerdy!” you pronounce. Then you notice that your pants are on backward. And upside down. Oh, wait, they’re still on the floor.

Maybe this was a bad idea.

Go to Scene 45.

9

You dunk your head in a small jar filled with piranhas. You look around and see a pack of them, smoking cigarettes and listening to antisocial music. A couple of them take out butterfly knives and swim directly at you.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: GANG PIRANHAS

FIGHTING: 5, HP: 20

When you lose, restore HP to 5 and go to Scene 37.

10

“Oh!” you say. “Sweet! So... so I pretty much automatically win?”

“Uh... yeah,” says your father. “Yeah, I guess so, I mean... if you’re willing to fight your own flesh and blood.”

BATTLE: FIGHTING: FATHER

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 9

If you win, go to Scene 2.

11

“You’ve become... a monster!” shouts your former brother monk.

“I know you are...” you whisper solemnly. An evil

11 - 12

silene hands you a two-handed plasmaster, which you ignite as you snarl, “But... what am I!”

“A dick.” says the goodsider.

“It was a rhetorical question!” you whine.

You throw down your weapon, as does he. The ensuing slap fight will be a source of embarrassment to you and your lineage for a thousand generations.

Nah, I’m kidding. You have no lineage.

At the climax of the slap fight, amid cries of “I hit you! No, I hit you!” the goodsider accidentally punches you in the neck. You can’t breathe. Things go black. You feel the cold embrace of death and it drives you mad. Suddenly, a wind blows behind you and you hear a wet snap. You realize you can breathe again, and turn around to find yourself in a cloud of smoke, your opponent dead at your feet.

As the smoke swirls larger, a dark figure in robes walks before you. In his deep rumbling voice, he whispers “Impressive. You must be very skilled Silene. A very special Silene.”

You fail to decide whether to say thanks or to laugh, resulting in an unhappy hybrid of the two that resembles a horse gagging on its own tongue.

“Mhm,” says the dark figure. He then pulls you in close and whispers “I would like to implant a chip in your eye.”

Sounds great! Go to Scene 16.

No thanks! Go to Scene 34.

12

You enter the courtroom and walk toward the judge.

“Friends!” you shout in your squeaky nasal voice.

“We are not animals! We are citizens of the United Vasals of the Empire!”

4 members of the jury, who are apparently not citi-

zens yet, look angry and write in their notepads.

You moisten your lips and continue. "We are all kind, generous people! Even the judge here, with his hilariously old-fashioned beard. Or the jury foreman, who looks like he weighs as much as four men!"

You check your speech. It says "wait for laughter." Eventually, you elect to continue anyway.

"Many of you have also been young college students like me. Perhaps not all, since I see some of you are members of the less intelligent races - you know who you are - BUT, you've no doubt seen movies that involve college students. And you know how hard it is. So, I say to you - is cold-blooded murder legal? Yes. Did I do it? Yes."

You flip to the next page only to realize you didn't bring it. Well, you can at least bring things to an eloquent end.

"The... me side of the argument... rests."

-3 CHARISMA.

The jury foreman asks the judge if they have to formally vote or if they can just shout "guilty."

Just then, a dark handsome figure appears at the back of the room. He wears leather pants and two cod-pieces. He has no shirt, but his virile coat of man-fur explodes in every direction, lending warmth to his massive pectorals, each of which is as large, solid, and intimidating as a Roman gladiator's buckler.

This can be only one man - the Vice President of the United Vassals of the Empire.

"Just a moment," he growls.

Go to Scene 56.

13

Success! Choose one of the following:

13 – 14

GET SKINNY: +2 CHARISMA, -2 FIGHTING.

GET FAT: -2 CHARISMA, +2 FIGHTING.

You have passed your exam, making you a bona fide engineer. Because you are an engineer and thus functionally illiterate, you have to look up “bona fide.” The definition pleases you.

You did it dorkulon. That’s not a computer saying that. That’s me.

Go to Scene 65.

14

Everything goes red as you murder everyone around you. When your normal vision returns, you find yourself alone atop a small hill of bodies as the smoke clears away.

An ancient monk walks before you, clapping his hands at your effort. “Gooooood, goooooood,” he says. “You’ve passed the first test, and proved that you have the potential to be a great Silene Warrior. All of that stabbing wasn’t just for pleasure – it was a test of your physical prowess.”

Your mouth hangs open rapidly.

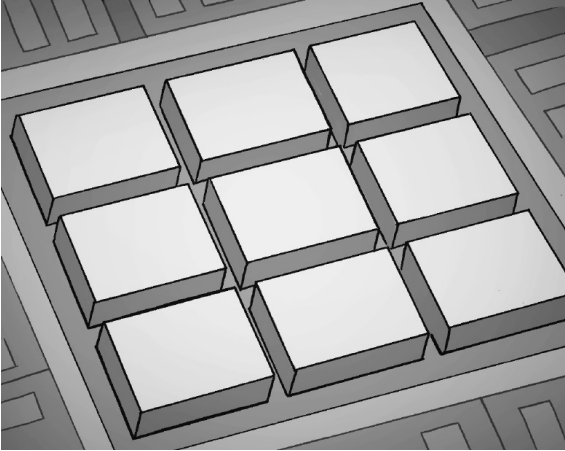
“But if you are to be a Silene, you must also possess good mental prowess. Not great mental prowess. I mean, it’s mostly killing stuff and smoking up, but... what was I saying? OH, yes. You must be smart-like to be a Silene.”

He escorts you to a small room, in the center of which is a table with 9 squares laid out.

He places your hand on the center square.

MINI-GAME

Put your finger on the center square and set a clock for 30 seconds. When the clock starts, obey the instructions on the following page. If you finish in time, remember what square your finger was on. Ready?



UP 1.
 LEFT 1.
 DOWN 2.
 RIGHT 2
 UP 2
 LEFT 2
 DOWN 2.
 UP 2.
 RIGHT 2.
 DOWN 2.
 LEFT 2.
 UP 1.
 RIGHT 1.
 UP 1.
 LEFT 1.

Remember what square you're on and go to Scene 53.

15 – 16

15

You go back to your dorm to sleep for a few hours before the exam.

As your eyes close, you enter your usual dream about having cooler dreams than you do right now, when suddenly the face of the VP appears. You reflexively hope that this is a sexy dream.

“Nope.” booms his mighty voice. “I’m here to warn you. Strange things are happening in the United Vassals of the Empire. All is not what it seems. Hey, my eyes are up here.”

You lift your eyes from his six pack, each portion of which contains another six pack.

“You are the only hope of the empire. No matter what, you must survive. It will not be easy, but... my eyes are up here.”

“Sorry.”

“You are special. You see... all living creatures in the universe are made up of booleons. Booleons are particles that determine many things about your success. They come as yes-booleons and no-booleons. Silenes have their powers due to slightly elevated yes-booleon counts. They are too small to measure easily, but we have reason to believe you have one of the highest ratios ever created. And so, you must be cautious of those who would fear you.”

“It will not be easy, but be on your guard. Trust no one, or it could mean your death.

M-I-C-K-E-Y M-O-U-”

You awaken to the sound of your Disney themed alarm clock. The time has come for your final exam.

Go to Scene 5.

16

The dark figure stretches the fingers of his right hand, a small gun slips out of his sleeve into it. He points it at your eye and pulls the trigger, depositing a small

piece of Germanium alloy at the back of your socket. This hurts even more than it sounds like it would.

GAIN MYSTERIOUS CHIP: +2 FIGHTING WHILE IN INVENTORY.

The strange man lets go of the gun, which secretly slips back into his sleeve. You close your eyes in pain. When you open them, he is gone.

As the smoke clears, you realize you are surrounded by a small band of goodsiders, dressed in their pastel-colored robes of war. The most aggressive of them all runs up to you and says “I strongly but respectfully disagree with your recent course of action!”

You cower reflexively, which causes everyone to laugh at you. It’s just like your first date, and all of high school, and what you imagine sex will be like. Your heart pounds as the rage overtakes you. You ignite your plastermaster and lunge at your defenseless pacifist opponents.

Go to Scene 14.

17

You arrive at the Great Monastery of Skubnuti. It is a tall tower of black stone, covered in shimmering jewels and strange writing. It is funded by government tax subsidies and by convincing poor people to donate a percent of their income.

The Silene Monks were once the champions of justice and peace in the galaxy. But, later, all their mystical powers were superseded by advances in weapons technology. Now, much of their time is spent amusing tourists and smoking slightly different cultivars of marijuana.

At the front gate, you are greeted by a gaunt man in black velvet robes – Master Belmopasek. He looks you over, briefly snarls in disgust at your eyebrows, then indicates for you to enter. You hand him the golden note.

He reads it for a moment, looks up, then pokes you

17 – 18

in the eye. He observes you as you whine “not in the face!” then nods his head and writes a few words on the note.

You follow him inside, expressing your profound rage with a mumbled threat to “write a blog post about this.”



You’ve spent the last 3 years learning the ways of the Silenes. You learned that there is a mystical energy that surrounds and binds the universe, which can be harnessed to lift shit or to shoot lightning.

You learned that there is a Good Side of The Energy and an Evil Side. You were informed that the Evil Side is generally preferable, since the learning process is much shorter and you gain all your power just by being upset or cowardly. The Good Side requires rigorous mental and physical discipline to achieve comparable results.

Ever since the Silenes were utterly marginalized by improvements in technology, both goodsiders and badsiders spend most of their time watching movies and browsing the Internet.

Now that you are 19, it’s time for you to learn a craft. You head to the Silene Monastery’s vocational training campus.

If you choose to be a medic, go to Scene 51.

If you choose to be a fighter, go to Scene 52.

If you choose to be an engineer, go to Scene 23.

18

You work for several hours on a gun that will target and alter certain brain waves. Your shop teacher always



18 – 19

said “measure twice, cut once.” You have a faster version called “measure zero, try once.”

You proceed to the courtroom, concealing the untested firearm in your pocket. Unfortunately, it keeps jumping around and getting hotter and hotter.

Things get even more difficult when the jury foreman asks you why you’re holding your pants and screaming “so hot! So hot!” in his courtroom.

You aim and fire your brain-warping ray gun. The foreman’s head explodes, throwing bloody human detritus all over the judge and jury. So... technically... it’s still a brain-warping gun.

GAIN ULTRA-BLASTER: +2 FIGHTING FOR REMAINDER OF CURRENT SCENE. MAY ONLY BE USED ONCE.

As everyone stares at you in amazement, you try to think of something clever. But, the only ideas that pop into your mind are various puns on the word head, such as “that’s using your head!” and “looks like he had to head out!”

You decide to go with “anyone want some head?”

The judge raises his gavel to pronounce you guilty, when a strange handsome man appears at the back of the court, facing away from everyone. His forceful yet alluring buttocks are so perfectly tanned that you barely realize he’s wearing assless leather pants. He narrows his eyes and pulls some legal notes from the cleft in his chin.

You recognize from pictures that this is the Vice President of the United Vassals of the Empire.

“Just a moment,” he rumbles, in his rich, panther-like baritone.

Go to Scene 56.

19

You stop by the local convenience store for bath...

uh... things. It takes a good 10 minutes for the clerk to realize that you want to buy soap and a towel after you repeatedly say “Purchase so-app and... cloth-rubby.”

You come back to your dorm and suddenly find yourself in a small strange chamber you’ve never seen in your three years living here.



As you step out of the shower, Lord Wheaton, the omniscient God of all Geeks materializes. He raises his scepter, which is inscribed with ancient runes. Legend has it that they are Japanese for video game cheat codes which he learned at a Renaissance Faire thousands of years ago. You cower before him as he puts on his robe and wizard hat.

You see the fury in his eyes as he accuses you of violating Geek Rule #271812 by taking a shower for completely non-masturbatory purposes.



19 – 21

If you karate chop Lord Wheaton, go to Scene 24.

If you point out that the only masturbation material in the geek dorms is old issues of *Starlog* from the 1980s, and who the hell wants to masturbate to Carrie Fisher, go to Scene 42.

20

You take so many uppers that you soon finish off the sack of them you brought to the library. In your lust for more drug-fueled genius, you eat the soap in the bathroom. In there, you notice a hobo secretly shooting heroin in one of the stalls. You eat him too. Between the uppers and the gallons and gallons of hobo blood, your psyche grows vast and strange.

You feel as if you can touch every point in the universe. You take the opportunity to feel up some attractive celebrities. Then, everything goes black.

When you awake, your mind is drastically expanded.

GAIN PSYCHIC ASPECT: ONCE PER ACT, YOU MAY PEEK AHEAD TO SEE WHERE THE OPTIONS OF YOUR CURRENT SCENE LEAD.

Your psychic ability makes you strangely uncomfortable about the surgery you're going to perform. Huh.

Go to Scene 45.

21

In the morning, you awake full of revulsion for yourself. More so than usual. The head monks see this as a very good sign.

You begin your Silene Monk training.

The art of the Silene Monk is a difficult one. At the expense of useful vocational skills, the monks work exclusively on honing their ability with The Energy. By this means, they are able to lift remote controls from the coffee table to their hands and to cook food by shooting

lightning from their fingers. They also have enhanced reflexes, which are very handy for playing hacky-sack. All of these powers are acquired by giving into evil.

Given your essential amorality, you are in principle good at all these things. However, to everyone's surprise, you are quite bad at turning evil into magic via The Energy. Fortunately, cheating is encouraged, and you manage to weasel your way through all your tests.

But now... you face the greatest test of all - the Silene Warrior final exam.

In preparation, the leaders put you in a room with 100 good peasants. Your task is to kill them all as fast as possible.

If you stab one after the other in an ever more horrifying crescendo of gruesomeness, go to Scene 14.

If you note that by creating an incentive system, you could have the group kill itself person-on-person, meaning that the whole affair could be accomplished in $\log_2(100)$ steps, go to Scene 26.

22

Having dispatched your friendly opponent, you gain the trust of your fellow badsiders.

GAIN GOODSIDER PLASMASTER: -1 FIGHTING WHILE EQUIPPED.

You begin your training as a warrior monk. For badsiders, power comes from basically doing whatever the goodsiders oppose, like cruelty, murder, and wedgy-ing goodsiders.



You spend the next three years in a never-ending

22 – 23

orgasm of hedonism called “training.” You’re too lazy to give into evil with much gusto, so most of your badsider actions involve petty things, like not doing your share of the dishes, and draining a bunch of the goodsider’s beer into a 128 ounce novelty mug while at parties.

You are taught about the strange feature of the universe that produces Silene ability - booleans. Each living being has a permanent number of tiny particles called booleans, which come in yes form and no form. Booleans themselves are so small, they cannot be measured. So, one’s boolean ratio can be known only from monitoring his luck over time.

The power of all Silenes comes from their slightly above-average ratio of yes-booleans to no-booleans.

You strangely display almost none of the badsider abilities, but they still like you because you somehow always seem to have a supply of free beer on hand.

Soon, the day of your final examination approaches. In order to prepare you for the challenge ahead, the Masters want to make sure you are truly devoted to evil. You are led into a small gray room. Across the way from you is a middle-aged man in dusty robes. You are told to fight him to the death.

“Uh, okay?” you say, shrugging. You take out your plasmaster and prepare to strike.

“He’s your father” says the Grandmaster. You stop in your tracks. “I will not fight you, son,” says the man.

If you choose not to fight, go to Scene 60.

If you choose to fight, go to Scene 10.

23

So you want to be an engineer!

Since you have a deep-seated need for control over your tiny little life, but no pressing desire for the finer philosophical notions that underpin reality, you decide to

enroll at the technical school.

Amidst the many glorious obsidian spires spread about the Silene Monastery complex, there is a gray concrete structure that looks like a penitentiary for the criminally boring.

You knock on the door of the engineering department. Instantly, a camera shoots out and looks you over. It looks with approval on your squinting eyes and prominent Adam's Apple.

The door dilates and a floating robot leads you to the headmaster. Her small office is festooned with mint condition action figures in the original packaging. Their yellowed plastic casings glitter in the unnuanced light of her desk lamp.

“Enter,” she says in a monotonic nasal beep.

You assume she's talking in a funny voice and chuckle. Whoops.

Your inelegant attempt to convert your laugh to a cough is noticed, but taken as a sign that you will fit in well at a technical school. She hands you a small pistol-shaped object. You ask if it's a soldering gun.

“Setting 1 is laser pointer, setting 2 is flashlight, setting 3 is soldering gun heat level 1, setting 3b is self-destruct, and setting 3c is soldering gun heat level 2.”

GAIN ALPHA RAY: +1 FIGHTING FOR REMAINDER OF CURRENT SCENE. MAY ONLY BE USED TWICE.

“Why did you put self-destruct between settings that aren't related to it?” you ask.

She glowers at you with a special and profound rage which engineers reserve for people who like intuitive computer interfaces. She picks up a limited edition Cybo-Staff (tm) signed by the author of Cybo-Wars I (tm), IV (tm), V (tm), and VIII (tm), and points toward the technical school dormitory.



Five years later (not counting the year you spent in China, which you claimed was for research and cultural exchange, but which was actually a thinly-veiled and unsuccessful plan to get an Asian girlfriend) you are near graduation. Although your main activities were masturbation, sleep, and sleepsturbation, you have learned quite a bit. And, you have gained some notoriety in your field for inventing sleepsturbation. But, you are not an engineer yet.

Today is final exam day.

Because you spent last night with your friends, drinking, playing video games, and talking about how you were all glad not to be tied down to a longterm relationship, you are in very bad shape. Panic begins to set in. The time for smart plans has passed.

If you decide to kill your professor and take his brain, go to Scene 29.

If you go to the psybrary to downbrain as much information as possible, go to Scene 6.

24

His Highness is so weak from centuries of motionless video gaming and drinking nothing but novelty versions of Mountain Dew that your karate chop goes through his flesh like a spatula through pancake batter in zero gravity.

With his dying breath, he requests that he be buried with his d100, and that his mother be chastised for never stocking the pantry with enough pizza flavor Pringles.

You wipe the viscous glob of geek flesh on your pants and gaze about in fear. The Geek Council is all-knowing, and as soon as they finish playing the new Final

Fantasy, and masturbating, then just a little more FF, then maybe round 2 on the masturbating, they will come for you.

+2 CHARISMA FOR BEATING UP A GEEK.

-3 FIGHTING BECAUSE YOU NOW HAVE A VERY WARPED PERCEPTION OF WHAT FIGHTING IS LIKE.

Knowing that you will never become a true geek, you go to the head engineer and demand a transfer. They inject you with brain-wiping serum.

LOSE ALL ASPECTS, ITEMS, AND BONUSES GAINED DURING ACT 1.

Since you've failed at engineering, they decide to enroll you in what they call "liberal arts."

Go to Scene 51.

25

Like the hundred-headed hydra, it seems as if every time you decapitate one mom another two appear. But, thanks to your skill and staggering lack of morality, you soon stand atop a small hill of heads, your victory hailed by a chorus of weeping children.

And bonus, amidst the carnage you find a stack of purses, each a cornucopia of semi-legal prescription drugs.

If you decide to take the drugs, go to Scene 41.

If you wuss out of taking a pile of strange unlabeled pills, go to Scene 15.

26

The evil monks stare at you in horror.

26 – 28

Your ability to have no concern for your own evil acts so long as they're framed as a math problem makes you too disgusting even for lifelong practitioners of the dark arts.

They wipe your brain.

LOSE ALL ASPECTS, ITEMS, AND BONUSES GAINED DURING ACT 1.

There's only one place where you'll be welcome now.

Go to Scene 23.**27**

You go to the library and download so many legal texts that your computer becomes physically heavier. You open them up only to find that they are written in Legalse, a hybrid dialect of English, Mandarin, !Kung, and the dances bees use to communicate with each other. To your uneducated eyes, it looks like an ocean of incomprehensible symbols, broken up by the occasional use of the word, aforementioned.

It is apparent that you will not be able to learn enough to competently represent yourself.

If you plan to make an impassioned speech, go to Scene 12.

If you build a mind-bending ray, then head to court go to Scene 18.

28

Having murdered your professor, you decide to just eat his brain. According to the laws of nature, you gain all his powers. As he was an engineer, this includes the ability to go without bathing for as long as you need, a speech pattern marked by bursts of rapid conversation followed by awkward silence all interspersed with ugly

chirping laughter, and a deep hatred for anyone either below or above your level of intelligence. Amidst the many small facts you take from the professor's brain, one in particular stands out. Something called "booleans."

WITS +2

According to modern science, the fundamental particle of reality is the boolean. All booleans are either yes-booleans or no-booleans, and most people have them in equal quantity. A person's ability to manipulate The Energy derives directly from having a higher than average percentage yes-booleans. The great Silenes, many important figures from history, and perhaps even the ancient Gods owed their fame to a random particle imbalance.

You decide to keep this stolen thought and discard less useful ones, like the time the professor's third child was born, or the fact that his anniversary is today.

You would think murdering a professor would pose a moral issue for you, but Ethics is a little too hard to simulate on computers for your department to care about it. Plus, engineers tend to focus on things that can either fly, explode, or flyplode.

Unfortunately, the head Silenes insist Ethics is real, even if you can't build a spaceship out of it. At least, that's the impression you get as they arrest you.

If you wish to hire a lawyer, go to Scene 54.

If you wish to represent yourself, go to Scene 27.

29

Ooh, fun! Murder!

You plan to have office hours with your professor at noon, shoot him in the neck with your alpha ray, saw open his head, cauterize your brain stems together, go

29 – 29

to the test wearing a trenchcoat and top hat so nobody notices, pass the exam, return to your office, soak the professor's body in nitric acid, then shoot the remaining chunks into space. Oddly, this is exactly what a fortune teller told you would happen 2 years ago.

You head to the professor's office. Inside, a student who spent the entire year referring to the period between consecutive Tuesdays as "the weekend" is complaining to his professor about the exam covering too much material. You enter and shoot him. His head explodes in an amusing fashion.

The professor chortles about "finally getting some use out of his brain" as he wipes blood and bone fragments out of his beard.

After the two of you laugh for half an hour, you turn silent.

"You know why I'm here," you say.

The professor begins to sweat and fidget. Wincing with fear, he mumbles "you want me to be on your committee, don't you?"

"No," you retort. "I want you to DIE!"

The professor exhales in relief, then wipes his brow. He takes out his Beta Ray and aims it at you.

You have an animated discussion about the tedious differences between the alpha and beta version, and about whether the beta ray was overhyped, and about whether it was smart for Apple to get into the weapons business. Then, you begin your game of death.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: PROFESSOR
FIGHTING: 2, HP: 6

If you win, Gain Beta Ray: + 1 fighting for remainder of current scene. May only be used three times. Go to Scene 28.

30

You head to the medical library.

In the grand tradition of medical students, you pop some amphetamines and begin cramming. Of course, it's not like it was in the early days of medicine. By now, all drugs are perfected so as to have only good side effects. In fact, pro-drug ads are regularly marketed to children via clever mascots, like "Tony the Toker," "Count Smackula," and "Peyote Coyote."

+3 WITS.

As your mind warps to a more functional state, you experience a strange hallucination - a dark figure coalesces from nearby shadows.

"You are chosen..." it says. "Each living creature is endowed with a certain number of Booleons. Some are yes-Booleons, some are no-Booleons. Because you have an elevated level of yes-to-no, you are gifted with great luck and strange powers. Carry yourself with pride, but be wary of those who might stop you."

The apparition disappears. This is the first time a hallucination of your subconscious has said something nice to you!

You pop a few more pills and study incredibly well for the next 20 minutes. Then a genius idea occurs to you. An idea that has occurred to anyone who's ever been intoxicated.

MINI-GAME: "ONE WAS GREAT, TWO MUST BE GREATER!"

Pick a random number. If it's 1 or 2, +2 wits. If it's 3, -2 wits. If you roll 0, quit. Play until you quit. If you gain 10 or more wits via the game, go to Scene 20.

Otherwise, leave the library in a confused panic. Go to Scene 45.

31 – 32

31

Unable to even push your stupid hand around a 9 square board, you fail out of school and live a life of mediocrity, never killing anyone ever again, unless you count the guy you drove to suicide by your bad taste in music.

If you're still reading this, you apparently don't even have the good sense just to cheat for the answer and go to the appropriate scene. Christ.

YOU LOSE.

32

After a good 30 minutes of arguing, she starts to cry. You manage to resist the temptation to display weakness for even a second.

Then, in an instant she stops, raises her head, and smiles. "Good. Very good."

She takes off her coat to reveal a badge. She's not some lady looking for a simple shred of human decency after all! She's the head pediatrician of the Silenes. "Take a walk with me," she whispers.

You find yourself pacing beside her down a cold white plastic hallway that smells of disinfectant as she explains the truth about pediatrics. "Children don't get diseases anymore, unless they have very bad booleans."

"What's a boolean?" you ask.

The doctor is amazed at your ignorance. She talks to you in the voice she normally reserves for five year olds. "Everything in the universe, at the smallest level, is made up of 'booleans.' Booleans form logicoids, which form syntaxons, which make up superstrings, which make up quarks and leptons and everything else. Every boolean is either a yes-boolean or a no-boolean.

"Most people are about 50-50, but occasionally an individual has more. People with a little more tend to be lucky. People with a good deal more, say 55-45, are

able to change reality with their thoughts. That's where Silenes get power."

You're amazed that you've never heard of any of this despite being in the monastery for years.

She sighs. "Everything's gone downhill since the school board put a sticker in every particle physics textbook that says "NUH UH."

You ask if you can take a test to determine how many booleans you have.

"They can't be measured directly. Too small. But there's a rough test that can be done – you get put in a series of risky situations and we watch the result. If you perform under expectation, it's because you have more no-booleans. If you perform over expectation, you have more yes-booleans. With a great deal of testing, we can approximate your ratio.

You decide to take a test.



You are placed in the Boolean Assessment Chamber and presented with two options.

1) Dunk your head in a bowl piranhas who were raised in bad neighborhoods.

2) Eat a tasty apple.

If you go with the piranhas, go to Scene 9.

If you go with the apple, go to Scene 43.

33

You feel as if a distant power is trying to manipulate you, but you refuse to go along for the ride. Here, you will make your last stand against evil.

33 – 34

A badsider lunges toward you, plasmaster outstretched. The end is near. The only thing left to do is say some awesome last words before you die.



YOU LOSE.

34

The figure's arm tenses ever so slightly with anger, which causes his mighty bicep to punch you in the face.

-3 HP.

"Very well." he says in irritation. He grabs your hand, places your plasmaster into it, and ignites it. Just as you are about to protest, he pulls up a strange machine and presses a button on it. It flashes, blinding you temporarily.

You feel a strange sense of rage bubble up in you, as if the light accessed all of your traumatic childhood memories and presented them to you without the charm-

ing modifications you've made to them over time.

You raise your blade and swing wildly at the nearby Silenes.

Go to Scene 14.

35

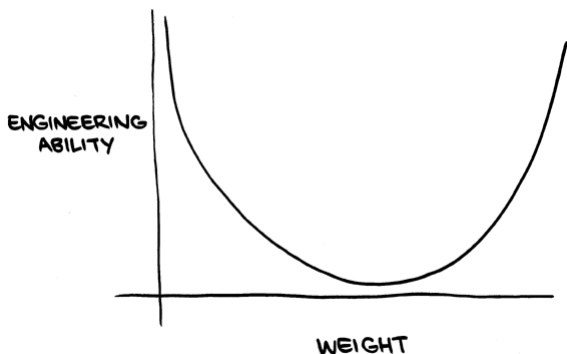
Well played, dorkulon.

That's not me saying that - that's what the computer says when you get the answer right. However, there is a surprise part of the test you must pass before you become an Engineer: A physical test.

Every atom of your body revolts at this notion. You became an engineer because you like working with your hands and dislike working with your arms.

Happily, the physical exam involves no exercise. You perk up. You may have a shot at this after all.

As is well known, the graphed weights of a group of competent engineers follows an inverted bell curve.



You have one week to get to one end or the other.

35 – 37

BATTLE: WITS: WEIGHT ALTERATION

WITS: 3

If you win, go to Scene 13.**36**

Your engineering background has prepared you well for the beating of children. You note that children's larger head-to-body ratio results in a higher center of gravity, and adjust your kicking accordingly.

Lost in your attempt to play "Mary had a little lamb" by rhythmically stomping the sternums of 3 children of differing sizes, you fail to notice a group of angry mothers clustering about you.

They confront you. Those are their kids and their drugs!

At first, you aren't scared of a small band of pleasantly attired mommies. Then, one pulls a Bed, Bath, & Beyond switchblade out of her baby yellow cashmere. Another uses her kid on a kid-leash like a morningstar. A third mommy pulls out a pair of brass knuckles, which is inscribed with "My Son is An Honor Student." It is also inscribed with spikes.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: ANGRY MOMS

FIGHTING: 3, HP: 5

If you win, go to Scene 25.**37**

Just as you are about to be shot in the face by a piranha, you grow furious at the absurdity of life – both at the strangeness of existence in a vast cold universe, and at getting stabbed by a fish.

Your body seems to overflow with a harsh warmth and brightness. You feel powerful. You scream and suddenly the lights in the room pop out as your brain surges

with energy. Then everything goes black. Technically everything went black a second ago, when the bulbs popped, but you didn't notice because you were screaming at fish.

A flashlight flickers and then illuminates the room. The doctors look in wonder – the water in the tank has vaporized and the fish are charred... yet you are unharmed.

Except maybe your eyebrows?

“No,” you say. “They were always like that.”

+3 CHARISMA FOR YOUR IMPRESSIVE MASTERY OF THE ENERGY.

The analysts check their readout. You have off the chart yes-Booleans – at least as high as 70%. Nobody in the last thousand generations has been so high... you must be the luckiest person alive.

The head doctor walks up to you. “Tomorrow, we need a surgeon to operate on an important visitor with a dangerous condition. It was going to be one of our veterans, but with your powers... I'm going to recommend you.”

“Who's the visitor?” you ask.

“The President.”

You gulp so loud, the walls vibrate.

Go to Scene 45.

38

You are sent to the surgical training building. On the outside, it's a black expanse of obsidian and bone proclaiming the horrid enigma of death in the eldritch whorls of darkness forming its structure. The inside also proclaims death and horror, but does so via white-walled waiting rooms, fake plants, and the reek of cleaning spray.

You pass the next 7 years getting a 4-year degree.

You spend most of your time memorizing the intricate Latin names of human anatomy and physiology. Your aging professors are convinced it will be useful later on, when you're draining cysts and removing rectal blockages.

The rest of your time is spent hacking on people. You have a secret betting pool in your circle of friends over who can use the largest bluntest implement for the most routine medical procedure. A friend of yours wins when he drives his car full speed at a patient, grabs the hand break, and spins out at just the right speed and angle so the car's bumper removes a blackhead from a patient's nose. Fortunately, the malpractice suit is more than covered by the betting pool winnings.

Silenes tend to be gifted in traditional medicines, like surgery and radiation therapy, thanks to their precognitive powers. You lack this ability. In fact, you once diagnosed a patient as having had a logic-impairing stroke, only to later realize you were talking to a mirror, only to later realize the mirror was a rock.

This makes it all the more surprising when you are informed that the President is visiting for an operation, and that you of all people have been selected as the surgeon. Even more surprising is that the decision must've come from a powerful non-local authority, since the headmaster of the Silene Medical School wrote a dissenting editorial title entitled "What the Fucking Fuck?"

You decide to visit the headmaster, but stop in your tracks as you run into a wall of rigid yet supple concrete. You look up to see a man. THE man. This man is 7 feet tall, wearing a leather tuxedo and no shirt. His hair is long and blonde, and extends down to just below his chin, which is so perfectly square it could be used for drafting.

"Who are you?" you dribble.

"I'm the goddamn Vice President."

He looks over your wimpy form, then peers down the hallway. Fast as a ninja, he slips something into your



38 – 40

pocket. “Don’t show this to anyone. Dark shit is afoot.”

GAIN EROTIC RING.

“Good luck with the surgery, son.” With that, he shoves his way past you with his rough yet sculptured hands.

“But I don’t know...” you whimper. It’s too late—he is gone.

Go to Scene 44.

39

He looks you over, grunts unhappily, then leaves. Weird.

You scrub up and head to the OR.

Go to Scene 57.

40

You kill your father.

As you stand over him, a similar-looking man with a mustache and glasses shows up to congratulate you. He’s so proud of you. You see... he’s your father.

Your third father’s head is cut off by a pair of exuberant badsiders, who then proceed to chest bump in celebration.

All hope is lost. You are surrounded by moral ambiguity, dying loved ones, and murderous enemies. Just as you feared, being talentless and lazy has come back to haunt you. The badsiders close in around you, plasmas-ters in hand. You close your eyes and await death by the traditional chant of losers: “not in the face! Not in the face!”

In your mind, you see a sparking dot of light, which branches out into a blazing spiderweb of energy. A deep voice in your mind says “destroy them” and the web

surges with harsh red light. You feel your fingers splay and your mouth scream as your body vibrates with energy.

If you do what the voices in your head say and kill everyone, go to Scene 14.

If you do not, go to Scene 33.

41

Since you don't know what each pill does, you decide to hedge your bets by taking all of them at once.

Suddenly, you can taste colors. Blue tastes like blood. So do red and yellow. At this point, you realize your mouth is full of blood.

You pass out and enter a state of disturbed dreaming. Strange flickers of color dance before and behind you as your vision becomes vast and panoramic. You attempt to shout "holy balls!" but no "holy balls" is forthcoming in this silent cathedral of the psyche.

In the blackness, a deep voice booms. "I come to you through The Energy, young one. I want to tell you a secret that has been kept hidden from you. Everything in the universe - matter, space, energy - everything is made of tiny particles. These are the granules of reality, and they are called booleons. Every living being is made up of a certain amount of booleons, some of which are yes-booleons, and some of which are no-booleons. A person's luck in life is tied to how many yes-booleons he has. All the great beings of history and mythology have had a high ratio of yes to no. The gods and titans higher still."

It is fortunate that you are unable to speak, because in your drugged stupor, you attempt to say "Whoaaaaaaa" 29 times during the speech.

GAIN PSYCHIC ASPECT: ONCE PER ACT, YOU MAY PEEK AHEAD TO SEE WHERE THE OPTIONS OF YOUR CURRENT SCENE LEAD.

41 – 43

+3 WITS

You wake up in a pool of your own fluids. This is unhygienic, even for the engineering department.

-5 HP

-2 CHARISMA

You check your phone. The exam is in 3 minutes. You haven't studied much, but you've got Grit*.

Go to Scene 5.

**Grit is the commercial name of a prescription amphetamine.*

42

YOU LOSE. Not even because of something in the game. Just because FUCK YOU. THAT WAS HALF OF MY CHILDHOOD.

YOU LOSE.

43

You take a big bite of the apple, which turns out to be filled with worms, poison, and embarrassing photos from your adolescent years.

The doctors go slack-jawed as they consider the odds. One in a trillion? One in a googol? But... if you were accepted to the Silene monastery, how can your levels be so low? They look at you with suspicion.

Just then the lights go out. You hear motion and movement and screams and splats. When the lights flicker back on, all of your fellow doctors are dead. The only trace you find is a small ring shaped like a man and woman having sex. It has a note that reads "wear me."

GAIN EROTIC RING.



Several officials in suits come into the room. They all smile until they see you standing in the middle of a pile of dismembered bodies, coated from head to toe in blood and brains. You scramble for something to say to defuse the situation.

“It was like this when I got here!” you blurt. Nice.

“Well,” says the head official, “I suppose you great surgeons have funny ways.”

“Uhh...” you add. “Dwuh?”

“We were informed by high authority that you are the finest surgeon in the monastery medical system.”

“Snuh?”

“As such, you will be performing neurosurgery on the President of The United Vassals of the Empire. Congratulations.”

The head official shakes your hand, wipes his hand on a paper towel, then exits. You begin to panic. You wonder aloud if you even know how to SPELL surgery, only you pronounce it “surjerdy,” like a five year old sounding out a new word.

Why in the world would they select YOU?

Go to Scene 45.

44 – 45

44

You sigh and walk home in concern. You have one night to learn to cut open the President's skull. It's just like that dream you had as a kid, only this time the head probably won't be full of candy. You check your anatomy book. Nope, no candy.

This is gonna suck. Better find a way to make it suck less.

If you spend the night at the Silene Cathedral/Hot-box, go to Scene 8.

If you spend the night at the library, go to Scene 30.

45

You somberly walk to the headmaster's office. You're not ready for this. Time to call it all off.

As you open the door, you realize the room is full of people and holographic cameras. You've just walked in on a live meeting between the Headmaster of the Silene Monastery and President Vidanek.

The Headmaster, who is not terribly in tune with the niceties of politics calls your fat mother a whore. You are about to retort that, in fact, "I know you are, but what am I?" when the President stands and shakes your hand.

As if this were all choreographed in advance, the President turns toward the camera and identifies you as the young genius surgeon who shows the promise of the future of The United Vassals of the Empire!

You thank him, but note that you've never even seen a brain. In fact, this operation is the first you're hearing about it, but it sure does make an awful lot of sense.

Without hesitation, the President says that he admires your honesty, which shows the promise of the future of The United Vassals of the Empire! He says he'd rather have an honest small town surgeon than some elite intellectual surgeon.

He smiles for photographs.

You walk out of the meeting in a daze. As you stumble toward the OR, you are confronted by the seven foot tall musclebound obelisk of mansomeness known as the Vice President.

He brushes a lock of his golden mane away from his sun-bronzed forehead, glowers at a camera, and shakes your hand.

-3 HP.

He looks you over and nods his head. “Be careful,” he says.

He leans in and asks how you think you’ll do on the surgery.

If you say “great!” go to Scene 39.

If you begin to say something, then sputter and cry, go to Scene 46.

46

He peers down the hallway in each direction then slips a pill into your pocket. He says it’s a mind enhancer, single use.

GAIN VP PILL: TRIPLE YOUR WITS FOR THE CURRENT SCENE.
ONE USE ONLY.

The VP nods and walks off, his curvaceous yet well-muscled buttocks swaying to and fro like the ocean breeze catching the sail of a fine ship by moonlight on a summer’s eve.

You shake your head and snap out of it. By then, he’s already gone.

You scrub up and head to the OR.

Go to Scene 57.

47

You are given in a job in the Silene Children's Medical Hospital making initial diagnosis on (aka, waving an Diagnostron over) the kids who come in. It's not as glamorous as surgery, since you're not personally causing anyone's death. But, you like to think you're at least proverbially stabbing people in the heart by working in medical bureaucracy.

A pleasant-looking gentleman in a white cardigan enters, carrying his 10 year old daughter. He says that his little girl has been sniffing for several hours. You run the Diagnostron over her, discover that she has a cold, and say so.

"Oh, maybe you should run at again," says the be-cardiganed man, growing agitated. "My little girl is an A student in 2nd grade." He chuckles sarcastically. "I highly doubt she'd simply get a 'cold.' Or, as she would say, 'rhinovirus,' wouldn't you, dear?"

The little girl nods rapidly, which inadvertently forces her finger higher into her nose.

You run the diagnostron and its diagnosis remains the same. "Nope," you say. "Looks like she's just got a cold."

He pulls a bowie knife from his pleated slacks. "MY CHILD IS SPECIAL. UNDERSTAND? IF MY CHILD ISN'T SPECIAL, THEN I'M NOT SPECIAL, AND IF I'M NOT SPECIAL I WANNA WATCH THE WORLD BURN!"

BATTLE: FIGHTING: NICE MAN

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 3

If you win, go to Scene 59.

48

You manage to open the cranium, largely thanks to the aid of the team of world class nurses. At several moments during the process, you whisper "so.." and drag out

the O for as long as it takes to get a nurse to move your hand for you.

But now things are more serious. You insert the brainalyzer into his frontal lobe. You wipe the sweat from your brow and look up at the neurographic imager. The offending brain growth is located just under his hippocampus.

This is the hardest part of surgery. You must align all the surgical proton emitters just right. A slight mistake and you could destroy his memory, his ability to use language, or one of his souls.

The spectators see you hesitate and they begin to murmur. All the sounds in the room seem to boom and echo. Sweat pours from your forehead as you painstakingly align the 14 proton beams. You push your moist hair back from your eyes, put on a resolute face, and press the button.

The head nurse sighs and presses the correct button.

The beams turn on. Your job is to keep them in place as they fire.

BATTLE: WITS: SURGERY

WITS: 2

If you succeed, go to Scene 58.

49

Your sexual prowess is so impressive, you are declared emperor of the entire universe. You spend the rest of your life in sin and debauchery, bringing prosperity and love to the entire galaxy.

Bravo. You are truly the greatest being in history.

YOU WIN.

THE END.

50 – 51

50

You become a surgeon, the frat boy of the medical universe.

You arrive at the monastery's medical ward and are brought before a group of doctors. You instantly recognize them as surgeons by their smug swagger and the half-empty red plastic beer cups spread around the room. The men and women here have their own version of “work hard, play hard,” that replaces “work” with “drink” and “play” with “drink” and “hard” with “drink” and that comma with “drink.”

A tall paunchy man with two weeks of stubble sidles up to you and asks you if you think you've got what it takes to “surgerize dudes.”

He takes your “don't hit me” posture for a yes. He looks you over and smirks. “Well, the Silene Medical Association may think you're ready to apprentice here,” he says. “But we got a test of our own.”

BATTLE: WITS: KEG OF INEXPENSIVE GRAIN ALCOHOL

WITS: 1

If you win, -1 Wits, and go to 38.

If you lose, -1 Charisma, and reassignment to the Children's Ward at scene 47.

51

You've always wanted to receive attention for digging through bodies. As you don't have the nerve to be a serial killer, you turn your attention to medicine.

As all scientific medicine is now done by nanomachines and computers, there isn't a significant role for meat-based lifeforms like yourself.

Just kidding. There's always a place for outdated science! You will be learning what is now referred to as “Traditional Medicine.” The monastery specializes in two

forms of traditional medicine - surgery and pediatrics.

If you go into pediatrics, go to Scene 47.

If you go into surgery, go to Scene 50.

52

So, you want to be a fighter.

You enter the dark chamber of the elite Silene Warriors. The high black ceiling is buttressed with the black bones of some ancient beast of the sky. Antigravity chandeliers wobble gently in the breeze above you and give their twinkling light to the room beneath. In a corner, you see many black-robed monks playing video games and eating an Oreo cake.

You walk over and are greeted by a Silene Grandmaster, who removes his cowl.

“Welcome to your new life. Being a Silene Warrior is no task for the faint-hearted. You have to get up well before noon. You have to wear dark robes, which are kinda hot. You have to smoke a lot of weed, and that’s just the beginning, and also most of the middle. We must determine if you are ready.”

As your first challenge, you must do battle with... yourself. You are laid on a table and strange electrodes are placed over your eyes. For a moment, you see nothing. Then you blink. You find yourself in a cave. Before you stands... you.

You isn’t that bad. I mean, we’re not talking supermodel looks or genius intelligence or adult hygiene, but overall You is pretty solid. You ask You if there are any dark secrets or disturbing revelations about your character – hidden currents under the still waters of your psyche.

“Nupe.”

You and You hang out and talk about Internet memes



for five minutes or so, at which point the strange environment around you dissipates. You open your eyes as the electrodes are removed.

“Okay...” says the Grandmaster. “Battle with yourself failed. We’ll have you battle Frank.”

From the crowd of video game playing warriors, a young man in a baby yellow cloak stands. He smiles genially and skips over.

“Meet Frank the goodsider,” snarls the Grandmaster.

“Hey hey!” says Frank exuberantly. When nobody responds to his offer of a high five, he segues it into a pat on your back.

The Grandmaster scowls and hands you a plasmaster. “It is an elegant weapon, from a more stabby age.” You press a button on the hilt, which causes an ever-whirling beam of plasma to appear above it. You cackle with idiotic glee.

GAIN BASIC PLASMASTER: +1 FIGHTING WHILE EQUIPPED.

Frank ignites his plasmaster. As a goodsider, his

weapon is not terribly effective at combat. Whereas your plasmaster cuts through all known matter, his gives gentle massages wherever it strikes.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: FRANK THE GOODSIDER
FIGHTING: 1, HP: 7

If you win, go to Scene 22.

53

ANSWER: UPPER LEFT CORNER SQUARE.

If you were right, go to Scene 55.

If not, go to Scene 31.

54

You are brought to a strange raised mound with a hole in the center. The Silene guards prod you toward it, afraid to near it themselves. As you draw close, you hear a rustling in the hole. You use your ray to shine a flashlight in, and immediately hear a hoarse hissing sound. Below you, a mole-like creature with flesh the color and feel of a turnip turns away in revulsion and covers its red eyes with an Armani suited arm.

“It stops the light!” rasps the attorney. “It stops the light or it gets no legal adviiiice!”

You turn off your ray.

“Come, come in” goes the guttural coo of the attorney, as it beckons you with its three gnarled digits and licks its long incisors. “Its initial consultation is freeee.”

You crawl into the law firm.

After shambling through a maze of strange passageways and corridors, you arrive at a small pleasant-smelling office. The walls are hung with tastefully banal paintings, the floor has a new beige carpet, and there are

54 – 55

several tall bookshelves filled with untouched literary classics. The mole creature skitters into its desk, where its Harvard Law diploma identifies it as Xasktriskix, J.D.

It shares an office with Joe Norman, a smiling blond man in a gray flannel suit. He wears an efficient yet soothing crew cut and a warm smile. On his desk, he has shrines to every major religious figure. Above all of these is a sign that reads “logical contradictions? That’s how God hugs!” Also on his desk are pictures of his golf pals, his 27 member immediate family, all the sick and downtrodden people he’s cared for, and several photos that came with the frame. Joe didn’t want to be mean to the people in them.

Joe is, in sum, the nicest man alive. However, you’re looking for a lawyer, and Joe’s J.D. from Patriotic Diploma Mill University is a bit unsettling. Also worrisome is the fact that he said “nice to meet you” as if he conceived of you as a fellow sapient being.

If you hire Joe, go to Scene 61.

If you hire Xasktriskix, go to Scene 3.

55

The monks giggle at you for spelling the word “poop” on their tic-tac-toe board.

You are moved to righteous indignation, shaking your fist as you shout “dicks! You guys are total dicks!”

The Grandmaster silences everyone with a single wave of the gun that he’s firing.

“Quiet. Our student here is almost a Silene Warrior. He has passed our physical test and our mental test. But, at last, he must pass the spiritual test.” Everyone around you smiles and nods in approval. You feel at your plas-
master and narrow your eyes as you await this new trial.

The spiritual test turns out to be going to the desert and doing peyote, which the monks claim is a spiritual

thing. They're also doing whip-its, which is ostensibly not a spiritual thing.

What did you expect? It's a bunch of people who hang out in capes and baggy clothes all day talking about magical energy. You pop a couple pills you find on the ground. Or were those rocks?

Suddenly you are attacked by a hallucination!



BATTLE: FIGHTING AND WITS: CATERPILLAR JESUS

FIGHTING: 2, WITS: 2, HP: 6

BONUS: YOU MAY IGNORE ANY ATTACK FROM CATERPILLAR JESUS BY TAKING A PERMANENT -1 TO WITS.

If you win, you are declared a Silene Warrior. Go to Scene 65.

56

The VP approaches the front of the room and, in a sound reminiscent of the grunt a prize bull makes on

56 – 57

claiming two mates at once, he clears his throat.

“Friends! I come here not just to exonerate this young man, but to ply your emotions with shallow rhetoric.”

People sit up and take notice. The VP consults his list of tear-inducing topics to touch on - dying loved ones, patriotic duty, the passage from youth to adulthood, and the quiet dignity of a life well-lived. Despite the fact that the speech has nothing to do with you and that on 12 separate occasions the VP stops to show his biceps to female or gay or open-minded members of the jury, by the end everyone is begging to recast their votes to declare you innocent.

The moment you are acquitted, the VP grabs you by the scruff of the neck and drags you out of the room.

You start to thank him, but his mansome scowl indicates that you should shutup for a second, you worthless clone.

He looks left and right, then gives you a strange chip. “You may need this for your exam.”

GAIN VP CHIP: WHEN USED, YOU CAN GO BACK TO THE LAST PAGE WHERE YOU MADE A DECISION. ONE USE ONLY.

It’s time for the final exam.

Go to Scene 5.

57

You enter the OR and are surrounded by a crowd of nurses and reporters. You answer questions in between requests for surgical implements.

The nurses have drawn a line across President Vidanek’s forehead at which you are supposed to make the incision. You know this as of three seconds ago because the head nurse was filled with horror when you asked what the squiggly red thing on his face was.

You take the plasma scalpel and run it across his forehead. Ew! Blood! Ew!

Wait... wait... did you think that or say it out loud? You must've said it out loud if everyone's staring at you. Or maybe it's because you just nicked the President's eyes because you weren't paying attention.

Okay. Focus. FOCUS!

BATTLE: WITS: FIRST INCISION

WITS: 2

If you win, go to Scene 48.

58

You fire the beams. Everything goes fine for a moment, then the machine sputters and changes direction. The President's head lights on fire.

You turn to a nurse and ask "Is it supposed to..." before being slapped. The nurses take over the operation, but it's too late. The President's head explodes like a pumpkin. The press immediately ask you for a statement. You will be quoted in the galaxy-wide press tomorrow saying "Not it!"

Then, you notice the pieces of the President's brain, which line your formerly white coat, begin to move like an army of inchworms. In fact, every bit of the President's head inches back toward his neck stump.

Over the next few minutes, everyone watches in shock as the little worms reform into a head. As they do, you notice a small piece of orangey-gray meat stuck to your foot which does not join in the procession of brain chunks.

You pick it up. A reporter says "what's that?" You reply, "it's... the tumor."

You hear the snap of holographic cameras and smile awkwardly.

+3 CHARISMA



You soon find yourself receiving the congratulations of your peers for discovering a new form of surgery. You must have an overload of booleans to be able to reform a human head yourself. Brilliant!

Based on your performance, you are allowed to graduate medical school immediately.

All this happens so rapidly that it's hard for you to grasp. You find yourself lying face up on your racecar bed, staring at the white stucco ceiling. You don't have any conscious memory of using any Silene powers at all. And yet, you must have some strange abilities that are beyond even your reckoning.

Go to Scene 65.

59

The world of pediatrics turns out to be a lot more stabby than you'd guessed. You go to the head nurse and tell him you killed a guy and his daughter.

The head nurse looks horrified. "Whoa, hey, look, that's a lot of paperwork. Just dump 'em in some nitric acid and flush 'em down biohazard." he says, pointing to a diagram of standard protocol. "This is a hospital, not a... don't-stab-any-kids...pital."

Medicine is everything you hoped it'd be.



You spend the next six months learning all the most important things about being a doctor – filling out paperwork, avoiding annoying patients, and how to crush

down idle emotions like empathy and self doubt.

However, pediatrics is a hard area of medicine. It's like combining geriatrics and family care. 100% of the patients poop themselves and have immediate family who care about them.

This day is particularly trying, as you are faced with an extremely irritating lady. She drones on and on about how she has a dying child who needs medicine and how she can't afford insurance and how the kid would've come in himself if he still had a spine, and blah blah blah.

Your goal is to not help her while making her believe she should feel bad for asking.

BATTLE: WITS: NICE OLD LADY

WITS: 2

If you defeat her go to Scene 32.

If you fail, you clearly don't have the social skills to deal with awake people. You become a surgeon. Go to Scene 38.

60

You turn against your Master and give in to Good. Before your elderly teacher realizes what's happening, you knock him out with the hilt of your plasmaster.

Your father smiles. You flee with him to join the good side. He promises to teach you in the true ancient ways.

You meet other goodsiders and learn their rules. From the outset, you're not entirely sold on their philosophy. For example, they have this "A Silene shall not know love," rule, but it seems more like a situation than a rule.

They also have all these sayings like "look within before you look without." None of them seem original. In fact, you're pretty sure you've seen them all on fortune cookies, since they're really trite and usually include lot-

60 – 61

tery numbers and short lessons in Chinese.

But, you persist. After several months of training, you are allowed into the secret underground goodsider monastery. Here, drawn on the walls is a wordless history of all of the goodside Masters. One after the other, each was nobly killed by a badsider who was bored or drunk. Your father puts an arm around you. “Welcome to the fold, son. Our underground lair has been kept a secret for millenia. Here, we train and train for the day when we will rise up and reclaim the galaxy for good.”

“Awesome,” you add.

That evening, you go home and write a blog post about what a great day you had. You accidentally include the address of the secret temple. Within moments, the entire goodsider portion of the monastery is stampeded by badsiders who are totally planning to TP the monastery and then totally kill everyone.

The tableau is horrific. Ancient goodsider Masters are forced to watch as their beloved temple is desecrated with the corpses of loved ones, and with toilet paper. SINGLE PLY toilet paper.

Your sense of duty compels you to action. But, your sense of cowardice notes that you don’t want to die. In fact, you don’t even want a fleeting moment of pain.

If you fight the badsiders, go to Scene 63.

If you join them, go to Scene 11.

61

+3 CHARISMA, FOR BEING A SAP.

You enter the Silene court, which is ruled over by the stern Judge Blbec, and take a seat.

The Silene University is represented by an attorney named Xasktriskix. You ask Joe to approach the judge

and say it's a conflict of interest, since Xasktriskix had access to privileged information an hour ago. After a few moments talking to the judge, Joe returns, smiling, and says everything's fine. Xasktriskix successfully argued that it's not a conflict of interest, on the basis that it didn't conflict with his interests at all. Joe laughs and writes down a note to tell that one to his wife tonight.

Six minutes later, you have been convicted of murder, theft, and resisting arrest, with a dash of pedophilia thrown in. This last one was apparently done on a dare, since Xasktriskix demands 20 credits from the judge after sentence is passed.

-6 CHARISMA

Just before the judge bangs his gavel to sentence you to death, the rear door opens, and a massive, beefy, strangely erotic shadow casts over the room.

It's the Vice President of the United Vassals of the Empire. His leathery left paw brushes his luxurious blond curls away from his square jaw. "Just a moment," he says, in his crotch-moistening baritone.

Go to Scene 56.

62

You lack the ability to focus on one trivial task to the detriment of everything and everyone around you. You are not cut out for engineering.

A nearby engineer places an electrode on your head and wipes your memory

LOSE ALL ITEMS, ASPECTS, AND BONUSES ACQUIRED IN ACT 1.
-3 WITS.

If you wish to be a medic, go to Scene 51.

63 – 64

If you wish to be a fighter, go to Scene 52.

63

Your father tosses you a goodsider plasmaster, then runs into the fray.

GAIN GOODSIDER PLASMASTER: -1 FIGHTING WHILE EQUIPPED.

You run into battle! With any luck, you'll get killed before any of your comrades reads your blog post. Just as you reach the enemy, a strangely familiar man walks before you. He looks like your father, only he has a beard.

"I am your father," he says.

You thought the other guy was your father.

"Well," he says, "in point of fact, a lot of guys probably were your father. The cloning program pulled genetics pretty much indiscriminately."

You frown. "Oh, it's not so bad!" says Beard Father. "Think of it this way – your mom is a steel and glass tube, and every guy had sex with your mom." You frown again. Just once you'd like to get good life-changing news.

Oh, also he advises you not to have sex with any of the 95% of local people who are clones. There's a good chance you're related. So on the plus side, you have a better excuse for your interminable streak of lonely Saturday nights.

As these thoughts percolate through your mind, you grow mad with rage. And Beard Father just stands there with his stupid paternal smile. Between your massive fury and tiny vocabulary, you mentally manage a brief wrathful speech, which consists mostly of the phrase "stupid jerkwads!" You holster your goodsider plasmaster and take out your badsider plasmaster.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: BEARD FATHER

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 7

If you win, go to Scene 40.

64

You head to another room in the library.

You open your calculus book to page 1. You check your watch. 6 hours to go. You can do this.

On page 1 is a sticker that was placed by legal mandate.

It reads “Calculus is not a fact, but a theory based on the assumption that reality changes over time. It should be read with an open and critical mind. Paid for by the council of local crazy people who sincerely have nothing better to do with their time (CLCPWSHNBWTT).”

Thanks to a gross misunderstanding of the purpose of education that has been enforced and escalated for several millenia now, the material in the book is simplified and made up largely of pictures of kitties. You master calculus in 3 hours.

WITS +3

CHARISMA -3

Why is your charisma down, you ask? Because you didn't shower your stupid clone body all night. You stink. Stink bad.

If you choose to shower, go to 19.

If you choose not to, go to 15.

65

Soon, it is graduation day.

Based on your outstanding performance in an institution that neither values nor encourages anything of quality, you are teleported to the chamber of the President and Vice President of the United Vassals of the Empire for a special consultation. They are impressed by your ability

65 – 65

to meet every challenge no matter how stupid, pointless, or foolhardy. Both look you over greedily, like you're a delicious steak.

The President whispers "we must be certain" to the VP. The VP nods thoughtfully at you, then walks over.

His ursine palms grip your puny shoulder as he towers over you, his protruding chin a monument to mansomeness.

"You will be needed on the front lines of the war."

Fortunately, your urge to vomit stifles your urge to squeal like a small child.

"Due to your achievements at the monastery, we believe you are destined for great things. But first you must prove your mettle in the man-forged of combat."

GAIN BASIC PLASMASTER: +1 FIGHTING.



One week later, you find yourself on a trip to a strange planet – Mizerny II - to battle a ragtag band of rebels led by the charismatic goodsider, Master Slaboch.

Several years ago, a number of members of The United Vassals of the Empire rebelled. They opposed the UVE central command's cruel treatment of its vassals, and wished to acquire independence because of their deep-seated belief that only a local government should be allowed to violate its citizens' rights.

General Explosives Inc. sponsored a subcommittee of congress, which voted to declare war against the seceding planets. It was an easy choice, as the UVE government is decidedly Prothoplastian in ideology, whereas the rebels are damnable Altervirians. Ha! Altervirian? After everything that happened in the 2470s?

You chuckle at the ignorance of people who are different from you.



Standing, you look out the window at the brightness of space at supercosmotic speed. Each star stretches out as a light yellow band across the dark. You marvel at how vast the universe is compared to a single human life. Killing people doesn't seem so bad after all.

END OF ACT 1.

RESTORE ALL HP.

If you are an engineer, + 2 Wits.

If you are a fighter, + 2 fighting, + 1 max HP.

If you are a medic, + 1 wits, + 1 charisma.

Go to Act 2.

ACT 2

1

Mizerny II is one of many points of conflict within the galactic rebellion. The original rebels have long since gained a foothold in the galaxy and settled into a semi-autocratic form of government similar to the UVE's. The ongoing war is what you might call a Goliath vs. Goliath struggle in which Davids are frequently created or destroyed.

Nowadays, the UVE and the Rebel Empire just fight proxy wars on other people's lands. That way, statistically, there are zero net casualties.*

In the media, the conflict is sometimes referred to as The Pointless War. However, like most "pointless wars," this war has all sorts of points. They're just mostly things like re-elections and no-bid weapons contracts.

Of course, you don't think any of this. You toss a grenade from hand to hand and sing the jingle for a breakfast cereal commercial as you happily await arrival.



Your ship cruises toward Mizerny II and drops through its atmosphere. You well up with pride as you think of the special important mission you've been sent on.

A voice booms over the intercom: "All special important mission people, please report to Hangar 1 if your name starts with A through C, Hangar 2 if your name starts with D through G, Hangar 3 if..."

You report to the appropriate hangar. Well, actually, you report to the overflow room for the appropriate hangar, which also doesn't have enough room for you. A ship's officer hands you a bag of standard-issue special important mission rations and a standard issue special important mission soldier's kit.

GAIN MEDI-PACK: WHEN USED, RESTORES YOUR HP TO MAXIMUM. ONLY ONE USE.

BANG! The ship lands. Several doorways open, and the horde of soldiers stream out and form into lines. You are greeted by a local officer who grunts at you, which you later learn is sort of a greeting around here.

You smile politely. "Hi, I'm here for the special mission ordered by the President himself."

"Uh huh," she says. "Engineer, medic, or grunt?"

If you're an engineer or medic, go to Scene 18.

If you're a fighter, go to Scene 51.

**Net Casualties = citizens killed + foreigners killed - foreigners killed.*

2

You give a dramatic speech in which you imply that your Silene training gave you great spiritual power. You insist that you will not be harmed, but that non-believers will die from the disease.

Over the next few days, your claim proves true. Many people die calling you a lying asshole, but the survivors now trust your beneficence. Sure, most of the troops are dead, but the scrawny red-eyed delicate-stomached survivors are really loyal.

Go to Scene 95.

3

One group of hooligans surges toward you. Several members grab you and shout "come on! We're gonna blow up a Starbucks!" When you note there isn't a Starbucks on base, they ponder for a moment. Then, half of the faction decides to build a Starbucks. For several minutes they turn a nice profit, mostly on pastry and

3 – 4

powder-based iced beverages, until the other half of their party breaks their front window, takes their cash, graffiti's "CORPORATE FASCISTS" on their wall and then lights it on fire.

Now more soldiers are dead, and worse, there will be no iced espresso novelty beverage for you.

This has gone too far. It's time for action.

If you fire indiscriminately, go to 21.

If you fire discriminately, go to 100.

4

In a reenactment of the glorious battles you imagined yourself having as a child, you cut down one opponent after another. Of course, viewed from the outside, it's you spinning around and fumbling with your blade as you kill motionless opponents.

This fact briefly occurs to you, but then you do this move where you jump at a wall and kick off into a somersault and spin your plasmaster and then switch hands and spin again and totally stab a guy and it's so awesome.

Once everyone's dead, you use their communication system to tell the UVE authorities you've captured an enemy base.

+5 CHARISMA

Go to Scene 50.

5

You manage to clean a bunch of shit from around the Mizerny II base. But, as you come to the finish, you begin to feel you've been strung along. What was the point of all this work? Has it taught you anything about soldiering? You confront your commander.

He informs you that your lessons in climbing shit

and cleaning shit, though seemingly useless, were actually training you in karate. He says, “Mop the floor,” prompting you to make the floor-mopping motion you “practiced” for 20 hours.

He then punches at your hand, making it appear that you blocked him using the “mop the floor technique.” This prompts oohs and aahs from onlookers.

He says “Clean the shit.” You wiggle your hand back and forth like you’re scrubbing the floor with a toothbrush. The commander runs into your fist and then falls over. More oohs and aahs.

“So, you see,” he says, “all along I’ve been training you. It certainly hasn’t been two days of busywork before we ship you off to die.”

This all seems very convincing, especially the part where he said “certainly.” And yet... and yet a few shriveled neurons somewhere in your tiny frontal lobe feel like you’re being put on.

If you kill him, go to Scene 19.

If you ignore your frontal lobe and thank him for being so wise, go to Scene 14.

6

Screw strategy – this war needs a personal touch.

You order your ship to run close to the surface, and you personally man a gunner’s station while wearing a cowboy hat. Unfortunately, after World War 4.5, a lot of history was lost. So, you’re actually wearing a princess hat.

The ship swoops down. You brush aside the strip of pink lace that keeps getting in your face and pull up the viewfinder. In the crosshairs, you see a flash of light and smoke.

If the missile had struck 10 centimeters closer, your

6 – 8

last words would have been “Hooray for fireworks! Hooray f- OH HOLY BALLS NO!” This would’ve been a happy thing for you, since your real last words will one day be “watch this” and whatever sounds your larynx makes when the polar bear rips it apart.

As things stand, the projectile merely rips the gunner’s station off of the ship as it explodes. You go hurtling toward the surface of Mizerny in a small steel box.

Choose two random numbers. If they are both 0, you die. Otherwise, go to Scene 56.

7

You open communication.

A grizzled and earnest old captain sits on screen before you. He says he comes in peace with a message of love and shared humanity. He says that, as long as we share empathy for our fellow creatures, we are never at war. There’s also something about love and beauty, but more interesting to you is the fact that he eats some of his rations as he talks, and they appear to contain beef jerky and gummi bears.

You decide to defect to the enemy.

You turn around and order an assault on your home base. Before you can fire, you are remotely disabled, at which point your ship is boarded and you are captured.

Several months later the United Vassals of the Empire enacts economic sanctions against you personally. Unable to trade for food, you die within three days.

YOU LOSE.

8

You’re not sure exactly where you lost the debate, but it was probably somewhere between calling the first lady a fat dyke and the quotation from Hitler.

What was that old saying among the Badsiders? Ah,

yes. "Don't get angry... get even... more angry... then assassinate the guy you're angry at."

If you are an engineer, go to Scene 101.

If you are a fighter, go to Scene 59.

If you are a medic, go to Scene 70.

9

You stand over the general. You note the deep care-lines worn into his aging brow. He has been a noble servant of his country in war and peace. Sure, he had a tough exterior, but— OH GOD YOU ACCIDENTALLY IGNITED YOUR PLASMASTER INTO HIS FACE.

You leave the general's tent to speak to the officers. They are impressed by the speed and cold-bloodedness of your action, and by its mildly homoerotic undertones.

It is getting close to morning by now, and some of the officers are beginning to sober up. One of them thinks to ask you a question that might've been important 3 minutes ago: "How will your command differ from Hovno's?"

You can see from the faces in the crowd and the murmurs of discomfort that you may have a revolt on your hands.

If you insist on a new system of punishments to secure a return to discipline, go to Scene 23.

If you promise everyone booze, sex, and constant parties in exchange for strict discipline, go to Scene 104.

10

You dare, no double dare, him to kill you. You suspect a puny worm like him hasn't got the guts to- AAH!

10 – 13

You experience a fleeting moment of surprise before the knife in your neck separates your body from its blood. Your last word is a combination of the word “fuck” and some guttural moans. It’s transliterated on your grave as “furglegurg!”

YOU LOSE.

11

You notice the doctor’s arm bone stuck right through his head and came out his mouth, like some sort of gruesome monument to the absurdity of death.

“I hope you find this... humerus,” you say.

-2 CHARISMA

Go to Scene 26.

12

You are quickly shot down by the enemy. Obviously. Your last thought is, “Why didn’t I send a qualified pilot to engage the enemy?”

Just kidding. Your last thought is, “AAAAAAH!”

YOU LOSE.

13

The 5% of your troops who are alive get a rest for the first time in years. One nerdy soldier confronts you and shouts “But the price of freedom is constant vigilance!” to which you reply “The price of vigilance is constant... bein’ a buzzkill.” A less astute and more drunk soldier comes from behind and wedgies the nerd.

Everyone settles in for a day of recreation. The most popular ersatz alcohols – nail polish, gasoline, and choking oneself – are shared, and loud sexist rock music is blasted from all vehicle speakers.

Then, overhead you hear it - the ominous sound of thousands of engines approaching. You yell, “Turn up the volume!” That obscures the ominous engine noise for a good ten minutes.

At this point, out of nowhere, the rebels strike.

-5 FIGHTING FOR NEXT SCENE ONLY.

Go to Scene 41.

14

Based on your extreme stupidity and perpetual impulse toward violence, you’re assigned to permanent grunt-hood. It’s time to head for the front of what your commanders call The War to End All Wars. You’ll be using equipment left over from the last war with that name.

You hop on a speeder bus, which zips off to the front line.



You find yourself in a mess tent a few kilometers from active combat.

You have a few days to kill before deployment. Since you have no loved ones and are more or less illiterate, you save time on letter-writing.

As you sit on a bench masticating another wad of vita-protein rations, a member of your squad gossips that your squad leader has secret naked pictures of his wife stashed under his bed. Your squadmates dare you to sneak in and steal it.

If you elect to go steal it, go to Scene 68.

If you refuse, go to Scene 53.

15

You rip the bastards apart.

15 – 16

As your rage subsides, you notice that none of the other test group members experienced these effects. In fact, they're all heaps of bloody goo on the floor now.

Your body shrinks back to normal.

-20 FIGHTING

You head for the exit. Just as you open it, another group of scientists enters. Their eyes gape, and you realize the strange scene at whose center you stand naked: A mound of shredded human corpses, their pallid limbs and contorted faces swimming in a lake of fetid blood and warm mucus.

The scientists look at each other in horror.

One manages to extrude a few syllables past his quivering lips: "Did they... did they lose the data sheets?"

"What?" you reply. "Oh, no. They're on the bench over there." The scientists stop worrying, and high five for a while. They kick aside the bodies as they collect the documents.

You leave in a daze. As you go you are confronted by a group of guards who wonder why you're naked and covered in blood.

If you are a medic, go to Scene 48.

If you are not, go to Scene 87.

16

The light of the plasmaster brightens the lake, but fails to illuminate any walls. It seems you're in some sort of massive hidden cave. Much like your existence, it is cold and empty. That's not a thing you think at the time, but it's true.

You swim to shore, gasping and spluttering as you dog-paddle. When you reach the cold banks of the underground sea, you pass out from exhaustion.

When you wake up, you see two strange figures in the darkness.

“Incredible, isn’t it?” says one.

“Indeed,” says the other. “He may be the chosen one. But we cannot yet be certain.”

One notices you looking up and yelps “oh, shitballs he’s awake!” He kicks you in the face, causing you to pass out again.

-3 HP

Go to Scene 113.

17

The President walks to the door, makes sure the coast is clear, then shuts and locks it.

“You have exceeded all of our expectations, son. You graduated from the Silene monastery despite your low origins, and you single-handedly defeated the rebels and killed the most powerful Goodsider in the galaxy.”

“Sure!” you blurt, looking aside nervously.

“That is why I am selecting you for a new mission...”

He pauses and looks you over.

“On Varlataneme IV is a great monster - the Varlata. It dwells in a great temple underground. We have sent countless missions there, but whenever we build a permanent base, the beast emerges to destroy it. We have sent many to kill the monster, but none have returned alive. We... did you lose something under the desk?”

You realize that you are huddling under the desk in terror. You try to think of something cool to say.

“Just, uh, kickin’ the floor’s ass!”

The President ignores you and continues.

“If you succeed in your mission, you will be given access to the deepest secrets of the UVE. Secrets only a handful of people will ever know in the history of this cosmos.”

He puts a hand on your shoulder and looks at you

17 – 19

with gravitas.

“Sweet!” you bark.

You both rise and head to the hangar.

Go to Scene 116.

18

You are brought before one of the lower ranking commanding officers at the Mizerny II base –

Commander Sourek.

“I’m told you’re toward the high end of the bottom quintile of the bell curve.”

You smile grandiosely. “Yes, I suppose I am.”

“You may think you’re hot stuff, bud. But, to be a commanding officer in this war, you can’t just be less stupid than the people around you. You gotta be more less stupid! And you gotta earn the love of your compatriots. And you don’t look like you could earn a lot of love,” he finishes, looking at your eyebrows.

You’ve got to convince him you are capable of being loved, despite reason, common sense, and what a litany of potential foster parents have told you.

BATTLE: WITS AND CHARISMA: COMMANDER SOUREK
WITS: 2, CHARISMA: 3

If you win, go to Scene 34.

If you lose, go to Scene 96, you stupid clone.

19

Military police rush in toward you and engulf you in a kevlar sack. You vow not to go down without a fight, but amend that threat when someone kicks you.



When the bag is lifted, you find yourself on the bridge of a mock spaceship. You sit in the captain's chair as lights and dials flicker around you.

A lieutenant walks in front of you.

"Welcome. My inferiors tell me that you have only marginal intelligence, but the ability to murder with little to no provocation."

You nod suavely.

"We want you for space command."

Your eyes light up. Ever since you were a child and it was made clear to you that you would never excel in any private sector field, you dreamed of being an officer in space command.

"But, before we can let you in, we have a test given to every space command captain before he's allowed to ship out. The Kawasaki-Manu test."

Your eyes widen.

The Kawasaki-Manu is a test in which the test-taker faces a no-win situation. It is designed to test the ability to act under dire circumstances. However, the test is so common, that everyone knows it's a test you can only win by cheating.

So, it has shifted to a test of whether or not you'll cheat while everyone's watching.

If you make your best effort to pass the test fairly, go to Scene 44.

If you hack the system, thereby altering the test so that it is winnable, go to Scene 75.

If you shoot a gun at your fellow test-takers, killing them indiscriminately, go to Scene 14.

20

That evening, you take the whole crew for a night at the bar. When the upstart's back is turned, you dump a cup of poison into his beer.

To your horror, you realize a commanding officer across the room watched everything. He walks over to you, looks you up and down, then looks at the upstart who is downing his pint. The upstart bleeds from his ears and nose, then and slides off of his stool.

The commander sits in his place, and takes a hard look at you.

“Did you just poison that boy?”

“I didn't NOT not not...” you get lost in your attempt to hide your crime in multiple negatives.

You gulp.

The commander presses a button on his watch.

Go to Scene 19.

21

The troops dislike being fired upon, but appreciate your even-handedness in choice of targets. It reminds them of the democratic spirit whose slow but inexorable submission to moneyed lobbyists is celebrated in song at the beginning of UVE football games.

The troops now see you as a great authority figure. Soon, several of the bleeding wounded soldiers shout, “Speech! Speech!” You demure, prompting several of them to point guns at you and shout “SPEECH. SPEECH.”

BATTLE: WITS: SPEECH
WITS: 3

If you win, go to Scene 95.

22

The President puts his arm around you and shouts that you truly show the promise of the United Vassals of the Empire and the spirit of the great revolution that was

crushed by our founding fathers.

Aboard ship, he brings you into his chamber for a private consultation.

“Son, I’m damn impressed.” he says. “You must have the highest booleon ratio of anyone I’ve ever met.”

You laugh and cough at the same time, causing a gob of spit to fling at Vidanek. The two of you tacitly agree to ignore this.

He takes a case from under his desk and opens it. Inside is “a special new gun.” It is shaped like a sphere with a big red button. He says you’ll need it on your next mission.

You reach toward the button to test it. “NO!” screams the President. “DON’T TOUCH THAT IN HERE!”

If you touch it, ‘cause like, fuck him, amiright? go to Scene 97.

If you pull back, go to Scene 67.

23

A RIOT BREAKS OUT.

IT’S ONE THING FOR YOU TO RUN AROUND KILLING THE GENERAL, BUT IT’S QUITE ANOTHER TO IMPOSE A CURFEW.

Within seconds, a base-wide barfight breaks out as soldiers turn their advanced weaponry upon each other. All around you, heads pop like pumpkins, bodies pop like eggplants, and legs pop like twinkies. The devastation is so raw and horrific, that a full description would defy even the most nuanced of food-based similes.

If you hide in a bunker till things cool down, then emerge and claim credit for stopping the riot, go to Scene 95.

If you leap into the fray, go to Scene 3.

24 – 26**24**

You are assigned a small destroyer and sent to bombard a major enemy basecamp that is defended by a ragtag group of Goodsiders. Their location was discovered after they made a public plea for peace and understanding.

You head to Northern Mizerny where you will help defeat the rebel ships and bombard the town below.

En route, you encounter a lone enemy ship. Its shields are down. Your communication officer turns to you. “They’re hailing us.”

If you fire at the enemy, go to Scene 92.

If you decide to talk to them, go to Scene 7.

25

You fall for several dozen meters into a lake of cold clear water. It is a sign of how bad your life has gone recently that you’re downright ecstatic to not be soaking in a puddle of urine.

-2 HP

You light your plasmaster.

Go to Scene 16.

26

You look down to find yourself atop a strange black surface. Before you can figure out where you are, the surface lowers underground, shrouding you in darkness. With a shudder, the lowering ceases. Lights come up and a nearby door opens.

You enter a long hallway with high ceilings. At first, you can hear the battle raging between rebels and imperials above. But, as you go deeper, it becomes so silent that you hear the echo of your own footsteps.

At the end of the hall you see an archway to a round

chamber. It must be Slaboch's sanctum. As you approach, two Goodsider Silenes confront you. They offer you crumpets with homemade jam, but you insist that you're stuffed. No really, you couldn't have another bite.

"Very well, then," says one darkly.

"Sorry about this," says the other.

They light their plasmasters and attack.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: GOODSIDERS

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 7

If you win, go to Scene 28.

27

The rebels have been nearly crippled by the recent UVE assaults. It's time to strike at their heart.

You are informed that Master Slaboch, the powerful Goodsider who leads the rebels, is on this planet nearby. You are told that everything you know about him from propaganda posters is true. You raise your hand and ask if he is really two-dimensional.

Everyone laughs at you, and you will never be smart enough to understand why.

If anyone were ever to write a biography of you, that would be the title.

Go to Scene 111.

28

You dispatch one Goodsider. The other strangles himself so his coworker won't be lonely in the afterlife.

You pass by them into a large pastel-colored sanctum, centered around a tall, plush throne. A polite voice booms out, "I've been expecting you."

The chair turns around. Slaboch looks you over. "What are you doing here?" he says.

"Uh..." you retort.

"I thought they would send a Badside Silene to assa-



ssinate me. Why are you here?”

“Perhaps,” you stammer, “you sense there is some good left in me. But, I can assure you, that is in the past. I have given into evil. And my very soul—”

He waves his hand dismissively, which makes you shut up and pout a little.

“No,” he says. “No, I don’t detect any Energy powers in you whatsoever. In fact, I think I’m weaker in The Energy just for having met you.”

Your wimpy lower lip pops out and wobbles involuntarily.

“Sorry, I don’t mean to upset you. But, I’m afraid I have to kill you,” he says in an apologetic grimace. He takes out a plasmaster and turns the dial from “massage” to “self-defense” to “mercy.”

BATTLE: FIGHTING: MASTER SLABOCH

FIGHTING: 11, HP: 45

When you lose, restore HP to 5, and go to Scene 54.

29

You stand up and ignite your plasmaster. You need something cool to say. Shit. Think! Think!

You notice the young upstart has a nose.

“Nose to meet you.”

-3 CHARISMA

BATTLE: FIGHTING: YOUNG UPSTART

FIGHTING: 2, HP: 9

If you win, go to 93.

30

Your only hope is to exhaust the leaked plasma enough that it fails to eat through the hull. You look around you for things to throw. Then, you notice a few Goodsiders running in, and you remember the Goodsider obsession with virtue and nobility.

You shout at them, “Hey! If you jump into that ball of plasma, I’ll never kill and eat an orphan baby!”

They leap into the proton cloud.

-2 CHARISMA FOR LYING.

The plasma cloud shrinks and there is now a clear path to the manual reboot. You clasp a Goodsider to either side you you, and run in.

Pick a random number. Lose that many HP.

As the Goodsiders on either side of you slowly melt in what is essentially gasified acid, you instruct the core to suck the plasma back in, lock itself off, and return to power generation.

Go to Scene 109.

31

Your target is a huge metropolis built slowly over millennia out of the jungles of Northern Mizerny II. It is formed of nearly perfect concentric rings, which like the rings of a tree visually tell a long, glorious history.

Also, it looks a lot like a big target.

As the thousands of explosions bloom to millions of flames and the firestorm engulfs the city, you feel a strange disturbance in The Energy, as if millions of voices cried out in anguish and were suddenly silenced. So, seems like everything went according to plan.

Just then, an alarm sounds. The retreat was a feint! You're being flanked by rebels, who are firing a massive barrage of projectiles. As usual, the rebels had a plan involving the sacrifice of millions of lives for the sake of a sneak attack.

The ship shimmies wildly and everything goes dark. When light returns, you check your screen. Both engines are out and all the engineers are dead. You're a sitting duck.

If you are an engineer and wish to use your engineering skill, go to Scene 74.

If not, go to Scene 78.

32

You notice that an officers-only party is occurring tonight. You find a ballcap and write "officer" on it. Fortunately, most of the military establishment is trained to gauge authority by what's on a person's hat, and you are allowed entrance.

You cast around for a disgruntled officer. You see a few old soldiers chatting in a corner and head over to eavesdrop.

"Hey," says one. "Are you satisfied with the leadership in this area?"

“95% yes,” responds another.

Aha! You run up and startle the crowd by shouting
“YOU WANNA KILL THE GENERAL? HUH? HUH?”

Everyone in the room is now alarmed and terrified of you. You’re going to have to convince them intellectually to join your side. You clear your throat and begin.

“Friends, I am about to propose something that you may think of as treason. But remember, you can’t spell ‘treason’ without ‘reason.’”

This isn’t going well.

BATTLE: WITS: OFFICERS
WITS: 2

If you win, go to Scene 35.

33

You arrive at the battle site and hail the UVE fleet. The remaining rebels have already fled space, so you are tasked with attacking a base of theirs on land.

If you bombard from a distance, go to Scene 31.

If you sportingly bombard them from a slightly shorter distance, go to Scene 6.

34

You manage to demonstrate your superior charisma to an aging, low-ranking officer in a pointless war. This is the high point of your entire social life.

+1 CHARISMA.

You are made into an officer and given charge of your own cadre of troops. You request the name “Troop Awesome” but the last five characters are removed due to budget constraints.

You take a small speeder down to the barracks of Troop Aw. When you come in, you find a mess. Bedsheets

34 – 36

are all over the floor, windows are broken, and soldiers stand around half-naked doing drugs, none of which are alcohol or amphetamines.

These people need some discipline, and it's up to a recent civilian with no training or even the most basic knowledge of army protocol to give it to 'em!

If you keep order with an iron fist, go to Scene 94.

If you keep order through friendship and camaraderie, go to Scene 76.

35

You encourage everyone to drink heavily, then commence a speech about how “Traitor” is just another word for “revolutionary hero.” At least until you're in charge. At that point, traitor will go back to meaning traitor.

Fortunately, the booze is strong, and people don't recognize the hypocrisy. You then denounce General Hovno's authoritarian style – forced to get up EVERY DAY. Forced to drill TWICE A DAY. Forced to eat THREE MEALS A DAY! This will not stand!

The officers agree to collude with you against General Hovno's overbearing leadership.

+10 FIGHTING DURING NEXT SCENE.

Go to Scene 59.

36

You head to the nearest imperial hangar. Most of the ships are destroyed by now. A few were hit during the assault, and most of the others were turned into bongs this morning.

Happily, since most of the pilots are dead, there are still a few available ships. You leap into a ship called “Medical Unit 1” and fly up through the clouds, high over the forest.

You zoom toward the rebel base. When it comes in sight, you notice they have a massive array of cannons. You pull up your machine gun and fire.

Shit, no, that's the flare gun.

You try another button.

Shit! That's the air horn.

At this point, you notice a stampede of projectiles hurtling toward you. Time for evasive maneuvers!

BATTLE: WITS: MISSILES

WITS: 2

If you win, go to Scene 91.

37

You walk down the tunnel. You find the passageway grows brighter and brighter as you go until your plasmas-ter is no longer necessary, and you holster it.

The cave opens into a large chamber. In the distance, you see a hole in the ceiling through which daylight shines. Below it, you see a sleeping Smilnit – the great monster in all those nightmarish stories taught to children!

You try to remember... what was it the nuns used to tell you about the Smilnit. Oh, right!

“If you're awake as darkness falls
The Smilnit comes to eat your balls.”

Oh, and that other one.

“If you should soil your sleeping place
The Smilnit comes to eat your face.”

Ah, and who could forget:

“Eat your gruel without complaint
Or else the Smilnit eats your taint.”

You decide you don't miss the orphanage. As you think on this, a single tear escapes your eye. You try to catch it on the way down, but miss. It falls down, down, down, until it splashes on the sleeping beast.

The Smilnit wakes. A thousand thorny tentacles



shoot out from its head. It leans back on its grasshopper-like hind legs, then leaps forth at you.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: SMILNIT

FIGHTING: 4, HP: 10

If you win, go to Scene 61.

38

Your refusal to be chummy with the men causes about a dozen of them to angrily heave their drinks and cigarettes to the ground at once.

Whoops.

YOU LOSE.

39

You successfully charge forward past the rebels. They offer you tea and cakes as you go. As you kill them, you try to come up with a clever catch phrase, but the best you can think of is, “Go ahead. Cake my day.”

You arrive at the entrance to the rebel stronghold

with about a dozen troops behind you. Just then, a crazed rebel jumps up and fires a flamethrower at you. He's apparently upset that you never said thank you for the cakes.

If you focus your mind, harness The Energy, and turn back electromagnetic radiation itself, go to Scene 79.

If you duck, go to Scene 43.

40

You stand before the dying soldiers and give a speech.

BATTLE: WITS: DYING PEOPLE
WITS: 2

If you win, go to Scene 2.

41

The rebel ships swoop down out of the sky as you rouse your remaining troops for combat. Fortunately, about half of the ships are piloted by Goodsiders, so they fire foam darts with uplifting messages printed on them. The other half are ragtag rebels, so they use outdated weapons and have little to no training.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: REBEL ASSAULT FORCE
FIGHTING: 1, HP: 7

If you win, go to Scene 99.

42

A metal grating is placed over the exhaust port. Just then, a plucky band of rebels attacks. Thanks to the new covering, their missiles bounce harmlessly off of the surface. Nearby cannons quickly dispatch them. You watch all this in silence from a viewing window as you smile cruelly.

42 – 44

Behind you, a man in a cloak approaches. He's a Goodsider who must've gotten past your guards!

"Who are you?" you ask.

He removes his hood to reveal that he is a young man. "I'm... your son."

You look around the room. You lick your lips and tap your feet, then sigh awkwardly as you walk over to him. In a whisper, you tell the young man that you've never had sex.

You hear immediately laughter over your communicator. It turns out you accidentally left it on after you entered your chamber. So, in addition to knowing you're a virgin, they also heard you sing the theme song from Batman while masturbating in the shower a few hours ago.

-5 CHARISMA.

The young man laughs at you as well and realizes he thought this was the Vice President's chamber. You shoot him in the face.

GAIN GOODSIDER PLASMASTER: -1 FIGHTING WHEN EQUIPPED.

Go to Scene 27.

43

You duck, allowing the flames to engulf your troops. Fortunately, they bravely fire back, killing the rebel instantly. Behind you are a dozen charred corpses. In front of you is a shattered shell of a human being, riddled with bullets and oozing black gore in an ever-widening pool.

Who's got two thumbs and thirteen new wallets?
THIS GUY!

Go to Scene 26.

44

A dozen young recruits enter the simulation room

and man their posts. The game begins.

Suddenly, you are attacked by a Hlupak warship, which bombards you with missiles.

The simulation machine sends electric sparks around the room for heightened realism. Normally, at this point, the test taker will will. You don't have the nerve to pull this off, so the sparks don't stop. Eventually, the spark generators explode, killing everyone in the room but you. You are nearly killed as well, but a panel in the ceiling happens to fall and deflect the shrapnel that was flying at your face.

“For fuck’s sake!” shouts the lieutenant. “You were in a simulation and you still killed everyone? You must be the unluckiest son of a bitch in space!”

-3 CHARISMA

You ask if you still get to be captain.

“No!”



You soon find yourself in a small shuttlecraft headed for the front line.

Go to Scene 14.

45

You sneak in and grab the porn. During your life, you've cultivated a lot of skill at silently watching porn, so you're a bit of a virtuoso at this.

Just as you begin to sneak out, a hand grabs your wrist. It's the captain.

“Good,” he says. “I started the porn rumor myself just so I could find the sneakiest recruits out here on the front.”

“Do I get to keep the porno?”

“I have a mission for you. An enemy starship has been surveilling us for several days now. I need you to take a jetpack, attach to the enemy ship, infiltrate, spark a mutiny, and take command.”

“So, yes or no on keeping the porno?”



Three hours later, you find yourself grappled to the belly of a massive airship, dressed in the uniform of an enemy airman and in a fake mustache. Fifteen-thousand meters below you are the jungles of Mizerny II. You use your plasmaster to cut a hole and jump up into the ship.

Once aboard, you say “Workin’ hard or hardly workin’?” to several dozen of the crew, thereby establishing yourself as a regular guy.

You begin a secret propaganda campaign against the captain, including a pamphlet titled: “The Captain: Douchebag?” It is an essay consisting of one word in large capital letters: YES.

Fortunately, the kind of people sent on repetitive surveillance missions aren’t the brightest, and you begin to win over the crew. Soon, you are holding secret meetings and using the onboard copy machine to print more pamphlets.

Then, you are summoned to the captain’s office.

He slams a pamphlet in front of you. It’s titled “New Guy on Ship: Should be Captain?”

“That’s taken out of context.”

He puts another in front of you titled “Mutiny: Awesome?”

“I didn’t say we should do it. Just that it’s awesome.”
The captain lights a plasmaster. He’s a Silene!

You gasp and pull out yours.

This surprises the captain, who detected no Silene power in you whatsoever. He picks up a paperweight and throws it at you. It bounces off your forehead, making a pleasant “thunk.”

“You’re no Silene” he says.

“I know you are, but what am I,” you respond, embarrassingly.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: CAPTAIN

FIGHTING: 3, HP: 8

If you win, go to Scene 47.

46

You land your ship on the scorched surface of Mizerny II, along with several hundred UVE warships. The horde of imperial spacecraft blots out the twin suns. Things are going well for once in your life.

As a captain, you are invited to a strategy meeting in progress at the flagship.



You plan to say “Working hard, or hardly working?” in a jocular manner to gain the sympathy of your peers. But, when you arrive, everyone looks sour and anxious. So, you put on a serious tone and say “Gentlemen. Working hard or hardly working.”

Happily, you are ignored once again as the briefing commences. The room is informed that the rebels have discovered a flaw in imperial designs. The central UVE base in Southern Mizerny II has a giant exhaust port that, if fired into, will destroy the entire base. Worse, every local ship has a self-destruct mechanism that will be instantly triggered if the central base is destroyed.



It is unclear to you why they were designed this way, until it is explained that destroying something that you have to rebuild technically increases the government's gross domestic product for that year.

You raise a hand to ask a followup about this policy, which prompts 14 political representatives to glower at you until you awkwardly lower it.

The briefing continues. A rebel fleet is en route to the central base and will arrive by morning. Action has to be taken now.

You and the other commanders get together to come up with a solution. You work long into the night, going over thousands upon thousands of possibilities.

Then, the boy serving coffee makes a suggestion: How about you, like, put a grating over the exhaust port?

Now you're mad. You were going to suggest that exact thing. Or at least, you were planning to suggest something at some point.

If you use The Energy to choke the young fool, go to Scene 102.

If you take his advice, go to Scene 42.

47

You murder the captain. As he lays in a heap on the floor, spewing his blood into a metal grate, you bend over and steal his hat.

You pull up the intercom.

"Now hear this. Your captain is dead. The old one. Not me, I'm still alive. I'm the captain and I'm... alive. Is that clear? Let me start over."

At this point, you realize you're talking into a paperweight.

You walk toward the hallway only to realize the door to the captain's chamber is open. They've seen the whole thing. Including the paperweight part.

-1 CHARISMA

To your surprise, everyone's happy to see you. It turns out 95% of rebellion missions involve noble suicide for the glory of freedom. People are generally opposed to suicide, regardless of what adjectives are connected to it, and so they readily defect to the UVE side.

+2 CHARISMA

An engineer among them hands you the actual intercom.

"Now hear this! You've a new captain, and if there's one thing I can promise, it's that our suicide will not be the least bit noble!"

A crowd chirps applause for a quarter second before they process what you actually said.

"Not the least bit!" you add.

-1 CHARISMA

You steer the ship toward the space battle in progress 10 megameters away.

Go to Scene 33.

48

You explain that you're conducting a medical experiment to find a way to save time by having people be born as adults instead of babies. Since you're low on funding, you did the experiment on yourself first.

The guards are impressed. You tell them you'd like to get back to the surface to report your results, and they point you in the right direction.

You use one hand to amply cover your genitals and the other hand to salute. Inadvertently, you salute with the upper and lower hand at the same time.

Nice one, clone.

Go to Scene 60.**49**

Nice try, cheater.

-1 CHARISMA.

Go to Scene 114.**50**

Having proven your worth as a soldier, you are ready to head to the front. Before you go, you must attend an emergency briefing.



You are informed that the great Silene Goodsider Slaboch is on this very planet, leading the rebel cause. The Propaganda Minister steps forward.

“Friends,” he begins. “Slaboch is a tyrant and a fascist. And, unlike our tyrannical leaders, he never appears in a positive light on propaganda posters. So, go forth and raise up our glorious flag upon this planet. E Pluribus Shoot’em!”

You are taken to the armory to stock up.

GAIN GRENADE: -3 HP TO OPPONENT. USE ONCE THEN REMOVE FROM INVENTORY.

Go to Scene 111.**51**

The officers here are well aware of the academic standards set at the Silene Monastery. They present you with an IQ test to make sure you’re not as bad as some of the recruits they’ve had in the past.

Fortunately, most of the questions are on the order of

51 – 53

“Where food go?” and “How are you?”

Unfortunately, it’s the hardest test you’ve ever taken.

BATTLE: WITS: IQ TEST.

WITS: 2

If you win, go to Scene 18.

If you lose, go to Scene 96.

52

You do the kind of half-cartwheel a 12-year-old does when pretending to be a ninja. The missile would’ve hit your legs if they had been properly extended.

A blast of energy propels you away from the explosion. You look down, and realize “Medical Unit 1” wasn’t just a funny name as you watch flaming people in scrubs explode out of the wrecked vessel. A doctor who tumbles through the air nearby calls you a dick and threatens to sue you if either of you live through this.

You can’t decide whether you fear death or a lawsuit worse. Luckily, you land on him, which solves both problems.

You stand up, dust yourself off, and squeeze the blood out of your uniform. You look at the mangled body of the doctor.

If you are a medic, go to Scene 11.

If not, go to Scene 26.

53

The local military tribunal is soon made aware that you’re a “total giant wuss.” This is an offense punishable by dishonorable discharge. As you are an extremely low-ranking grunt, discharge is usually accomplished by death.

You are assigned to Disposable Squad.

-5 CHARISMA.

Go to Scene 82.

54

He knocks you to the ground and points his blade at your neck.

“Where is the Vice President!?” he screams politely.

“W-What?” you reply. “I don’t know.”

The Master looks confused. Just then, a Goodsider runs in. “Master!” he shouts. “Master, we are done for! The Empire has won! Only you and I remain.”

“This doesn’t make any sense,” he says. “We should’ve won. I had an inside agreement with... unless...”

He ponders and strokes his beard. He looks at you. “You’re the chosen one. You’re meant as-AAAGH!”

Slaboch clutches at his heart and falls over. He gasps as he looks at you. You look at him, horrified. He looks at your eyebrows, laughs hoarsely, then closes his eyes for the last time.

You stab the other Goodsider as you rise to your feet and stand over Slaboch’s corpse.

From behind, you hear the sound of great ships landing. The entranceway to the rebel base is blasted open. Through the smoke, in slow motion, the President and Vice President enter.

The President looks toward the Vice President, who raises his eyebrows as if to say “Told you so,” and cracks a rare smile.

President Vidanek walks up to you, holographic cameras flashing behind him. He shakes your hand vigorously. “Young man, you are worthy of the rank of General. Your efforts here have shown the great promise of the United Vassals of the Empire. We will send you to the finest hospitals to fix any wounds you may have.” He

glances furtively at your eyebrows, then turns toward the camera and smiles.

You may ride back to the capital with the President or the Vice President.

If you ride with the President, go to Scene 22.

If you ride with the Vice President, go to Scene 85.

55

A strong hand grasps your arm and yanks you back. You find yourself over the shoulder of the man in black as he runs through the darkness. At first this is strange and thrilling, but after about 3 minutes you're bored. You start to tooth-whistle some of your favorite corporate jingles, at which point you feel a wet handkerchief cover your mouth and nose.

You awaken on the floor of a UVE military office. In your blood-soaked hand is a note that reads "Thank you for your service in destroying a rebel base and finishing off a long endangered species." It has a seal from UVE central command.

You stand up, ineffectually dust some blood off your naked body, say "Terribly sorry, ma'am" to the elderly woman who was passing by, and find your way to an elevator.

Go to Scene 60.

56

You fall several hundred meters into the trees below. As you tumble, you see your life flash before your eyes. Mostly it's people laughing at you or punching you while you shout, "Not in the face."

You shut your eyes as you close in on the surface.

Nothing happens. You look out the window and realize you're still falling. You look around and see yourself

surrounded by black carved stone. It looks like the walls of a temple. For a split second, you imagine you're in some sort of huge church that can only be entered, never exited. OH GOD, YOU DIED AND THIS IS HELL! THIS IS HELL! NO! NO! N--

You splash into a pool of liquid and come to a surprisingly smooth stop. You light your plasmaster and look around.

Go to Scene 16.

57

You can't complete simple military missions or drink simple mystery drugs? You're not fit for real soldiering.

You're demoted from Disposable Squad to Ultra-Disposable squad. You head to the cafeteria to be eaten.

The mega-idiots around you don't seem to comprehend their situation. One of them can't wait to be part of a container of refried beans. Somehow, he doesn't connect this to his own mortality.

The lunchlady smiles as you enter the kitchen. She stabs the guy in front of you. His dying words are, "Come on, beans!" The lunchlady says "We'll see!" in a singsong voice.

It's your turn. You insist that you don't want to be part of a sandwich. Everyone groans at how uppity you are, and how we need to stop letting these college boys in the military.

The lunchlady turns angry and grabs an axe.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: LUNCHLADY

FIGHTING: 4, HP: 6

If you win, go to Scene 69.

58

Thanks to a brilliantly interlaced series of straw man arguments, outright lies, and a sing-song rendition of the word “pussy” whenever the general expresses concern for civilians, you win the debate.

The general presents his counterargument. It’s a gun named “Counterargument.”

BATTLE: FIGHTING: GENERAL HOVNO
FIGHTING: 3, HP: 11

If you win, you must still convince the troops to trust you. Go to Scene 66.

59

You decide to kill General Hovno in his sleep, just like Lieutenant Sulin, the clever hero-spy of your nation, or Sergeant Curak, the dastardly villain-spy of the enemy.

You wait until that night, then sneak into General Hovno’s chamber. He sleeps soundly.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: SLEEPING GENERAL
FIGHTING: 0, HP: 20

If you win, go to Scene 9.

60

You locate the elevator shaft and enter. It’s a bit full, but people are willing to make way when they see you’re naked and coated in coagulated blood. “Rough day at the office,” you manage as the door closes.

Ten minutes later you arrive at the surface. Everyone runs out, gagging as they go. Fortunately, given your life history, you don’t see this as surprising.

You sprint the few kilometers back to basecamp and arrive covered head to toe in sweat and blood. Needless to say, the leaders are thoroughly impressed. You are

given pants and a medal of honor.

+2 CHARISMA

Go to Scene 50.

61

The Smilnit fires out its tongue and knocks away your plasmaster.

As its massive jaws encircle you, you close your eyes and scream like a baby. Like a baby with an unattractively nasal voice.

In the darkness, you feel your hand jerk forth as if impelled by a power beyond your own. Your fingers clench onto something moist. You hear a wild, angry bellow that echoes all around you before you are unceremoniously spat out onto the ground, your clothes ripped away from your body. When you land, you locate your plasmaster and try to stand.

After slipping in monster spit seven consecutive times, you manage to stand and light your plasmaster dramatically. But, the Smilnit is motionless, its massive bulk no longer respiring, and a trickle of blood pouring out its mouth.

You drop your plasmaster and turn out your quivering palms. As you look over the creases of your simple hands, somehow the conduit of cosmic powers, you think “What have I wrought?!”

Just kidding. Your actual thoughts are, in no particular order: (1) “Holy balls!” (2) “I’m hungry” (3) “My ass hurts from falling” (4) “What have I wr... wra... route? Wroutied? What have I wroutied?!”

GAIN SLAYER ASPECT.

Go to Scene 55.

62 – 64

62

You successfully climb the wall.

On the other side, the sergeant congratulates you and the others who survived day one. At first, you wish to protest your inclusion in this troop of morons, but then the sergeant gives a speech.

“YOU ALL GOOD.” he shouts. Damn his silver tongue.

Tomorrow, he promises, will be an even greater opportunity to test your soldierly mettle.

Training day two. You must clean some shit.

BATTLE: WITS: CLEANING

WITS: 1

If you succeed, go to Scene 5.

63

+5 CHARISMA FOR KILLING ALL THE REBELS WITHIN SECONDS.

-5 CHARISMA FOR FOLLOWING AN UNDERLING'S ADVICE, STUPID.

With the spacefaring rebels now dispatched, you head toward the front to finish the job.

Go to Scene 27.

64

You make your way to General Hovno's quarters, push past his guards and demand to speak. You clear your throat, eye him coolly, and tell him he's doing everything all stupid-like!

He fails to react.

You pick up a random document on his desk, skim it, and shout “AHA! How incompetent!” You berate him for delaying attack until the infantry get better armor. Like

a GIRL.

Hovno's bodyguards were against you until that last part. They murmur misgivings about the general's cowardice. The air vibrations from their whispers cause pieces of their plastic armor to snap off.

Hovno finally raises his head. He looks at you. "What do you want, peon?"

You challenge him to a debate.

BATTLE: CHARISMA: GENERAL
CHARISMA: 5

If you lose, go to Scene 8.

If you win, go to Scene 58.

65

Your ring suddenly hums. You hear a sound like a tuning radio and excuse yourself to another room.

You hear a voice through the ring. "Hello? Hello?"

"Who is this?" you ask.

"Slaboch," returns the voice. "Mandy? Is that you?"

"...Yes," you reply.

"Everything is proceeding as planned. But come quickly. I'll need you for the final battle."

Slaboch gives you coordinates, codes, and passwords by which to personally enter his sanctum. You can't believe your luck.

You thank him awkwardly. He asks if you have a cold, since your voice sounds different. It sounds like someone made a dead cat into a bagpipe, only more irritating.

You frown and pocket the ring.

You order the troops to go ahead toward the final assault, but tell them you will not be among them. After you wait five minutes, desperately hoping someone will ask you to stay, you inform them that you will be riding

65 – 68

ahead alone to meet another Silene in combat. You wait ten minutes hoping someone to look impressed. It is the only time in history that two sentences make up a 15 minute speech.

You walk to a shuttle ship and take off for Slaboch's sanctum. Soon, you have landed at the indicated coordinates.

Go to Scene 26.

66

You stand tall and clear your throat.

"Friends! Yes, I have committed murder. And yes, I have committed treason. But, in my heart, I was always a patriot. And, like the general, I have something hard and irreversible in my brain and heart. But in my case, it isn't bullets. It's love for my country. Love for its people. Love for the free states, and tribute-paying vassals, who make her great!"

Good start.

BATTLE: CHARISMA: SPEAKING

CHARISMA: 3

If you win, go to Scene 81.

67

GAIN PRESIDENT'S GUN.

Go to Scene 17.

68

You sneak into the captain's room. He's asleep. Under his bed is a box, labeled with spangled letters: P O R N.

If you use The Energy to levitate the porn, go to

Scene 115.

If you creep like a snake under the bed, go to Scene 45.

69

You slice the lunchlady in two with your plasmas-ter. You try to think of a cool phrase, and end up going with “Well, she sure did... break... fast.” The industrial strength morons behind you clap and hoot idiotically. You smile.

However, you see now that you’re surrounded by non-moron soldiers who are angry that their lunch will be delayed.

The voice of one of your dead Silene Masters (the one who died of alcohol poisoning on St. Paddy’s Day) rings in your ear: “Use The Energy, idiot... uuuuse Theeee Enerrrgyyyyy.”

If you do what your primary caretaker between ages 3 and 7 did and obey the voices in your head, go to Scene 83.

If you fight the entire group, go to Scene 112.

70

You decide to poison his water supply. Using the expertise you picked up in med school, you badger and shame an army nurse into not asking you for ID, then take several gallons of arsenic.

Unfortunately, it turns out his water supply was everyone’s water supply. This explains why it was so large, and why everyone around you is projectile vomiting now.

Within hours, most of the troops are dead or dying.

If you confess to everything and tell people to stop drinking the water, go to Scene 95.

70 – 73

If you insist that this is a celestial punishment, and that they will only be saved by your guidance, go to Scene 40.

71

Having conquered booze AND standing, you are clearly a fit leader.

+2 CHARISMA

You lie down in a pool of mud, void your stomach, and settle in for a night of sleep.



You rise with the dawn. “The morning looks beautiful,” you think to yourself as you wipe vomitus from the back of your head. You decide to give the men the day off to recuperate.

Go to Scene 13.

72

You turn around to make a run for it, then remember you’re in a tree. As you fall off the branch, the torrent of friendly fire keeps your body bobbing up and down for 20 minutes. Sadly, it’s only fun for the first 10 seconds or so.

YOU LOSE.

73

You begin an all out ground war with the enemy. Your men are weak and sick, but the enemy is few, and their strategy was designed by Goodsiders so as to be as friendly as possible. In fact, all their foxholes, ammo

depots, and laser turrets are marked with neon signs, and their group formation makes a smiley face.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: GOODSIDERS

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 7

If you win, go to Scene 39.

74

Sparks of lightning flash across the engine room. The plasma core has split apart, and two massive streams of protons eat their way through the hull.

“It’s a good thing they sent an engineer” you think. It’s time to fix this problem the same way you fixed your wallet, your buck teeth, and the Silene Monastery’s life support system.

Working as fast as possible, you manage to duct tape the plasma back together just in time. The lights turn back on and the engines hum with power.

Go to Scene 109.

75

Young recruits file into the room as the simulation begins. Little do they know, you’ve rigged the simulation to fall in your favor.

As expected, at the outset of the simulation, your ship is crippled by a Hlupak warship.

“Fire back!” you shout.

“We can’t. All the weapon systems were obliterated,” says your Chief Gunner.

“...Fire anyway,” you say dramatically.

The gunner rolls his eyes, shrugs, and hits the button as he mutters about how this is the least clever cheat he’s ever seen.

To nobody’s surprise, the guns do work, and the Hlupak ship is destroyed. To everyone’s surprise, the screen

75 – 76

starts playing porn. Oh SHIT. You left your browser open when you connected your computer to the simulation room!

“IT WAS A JOKE! A JOKE!” you attempt to yell over the laughter. Fortunately, as they realize what kind of porn it is, the laughter ceases. Creep.



Despite your repulsive and pathetic fetishes, you are promoted to Starship Captain. You stand with your graduating class as the admiral comes by to shake the hand of every graduate. Except you. You, she furtively fistbumps while wearing latex gloves.

When the ceremony ends, you toss your hats into the air in celebration. Everyone is careful to avoid yours.

GAIN PILOT ASPECT.

Go to Scene 24.

76

You decide to lead off with a joke. “What did one soldier say to the other?”

Silence.

“He said... hi! I’m your new commanding officer!”

Everyone in the room punches you in the face at the same time. This is the fourth time this has happened to you. The other three times were when you performed at a poetry slam open mic night in college.

-3 HP.

You stand up confidently, narrow your eyes, brandish your fists, and vow to tattle on each and every one of them. You head to your nearest commanding officer,

complain, and demand he take this straight to the local military tribunal.

Go to Scene 53.

77

You know, if you mix gasoline with a little ice and crushed mint, it's not so OH GOD what is that feeling in your stomach?

You close your eyes for a moment. When you open them, you find you are looking over a precipice. Part of your brain says to leave, you colossal idiot, but another part says you need to pee off this cliff because having your urine reach terminal velocity is somehow validating to your sense of masculinity.

For this scene only, you have half your wits (round down if needed).

BATTLE: WITS: STANDING
WITS: 1

If you win, go to Scene 71.

78

You head down the hall toward the engine room. En route, a boarding party of Goodsiders with plasmasters leaps in front of you. They light their plasmasters and cut through you at once. Fortunately, these are Goodsider plasmasters and set to “massage.”

+3 HP

The head Goodsider pulls back his pastel green hood and stares at you gravely. “Turn over this ship, or we shall use a less pleasant massage setting.”

The other Goodsiders worry aloud that he's being too harsh. One of them offers you some tea and cakes.

You smile and ignite your plasmaster.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: GOODSIDERS

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 6

If you win, go to Scene 105.

79

You focus your mind, and contemplate the infinite.
FWOOSH!

You are less able to concentrate now that you're on fire.

YOU LOSE.

80

The men grow uneasy with your display of cowardice, as you have the interloper taken away to be shot.

They then notice you aren't drinking any of the "extra strong whiskey" you got them. They insist you take a drink of what you know to be gasoline.

If you drink up, go to Scene 77.

If you refuse, go to Scene 38.

81

Your grasp of reality is so tenuous that you are able to slip in and out of lying without realizing. This leads to an excellent political speech.

You win over the cadre of low-intelligence grunts in a state of shock, and are installed as the local commander.

If you insist on a new system of punishments to secure a return to discipline, go to Scene 23.

If you promise everyone booze, sex, and constant parties in exchange for strict discipline, go to Scene 104.

82

You are chloroformed and placed in a small, rarely-used elevator, which takes you deep below the planet's surface.

You awaken in a short metal room along with a dozen more military rejects. Mentally, you protest that you don't belong with this bunch. Then, you see one of them has drawn a butt on the wall, and labeled it "butt." After you laugh for ten straight minutes, you feel shame. Shame with a tinge of solidarity.

A lieutenant enters. He closes the door softly, makes a big smile, and clasps his hands together lovingly. "Okay, everyone! I'm gonna let you in on a great big secret! You aren't here because you're rejects. Just the opposite – we've handpicked you from all over the imperial army for the most important most secret mission in the UVE."

As you smile inwardly, the lieutenant goes on to



82 – 84

unveil “Operation Drink-this-chemical.”

Four people in labcoats enter and hand a vial of steaming silver liquid to each of you. You look around to see what the group thinks only to find that they’ve already finished theirs off. You stare at the vial. It bubbles violently and sends yellow sparks in every direction.

“Is it supposed to do that?” you ask.

The lead scientist shrugs.

If you drink up, go to Scene 90.

If you refuse, go to Scene 57.

83

You close your eyes and put out your hand. Then, someone stabs your eyes, and someone cuts off your hand.

YOU LOSE.

84

You touch the wires together, and the cave wall evaporates.

You find yourself facing an entire room full of Goodsiders monitoring the war effort. They look up at you in shock. One even shouts, “goodness!” which prompts several of the others to request she watch her language.

You ignite your plasmaster.

The Goodsiders offer you a plate of finger sandwiches and a cup of Lady Grey and ask if you’ll kindly keep all this a secret.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: 100 GOODSIDERS

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 10

If you win, go to Scene 4.

85

The VP shakes your hand.

-3 HP

You walk through the sterile metal halls of the ship toward an oddly out of place wooden door where a pair of brass testicles serve as a knocker. He employs the knocker once, which shatters the door. Musclebound men in leather pants come out to install a new one as you and the VP enter.

“Sit down.” His words are so commanding, they seem to bypass your brain and talk directly to your ass, which scurries to the nearest couch. It is upholstered in tiger fur.

As the VP seats himself behind a desk made entirely of depleted uranium and dinosaur spines, you look around the room. The towering walls are packed with heads of slain animals - lions, tigers, cyclopes, griffins, Zorblaxians, and a number of cloned infamous humans, like Ghengis Khan of the 12th century, Jesse James of the 19th, and Ghengis James of the 24th.

“Quite a collection,” you stammer.

“Yes, it was a productive morning,” he says. “Now, it is your turn.”

He hefts a claymore high over your head. You squeal in terror. He lowers it onto a small envelope. From it, he pulls a device the size of a pill.

GAIN PERSONAL SHIELD: +3 TO MAXIMUM HP WHILE IN INVENTORY. DOES NOT NEED TO BE EQUIPPED TO GIVE BONUS.

+3 HP

“This will protect you, but...”

He grabs you by the collar and pulls you in close.

-3 HP

111

1



“On your life, do not tell the President you have it. Remember, no matter what anyone tells you, your next mission is fraught with danger.”

He releases you, stands, straightens his bandoleer and loincloth, and dismisses you.

As you walk the hall, President Vidanek sees you and says he needs you for a mission that is in no way fraught with danger.

Go to Scene 17.

86

Just as the Angler is about to drive a spike through your face, you squeal “crud!” The Angler stops dead in its tracks. You detect a hint of fear in its horrid face. The light of its angler goes out. In the darkness, you hear an unearthly howl of agony followed by a loud wet burst. The massive pressure wave knocks away your clothing and warm moist goo rains from the sky. This is just like that night in Vienna you promised never to think of again.

As your eyes readjust to the lower light, you find that the giant fish is dead and you are covered in blood. Behind you stands a large man in black robes.

Yep, exactly like Vienna.

GAIN SLAYER ASPECT.

Go to Scene 55.

87

You need to convince them not to arrest you. You try to think of an excuse for being naked. Naked, that is, unless you count the gobs of blood and bits of meat. You scan your brain for a clever pun, but the best you come up with is, “Nice to meat you.”

BATTLE: WITS AND CHARISMA: EVERYONE

WITS: 3, CHARISMA: 3

If you win, go to Scene 48.**If you lose, go to Scene 98.****88**

You hold out your hand, close your eyes, and concentrate. Pick a random number.

What's the number? Who cares – you die.

YOU LOSE.

89

Then the troops begin to pass out openly. Then to die openly.

Then, overhead, you hear the roar of engines. “Crud-balls!” you shout as rebel ships draw near.

“Man the gun-thingies! Artilitary! Man the artilitaryes!”

Your unpreparedness may be a problem. Pick a random number. Lose that many Fighting points during the next scene.

Go to Scene 41.**90**

Halfway through drinking, a piece of metal drops from the ceiling and knocks the vial out of your hand. You think you hear some scurrying above you, but barely notice as the drink scalds its way down your esophagus.

It tastes salty and astringent and burns like ethanol and... well, it reminds you a lot of that one night in Prague that you promised never to think of again.

Your heart pumps so hard you fear it will explode. Your shirt rips as your biceps double in size. Then your shoulders double. Then your legs. Then your abs.

Your penis, however, stays the same. Dammit. Now it's ¼ the size it ought to be.

+20 FIGHTING

With your newfound power, you turn toward the scientists who made you a guinea pig. They pull out their laboratory shotguns.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: SCIENTISTS

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 6

If you win, go to Scene 15.

91

You steel yourself, grip the controls, and press the evasive maneuvers button. The ship banks hard then turns down fast. You black out. Just as everything goes dark, you think you see a strange figure behind you mutter, “Oh, for fuck’s sake” and take control of the ship.

You awaken moments later as the ship coasts in for a landing. You pop the cockpit and hop out just in time to see a missile coming your way.

If you hold out your hand and will the missile to stop, go to Scene 88.

If you run away, go to Scene 52.

92

You and the enemy captain size each other up. You have the same armament and same class of ship. So, it’s really just a matter of tactics.

If you win, head on to the battle and go to Scene 33.

93

Having dispatched yet another comrade, you decide to make a speech.

You stand on his bleeding body as you look skyward. “Friends, we must stop this unending cycle of violence! Because if we don’t, I will beat the living shit out of each and every one of you.”

Maybe it’s just the gasoline they’ve been drinking for the last six hours, or the petroleum fumes burning their eyes, but many of the troops begin to weep openly.

+1 CHARISMA.

Go to Scene 89.

94

You remember the monks using the phrase “You must be cruel to be kind” often. It must’ve been a long-term investment sort of thing, because you never saw the second part happen.

You take out your plasmaster and cut off a soldier’s head.

“If you people don’t shape up fast, you’re gonna be... head and shoulders above... no that doesn’t work.” You point your weapon at a soldier and demand a head pun. She hesitates. You cut off her head.

“I guess she had to die, TWO,” you say, not realizing that the pun doesn’t work verbally. “T-W-O,” you say. “WHATEVER.” you say.

Most of the troops are cowed by your psychotic outburst, but there is an upstart who challenges you for authority. He holds a knife to your neck and questions

why you get to tell him what to do. “Why, in a broader sense,” he spits. “Is it an arbitrary social construct or is there what one might call a platonic meaning to the notion of leadership?”

If you laugh at him, daring him to cut you, go to 10.

If you pretend to take his question seriously, talk him down, pat him on the back for having spunk, then poison his beer that night, go to 20.

95

The remaining troops, all of whom are now deranged and disoriented, promise their lives to you so long as you are commander. At least, that’s what you interpret from the vomiting and confused yelps.

Since pretty much everyone is dead, you decide to declare today a holiday.

Go to Scene 13.

96

Let’s just say you come in on the left of the left side of the bell curve.

Actually, no, let’s put that in words you can understand: you small brains got.

-2 CHARISMA

But, don’t feel bad. Just because you’re an idiot, that doesn’t mean your body can’t absorb metal and electromagnetic radiation on behalf of smarter soldiers. Actually, no, let’s put that in words you can understand: You get to go in front!

You are assigned to CanFod division. (No, that’s not a euphemism for “Cannon Fodder.” It’s just easier for people like you to spell).

You arrive at a small barracks and open the velcro door. Inside, a wide-eyed soldier with a bowl cut yells, “YOU NO BELONG! NO YOU!” You are about to get angry when you realize you are, in fact, at the wrong barracks. You check your plush map and try to find where the correct squiggle is.

Thanks to a helpful officer who rewards you with a tasty fun-size candy bar, you finally find your bed for the night. You are about to protest that you aren’t that stupid, and that it’s all been a mistake, when you realize your voice is garbled by the caramel in the candy, and you’re spitting peanuts at the officer.

In the morning, your grunt training will commence. Training day 1: You must succeed at climbing shit.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: WALL

FIGHTING: 2, HP: 15

If you succeed, go to Scene 62.

97

BOOM! The whole thing explodes, killing every nearby person but the forcefield-protected President.

YOU LOSE.

98

You rack your brains for something more clever than a stupid pun.

“Nice... to... meat... you.”

Christ.

You fail to convince anyone that you’re SUPPOSED to be running around naked, coated in blood. The guards seize you and bring you back to base. Lucky for you, the tribunal judge finds murder hilarious. So, instead of a court martial, you’re sentenced to one night of hazing.

He then personally draws a dick on your nose and

turns you over to a military frat.



Over the centuries, fraternities have refined hazing from the crude form it took in the old days and narrowed it down to its essential characteristics – humiliation, fear, and having a stranger’s balls on your forehead.

To save everyone time, the molecular printer builds a set of testicles that are taped to your forehead.

-3 CHARISMA.

They blindfold you and put you in a truck. When the blindfold is lifted, you stand before what appears to be a gigantic outdoor latrine.

One of the soldiers punches you right in the head-balls, knocking them off. You wince in confusing pain, which causes you to fall into the pit.

Go to Scene 25.

99

Despite your leadership (you yell “Retreat!” and are ignored on no fewer than 184 occasions during the 15 minute skirmish), the rebels are crushed.

+3 CHARISMA

Your troops hoist you aloft until they realize you’ve soiled yourself.

-3 CHARISMA

You prepare to mount a decisive counter-offensive, when you are warned about the powerful Goodsider Si-

99 – 101

lene among the rebel ranks – the galaxy-renowned Master Slaboch.

You steel yourself for the battle to come.

If you have the Erotic Ring, go to Scene 65.

If you have ever captained a starship, and wish to do so again, go to Scene 36.

If you wish to attack on land, go to Scene 73.

100

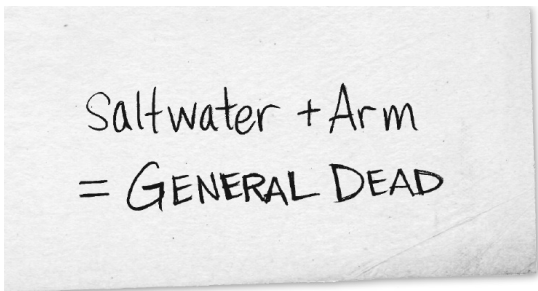
The troops notice that you seem to be shooting mostly redheads. While they dislike the wholesale slaughter of their friends, they also appreciate that you're fulfilling their long-held gingercidal fantasies.

+3 CHARISMA.

Go to Scene 95.

101

You discover that Hovno has a prosthetic arm that requires charging every night. On the back of an envelope you do some calculations.



This is going to require all of your engineering know-how. You consider just dumping the bucket on him in his sleep, but quickly decide that's not engineering enough. So, you find a sniper rifle and retrofit it to fire saltwater bullets.

The next day, you hide in a tree and point your gun at the General. You fire a bullet, but miss and hit his brain.

Dammit! That's not how the design works!

You fire and miss again, hitting him in the heart.

Dammit!

Hovno falls over, bleeding from the head and chest, experiencing slightly more pain than he should due to the saltwater centers of the bullets. His body stops moving.

"Come on, baby" you whisper. You pull the trigger once more, and the bullet lodges right in his arm. The shock causes him to briefly come back to life before dying again. The men around him look up in your direction. They shout for you to surrender.

After a few shots you run out of bullets. Now you consider surrender more strongly.

If you run for it, go to Scene 72.

If you attempt to win them over, go to Scene 66.

102

You clasp your fingers together and give in to your anger. Nothing happens.

You say "C'mere." Reluctantly, he agrees. You mentally will your hand to lift up and grip his windpipe. He chokes out a few words: "That... doesn't... count..."

You let go just as he's about to asphyxiate. Then, you make him punch himself over and over as you shout "Why you hitting yourself?" Soon, you're crying as you remember a countless series of bullies doing this to you during your childhood.

102 – 104

When you finally realize what's going on, you snap to attention in front of the other commanding officers.

You stand and wipe the blood and mucus from your hands.

"I will take care of the rebels myself," you say. You turn to head toward your ship.

"Why not just shoot them down?" says the young man. "Don't you have any tracking missiles or laser systems or anything?"

If you kill him and follow your own, clearly stupid idea go to Scene 12.

If you do what the kid says, go to Scene 63.

103

Like a scared Frankenstein's monster, you run away from the light in terror.

In the darkness you trip and tumble to the floor, where your ear presses against the cave wall. You hear the faint sound of people talking. It sounds like they're speaking UVE standard. You look up and see a switchbox, which you open with your plasmaster.

Inside is a mess of wires and switches. If you can align the wires just right it might well open a doorway. How hard could it be?

If you are an engineer, go to Scene 84.

If not, pick two random numbers. If they are both 0, you lose. Otherwise, go to Scene 84.

104

It occurs to you that you have no booze, sex, or party supplies. However, you decide gasoline can be commandeered for booze, protein rations can be repurposed for

sex, and munitions and camouflage can be turned into fireworks and streamers.

Let the party start!

Within hours, the base has become a camo-colored Mardi Gras. Thanks to the modern unisex army and the repurposed gasoline, you have the one thing that separates good parties from bad: booze-n-tits.

Everyone is having a fantastic time until a young man angrily runs up to you and shouts that you're an irresponsible leader.

Everyone goes quiet. The limbo game stops completely. Your eyes and nostrils widen as you turn to face him. You look over the young upstart, and ask who he is to question your leadership. You await his answer as you light a hand-rolled cigarette made of maps.

He is speechless.

You insist that you deserve respect and authority on the basis that you killed the last respected authority, and thereby gained his powers.

The council of strategy, who are clustered around you, smoking while drinking gasoline, are beginning to doubt your leadership. After all, this young upstart is yelling at least as loud as you were when you took over.

If you fight, go to Scene 29.

If you refuse to fight, go to Scene 80.

105

GAIN GOODSIDER PLASMASTER: -1 FIGHTING WHEN EQUIPPED.

You arrive at the engine room and find a sign marked "In Case of Emergency." Inside there's some duct tape and a piece of paper that says "Good luck."

Just then, you hear a grunt from one of the dying Goodsiders.

105 – 108

“Use The Energy...” he coughs. “Tap into your higher feelings.”

If you follow the dying man’s advice, go to Scene 107.

If you are an engineer, go to Scene 74.

If you are not an engineer, go to 30.

106

You head deeper into the cave. It is so vast and silent that even your slightest noise reverberates. This makes you feel almost as lonely as you did on every birthday, holiday, and prom night of your life.

While thinking about disastrous prom night #12, you accidentally trip over your own tears and tumble down a passageway. When you look up, you see a stairway hewn into the cave rock. Toward the top, you see a small hole, which emits... daylight?

If you go toward the light, go to Scene 110.

If you go away from the light, go to Scene 103.

107

You look inward. You focus. You– BOOM! Turns out high energy protons aren’t interested in your religious views.

YOU LOSE.

108

You decide you’ve had enough of war. Using your Silene powers, you focus inward. Light swirls around you and you hear the voices of angels. In an instant, all thoughts of war are banished from the minds of every creature in reality.

Having saved the universe for all time, you retire to a small seaside hut on a distant planet. There, you spend

your life in blissful contemplation, revered by everyone.

YOU WIN.

THE END.

109

You lean over to an intercom.

“We’re online! Fire back! Fire back!”

An armada of missiles flies from the ship’s turrets, annihilating the rebels. The ship jerks back as the hull withstands the resulting pressure wave.

You sense a great disturbance in The Energy, as if hundreds of voices cried out in anguish and were suddenly silenced. Woohoo!

Go to Scene 46.

110



As you approach the light, it begins to take form.

110 – 111

The light appears to be emitted from a massive pair of breasts made of solid gold. You drool with anticipation as you edge closer, arms outstretched.

You get within a meter of the goldknockers when you realize there's no stone beneath you left to walk on. The stairs apparently lead to nothing but the boobs, which are just out of reach. Below the boobs, you see a huge tentacle holding them aloft. Odd. You shine the plasmaster down and see four massive red eyes and countless spindly fangs. The whole mass of primordial horror lunges up at you.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: MAN-EATING ANGLERFISH

FIGHTING: 4, HP: 10

If you win, go to Scene 86.

111

You arrive on the front lines and chaos reigns. You see the work of congressional earmarks everywhere. Vehicles have needlessly complex designs so that their parts can be made in hundreds of different districts. The mess hall exclusively serves tins of food from Congresso, the corporation owned and operated by current members of congress. When you remark to an officer that your bed is made entirely of knives, he corrects you, saying “These aren't just knives. They're fine old-fashioned knives manufactured right in good ol' Seskatchechusetts.”

It's clear why the rebels of Mizerny have been able to hold out so long despite being outnumbered a thousand to one. The whole war has been run by corrupt bureaucrats and profiteers. It's gonna take a real leader to fix this, you think to yourself. Someone with grit. Someone with guts.

Then, you see they have genuine Congresso canned pumpkin pie, and these thoughts flee your brain.

That night, as you lay in bed, a ring of orange

goo around your lips, a dark figure stands before you.

“Awaken,” rumbles his voice.

“No,” you whine.

He slaps you.

-2 HP

“Okay, okay! I’m listening,” you say as you pick up a half-eaten can of Congresso sugar cubes in heavy syrup and start eating.

“You are chosen to lead this group. You are special. You are not like the others.”

Your jaw gapes, loosing a Niagara of sticky spittle.

“You must lead the UVE battalion to victory. Only then will you return home to fortune and glory.”

The dark figure disappears in a blast of musky smoke. You drop the can and your eyes go wide. “Fuck-doodles,” you whisper to yourself.

The next morning you wake with a new sense of purpose.

If you locate the local authority and attempt to seize control, go to Scene 64.

If you try to subvert the system from the inside, go to Scene 32.

112

BATTLE: FIGHTING: 50 ARMED SOLDIERS

FIGHTING: 10, HP: 60

If you lose, go to Scene 114.

If you win, go to Scene 49.

113

You are awakened by a loud gust of wind coming

113 – 114

from the east. While you were asleep, your plasmaster accidentally set off a small oil fire which casts light on distant walls. It also roasts some endangered cave newts.

GAIN CAVE NEWT MEAL: WHEN EATEN, FIRST ADD PERMANENT +3 TO HP MAXIMUM, THEN RESTORE ALL HP. USE ONCE.

You look around in the flickering oil fire and see two passages. One to the east and one to the west.

To go east, go to Scene 106.

To go west, go to Scene 37.

114

SET HP TO 3.

The soldiers beat you within an inch of your life. Just as they are about to kill you, anger sweeps over you. You scream from the depths of your being, when suddenly a blast of lightning comes through the ceiling, shocking everyone around you.

Before anyone knows what's happened, you're outside, running away. A huge crowd of angry soldiers with guns chases you out into the forests of Mizerny II. You have a large headstart, but due to your recent beating and a lifetime of sloth, you lose ground to them rapidly.

Just as they are about in firing range, a satchel falls from the sky and smashes you in the stomach.

GAIN MEDI-PACK: WHEN USED, RESTORES YOUR HP TO MAXIMUM. ONLY ONE USE.

You fall over with the force of it and tumble down an incline. You are about to come to a halt when you fall off a ledge into a pit.

Go to Scene 25.

115

As the monks taught you, you give into your anger. You focus on the time the monks wedgied you in front of this girl they heard you were into.

Soon, you find yourself shouting “DICKS! DICKS! BUNCH OF DICKS!” The captain awakens. As a veteran of the war against the Megapenises of Rigel 9, he takes your screams for a warning. Your ungainly tube-shaped form is among the first things he targets.

YOU DIE. LIKE A DICK.

Literally.

YOU LOSE.

116

A week later, your ship lands at the Imperial capital on Sakra 2, where you are surprised to see a massive crowd.

As you step over the bodies crushed by the ship, you notice the survivors seem to be there for you personally. Many hold signs with dubious compliments, like “___ defeated the rebels!” and “___’s penis is at least average!”

+5 CHARISMA

Over the next few seconds, you are celebrated by the galaxy-wide media as a war hero. Sure, eventually some celebrity will accidentally show a nipple, but for the moment, it’s all about you.

Tomorrow, you head for Varlataneme... and destiny.

END OF ACT 2.

RESTORE ALL HP.

If you are an engineer, + 2 wits.

If you are a fighter, + 2 fighting, + 1 max HP.

If you are a medic, + 1 wits, + 1 charisma.

Go to Act 3.

ACT 3

1

You are put into a hypersleep tube and placed in a transport cruiser zooming toward the Varlataneme system. Just before you doze off, several blocks of wood are placed around your tube and nailed together. You feel a terrific force on one side of the box, which then slides across the room until it slams into the wall.

It is a little known fact that the term “fragile” is always placed on packages at their center of mass so that postal workers will know where to kick during transport.



Millennia ago, the Varlataneme system was a galactic zoo, with each planet serving as the home to some particular great beast. Varlataneme I housed the Sracky – a giant of the snow with the head of a bear and the body of an ape. Varlataneme II housed the Vyhrknout – a massive aerial life form, with the body of a jellyfish and the teeth of shark. Varlataneme III housed every bad roommate who ever existed, with the head of a guy whose turn it clearly was to do the dishes, and the body of seriously, it's your turn to do the dishes, asshole.

Most of those beings have died or migrated in the days since the fall of the ancient Republic, but Varlataneme IV still houses the greatest of them all – the Varlata.

The Varlata is commonly spoken of in children's rhymes as a sort of bogeyman. Ah, those funny old tales. You fondly recall your days at the orphanage, when the nuns told you that if your stomach groaned too much from hunger, the Varlata would hear you in the night.

You feel a surge of pain in your longterm memory center. A stiff blow from your hand fixes that.

Go to Scene 164.

2

You close your eyes and focus inward. You nod off while thinking about dreaming about masturbating.

When you wake up, the entire room is strangely lit. You stagger past all the drunk and passed out old hunters until you reach one of the windows. You pull a string to open a curtain. Before you is a massive swirling vortex of red and yellow plasma.

Your ship is less than a few hundred kilometers from the surface of the Star of Varlataneme! This may be the last few minutes of your life. How can it be stopped?!

You close the curtain.

Then you open it.

Dammit. Still there.

Go to Scene 13.

3

BATTLE: FIGHTING: VARLATANEME GUARDS

FIGHTING: 3, HP: 14

If you win, go to Scene 135.

4

You slide down a long winding tube, screaming until you run out of breath. After about 15 seconds you become bored. You try to think of something to do, and suddenly remember you hid a granola bar in the crotch of your pants. You reach in for it and search around.

You are then unceremoniously dumped on a hard, cold surface. You look up to see three men in robes made of lizard skin as your injured hand continues to search your crotch for oats. Oh God, it's Rio all over again.

Behind them is a 100-foot tall monster – the Varlata.

The first of the three monks removes his cowl. “You are trespassing on the great lizard’s domain.”

“Takes one to know one!” you retort, stupidly. Even



the Varlata cringes in embarrassment for you.

The first monk takes out a massive axe.

You smile rakishly and say, “I hope you don’t have an... axe...ident.”

-3 CHARISMA.

At this point, the first monk attempts to kill you.

Go to Scene 163.

5

The dark warrior pulls you in close and gives you a map of the route to the Temple of the Varlata. He looks left and right, drops a smoke bomb, and disappears.

You ponder over this strange situation. Who would be here to help you on this distant planet? You don’t ponder why they only help a little and then leave, since that’s exactly what you would do.

When the smoke clears, you read the map. You’re only a few kilometers from the temple.

Go to Scene 76.

6

Always a bad choice.

You turn your blade on yourself. The dark figure briefly tries to stop you before you plunge the blade into your body. In doing so, you manage also to stab Suicidal Joe in the brain, much to his delight.

The second to last thing you hear before you die is the dark figure shouting, “You’ve destroyed the universe! All is lost! All is looooooost!”

The last thing you hear is the dark figure shouting, “What an asshole!”

YOU LOSE.

7

It occurs to you that the ball only appeared once the Varlata went from being alive to dead. So, it must've had some mechanism by which it recognized the beast's death. You reason that the heart is the most likely place to put such a mechanism.

You go to the Varlata and perform CPR. It briefly revives before roaring in pain and dying again.

Just as the angry mob charges into the chamber, you once again hear the horrible sound of stone against metal. Another huge golden ball tumbles out, crushing the angry mob. You have officially killed every person in the entire complex.

-50 CHARISMA.

But, nobody ever has to know.

+50 CHARISMA.

But, you'll bear a mark of shame on your conscience forever.

-50 CHARISMA.

Just kidding. You have no conscience.

+50 CHARISMA.

You head out across all the unrecognizably mutilated corpses and slowly dying human beings wailing for the sweet embrace of death. Like a guy pretending he wasn't the one who broke a bottle of wine in a grocery store, you hold your head up, put your hands in your pockets, and whistle as if you have no idea anything could be amiss.

You soon arrive back at the clearing and radio for a ship.

Go to Scene 24.

8

The man fires a dart from his gun, which you manage to dodge. You counter-attack by slicing off one of his legs. He falls to the floor in agony.

“WHO DO YOU WORK FOR!?” you shout.

“The Vice President!” he screams, in terror. You look at him in confusion. Just then, a mechanical arm reaches out from one of the computers. You jump out of the way.

You want to ask the man more questions, but you realize you accidentally kept your plasmaster lit, and it cut his face in half. Crud.

The mechanical arm lurches around and makes another pass at you. You run out in a panic, heedlessly dashing into the darkness. You’ve soon lost all sense of space and time, when you are brought back to your senses by the sound of rushing water. You walk toward it and hold up your plasmaster for light.

Go to Scene 123.

9

“Which creature in the morning goes on four legs, at mid-day on two, and in the evening upon three, and the more legs it has, the weaker it be?”

If you say “Man,” go to Scene 58.

If you say “A cow who loses two legs in the middle of the day, then gets one back, and all its legs are made of poison,” go to Scene 64.

10 – 12

10

You are almost certain you didn't even touch her, but she did explode and disappear when you got close. You chalk it up to your limited understanding of female anatomy and declare it a victory.

The onlookers in the chamber flee in terror before the confusingly violent spectacle. Soon, you are left with the Varlata, who stands high above you. You move to confront it, only to be repelled by a forcefield.

Before you, a massive holographic face with enormous glasses and an unwashed t-shirt that reads "Varlataneme Institute of Technology" appears. He narrows his eyes and gravely intones, "You must answer three riddles ere you die by the Varlata."

Go to Scene 9.

11

You punch the perfectly logical man in the face, knocking out his perfect teeth. Now, he's perfectly **PISSED**.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: LOGICIAN

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 6

If you win, go to Scene 145.

12

As you enter the cave you see a massive ancient temple. It is covered in lichens and cobwebs, filthy with ages of disuse. Its front edifice is made of gigantic marble pillars, the centermost of which is in the shape of a great bearded god. Above his head in Latin is written, "Wednesday is Bingo night."

Alongside the temple runs a great river that rushes off into the mysterious darkness, reinforcing your intuition that this cave is a vaginal metaphor. Of course, it's

been 2 weeks since you last masturbated, so about 70% of things seem to be vagina metaphors right now.

If you enter the temple, go to Scene 171.

If you hop into the river, go to Scene 42.

13

Shit! Shit! Shit! You're cruising straight toward the Star of Varlataneme!

You grab your fellow bounty hunters and head for the cockpit. Once at the cockpit, you discover nobody's at the controls, and the monks are keeping it that way.

"We are Celibate Monks" says one, "and celibacy really really sucks. I have not reached climax in 27 years." To illustrate, he takes a bowling ball, and sits it below his middle, where it is held up entirely by his erection.

You and all the bounty hunters gape in horror.

You attempt to grab the controls.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: CELIBATE MONKS

FIGHTING: 2, HP: 8

+10 TO FIGHTING FOR THIS SCENE, DUE TO HELP FROM THE BOUNTY HUNTERS.

If you win, go to Scene 118.

14

You trudge on past the natives, punching your junk as you go. Like so many moments in your life, it involves a brief interaction with your penis followed by a long interaction with the remorse-mediating parts of your brain. The Celibates are very impressed.

As you go, you come upon a man who is creating a noose covered in razors. He identifies himself as Suicidal Joe. He's on his way to the Varlata.

14 – 15

When you ask him why, he explains that he's very unlucky. He has two extremely rare genes – the first gene makes him wildly incompetent at everything. The second gene makes him constantly try to kill himself.

“How old are you?” you ask.

“Thirty four,” he replies somberly. “That’s why I’m heading to the Varlata. To finally wind things up for certain.” He then attempts to hang himself on the razor-noose, only to accidentally miss, causing the razors to simply give him an embarrassing haircut.

You are not terribly impressed with Joe, but the monks certainly are.

Because of Suicidal Joe’s monomaniacal obsession with ending his own lineage, he hasn’t the faintest interest in carnal pleasure. Plus, due to the massive amount of blood he’s lost and replaced with poison, he is no longer capable of anything even resembling sex.

The monks wish to proclaim him their leader.

If you challenge him for leadership, go to Scene 141.

If you let him lead the troupe, go to Scene 33.

15

Suicidal Joe whines from your backpack. “AWWW NOW who’s gonna kill me?!”

As the Varlata’s heart shuts down, the entire room begins to shake. You hear a horrible sound, like metal scraping against rock. You look up to see a massive circular fresco of the Varlata fold inward. The hole vibrates ominously just before a massive ball of gold flies out of it toward you.

You look back. There’s a main door to the chamber and there are the wings of the chamber, shrouded in darkness.

If you run for the door, go to Scene 86.

If you head into the darkness, go to Scene 155.

16

The big dog leaps toward you.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: METAPHOR FOR SELF AS EMBODIED
IN A ROTTWEILER
FIGHTING: 2, HP: 12

If you win, go to Scene 84.

17

The seducers pull away. They are impressed.

“How do you resist such temptation, even though you are not trained in the Celibate Ways? You shall be our leader. You shall reign over—”

“Wait!” you splutter. “They were actually hitting on me? They weren’t just making fun of me?! AUUUUGH!”

You begin pounding your fist against your head in self loathing. Three hours later, when you have stopped crying, you decide to continue existing in this stupid life.

Still pouting, you take the controls.

Go to Scene 87.

18

You set off with the Celibate Monks.

You soon come upon a tribe of friendly natives. In fact, they’re very friendly. And naked. They seem to have some innocently Edenic view of sex, which you would very much like to relieve them of.

The Celibates note your temptation and inform you that you must not give in. If you do, you will become impure, and then cannot continue your journey with them.

18 – 22

If you join the natives, go to Scene 19.

If you punch yourselves in the genitals and trudge on, go to Scene 14.

19

You stop adventuring and join the tribe. You spend the rest of your life in a never-ending crescendo of debaucheries.

YOU... LOSE?

20

The nerdy hologram is impressed by your resistance to even a hint of linguistic ambiguity or poetic spirit. He clears his throat.

“Why was 6 afraid of 7?”

If you say “Because 7, 8, 9,” go to Scene 166.

If you say “Hyperactivity of the amygdala,” go to Scene 103.

21

You and Joe each down the strange liquid. Your stomach starts to rumble and you double over in agony.

You die, unless you have at any point in this book drunk gasoline.

If you have, gain 5 HP, and go to Scene 97.

22

You heave Joe at the golem, which immediately catches on fire. As the golem begins to burn up, he falls over, taking Joe and the native village with him. Nice one. Genocide, homicide, and arson so rarely go together this simply.

As you congratulate yourself mentally, you hear an explosion, and then see a screaming object tumbling toward you like an angry bowling ball.

When it stops at your feet, you realize it's Suicidal Joe's head. Not only is he not dead, but a metal disk coats his neck, preserving his life and ability to talk.

"This sucks," says Joe.



"What happened?!" you ask.

"I don't know. My head got separated from my body, which was pretty cool, but then I guess I landed in some sort of cybernetic device that keeps heads alive."

A hopeful wisp of fire still burning on one of his ears experiences a weak gust of wind and blows out.

You feel a little bad about... you know... killing everyone, so you take pity on Joe and stuff his mangled head into your pack.

GAIN SUICIDAL JOE'S HEAD.

Go to Scene 53.

23

-3 HP AND +1 CHARISMA.

You emerge victorious and hungry. Both of these feelings are soon addressed by a golden plate full of brownies. As your teeth darken with the chocolate repast, you tell the chief of your mission to slay the Varlata.

Impressed, the shroomfolk chief offers to take you partway on your journey. The shroomfolk have lived and, like, hung out here for many a year. In that time, they have gained some knowledge of their surroundings. They suggest two paths which may take you closer to your goal.

If you wish to go to the hut of the Goodside Master, go to Scene 116.

If you wish to head back to the caverns, go to Scene 121.

24

A massive ship with the insignia of the President lands. The Presidential insignia is a noble lion accepting soft money from special interests. A portal opens and out comes the President, followed by a crew of news organizations.

A reporter asks you how it feels to have killed a one-of-a-kind animal in cold blood. You respond that any other patriot would've done the same in your situation.

Another asks you if the mass murder of locals that took place in the last three minutes was necessary for the mission. You respond with the old politician's line, "You can't make an omelet without committing a few atrocities."

A third asks you if you are going to be involved in the operation to capture the traitorous Vice President and bring him to justice.



24 – 26

“What?” you reply. “The Vice President’s on our side.”

If you have the erotic ring and wish to show it, go to Scene 90.

If you do not, go to Scene 157.

25

The Temple of the Varlata is within your sight as you bump into a strange village.

The locals are startled and immediately implore their shaman to stop you. An old man arrayed in mystical beads and feathers holds a staff high. He summons a golem!

As these are jungle natives, they don’t have much access to quality stone. So, the golem is mostly made of wood, straw, and garbage.

You turn to Joe to ask if he has any thoughts, only to see that he has gleefully managed to set himself on fire and is shouting, “I did it! I finally did it!”

Great job, leader.

If you focus inward and use The Energy to set things right, go to Scene 98.

If you shove Joe into the golem, go to Scene 22.

26

Based on your impressive abilities, the monks select you as their Master and show you around their neighborhood.

There are two monasteries in town. One is operated by the Warrior Monks. The other is operated by the Celibate Monks. You ask if the Warrior Monks aren’t also celibate.

“We are married to combat,” says one.

“I see,” you reply.

“Though... sometimes we cheat on combat,” says another.

“With who?”

“Sex.”

You are informed that the Celibate Monks are actually the most fearsome warriors, as they have all the rage that comes from never once having had sex.

You act as if the idea of being a virgin is not something you think about constantly, by saying “Pff... sex? I’ve done that half a dozen times at least!”

Fortunately, nobody hears you, as the ship is beginning to rumble. The temperature has increased quite a bit in the last ten minutes, and everyone is now sweating and panting.

A Warrior Monk informs you that the Celibates have had control of the ship for weeks and are steering it directly at the Star of Varlataneme. Soon, everyone will die as their eyes and digits explode from heat.

You’re so excited about being finally accepted by peers who weren’t coerced or drugged that you fail to listen.



Six hours later you take a long sip of water, go wide-eyed, then spit it out all over the guy next to you. This doesn’t relate to the star thing. You’re just drunk on power and display it by spitting on people.



Six hours after that, you look out the window and see a giant ball of hot plasma. At this point – finally, for fuck’s sake – you connect the dots.

You rush out and get in a rickshaw made of porn.

“Take me to the cockpit!” you shout.

“The neighborhood or the part of the ship?” asks the boy.

“Uh, second one.”

You and a crew of Warrior Monks head to the front.

You reach the cockpit, which is guarded by a cadre of Celibate Monks. They are suicidal, and refuse to let you alter the ship’s course. You try to reason with them, saying there’s more to life than self-denial and horrible death. They say that sounds like New Age bullshit, then increase the ship’s velocity.

As the Warrior Monks are on your side, you have +6 fighting in the next scene.

Go to Scene 74.

27

You pull Joe’s head out of your pack and hurl it at the boulder. “Wheeee! Thanks!” shouts Joe in ecstasy. “What? OH! No problem!” you call back, as you remember that he wants to die.

Just as the golden boulder is about to crush Joe, a sphere of glowing plasma shoots out from his metal neck and covers his head like a fishbowl.

“Oh, come ON!” he cries.

The boulder skips off of Joe and goes flying over your head. It crashes through the door behind you, and goes bowling forward, destroying everything in its path. Joe tumbles up to your feet, and his shield dissipates. You put him in your pack before he can pout too much.

If you run after the boulder, go to Scene 99.

If you wait for it to clear out a path, go to Scene 73.

28

As you make your way through the jungle, you find

that Joe is really holding you back. He complains a lot and every three minutes you have to knock a knife away from his face, or stop him from pouring gasoline on himself or eating poisonous mushrooms.

You're about to reach your wits' end, when you hear a growl.

You and Joe whirl around to see a massive Nasrat, the terrifying carnivore of the Varlata Jungle. They are like the T. Rex of ancient Earth, only they have giant muscular arms, each of which holds a gun.

If you fight the Nasrat personally, go to Scene 46.

If you push Joe forward, go to Scene 158.

29

For the rest of Act 3, you are shrooming. For each of your stats, pick a random number. If it's 0 or 1, that stat is -3 while shrooming. If it's 2 or 3, that stat is +3 while shrooming.

The shroom people are impressed with your failure even to wash the mushrooms before saying yes. After a brief deliberation, they elect you their leader. They seem to think you're some sort of monkey from space, but hey, a vote's a vote.

Go to Scene 63.

30

You run under him as he jumps. Just as the rope should have tightened, it breaks. "Dammit!" he shouts. "MORE bad luck?"

You actually only hear the first part of this, since he lands directly on top of you, crushing your spine.

YOU LOSE.

31 – 33

31

You must first prove your celibacy if you wish to join.

If you are an engineer, you may skip the test and go to Scene 81.

Otherwise, go to Scene 120.

32

You pull out your plasmaster and rush through the crowd.

REDUCE HP TO 1.

You run as fast as your legs will carry you. Since most of the angry people grew up in a cave with bad nutrition, you are able to just barely outrun them. You cackle wildly at the suckers and their mangled family members until you hear the sound of metal being crushed.

When you look up, you see that your escape ship has been flattened. You scan the area for another spaceship and find a nice small freighter.

You estimate that you've killed at least a third of the local population, so the odds that this ship meets the legal standard for finders-keepers are high. You become less confident of this assumption when you see a guy inside it.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: SLEEPING MAN

FIGHTING: 0, HP: 14

If you win, go to Scene 56.

33

You figure letting a suicidal stranger lead is still better than taking personal responsibility. You march on

behind him.

Impressively, in the middle of a jungle, he finds a sheer cliffside with fire and spikes at the bottom. He suggests all out war with the cliff.

“No. No chance of that.” Go to Scene 107.

“Chaaaarge!” Go to Scene 72.

34

You successfully murder your Master with the help of a man in a dark robe. Hooray?

You ask the man if he’s an associate of the VP, but he ignores you. He tells you how to get to the inner sanctum of the Varlata, then frisks you.

If you have the President’s Gun, go to Scene 154.

If not, go to Scene 5.

35

You enter the underground jungle. It is a land of terror. Above you are wild tree panthers. Below you are wild boars. About at eye level are wild tree boars. Worst of all, this is a bad neighborhood of the jungle, so all of the animals are packing knives.

Suddenly, a pack of monkeys with knives attacks. If you are not a fighter, -3 HP.

Go to Scene 111.

36

In the long and solemn tradition of people who choose to stand their ground, you die forgotten. No songs will ever be sung for your death, unless you count the gentle sopping sound made by hands searching your mouth for gold fillings.

YOU LOSE.

37

You awaken some time later, rubbing your head, wondering where you are. You realize your hands are covered in blood. “Oh GOD,” you think, “IT’S SPRING BREAK ‘09 ALL OVER AGAIN!” Then, you realize the blood is coming from your own body, and sigh in relief.

Your clothes are soaked and you are near the river. Apparently, you floated downstream for quite some time. You convince your body to sit up and you look around to get a sense of the area.

To your delight, in the near distance you see a temple with a massive symbol of the Varlata above it. You’ve almost made it!

Go to Scene 125.

38

As you walk through the jungle, you notice a strange trend. On the path you take, the trees slowly grow more orderly. From being randomly spaced, they seem to form neat rows. Then shapes. Then complex patterns. Meanwhile the smaller flora of the jungle arranges itself accordingly, as if it is a decoration lining the tree pattern.

More eerily, even the animals begin to obey this rule. You see rabbit holes shaped like hexagons, perfectly toroidal bird nests, and a squirrel shaped like a rectangular prism.

“Oh, wait, that last one’s a brick” is the last thought you experience before a brick hits your face.

When you awaken, you find you are surrounded by a rogue band of logicians.

They tell you that the Temple of the Varlata is a domain of pure chaos. So, the most rational people were expelled from it long ago. They soon formed a tribe of people who were obsessed with mathematical perfec-

tion and the beauty of logic. Like many such people, their main hobbies are watching Star Trek and efficient masturbation.

Their leader, Person 1, greets you. Person 1 puts a challenge forward. “It is an ancient sort of puzzle that we’ve made more fun by removing proper names.”

There are five houses in a row from left to right. Each is a different number assigned to it. The inhabitant of each is different, and enjoys a different food, beverage, and possession.

Person 1 lives in House 1.

Person 2 owns Possession 1.

Beverage 1 is drunk in House 2.

Person 3 drinks Drink 2.

House 2 is immediately to the right of House 3.

The person who eats Food 1 owns Possession 2.

Food 2 is eaten in House 4.

Beverage 5 is drunk in the middle house.

Person 4 lives in the first house.

The person who eats Food 3 lives in the house next to the person with Possession 4.

Food 2 is eaten in a house next to the house where Possession 5 is kept.

The person who eats Food 4 drinks Beverage 3.

Person 5 eats Food 5.

Person 4 lives next to House 5.

Who drinks beverage 4?

Who owns possession 3?

Write your answers below.

Go to Scene 167.

39

You head to the village. To your surprise, the natives are all dressed in modern clothing.

You find out they are a small commune of nature lovers who moved into the underground jungle of Varlataneme to protect the endangered species. For example, there is the rare Varlatan Dinner-Sloth, known for its delicious flesh, neon skin, and slow movement. There are also a number of rare insect species, but they're not huggable so fuck'em.

There is also the Varlata species, which may have only one remaining member.

"That's funny you should mention the Varlata!" you blurt. "I'm actually here to kill it!"

The erstwhile peaceful natives suddenly grow mad. The drum circle stops. Each opens the top of a drum and pulls out brass knuckles shaped like a peace sign.

If you run in terror, go to Scene 49.

If you stand your ground, go to Scene 77.

40

When you find it, you are surprised to see that not only is Joe's head still alive, but capping the neck is a metal disk with blinking lights.

"Dammit!" mutters Suicidal Joe. "I landed on top of this thing and now I'm not dead!"

You wonder if this counts as good luck or bad.

"KILL ME!" he shouts. "KILL ME!"

"You should have killed yourself before we started out," you scold. "Now you'll just have to hold on until we get there."

"FINE," pouts the head.

You pick up what's left of Joe and stuff him into your pack.

GAIN SUICIDAL JOE'S HEAD.

Go to Scene 53.

41

You close your eyes and swing wildly. A massive fist connects with your gelatinous jaw.

-5 HP

You open your eyes and feel overcome with rage and terror. You reach out to use The Energy. Suddenly a massive coil of lightning leaps from the ceiling into the crowd of bounty hunters. They are roasted where they stand.

Everyone looks at you as you grab a roast rib. They are impressed.

Soon, a festival is held in your honor, complete with a new song. Here's an excerpt:

When faced with foes on every side
O, he stood proud and tall.
The stories that he soiled himself
Are rumors, that is all.

Their mighty bodies he did blast.
Their might jaws, he splintered.
That stain upon his inner thigh
Was there before he entered

+3 CHARISMA.

Go to Scene 110.

42

You jump into the river **and** are rushed along with the current. Since no one has ever loved you enough to worry about you, you've never been trained to swim. You

make a mental note to write “Remember: nobody loves you” on your hand, if you survive this.

Suddenly the river drops off a cliff. You hurtle down into the darkness. As you near the rocks below, your last thought is eerily reminiscent of the first conscious thought you remember having as an adolescent: “Not in the face! Not in the face!”

You feel a sudden blast of air, and have the sensation of zooming sideways. Everything goes black.

-5 HP.

You wake up in a muddy shore. It’s very similar to that night you went to a bordello in Amsterdam, except this time you still have your wallet and you don’t smell of cheap perfume and ethanolsmopolitans.

There must be some source of light down here, as you can see the ceiling. You appear to be in a massive underground cave. Not far down-river you see a small village which must be providing the light. Beyond that there is only jungle.

If you head to the jungle, go to Scene 35.

If you head to the village, go to Scene 39.

43

The moment the test turns on, all of your detectors light up at once. A frame-by-frame analysis reveals that you held out 12 picoseconds longer than your opponents.

You are declared the leader.

A monk smiles and turns to you. “So, leader, what are your commands for the next 14 minutes?”

“Bluh?” you inquire. “What happens in 14 minutes?”

The monk indicates a nearby window. You adjust the Venetian blinds, which allows a painful brightness and heat to blast through. You shut the Venetian blinds.

“Are we headed into the Star of Varlataneme?”

All the Celibate Monks give a big thumbs up.

“Excuse me a moment,” you say.

You sprint toward the cockpit. When you giggle at the word “cock,” the monks realize what you’re up to and run to stop you.

Go to Scene 91.

44

You bash your face with a piece of wood. Judging from the pain you feel, and your sudden conviction that 42 is the biggest number possible, you may have caused some sort of permanent damage. After a few moments staggering about, you pass out and fall off the edge.

-3 WITS

-10 HP

If you currently have any fingers holding your place in this book, remove them.

Go to Scene 37.

45

You create a makeshift suit of armor out of the wood and prepare for pain. You waddle over to the edge of the falls and tip over. You fail to estimate the distance to the edge and tumble onto the ground nearby.

-1 HP

You wiggle your feet until you tumble over, hurtling toward the underground river. You splash into the water, and everything turns black.

-10 HP

45 – 48

Go to Scene 37.

46

The Nasrat lunges for you. You realize you have no chance to beat him physically. You're going to have to outsmart his walnut-sized brain.

BATTLE: WITS: NASRAT

WITS: 4

If you have **Slayer Aspect**, +3 wits for this scene.

If you win, go to Scene 132.

47

The ship plows straight into the Star of Varlataneme. In space, nobody can hear you say, "The Mooseum."

YOU LOSE.

48

You hurl the gun at the Varlata.

REMOVE PRESIDENT'S GUN FROM INVENTORY.

It opens its mouth and snaps up the gun like a frog eating a fly.

Crap.

You take out a piece of paper to write your last will and testament. Then you realize you don't own anything to bequeath. Then you realize you DO own one thing – this will. You start your will "This is my last will and testament. I leave my last will and testament to..." Then you realize you have no friends or family.

You decide you welcome death and shout "Eat me!"

Just as the Varlata is about to oblige you in your desire, its head explodes. Thick gobs of bloody goo fly in

every direction. The remaining body writhes to and fro before slumping to the ground like a sack of stones.

“The gun...” you mumble, “was a bomb?”

Go to Scene 15.

49

They immediately subdue you.

“You’re lucky we’re enlightened Marxists,” shouts one of them, “or we’d kill you right now and put your head on a spike!”

Subsequently, they declare you to be a member of the bourgeois ruling class, then kill you and put your head on a spike.

YOU DIE.

50

Having defeated Jesus Christ on a Lizard, you cross another item off your bucket list. Later in life, the phrase “Christ on a Lizard!” will be a common exclamation of surprise, but will be a source of bowel-voiding terror for you.

During the fight, Suicidal Joe fell out of your backpack and rolled face-first into a moist crack in the floor. The moisture is just enough to clog his sinuses with filth, but not enough to kill him.

“Hey!” he calls, his speech garbled by the water. “There’s light coming through this crack!”

If you examine the crack, go to Scene 71.

If you tell Joe to fuck off, go to Scene 68.

51

You enter the bounty hunter neighborhood, which is populated by tough, angry folks, headed to Varlataname

51 – 52

to bag criminals on the run.

You see an old saloon, and open its porn-crafted swinging doors. Just then a nasty half-man half-goat creature appears in front of you. “BA-A-AH!”

You look down and find a knife at your throat. The goat creature sniffs at you, then demands your wallet. You are trying hard to figure out where this *deja vu* is coming from, when you realize it’s all similar to the only date you’ve ever been on, with the lone difference that you’re not still holding out for the possibility of sex right now.

Well maybe... maybe... no. No, I guess not.

If you decide to deflect the knife with your neck, go to Scene 151.

If you ignite your plasmaster and do battle, go to Scene 146.

52

You use the wood to construct a primitive trebuchet. Sure, you could have constructed a bridge or a ladder, but you’re an engineer, which means you prefer the most pragmatic solution unless there’s some other solution that involves a trebuchet.

You use some rocks to create a counterweight. Thanks to your petite (or, as the nuns said, “unfuckably weak” frame), you need very few.

You climb in the pouch, release the counterweight, and are flung across the gulf. You sail through the air, for the first time in your life enjoying a sensation of pure freedom. You sail through the hardwood door, for the first time in your life enjoying a broken collarbone. You sail into a treasure room, enjoying a view of millions of tons of gold and jewels you will never touch. You sail through a window and into a faintly lit cavern.

Then you see it. Below and in front of you is an

entranceway, above which sits a giant stone statue of the Varlata.

You adjust your drag by rotating the large shards of glass embedded in your legs and come in for a smooth landing at the entrance the the Temple of the Varlata.

OH YEAH, -5 HP.

Go to Scene 122.

53

You head on toward the temple gate. Before you are two massive doors with a strange seal in their middle.

A large plaque explains that the seal is a puzzle. And this puzzle is so tedious and so unclever, that no one has ever been able to solve it without saying “Ah, fuck it.” and leaving. Only someone with the the mental warp-ing needed to spend hours and hours on a single project purely to prove a tiny level of intellectual superiority to a small group of losers could solve this puzzle easily.

+10 WITS IN THIS BATTLE IF YOU'RE AN ENGINEER.

BATTLE: WITS: PUZZLE
WITS: 1

If you win, go to Scene 140.

54

You convince the monks that there will be plenty of suicide if they will just wait till you get to Varlataneme IV.

“But I need to go NOW!” squeals one of them.

“Well,” you reply, “you should’ve thought of that before you left the monastery.”

The entire group is impressed with your powers of rhetoric. Several less devout Celibates offer up their

54 – 56

bodies in secret.

If you remain celibate, go to Scene 17.

If you go for the fivesome, go to Scene 160.

55

RESTORE HP TO 3.

Just as the Varlata is about to rip your face out from the wrong side of your head, you shriek, “EEE!”

This is apparently a weak spot for the Varlata, who winces back in agony. It pauses oddly, grunts, then rolls over.

You run up to its body and are surprised to find several smoking bullet holes in the back of its head. You touch one, at which point a geyser of blood splurts into your face. You swear you hear someone distantly laughing at you, but perhaps it’s just the wind.

Go to Scene 15.

56

You lower the cockpit window as the mob comes upon you. You shout about how you’re a victim of circumstance as you drop the man’s corpse over the side of the ship.

You start the fusion drive and put it in high gear, blasting up away from the crowd.

Once you hit space, you begin to examine the ship. You notice the ship’s computer has a document open with several lists, all of which contain unspeakable acts of violence and cruelty. Above that is a header, “Stuff I’ve done.” Above that is a stack of felony charges.

Just then you look up to see three military police ships.

Shit.

“This is the Imperial Police! You are surrounded! Power down your weapons! Anything you say or appear to be thinking can and will be held against you in a dungeon of law!”

If you fire your guns, go to Scene 149.

If you surrender, go to Scene 115.

57

As you set off into the jungle with these mighty warriors, you finally have time to admire their craft. They are not just warriors, but amazing dancers and gymnasts. They are trained in the arts of calligraphy and poetry. You watch one move forward with the graceful ease of a cat, right up until he gets shot in the ass.

You whirl around to see a small group of jungle poachers, who sell animal parts to local healers. Normally, they hunt for rhino penis, or elephant penis, or dinosaur penis. Really, anything penis. In fact, “Anything Penis,” is the slogan for the Varlataneme Poaching Corporation.

Their leader reasons that Warrior Monk penis will likely be an excellent aphrodisiac when ground into a fine powder. Or, anyway, it’ll be roughly as effective as the rhino penis.

+10 FIGHTING FOR DURATION THIS BATTLE, SINCE THE MONKS ARE ON YOUR SIDE.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: POACHERS

FIGHTING: 3, HP: 12

If you win, go to Scene 113.

58

“Wrong!” crows the angry head. “Man starts off with

two legs! Unless the riddle was meant to be a metaphor or something.”

Your final thought before the head eats you is, “This sucks.”

YOU LOSE.

59

You swing your plasmaster at Joe, but your stroke is a good ten feet off the mark. However, Joe suicidally leaps toward the blade, and manages to hit his head against the hilt. He falls down, defeated.

Despite his objections, you allow him to live. This is too pathetic, even for you.

+3 CHARISMA, YOU WUSS.

You and Joe and the Celibates head on toward the Temple of the Varlata.

Go to Scene 25.

60

You inform the warrior that he used “literally” incorrectly.

“No, I mean it,” is his response. “Today, we will battle a star itself on our way to oneness with the universe.”

This puzzles you until you look out the window and see nothing but a bright red ball of plasma. The ship must be within a few hundred kilometers of the Star of Varlata-neme. You yelp like an effete Chihuahua.

The monks look confused. Aren’t you heading for suicide too?

“Not on purpose, usually!”

You jump up and run toward the control room. You arrive to see it is guarded by several Celibate Monks. One folds his arms behind his back and turns toward you, ac-

cidentally poking your eye from across the room.

Go to Scene 74.

61

All of the running around and pretending to be a monkey has garnered the attention of some real monkeys.

You and the remaining monks position yourself in Monkey Style fighting stances. Unfortunately, the monkeys are not using Monkey Style. In fact, they're using swords.

-5 TO FIGHTING THIS ROUND. ADDITIONAL -5 IF YOU HAVE MONKEY STYLE ASPECT.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: MONKEYS WITH SWORDS
FIGHTING: 4, HP: 8

If you win, go to Scene 128.

62

Wrong.

As punishment for your failure, you are shaped into a platonic solid.

YOU LOSE.

63

You are brought before the most wise leader of the shroomfolk. You can tell he is very wise because none of his advice is either practical or coherent. He has a murmured coda to each of his sayings, which you initially take to be "Amen," but which later turns out to be "Ohhhh, maaaaan."

He is impressed by your prowess as a fighter and challenges you to a battle of wits. He introduces you to a

63 – 66

long-popular game called “Smoke the weed.”

The goal is to smoke the weed. The rules are smoke the weed.

BATTLE: WITS: MARIJUANA

WITS: 1

If you win, go to Scene 23.

64

“You are wiser than you look,” says the head. “But try this one!”

“There are two sisters: one gives birth to the other and she, in turn, gives birth to the first.

If you say “Day and Night,” go to 159.

If you say “Two ladies with giant vaginas,” go to 20.

65

Person 1 is very impressed. He hasn’t been this impressed since the time Person 5 solved Puzzle 97 on Day 53 in Place 2.

He wishes to give you a gift that has been passed down through generations of mathematicians.

GAIN BUCKET OF BENZEDRINE: +3 TO WITS DURING CURRENT SCENE. USE ONCE THEN REMOVE FROM INVENTORY.

The logicians allow you to go on your way, and point you in the direction of the Varlata’s temple.

Go to Scene 150.

66

He introduces himself as “Joseph! But my friends call

me Suicidal Joe!”

He holds up two glasses of liquid and offers you one. It smells like almond.

If you drink it, go to Scene 21.

If you slap the drink out of his hand, go to Scene 95.

67

You and the Master manage to knock the dark figure to the floor. For a moment, his cape opens, revealing a tattoo of the symbol of the VP.

You look in confusion. The Master looks in realization. He turns to you, looks resolute, and raises his blade above your head.

“Run!” shouts the dark warrior. You manage to get out of the way just as the Master tries to cut you in two.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: MASTER

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 12

If you win, go to Scene 34.

68

You pick up Joe and proceed deeper into the church. Behind the pulpit, you find a door and enter. To your surprise, the inside appears to be a thoroughly modern control room for a computer monitoring system. “Jeepers!” you shout wussily.

A man in uniform jumps up, spilling his Taco Bell, and shouts “Ah, shit!” He takes out a gun and aims at you.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: MAN IN UNIFORM

FIGHTING: 2, HP: 10

If you lose, go to Scene 134.

If you win, go to Scene 8.

69

You figure being constantly alone has worked out for you so far. Might as well die that way.

If you have any monks with you, remove them from your inventory.

As you enter the forest, you see a strange man in tattered rags.

If you talk to him, go to Scene 66.

If you ignore him and trudge on, go to Scene 38.

70

In a moment reminiscent of three non-consecutive occasions during your teenage years, you run after a stranger for hours shouting, “WHO ARE YOU? ARE YOU SINGLE?”

But, as ever, to no avail. On the plus side, this time nobody calls the police.

By the time you run out of breath, you look up to see that you are at the Temple of the Varlata. As you approach, you meet a strange ragged man. He has his head inside the gaping maw of a panther and is yelling at the panther to eat his head. The panther looks bored.

You ask him why he’s tempting death and why the panther isn’t just eating him.

He identifies himself as “Suicidal Joe.” He says he’s called that on account of his terrible, terrible luck. You see, he was born with two genes so rare, they’ve never been in the same body until he was born. One gene makes him constantly suicidal. The other makes him fail at everything.

He speculates that he’s the unluckiest man who ever lived.

“What?!” you cry. You then go on to describe all the

crappy situations you've gotten into over you pathetic life. The mother who never loved you because technically she never existed. The father who never loved you because technically he never existed. The girlfriend who never loved you because technically she never existed. The hundreds of times you've been shamed, degraded, and nearly killed, only to escape by the slimmest of margins.

Suicidal Joe finds all this very strange. He describes a remarkable series of adventures he's been through, which parallel much of your story. You extend your hand in friendship. He demures and says you're "privileged," since you're an orphan who wasn't preprogrammed with the desire to kill himself constantly.

He puts up his fists. You put up yours. You want to make a yo mama joke, but neither of you had a mother. So you go with, "Your synthetic gestation vat operator was so fat, when your synthetic gestation vat operator sits around the house, your synthetic gestation vat operator REALLY SITS AROUND THE HOUSE."

"Nobody talks like that about my synthetic gestation vat operator like that!"

BATTLE: FIGHTING: SUICIDAL JOE
FIGHTING: 1, HP: 1

When you win, go to Scene 106.

71

You walk over to the crack, stuff Joe into your pack, and look down. You make a small cut with your plasmas-ter and find you can see a few hundred feet down. You decide to make another cut to see more. Then another. Then, cracks start making themselves. This is convenient for about a quarter second, at which point the ground gives way.

You fall downward in terror. It's like Christmas for

71 – 73

Suicidal Joe.

You splash into a dark underground river and lose consciousness.

When you wake up, you are surrounded by a strange band of pale young men who reek of marijuana and ill-considered philosophical stances. You wonder what they're doing in an underground cave before realizing that the cave is some sort of secret mushroom farm. As you look about the wreckage you've caused, you see you've managed to kill a number of guards armed with frisbees. These must have been the warrior class here.

Fortunately, the remaining members are very mellow, but also very paranoid. Due to your superior prowess, they wish you to lead them. But first, they force you to play a game that has long been used as a test of friendship among college students: Eat the shrooms.

The goal is to eat the shrooms. The rules are eat the shrooms.

BATTLE: WITS: SHROOMS

WITS: 2

If you win, go to Scene 29.

72

You die. Because of the spikes. And the fire. Did you even read the options?

YOU LOSE.

73

You watch the enormous boulder roll forth, squashing everything and everyone that stands in its way. In a perverse retrospective of your journey to the temple, you see pieces of every part of your strange trip ripped to shreds, and people who changed the course of your

journey crushed. You wish to look away, but cannot. It's been said that the eye is a thirsty thing. It should also be said that the eye is a crazy asshole.

The boulder eventually fades into the far distance, leaving a straightforward path back out. However, the path is soon occupied by an angry mob of people whose friends have been killed. They look pretty pissed. Hopefully this isn't about the whole boulder thing.

If you are an engineer and wish to think like one, go to Scene 7.

If you run, go to Scene 32.

74

You ignite your plasmaster and look over the enemy.

The Celibates all have strangely powerful right hands (except for about ten percent of them who have strangely powerful left hands). You notice this just as they fall upon you.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: CELIBATE MONKS

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 9

If you win, go to Scene 152.

75

With a good hard slap, Joe recovers his senses. Finally, you can talk to him.

Joe explains that he has a rare suicidal gene, and has spent most of his life trying to kill himself. Yet, he always fails because he has the rare always-fail gene.

Before you can fully grasp the meaning of this, you see Joe maneuvering a knife blade straight for his own neck. Just as it pierces the skin, a branch from a nearby tree falls and knocks it away.

“EVERY STUPID TIME,” moans Suicidal Joe.

You look for the source of the branch, but find nothing but the wide silence of the jungle.

You ask him how he got to Varlataneme, and he explains that a mysterious man in black transported him here on the promise that the only sure death in the universe is at the hands of the Varlata.

The only thing he knows is that the man is very powerful.

You pause to think. When you look up, Joe is tying a noose around his head.

If you decide to kill Joe, go to Scene 156.

If you urge him to come along with you, go to Scene 28.

76

You arrive at the gate to the inner sanctum of the great beast. You see three guards, dressed in the sloughed off skin of the Varlata. They are alerted to your presence when you say, “Ewwwww.” This identifies you both as a foreigner and as a total wussbag.

They set upon you.

If you flee, go to Scene 127.

If you stand your ground, go to Scene 3.

77

You are surrounded by angry hippies, several of whom smash their bongos and threaten you with the broken glass edges.

Their champion, Love-lily, steps forward. On his left knuckles he’s tattooed “LOVE.” On his right, “ALSO LOVE.” He punches you in the face with “ALSO LOVE.”

-2 HP.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: NATIVE CHAMPION
FIGHTING: 3, HP: 8

If you win go to Scene 82.

78

The Warrior Monks are thoroughly impressed with your skills. They teach you Monkey Style, most of which is waddling along the ground and hooting in order to confuse your opponent.

“What do you do once the opponent is confused?”
you ask.

“That’s when you whip out a gun if you have it.”

“Riiiiight...”

**If you are a fighter, gain Monkey Style Aspect.
Go to Scene 61.**

79

Turns out he was, in fact, literally telling the truth. By not calling that word out, you doom yourself to a horrifying end.

You look up just as the ship heats up 1000 degrees and plumes of plasma fire through all the windows at once.

YOU LITERALLY LOSE.

80

Your prefrontal cortex keeps screaming “NO NO NO!” However, your medulla oblongata (responsible for involuntary functions, like vomiting) insists.

The punning seems to have infuriated the crowd even more than the murder of loved ones. You decide to make a break for it.

Go to Scene 32.

81

The monks are deeply impressed by your commitment to virginhood. They inform you that they are in need of a leader ever since the last leader went mad with lust after briefly viewing the ankles of a humanoid ape.

A celibacy contest is announced. You and several other would-be leaders are connected to a mind reader. The game is not to think about sex for as long as possible.

BATTLE: WITS: OWN BRAIN

WITS: 3

If you win, go to Scene 43.

If you lose, go to the bounty hunters' bunk in Scene 51.

82

You manage to defeat the native champion. Chief among the reasons for your victory are that you have a blade made of plasma and that he is a conscientious objector. You successfully sever his head from his body, at which point the native doctors come out. As they are experts in herbal medicine, they lay some medicinal leaves on the stump and claim it'll grow back soon.

You would disagree, but you're currently spending most of your brain power trying to think of puns using the word "stump." You manage to say, "Well, I guess he was stumped." Everyone laughs. Wow. That's the first time that's ever happened, and all it took was several pounds of drugs.

Just then, a wise old man with a ponytail and Grateful Dead shirt approaches. He identifies himself as a shaman of the nearby mushroom growing cult. Then he realizes he's facing a wall and turns toward you.

He asks you to come meet his chief.

Go to Scene 63.

83

You wander over to the Warrior Monks' side of town. You see a particularly large tent and wander in. The monks inside appear to be doing Tai Chi, only sped up, and with the intent to draw blood.

You introduce yourself as a fellow warrior from the Silene Monastery.

After they finish laughing, it is breakfast the following day. You join them for a humble meal of protein slurry.

As the laughter dies down, conversation starts. The monks tell stories and brag of their fighting prowess. One notes that they are so powerful, they hope to literally fight the heavens this day.

If you choose not to be a dick about his use of “literally,” go to Scene 79.

If you choose to call him out on his use of “literally,” go to Scene 60. (Note, if you are an engineer, you must choose this option.)

84

You slice the dog in half with your plasmaster.

“HOLY LIVING CHRIST,” shouts the Goodsider. “YOU WERE SUPPOSED TO HUG HIM. THE TEST WAS TO SEE IF YOU ARE CAPABLE OF LOVING YOURSELF!”

You feel a tinge of embarrassment, and resolve to get the Master a nice apology card with a gift certificate next time you're home.

Fortunately, the Master is a Goodsider, and obliged to not feel emotion over this. He admits this, and admits that you've more or less “passed” the test. Nice. Cancel that gift certificate.

You and the Master return to his hut for the evening.

You get to talking of days gone by, and he finds out that you once fought in one of the wars to end all wars, and are now trying to defeat the Varlata. He then finds out that you were sent by the Vice President.

This surprises him. Long ago the VP was his pupil. He was training to be a Goodsider, but he was too powerful. He wanted to change the world. He wanted to end injustice. The rest of the Goodsidiers were mostly interested in drum circles and extremely slight variations of marijuana cultivars. So, the VP left.

What would a powerful, awesome personage like the VP want with a luckless weakling like you.

“What do you mean by luckless?” you say.

“Well, he says. Are you familiar with the concept of booleons?”

Just then, a dark-robed warrior leaps through the window and lights a plasmaster. You and the Master light yours as well.

If you fight, go to Scene 169.

If you run, go to Scene 136.

85

As you fall backward, you and Joe both yelp like baby poodles.

You feel a moment of solidarity, which is interrupted by the arrival of two men in green robes. They pick you up by the collar, say “Ah, you must be today’s sacrifice,” and throw you down a dark shaft.

-3 HP.

Go to Scene 4.

86

You run back toward the door, which has the unfor-

tunate effect of keeping you squarely in the path of the boulder. If you'd paid attention in geometry, or physics, or life, you'd have known this.

By the time you reach the entrance, it is almost on top of you.

If you use The Energy to halt the ball, go to Scene 173.

If you take out Suicidal Joe and heave him at the ball, go to Scene 27.

87

You set down on Varlataneme IV and exit the ship.

You look out on an endless jungle, whose green expanse is interrupted only once, in the far distance, by a high rocky form. If you squint just right, you can see that it's a statue of the Varlata eating a guy's face.

The cargo bay doors open, and the bounty hunters charge off into the forest for the Temple of the Varlata. The remaining Celibate Monks and Warrior Monks also come out.

The monks look like they just landed in Disneyland. According to Wikipedia, the Varlata Jungle has the most ways to die horribly per square meter in the galaxy!

If you join the monks, go to Scene 88.

If you decide to go it alone, go to Scene 69.

88

You decide to go with the monks.

However, the Warriors and Celibates will be splitting up. The Celibates wish to die quickly and the Warriors wish to die horribly. You've always expected to have both at once, so the choice seems downright exciting.

If you go with the Warrior Monks, go to Scene 57.

If you go with the Celibates, go to Scene 18.

89

You look out the window to see that a massive swirl of plasma is engulfing the ship. You're headed straight for the Star of Varlataneme. You can't believe it – is there no limit to the scope of your shitty luck? Does the universe just HATE you?

Then you see a plume of plasma in the shape of a hand giving you the middle finger.

You decide to keep living, purely out of spite.

You and the bounty hunters rush toward the cockpit, but are confronted by the Warrior Monks AND their Celibate Monk compatriots. They've directed the ship straight for the Star of Varlataneme in order to kill themselves! Dammit!

BATTLE: FIGHTING: MONKS

FIGHTING: 3, HP: 8

If you win, take the controls and go to Scene 118.

90

They look at the symbol, and their eyes go wide.

“Traitor!” they shout.

Your last words before you are ripped to shreds are “I know you are, but what am I!”

YOU LOSE.

91

You arrive and attempt to adjust the controls, but the monks shove you aside.

“Don't you want to LIVE?” you implore.

One of them steps forward. “Do you have any idea

what it's like to be forced to live in celibacy for 20 years!"

You look side to side sheepishly.

"Also, we're not allowed to masturbate."

"OH MY GOD!" you shout. You suddenly feel ill with horror and sympathy.

On the other hand, you don't want to have your body ripped apart by a massive plasma ball.

If you fight them, go to Scene 74.

If you try to convince them the Varlata will be a way better way to die, go to Scene 139.

92

As no one has entered the cave in several thousand years, your opponent is an elderly man who's never experienced combat attempting to wield a rusted weapon that's too heavy for him. Thanks to that and his having at least two cardiac episodes during the fight, you emerge victorious.

You turn to the two remaining monks. "Mind if I axe you to fight me?"

The second monk shoots at your leg with a crossbow. This is not the first time that has happened in response to one of your puns, so you manage to dodge.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: SECOND MONK

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 14

If you win, go to Scene 147.

93

You pull out the strange bulbous gun. You point it at the Varlata and shout, "Axe you later!" as you press the button. Just as you press it, a number of people appear out of the shadows and lunge toward you screaming, "STOP! STOP!"

BOOM! The weapon explodes, killing you instantly. You don't realize it at the time, but your stupidity dooms the entire future of the universe.

Your name will live in infamy forever.

Just kidding! Nobody remembers your name.

YOU LOSE.

94

Having killed a bunch of police officers, you decide to consider whether it was smart to kill a bunch of police officers.

Just then, you're caught in a tractor beam.

You look up to see a ship so vast that it blots out half the stars above you. On its side is the symbol of the President. It is an image of a noble lion accepting soft money from special interests.

The tractor beam deposits you in a small hangar. Imperial high guards run up, jack your cockpit open, and stick laser guns in your face.

If you tell them who you are and say it was all a funny joke and that you hope police officers have a sense of humor, go to 138.

If you have the symbol of the Vice President and want to show it, go to Scene 90.

95

You slap away the poison. Joe looks furious.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: JOE

FIGHTING: -1, HP: 1

When you win, read on.

With the aid of Suicidal Joe, you defeat Suicidal Joe. At one point, you slash at his legs with your plasmaster,

only to have him catch the handle. For a moment, you are scared that he's some master warrior. Then, you realize he's directing the blade at his own face. At this point, you manage to stop him and end the fight by punching him in the face.

Go to Scene 97.

96

Having destroyed the old man's body and stolen his possessions, you experience a strange emotion. Is it... is this guilt? No, wait, it's you remembering you can also loot his home.

Amidst photos of family and loved ones, you find a map. The map is hand-drawn and contains detailed notes on the entire underground world!

To your delight, you find that you are mere kilometers from the inner sanctum of the Varlata.

Go to Scene 125.

97

Joe begins pouting. "It never works! I can't die! I can't, I can't, I can't!"

It looks like Joe needs a good slap to the face.

If you slap him, go to Scene 75.

If you are a medic, you may "medically" slap him, and then credit your high level of education if it succeeds. In that case, gain +3 charisma and go to Scene 75.

98

You focus inward. This makes it all the more surprising when your body is crushed by the massive hand of

98 – 100

the golem.

The resulting whoosh of wind puts out the fire on Joe, who is both pissed off and jealous of you.

You die under a mound of garbage as Joe gives you the finger.

YOU LOSE.

99

The ball tumbles through chamber after chamber of the underground lair. As it goes, it destroys thousands of people and priceless artifacts. You try to make up for this by shouting things like “We all gotta go sometime!” and “Sucks to be you, buddy!” After one particularly grisly crushing, you shout “I guess your son really rocked!”

As you laugh moronically, you trip.

When you get up, you are surrounded by a mob of thousands, most of whom are trained in combat and ready to kill you.

If you run, go to Scene 32.

If you stand your ground, go to Scene 36.

100

You enter and hang out for a good three hours while nothing happens. It turns out the cave was supposed to physically manifest your hidden inner self. But, since you’ve never experienced a moment of introspection in your pathetic tiny existence, nothing happens.

Eventually the Master comes in. Since the test never happened, you neither failed nor succeeded. Fortunately, the Master has prepared a backup. He sends in a Rottweiler with a picture of your face taped to its nose.

If you choose to gather up The Energy and face this representation of your inner self, go to Scene 153.

If you decide to fight this representation of your inner self, go to Scene 16.

101

With the ship under control, you navigate toward Varlataneme IV, somewhat to the chagrin of the Warrior Monks. Many of them had wanted to die in the star, but are willing to compromise and die on the surface if need be.

When you ask why they're so eager to die, they explain that their gentle religious founder insists that they perish horribly for spiritual reasons. So, the Varlata will do well.

“What's the Varlata do?”

It requires the entire remainder of the trip to describe the multi-decade process of being digested by the Varlata. However, the essential notion is that as it consumes you, it slowly but surely dissolves away every part of your body that isn't a pain receptor.

“Shitbiscuits,” you mutter. “Shitbiscuits indeed, my friend,” says one of the monks.

The monks offer to have you as their leader for the rest of the journey. You indicate your acceptance by doing an embarrassing victory dance and shouting, “Woop woop woop!” in a falsetto voice. The monks smile at this, which gives you confidence, until you realize they're all hoping to die.

You tell them you'll think about it.

Go to Scene 87.

102

You defeat some fish.

By the time you are victorious, you have washed

102 – 103

down the river and are deposited near the forest where your journey began. You stand up, squeeze the water out of your coat, brush back your hair, then look forth to see that the rolling ball of gold has killed several thousand bystanders, belonging to many of the different tribes of Varlataneme IV.

You also notice that a large crowd has gathered. Several of them run up to you. Their leader says, “DID YOU DO THIS?”

You wrestle internally. On the one hand, you don’t want to die. On the other hand, you really, really want to quip, “I guess you could say I rocked your world.”

BATTLE: WITS: STUPIDITY

WITS: 3

If you win, go to Scene 108.

If you lose, go to Scene 80.

103

“Amazing!” shouts the head. No one has ever successfully answered all three riddles.

“Well,” he says, “I guess I’ll pack my things and go.”

Before he leaves, you ask, “Were you ever, by any chance, a computer scientist?”

He brightens up for a moment. “How could you tell?”

The head disappears in a puff of green smoke. The forcefield flashes brightly, then dissipates. You pass into the chamber of the beast.

If you have the President’s Gun and wish to use it, go to Scene 170.

If you have the Vice President’s Gun and wish to use it, go to Scene 109.

If you have neither, or wish to use neither, go to Scene 119.

104

From a distance, you zap the Varlata over and over with your gun. You cackle wildly, inexplicably impressed with yourself, as you come up with one after another axe puns. Finally, the beast gives in and accepts death. It is unclear whether this is from the laser blasts or from your use of the phrase “What time is it? Axe o’clock!”

The great monster slumps down. Out of its many wounds comes a small lake of blood, which you trip in several times.

Mysteriously, the gun dissipates before your eyes. You have an infant-like grasp of reality, so this doesn’t strike you as odd.

LOSE VICE PRESIDENT’S GUN.

Go to Scene 15.

105

You attack the old Goodsider. As a Goodsider, he has very, very courteously decided to make his own plasmas-ter not block others.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: FRIENDLY HELPFUL ELDERLY MAN

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 8

If you win, go to Scene 126.

106

Your pathetic fighting prowess manages to prevail thanks to Suicidal Joe’s constant attempts to end his own life mid-combat.

You slash wildly, missing him by a good ten feet. Fortunately, he leaps into the blade, and you remove his

head from his body.

The head has a massive smile and mouths “Thank you!” as it skitters away into the woods, tumbling end over end as it goes.

You feel a bit of shame for having won a cooperative battle against the guy cooperating with you, and you chase down the head. To your amazement, not only is Suicidal Joe alive, but his neck now has a metal disk attached to it, which seems to be keeping him alive.

“Dammit!” shouts Joe. “I always blow it!”

You feel a twinge of remorse as you pick up Joe and look into his eyes. As you are about to dropkick the head, an apparition appears.

“Nooooo...” says a dark figure in robes.

You sense the presence of The Energy all about you.

“Whyyyy...” you respond.

“Are you mocking me?”

“Nooooo...”

The figure shoots your arm with lightning.

-2 HP.

“You must take Suicidal Joe with you. He will be important if you are to survive the Varlata.”

“What? Why?”

But the apparition is already faded. You sigh as you stuff Suicidal Joe into your pack.

Go to Scene 53.

107

You feign interest in rushing over the edge, but run very slowly. Joe screams and sprints.

If you have any companions in your inventory remove them, since they die by leaping over the edge.

Joe takes a majestic flying leap.

But he doesn't quite make it. Just as he leaps, a boul-

der tumbles down, crushing his body, sending his head flying back past you. As the head tumbles through the air, you notice Joe has a big smile on his face.

You decide to chase down the head instead of jumping to your death.

Go to Scene 40.

108

Using every bit of mental control you possess, you manage to narrow your eyes, grit your teeth, and say, “Nuh uh.” The devastated people are too dazed to argue and so they believe your pathetic lie. You do a little happy dance as the widows and orphans mourn for their dead and dying.

You follow the path of the boulder back to the clearing where your ship first landed. There, you radio for a pickup.

Go to Scene 24.

109

You take out your gun just as the Varlata lunges at you. You pull the trigger and it hums like the low rumble of a panther approaching its mate. The front opens, and long girthy laser blast spurts out.

The monster winces in agony. No weapon has ever done that to the Varlata! This weapon must have an on-board antimatter drive!

FOR THIS SCENE, +20 FIGHTING.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: VARLATA

FIGHTING: 15, HP: 40

If you win, go to Scene 104.

110 – 112

110

You only have enough room in your stomach to eat one victim and gain his powers. You ask what they were like.

You are informed that one was an expert navigator with a sixth sense for his position in the universe. The other was an old hobo who was really handy with animal noise puns.

If you eat the old hobo, go to Scene 142.

If you eat the navigator, go to Scene 112.

111

The knife-monkeys, like most knife-monkeys, mean business. One of them even has a plasmaster, which he ignites. This calls into question both the length of life you have remaining and the value of the education you received back at the monastery.

If you have ever fought monkeys armed with blades before, go to Scene 137.

If you have not, go to Scene 161.

112

As you chomp into a femur, your mind lights up. You absorb the powers of the navigator.

You suddenly sense something wrong. You look around at the crowd, but nobody else seems fazed. Of course, they aren't fazed by the femur in your mouth either, so it doesn't necessarily mean much.

If you focus inward on The Energy, and reach out with your feelings, go to Scene 2.

If you head to the bridge to see what's going on, go to

Scene 117.**113**

You manage to drive back the huntsmen, but many of the Warrior Monks are slain as they do impressive feats of jumping, spinning staffs around, and generally looking totally cool.

The Celibate Monks soon arrive and are devastated by the carnage and that it didn't happen to them. They grow angry.

One of their leaders shoves you and says that the attack was probably due to your lack of purity. In fact, he accuses you personally of constantly thinking about masturbation.

If you kill him, go to Scene 78.

If you surrender and ask to join him because, strictly speaking, he's right about you, go to Scene 18.

114

You narrowly defeat the horde of knife-monkeys. As the survivors scatter, you chase the plasmaster-wielding member.

Go to Scene 116.

115

Your ship is crippled by several electric pulse weapons and then tractored inside a police transport. You are yanked out of your cockpit and handcuffed.

-2 HP

"I'm innocent!" you shout. "It wasn't my ship! I just stole it! I never killed a single soul on that specific list of people he killed!"

They aren't going for it. Maybe they think you're just some crazy guy. Then you remember that you know the President.

"Get me the President! He'll tell you I'm not crazy! He's probably watching me right now!"

You find yourself in solitary confinement in ship's rear. You have a small, nauseating view of empty space through a porthole window.

As you sit there, playing imaginary solitaire and losing, a shadow casts over your window. You realize your small prison ship is being engulfed by something much larger.

The police vessel is pulled into the hangar of a massive battleship. On a huge flag draped over the hangar wall you see the symbol of the President! It is an image of a noble lion accepting soft money from special interests.

Your door opens. The police scowl at you.

"Get up."

"Where are we going?"

"To the President."

Go to Scene 138.

116

You go a long distance through many strange sights until you come to a bright clearing. In the middle of the clearing is a small stone house, the outside of which is covered with runes. Out front, there is a "mi casa su casa" mat. This can mean only one thing: A Goodsider lives here.

You look around and realize you're all alone now. Well, except for Joe, but who gives a shit? Just then, a wizened old white-bearded man exits the house.

"Good day, old Master," you say.

The old man notices your plasmaster and smiles.

"What Silene gave you that?"

"I am a Silene," you declare.



The old Master laughs, then realizes you're serious. He closes his eyes and focuses on The Energy, muttering something about booleons. When he opens them again, he says something polite about how it's nice the monks have relaxed their standards so very much since he was in school.

He offers to train you in the ways of the Goodsider.

If you train, go to Scene 165.

If you attack him, go to Scene 105.

117

You look at the onboard maps and realize the ship is headed straight for the Star of Varlataneme. Thanks to your newfound skills, you have the ability to press “auto-pilot” and select “Varlataneme IV.”

Just then, a group of Celibate Monks bursts in. They were flying this ship into a star to commit suicide!

“Duh whuhr?” you riposte.

But it's too late. They're upon you, with all the pent-up rage of celibacy.

117 – 118

“Why don’t you guys just masturbate?” you ask.

“Our religion doesn’t condone it.”

The scenery seems to whirl about you as you try to fathom this unfathomable notion. Before your eyes, 10,000 hours perform a danse macabre, crying out to have had their existence be more valuable. The wails of sadness burst into your ears and flood into your brain and out your mouth. You scream for what seems like centuries.

You return to your senses, and try to think of something to say. “Sucks to be you guys!”

A monk punches your face.

-1 HP

BATTLE: FIGHTING: ANGRY CELIBATES

FIGHTING: 2, HP: 9

If you win, go to Scene 152.

118

You and the bounty hunters manage to defeat a handful of suicidal virgins. Congrats.

You see the controls are beginning to shimmy with the force of this sun’s ion emissions. This isn’t going to be easy.

BATTLE: WITS: CONTROLS

WITS: 2

+3 TO WITS FOR THIS SCENE IF YOU HAVE PILOT ASPECT.

If you win, go to Scene 143.

119

BATTLE: FIGHTING: VARLATA

FIGHTING: 15, HP: 40

When you lose, go to Scene 55.

120

The monks have been celibate for so long, the tests they consider to be difficult are easy for most people.

The test is to not “accidentally” allow your genitals to brush against any surface for the next ten seconds. The fact that you are already doing this impresses the monks beyond measure and explains why they’re always hanging out near walls and chairs.

Unfortunately, the fact that everyone is molesting the walls is a bit of a turn on, so you fail within five seconds.

Fortunately, everyone’s busy molesting the walls, so nobody notices.

You pass.

-5 CHARISMA FOR THE AMOUNT OF SELF RESPECT (ALL OF IT)
YOU JUST LOST.

Go to Scene 81.

121

You arrive at a cavern and you enter into the darkness. It is commonly said that one does not fear the dark, but rather what might lurk within. However, you personally fear the dark, and lack the foresight to realize something may be lurking within.

Nearby, you hear an ominous rumbling.

Go to Scene 123.

122

You arrive at the gateway to the hidden temple. To your dismay, there is a seal that blocks the entrance. It appears to contain a puzzle of great complexity.

122 – 124

You spend several hours failing to even grasp the underlying principles of the puzzle. You grow angry. You stare at the puzzle, focus on your wrath, and close your eyes.

Seemingly from nowhere, a laser blast flies right into the puzzle, causing the doors to fling open. You open your eyes and smile.

You scan the area and tiptoe in.

Go to Scene 76.

123

You find yourself standing in front of an underground river. You walk for a bit until you see a sheer cliff edge, over which the river falls. On the opposite side there is a ladder going up from the river to a massive door. If you could just reach it...

Near the edge of the falls, you find an old pile of wood.

If you are a medic, you use the wood to brace your body for impact below. Go to Scene 45.

If you are an engineer, you build a trebuchet using only the wood and your plasmaster. Go to Scene 52.

If you are a fighter, you bash your face into the wood and hope for the best. Go to Scene 44.

124

As the two of you battle the Varlata together, you realize you've fallen in love. After all these years of searching, you've found the mate of your dreams.

With your combined skills, you dispatch the monster. When you return home, the entire empire acclaims you and your love. The two of you are declared monarchs of the Varlataneme system. You spend centuries together, your love never waning, as you turn Varlataneme from a

dangerous wasteland to a bustling and beautiful civilization.

In future dictionaries, your picture appears next to the word “blissful.”

YOU WIN.

THE END.

125

You skip toward the temple. As you bound forth you are ferociously tackled by a burly man clad in fur. He informs you that he is the first keeper of the sacred Varlata. As a foreigner, you are not welcome anywhere near the temple.

You are confused. “If I can’t get near it, how am I supposed to kill it?”

This was, apparently, the wrong thing to say.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: BEASTKEEPER

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 9

If you win, go to Scene 122.

126

Having dispatched the kindly old man, you paw through his corpse like a jackal. The only thing of value is his plasmaster. You try it out as a back massager. Not bad.

GAIN GOODSIDER PLASMASTER: -1 FIGHTING WHEN EQUIPPED.

Go to Scene 96.

127

You run haphazardly into the temple, pursued by the guards. You find yourself in darkness as you go deeper and deeper. Then, in the distance, you see a pinprick of

127 – 129

light. You giggle at the word “prick.”

As you draw closer, the light resolves itself into a small natural window in the cave. You look in. Below, you see a strange ritual in progress. Hundreds of people in ceremonial clothing dance around a flame. Behind them, in a forcefield, is a hundred foot tall lizard pacing back and forth, flicking its tongue and snarling. The Varlata!

As the menacing monster is lowered down, a priest points to it dramatically, then points to everyone in the room. Another priest hands out the collection plate.

You hear a roar and jump back in horror, losing your footing.

Go to Scene 85.

128

The Warrior Monks are quickly dispatched, leaving only you. A horde of sword-wielding monkeys leaps toward you like a tidal wave of... monkeys. And swords.

You cover your eyes in terror and thrust out your plasmaster. You hear a horrible shrieking sound. When you look out, dozens of angry monkeys lay dead around your feet. Those who remain scatter fearfully into the woods.

In your disoriented haze, you believe you see a woman in dark robes run away from the scene.

Go to Scene 70.

129

Under the statue of Jesus-the-Devoured is a small chest. You figure, hey, it's not theft if nobody's looking.

As soon as your hands touch the chest, the room begins to shake. The statue shimmies harder and harder until it seems like it may fall over. Suddenly, Jesus pulls himself out of the maw of the lizard and hops on its back. The lizard leaps off the wall.

Shit.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: JESUS CHRIST ON A LIZARD

FIGHTING: 4, HP: 13

If you win, go to Scene 50.

130

You stab him directly in the heart. As you withdraw the blade, you notice his breathing is labored. You suspect it's due to a fistula running from the area where your blade went in to the area where your blade came out. You may be able to save him.

BATTLE: WITS: SURGERY

WITS: 5

If you win, go to Scene 162.

If you lose, go to Scene 144.

131

You pull out an apple to munch on it while Joe loops the noose around his neck. He climbs a tree, ties the rope to a branch, then jumps.

The force of his body snaps the branch off, which clonks him on the head. The branch ends up under him, causing him to roll into a hollow under the tree, at which point the badgers who live there begin clawing at his crotch. He sighs, surprisingly unfazed.

You ask how he remains so calm, as this is very much unlike any of your own badger-crotch experiences.

“I have two genes, both so rare that I will probably be the only person to ever possess both. The first makes me constantly try to end my own life. The second makes me fail at everything.”

He dusts the remaining badgers off of his lower

131 – 133

half and then looks up at you. “That’s why I’ve come to Varlataneme. Here alone, with the great monster, can I be certain to die.”

“Well,” you say, “I too am headed to the Varlata. And I could use some cannon fodder.”

Joe’s eyes glisten with joy. He agrees to accompany you hereafter.

Go to Scene 28.

132

You manage to dodge the Nasrat just so that it smashes into Joe. Joe’s entire body explodes like a balloon filled with red goo.

His head flies off into the distance, with an oddly large smile on its lips.

The Nasrat stumbles around, blinded by the thousands of toxins in Suicidal Joe’s blood. Joe’s blood, which is thick and curdled, seeps into the Nasrat’s mouth. It leans hard on one leg, loses balance, and falls over dead.

GAIN SLAYER ASPECT.

You run to grab what remains of Suicidal Joe, following the series of blood splotches along the ground.

Go to Scene 40.

133

He poses another puzzle:

“Three humans are discovered to have violated local legislative sanctions. Person 1 claims innocence. Person 2 claims innocence. Person 3 claims person 2 is guilty. Only one statement is true. Which person violated local legislative sanctions?”

If you say “Person 3,” go to Scene 62.

If you say “Person 1,” go to Scene 65.

If you think it’s time for this riddling asshole to die, go to Scene 11.

134

You ignite your plasmaster to block the laser blast.

THOONK! Out of the gun barrel comes a tranquilizer dart, which strikes you in the forehead.

You stagger about, drool dripping from your mouth. The man in uniform notes that the poison hasn’t been injected yet.

“Oh,” you say.

You wait patiently.

“So...” you start. “How’s life in a cave?”

“Not great,” he replies.

The awkwardness is practically suffocating you by now.

“So...” you start again. “When does the poison start injecting?”

The man in uniform checks his watch just as the dart empties its contents into your face. You pass out.

Go to Scene 37.

135

You stand over yet another pile of freshly murdered human beings. To your discomfort, you realize that you’ve made a habit of checking your victims for wallets, and have already come up with a handy method of justification for it in which you say, “Ethics is always nuanced,” and wave your hands around.

You find no wallets, but you do find some goodies. Looks like there’s some insulin and some children’s vitamins next to this picture of a family. OH! Here we go!

GAIN MEDI-PACK: WHEN USED, RESTORES YOUR HP TO
MAXIMUM. USE ONCE.

135 – 138

You stand up and walk into the temple. Once inside, you realize you're on some sort of a parapet. Below you, a congregation watches several strange priests. They stand before... the Varlata.

The Varlata bays angrily from behind a nearly transparent forcefield, lending a nice backdrop as the priest gives a sermon about tithing. The beast looks up and seems to see you. "Crudballs," you murmur. It roars, sending a blast of hot air directly at you.

You try to stand, but you stumble backward.

Go to Scene 85.

136

You decide to employ subterfuge then flee. You turn to the dark figure and shout, "Hey, look at that!" Only the Master looks. The dark figure cuts the Master in two.

Okay, Plan B.

If you nobly sacrifice yourself to join your Master in the great beyond, go to Scene 6.

If you attack the dark figure for vengeance's sake, go to Scene 148.

137

The monkeys sense your ability to fight small knife-wielding simians. They flee in terror.

The one monkey holding a plasmaster brings up the rear. You decide to chase after him.

Go to Scene 116.

138

The guards look angry, but resigned.

They take turns punching you in the dick, then lead you down a long white hall. The walls of the hall emit a white plastic glow and are covered with a series of holo-paintings of the President's ancestors, like Ghengis Khan,

Hitler, Satan, and the abstract notion of treachery.

You turn a corner and are surprised to find a mob of reporters. The guards try to back up, but the reporters seem to have made a pincer movement.

“What do you have to say about the betrayal of the Vice President?!” yells a reporter from United State-Run Media.

“Duh, whuh?” you reply.

“Will you be involved in the quest to return him to the perfect justice of the UVE court system?!” shouts a reporter from National State-Run Media.

You awkwardly scratch your inner ear in response.

“Were you involved in any way with the VP?!” screams a reporter from Alternative Independent State-Run Media.

By now, the guards have managed to construct a tunnel through the reporters, which they guide you into. You emerge on the other side and are hurried down a narrow corridor. At the end of it, an obsidian door covered in skulls lowers down on chains made of vertebrae.

Inside, you see the President. He is watching the viewscreen, but shuts it off.

“Oh hey, buddy! I was just finishing my favorite episode of Patriotic Self-Surveilling Family!”

“I love that show!” you reply. It’s true. Your favorite episode was the one where the family learns that we’re all alike on the inside, which is why you have to judge people by visible things like skin color and religious affiliation.

The President smiles and asks you to come in.

Go to Scene 174.

139

You clear your throat to make a speech. “Friends,” you begin. Then it occurs to you that you aren’t really friends. “Acquaintances and enemies...” you begin.

139 – 141

Christ, what an idiot.

BATTLE: WITS: PUBLIC SPEAKING

WITS: 3

If you win, go to Scene 54.

140

It takes 86 hours to solve the problem, and most of the time it is simple arithmetic. While you are doing the puzzle, many onlookers come by in curiosity and become so bored they forget to breathe. Soon, a pile of bodies has built up around you.

If you have any companions other than Joe, remove them from your inventory.

Happily, having grown up on sitcoms and reality shows, you are capable of doing anything for any amount of time as long as it supplies an extremely low, but constant level of stimulation.

As you input the last number into the puzzle, it hums to life. The rotary dial on which you entered the numbers dips inward, becoming a massive hole. The resulting cavern is faintly illuminated, and on the sides of the entrance are gargantuan frescos depicting the Varlata torturing people in various ways.

You soil yourself resolutely and enter.

Go to Scene 12.

141

By the laws of the Celibate Monks, anyone may engage in sporting combat, so long as it isn't sublimation for psychosexual urges, like Greco-Roman wrestling, or ping pong. (In case you're wondering, the paddles represent paddles, and the balls represent balls)

BATTLE: FIGHTING: SUICIDAL JOE
FIGHTING: -1, HP: 1

When you win, go to Scene 59.

142

You polish off the last bite of hobo and turn to the expectant crowd.

“Where does a fish go to see pigs?” you ask.

When no replies are forthcoming, you say, “The Oinkquarium.” Everyone raises their steins and cheers.

+10 CHARISMA.

As you indulge in your newfound popularity among drunk people who are terrified of you, you notice the ship is has increased in temperature in the last few minutes and a bright light burns outside the windows. Everyone else is too enthralled by your amazing jokes to notice.

If you look out the window to see what’s up, go to 13.

If you say “Where does a cow go to see historical artifacts?” go to Scene 47.

143

You grab the controls but they won’t respond. You yank back hard on them, which rips them out of the socket. The controls go from a navigational tool, to a weapon to fend off the suddenly pissed bounty hunters.

Just then the ship lurches back from the star, inexplicably. It gets smaller in your field of view until you are a safe distance away.

Go to Scene 87.

144

The creature falls over dead. You kneel over its lifeless form. The bounty hunters are impressed as you write your initials into its face.

Suddenly, they all jump on his corpse to eat the flesh. “Pardon me,” you say. “Why are you doing that?”

A bald man with a mouth full of gore explains that when you eat the dead you gain their powers. As you watch them gobble away, you feel anger and revulsion. That’s your kill, and those should be your powers!

You light your plasmaster again.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: BOUNTY HUNTERS

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 10

If you win, go to Scene 41.

145

As you purposefully chop the logician into irregular shapes, you notice a crowd has formed nearby.

It’s a group of the Warrior Monks from the ship, and they are very impressed. They wish to train you in their most secret fighting style – MONKEY STYLE Kung Fu, which they suspect will be useful in the jungle.

If you wish to learn Monkey Style, go to Scene 78.

If you continue on without the Monks, go to Scene 150.

146

The ignition of your plasmaster strikes fear into the hearts of everyone present, until they realize you’re a Silene. Then they start laughing and chattering. In particular, a number of people seem to be gesticulating about

your eyebrows.

You feel shame. Well... you feel extra shame.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: GOAT CREATURE

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 8

If you win, go to Scene 144.

If you win, and you're a medic, go to Scene 130.

147

It becomes apparent that the second monk has serious macular degeneration. He politely asks if he can put on his trifocals. You take advantage of the distraction to chop his head off.

Having dispatched two elderly weaklings, you grow in confidence. You are certain you can dispatch a third. Then, the third monk approaches and reveals she's a young attractive woman. She wishes to talk to you.

As this has never happened to you before, you have no idea how to react. Fortunately, your attempt to soil yourself is counterbalanced by your shy bladder.

She removes a lizardskin glove to reveal her right hand only to you. On it is a tattoo bearing the symbol of the VP.

“Holy butt!” you blurt.

She looks left and right, then leans in to you. “Remember. Be literal.” she says.

She takes a step back, pulls out battle axe, and prepares for combat.

You jerk from confusion to the sudden and overwhelming desire to, apparently, say something you'll regret for a long time. “Well, look what the axe dragged in.”

She shakes her head sorrowfully and whispers, “How can he be the one?”

147 – 151

BATTLE: FIGHTING: THIRD MONK

FIGHTING: 2, HP: 16

If you win, go to Scene 10.

148

You light your plasmaster and lunge forth, planting your face directly into the dark figure's fist. You stagger backward and pass out.

-3 HP.

Go to Scene 168.

149

IF YOU HAVE PILOT ASPECT, +10 FIGHTING FOR THIS SCENE.

BATTLE: FIGHTING AND WITS: IMPERIAL POLICE

FIGHTING: 1, WITS: 3, HP: 24

If you win, go to Scene 94.

150

Because it wasn't logical to go very far from home, the realm of the logic people is very near the Temple of the Varlata. You see it now, only about a kilometer away.

As you walk forward, you come upon a ragged man tying a noose around his head. You ask why he's killing himself. He says his name is Suicidal Joe and he's the unluckiest man who ever lived. He's decided to end it all.

You look up at him as he prepares to jump.

If you stop him, go to Scene 30.

If you don't stop him, go to Scene 131.

151

You figure if you can flick your Adam's apple just right, it'll toss the knife upward, at which point you can smack it with your eyeballs to propel it for— OW! OW! OW!

-7 HP

Pain. Your greatest weakness.

You close your eyes and rage internally. Just before the knife enters your throat, it suddenly pulls back then flies across the room, sticking into a bar stool made of Wood. Specifically, Wood Episode 14.

You reach for your weapon.

Go to Scene 146.

152

Just as the tide seems to be turning against you, the ship jostles, throwing a number of the Celibate Monks through the cockpit window. By the time the nanobots repair the hole, the Celibates have been decimated. One remaining monk lunges at you. He is so full of pent up sexual need, that your kick to the crotch causes him to explode. His last words are, "OH THAT FEELS GOOD."

The Warrior Monks come up behind you.

Go to Scene 101.

153

That might've worked against an apparition of your subconscious mind. But this is a dog, so it eats your face.

YOU LOSE.

154

The dark figure shakes his head and mouths, "Christ, what an idiot." He looks from side to side, opens the cas-

154 – 156

ing of the gun, attaches a tube, and makes some adjustments to the circuitry.

LOSE PRESIDENT'S GUN.

GAIN VICE PRESIDENT'S GUN.

Before you can thank him, he has disappeared. You head on.

Go to Scene 76.

155

You run into the darkness and soon come across a river that flows away from the temple. You steel yourself and leap in.

It doesn't occur to you that leaping into a strange river while covered in lizard blood might be a bad idea until you're surrounded by a horde of angry fish with teeth. Worse, since these fish come from a tributary that runs along the forest of knife-wielding animals, they all carry tiny switchblades.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: KNIFE-WIELDING FISH
FIGHTING: 0, HP: 10

If you win, go to Scene 102.

156

You reach to strangle Joe. Just as your hands are about to find his neck, a blast of lightning strikes you.

The last thing you see is a dark figure crouching over you. "Dammit," she says in a low tone. "Now there's only one."

YOU LOSE.

157

The reporter explains to you that, while you were gone, the Vice President was caught sleeping with the President's wife. You are first briefly jealous of the wife, then confused about your sexuality, then you wonder how someone as deft as the VP would get caught doing that, then you are ushered away by the President's Secret Service before you can talk any more.

"Sorry about that," whispers the lead guard as his men show you to your room. "The story you just heard is a cover. Clean yourself up and come to the President's chamber."

You nod as you remember that you're soaked in grime and lizard blood.

You enter your finely appointed room and go to the shower. As you strip and turn on the water, you notice a small box with the words "From a friend" on it. As if you have learned nothing from the past several years of life, you pick it up and open it. Inside is a coin-shaped piece of red plastic and a note: "Keep disc. Destroy box."

You look side to side fearfully, then turn the disc over in your hands.

"IT'S A TIME BYTE!" shouts Suicidal Joe from your backpack.

Joe continues. "When you squeeze time bytes, they disappear and pop you back in time a minute. Of course, the spacetime warping causes a huge explosion in some random other part of the universe, so the ethical considerations are—"

"ZOWIE THAT'S COOL!" you shout.

GAIN TIME BYTE: YOU MAY GO BACK ONE SCENE. USE ONCE THEN REMOVE FROM INVENTORY.

You finish your shower, flush the time byte's packaging down the drain, and head to your appointment.

Go to Scene 174.

158

Joe pulls a battle axe from his backpack and runs at the creature. “I’ll show you!” he shouts as he raises the axe over his head. “You can’t kill me if I’m already dead!”

You facepalm as he drops the blade toward his own forehead.

Just before the axe reaches his head, the Nasrat eats both his arms, and the axe in one bite.

Joe wastes no time in tapping the heel of his left boot, which prompts a long blade to extend out of the boot’s front.

“SPIKE to meet you,” he says, impressively. You find yourself jealous of his catch-phrase prowess.

He leaps into the air and kicks upward toward his own face. Just before the blade reaches his head, the Nasrat eats his legs. Suicidal Joe is now a thorax and a head. He’s out of clever tricks, so he ineffectually attempts to eat his own body.

Now, things are just awkward.

You resign yourself to death at the hands of the Nasrat, when you notice it stumbling around as if drunk. Then you realize – the Nasrat just ate two sharp weapons and several gallons of poison blood.

It staggers about for a moment before keeling over. Its massive cranium crushes Suicidal Joe’s torso and sends his head hurtling away.

You chase after it.

Go to Scene 40.

159

“Incorrect!” screeches the angry head. “Day and night are inorganic and therefore the idea of them giving birth is ludicrous!”

Your last words before the head eats you are “This is bullsh–”

YOU LOSE.

160

About 20 minutes into the orgy, a crowd of furious Celibates comes in to kill you.

You die, in a fivesome.

So, if you want, consider yourself to have won the game.

YOU... LOSE?

161

BATTLE: FIGHTING: KNIFE-MONKEYS

FIGHTING: 3, HP: 8

If you win, go to Scene 114.

162

Working with the ease and grace of a practiced physician, you tell your medi-scanner to fix whatever’s wrong. It disinfects the wound, sews it up, pats it gently, and places a mint on top.

Having both killed and healed the strongest fighter among the bounty hunters, you are declared their leader.

However, your healing prowess has also attracted the attention of a subset of the monks visiting the bar. These are the only sort of monks who are brave enough to visit the porn-crafted side of town. They wear only loose-fitting pants and sandals, and they have the steely gaze of practiced warriors. They look you over approvingly as they drink their lemontinis.

One spits a paper parasol onto the ground, eyes you, and asks if you want to learn the ways of the warrior.

You hesitate, wanting to grow in your abilities, but

162 – 164

not wanting to do anything to achieve that goal.

Then, out of the corner of your eye, you see a burst of red light. You look over and see that it's coming from a ship window. You also notice that the ship has gotten ten degrees hotter in the last three minutes.

If you decide to learn from the Warrior Monks, go to Scene 26.

If you decide to check on the flame surrounding the ship, go to Scene 89.

163

BATTLE: FIGHTING: FIRST MONK

FIGHTING: 0, HP: 12

If you win, go to Scene 92.

164

A month later, you awake from hypersleep. You break open your chamber to look around.

You are traveling on an inexpensive ship carrying bounty hunters, strange monks, and a large shipment of low-grade porn. As the surroundings are dingy and rather meager, a number of people have built small cottages out of the porn. In fact, this has gone on long enough that whole neighborhoods have developed, which are signified by the x-rated titles out of which they are crafted.

“Welcome to Asspumpers 12, lad” says an amiable voice.

You look to see a leathery man with an eyepatch.

“You’re on the bounty hunters’ side o’ the ship,” he grunts. “I can set ye up with a nice place over in Vagina-mancer 2 or down by Not in My Nose.”

You notice there is a large area where quiet clean-looking folk live inside well-washed linen tents.

The gruff man notices your distraction and says “Oh,

those be the monks. They're a bunch of fancyboys – too good to live inside porn.”

If you wish to bunk with the bounty hunters, go to Scene 51.

If you wish to bunk with the monks, go to Scene 172.

165

You spend a dedicated weekend learning about the power of the good side of The Energy. “It is beautiful. It binds us together and loves us, but asks much in return.”

“Like an expensive prostitute,” you whisper pensively.

“Sure,” says the Master.

You learn how to lift stuff at a distance and how to very, very vaguely see the future.

But now, you must face the most difficult challenge of all – yourself. The Master takes you to a cave in the jungle and instructs you to enter.

Go to Scene 100.

166

“What does fear have to do with an integer sequence?” the head screeches just before it eats you.

YOU LOSE.

167

The answer is “Person 4 and Person 5.”

If you answered incorrectly, you die.

If you answered correctly (or as Person 1 says, “If your answer had a non-zero unfalse value”), go to Scene 133.

168

Sometime later, you awaken in a large, dimly lit chamber. You instinctively check your wallet. OH GOD THEY USED A SHRINK RAY ON YOUR WALLET. Oh... wait... no, that's not a wallet.

You stand up and look around. A short distance in front of you, you see it... the hidden Temple of the Varlata!

Go to Scene 122.

169

The master turns toward you and shouts, “Let us be a team!”

-3 FIGHTING FOR THIS SCENE.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: DARK FIGURE

FIGHTING: 1, HP: 8

If you win, go to Scene 67.

170

The Varlata sees you moving nearby. It snarls and rears its hideous head.

You whip out the President's gun. It's a strange weapon – a black sphere, the same all around except for a big red button at the top. You can't even find a barrel out of which it would shoot.

As the million fangs of the Varlata hurtle toward you, it occurs to you that you could possibly have checked this earlier. Then, you remind yourself that, hey, sometimes you gotta live for the moment.

At this moment you are covered in shadow by the yawning maw of the monster.

If you fire the gun, go to Scene 93.

If you throw the gun at the beast's face, go to Scene 48.

171

You enter the temple. Judging from the gold-plated stained glass windows depicting men abstaining from wealth, this must have been some sort of church.

You strike a match against a pew. The room looks like a massive cathedral, the one big difference being that Jesus, instead of being on a cross, is being eaten by a giant lizard.

In the pew, you see a bible, which you find contains a third book titled, "Testament of the Lizard." Despite being 300 pages of snake drawings and onomatopoeic lizard sounds, it is still more sensible than Leviticus.

You hear a distant howl. The Varlata – its cry rings shrill and guttural. Or maybe you just breathed in through your nose in a weird way. Time will tell... time will tell...

Go to Scene 129.

172

Intrigued by the idea of a home that doesn't leak herpes, you head to the monks' part of the ship. A kind man in robes strides over to you.

"Greetings, friend. Are you also on a suicide mission to Varlataneme?"

You mull it over.

"Probably, yeah."

"Then you are welcome. We have two neighborhoods here. I am a member of the Celibate Monks." he says good naturedly. "That is why I have this giant erection, and my eyes won't stop twitching. Across the way are the

172 – 174

Warrior Monks. They are dedicated to the beautiful arts of hitting things really hard with your hands and feet.”

“Are they also suicidal too?”

“HOHOHO! Oh my, yes, of course.”

“Gotcha.”

If you wish to join the Celibate Monks, go to Scene 31.

If you are a fighter and wish to join the Warrior Monks, go to Scene 83.

173

Really? Come on. Even you should know better by now.

YOU DIE.

174

You enter and set down your pack.

With pleasure, the President realizes you have Suicidal Joe with you. “That’s good. Very good! You’ll need help.”

He sets Suicidal Joe on his desk, facing him. The President clicks a button on his chair, causing the door to close. He sighs and leans back.

“You’ve probably noticed by now that we have something special in mind for you. You may have wondered exactly what. It’s time I told you the truth.

“You see... we’ve been searching for decades for someone with a high enough booleon ratio to access the powers of the ancient Masters who brought peace and harmony to the galaxy. You have the potential to be one of those great Masters.”

This is so staggering, you stop absent-mindedly scratching your genitals.

“As you know, it is very hard to measure booleon counts. For very high counts it is even harder still. When

you were born, you and a million other children were set aside to be tested by the Vice President. All sorts of barriers were put in your way.”

The President looks at your eyebrows and nods.

“Each year, many of the children died or went mad as obstacle after obstacle was put before them. The few who made it to adulthood were put in the worst training center in the universe – the Silene Monastery. There, they wasted years learning nothing, but we kept putting them through tests. Many more of them died. But some persevered.

“The remainder were sent off to the most recent war to end all wars. Time after time, they were put in perilous positions. Yes, you remember. Fewer still survived that test.

“Finally, we loaded the last couple of young people on a ship headed toward the Star of Varlataneme. A handful came through alive, only to face a more horrific foe— the Varlata.

“By the time you killed that great monster... only two remained. You... and Joe. You two... are the luckiest



beings in the universe.”

“We are in the final stages of the mission... but there is a problem. The Vice President, once my most loyal servant, has gone mad with jealousy. Ruggedly mansome jealousy, yes, but jealousy nonetheless. He has absconded with the ancient texts which were to be yours and now resides in his space-castle... Manadu.

“There are only two people who are strong enough in The Energy to stand a chance against him. So, you see... there remains for you... one last test.”

END OF ACT 3.

RESTORE ALL HP.

If you are an engineer, +2 wits.

If you are a fighter, +2 fighting, +1 max HP.

If you are a medic, +1 wits, +1 charisma.

Go to Act 4.

ACT 4

1

The President stands and walks to a bust of Ghandi (no, not that Ghandi... the one who impaled everyone on Earth II). He pulls back the head to reveal a small panel, on which he places his hand. It conducts a brief scan and a hidden door in the chamber opens. Inside are two of a recent and expensive invention: teleportation pods.

They break down every atom of your body and reform it somewhere else, thus transporting you across space at the speed of light.

You step into your pod and the President steps into his. Thousands of lasers scan your body. You feel like you just stepped into an oven, and then everything goes dark.

If you philosophically believe that a duplicate of you, no matter how accurate, does not count as you, you die here.

Otherwise, go to Scene 23.

2

You tell your strikeforce pilot to engage the favorite warp drive, and your ship zips off into the stars. You marvel at the power of warp technology. Antigravitons are needed to power it, but they are so rare in the universe that only nine of them have ever been found and four of them were kinda crappy.

A quarter second into the journey, the ship rapidly decelerates.

“Captain!” shouts the first mate. “Someone popped our warp bubble!”

On the screen in front of you appear several hundred ships, which you identify as the VP’s fleet by the fact that these are the girthiest ships you’ve ever seen.

You can only hope to evade them. You tell your pilot and strikeforce to engage in a tactic you often use when avoiding people you know but don’t want to deal with –

2 – 3

move past them while looking away.

The pilot assumes you're joking because it's an impressively dumb idea and you have a sort of comedic face in general. Then, he realizes you're serious.

“Fear not,” you say. “For I am powerful in The Energy.”

BATTLE: WITS: VP'S FLEET

WITS: 3

If you win, go to 27.

3

You decide to take a quick nap.

As you get comfy on the couch, you hear a tinny mechanical voice mutter, “Oh for fuck's sake” through the door.

You awaken as the door slides open and a small horde of robots comes out, ready for combat. You take one of the many fighting stances you used earlier when you defeated many of them. Before you quite have the stance ready, a robot tasers you.

-5 HP.

The robots pick you up, hustle you out the door and onto escape pod row. A particularly surly robot kicks you toward one of the doors. It opens, and you are shoved inside despite your squealed protestations of “Come on, guyyys!”

The door locks. Through its porthole, you witness the rare sight of 30 robots giving you the finger at the same time.

The pod blasts off. Looking out your window, you realize you're headed toward a spacebase. It is a large base, shaped like... like the symbol of the VP. A battle standard hangs on one side, bearing the VP's coat of arms – a noble

lion with two lionesses at the same time. At its bottom is the name of the base – Manadu.

Go to Scene 9.

4

You're really getting into this easy victory thing. Reasoning that you must just be an amazing warrior, you start punching and kicking with your eyes closed, destroying robot after robot.

As you happily kill your hundredth sapient machine, the room suddenly becomes very bright. A massive hologram of the VP appears, and he looks pissed.

“GodDAMMIT, man!” he rumbles. “I meant for you to come to my fucking base. Isn't it obvious the robots are letting you win?!”

“Maybe...” you say. You take one more quick punch, destroying a robot.

“UGH!” is the last thing you hear before one of the robots shoots you with a stun gun.

Go to Scene 7.

5

As originally planned, you set out for the VP's base with your small strikeforce. You call up your first mate and ask him to tell you what you should tell him to do.

He says there are two routes that will best avoid the Vice President's fleet.

You can attempt to navigate the asteroid belt between here and the VP's base. If you do so, you'll end up behind the VP's base for a surprise attack.

Or you can sneak through the ruins of an old space battle. It's safe, but once you're on the other side, they'll see you coming.

If you have Pilot Aspect and wish to go through the

5 – 7

asteroids, go to Scene 8.

Otherwise, head to the battle ruins. Go to Scene 33.

6

BATTLE: FIGHTING: SUICIDAL JOE
FIGHTING: 2, HP: 9

If you win, go to Scene 15.

If you lose, go to Scene 17.

7

You wake up in a small cell while a robot doctor stands by.

“What’s going on?” you ask weakly.

“You’ve been captured. However, all you have to do to take command is say, ‘I am in control’ to this device.”

It holds a small sensor array up to your mouth and you yell the requested phrase into it. Then the robot hits you in the face with it and turns to a floating assistant.

“Send this signal to the President. He’ll think the fool has taken command of this vessel.”

You are injected with a rare chemical called pain-quilizer, which puts you through extreme agony while tranquilizing you.

Several hours later, you are brought to the bridge as the ship arrives at the VP’s stately pleasure palace – Manadu. It is the most erotic structure ever built. The long, thick base is crafted entirely from buckskin and claymores. As you near, a gap opens in its surface and envelopes you.

The robots boot you out the door into a dark chamber. For a moment, you hear nothing but soft music and running water. Then, the lights go up.

Go to Scene 21.

8

You head into the asteroid belt. A little known fact about asteroid belts is that they tend to be so sparse that the odds of directly touching an asteroid by accident are less than one in a billion. That said, the risk is high enough that you can't engage the warp drive. So the real trial of being in an asteroid belt is escaping boredom.

The ship's engineer asks which boardgames you had stowed on ship prior to launch. You respond "all the best ones! Chutes and Ladders... Candy Land... some coins for flipping."

Within two hours, half the crew has died of boredom. Several times, you see two members of the small fleet accidentally careen into each other, since their crews have all perished.

By the time you near the belt's edge, only your ship and a small party of morons remains.

Then you see it. The pleasure dome of the great VP - Manadu.

You push the body of the pilot out of his chair and take the reins. From behind, you swoop down toward the guns of Manadu before they inflate to full turgidity.

+12 WITS FOR THIS SCENE.

BATTLE: WITS: MANADU

WITS: 14

If you win, go to Scene 16.

9

You crash land on the surface of Manadu.

UNLESS YOU HAVE PILOT ASPECT, -5 TO HP.

You grab your gear, suit up and hop out. Several turrets raise out of the surface, point out you, and fire

9 – 12

massive torpedoes. They miss you, but completely destroy the escape pod.

Just then, the ground under you creaks and falls open like a massive swinging gate. You fall for a few seconds before landing in darkness.

A deep voice intones “Lights up.”

Go to Scene 21.

10

BATTLE: FIGHTING: ROBOTS

FIGHTING: 0, HP: 40

If you win, go to 11.

11

Once again, the robots are oddly easy to defeat. At one point, you accidentally cut yourself on some metal, and a robot fires a blaster, which perfectly cauterizes the wound. After that, you continue fighting as before.

At another point, you accidentally drop Suicidal Joe's head on the ground. When he finds he's surrounded by armed robots, he gets ecstatic. Then, a robot trips over his head, and falls into ten other robots, causing them to explode.

Something weird is going on here.

If you lay down your arms, go to Scene 22.

If you keep fighting, go to Scene 30.

12

All your years holding on to the present situation desperately, no matter how undesirable, were not in vain.

The ship ultimately stops rocking. Seeing that no serious damage has befallen your shuttle, you don your spacewalk gear and get out. You ignite your plasmaster

and stab into the command ship.

Once inside, you find yourself in a room full of robots having lunch. They look startled and take out their tasers.

If you fight them, go to Scene 36.

If you surrender, go to Scene 22.

13

You send the most powerful of your ships into battle against the VP's fleet.

You stand before the viewscreen and turn toward your crew to give them a speech on the nobility of sacrifice by people below the rank of major.

Partway through, a terrific burst of light flashes silently on screen behind you. The crew's faces go from bored to horrified. You turn around.

“Where'd our attack squad go?”

Go to Scene 5.

14

You bring the ship down behind one of the great guns of Manadu. It is an impressively mansome base. The entire exterior is made of buckskin, steel spikes, and skull-shaped belt buckles.

You and your remaining crew suit up and exit the craft. To your surprise, nearby is a door marked “Go in here.” You pull Joe out of your pack and ask him if you should go in. He says “Yes.”

By the time the door shuts behind you, separating you from your crew, you remember that Joe is actively seeking death.

You find yourself in a dark room. A shower of red light breaks out and you hear a series of laser blasts as each member of your crew is slain one by one. Instinc-

14 – 16

tively, you begin spouting all the UVE government secrets you know before a husky, musky, panther-like voice says it will do you no good here.

The lights go up.

Go to Scene 21.

15

In the one honest stroke of luck of your life, you manage to defeat a severed head wishing for its own demise. Congrats.

The VP stops the fight just as the plasmaster is about to enter Joe's brain. Joe will now be groomed to save the universe. You are no longer needed.

You are sent off in a small spacecar formerly owned by the VP's great aunt. There's no music player, and the whole thing smells like cough drops and cigarettes. You arrive back at Ritni Otvor and get a job working at a telemarketing firm, where your profound sense of nihilism goes unnoticed. After a few years there, you have a mid-life crisis which leads to a heroin problem and homelessness.

Your epitaph will read: He died as he lived – in a dumpster behind Burger King.”

YOU LOSE.

16

Once again you find the VP's forces surprisingly easy to defeat. During the dogfight, you shot several missiles backward, and yet they always hit at least one of the VP's attackers.

Despite your victory in combat, you suffer a few precision strikes that happen to take out all of your camera surveillance points. You manage to land by looking at the window and having a ship with a robust hull.

If you are an engineer, and wish to fix the cameras,

write “Surveillance Fixed” under your item list.

Go to Scene 14.

17

You lunge at Joe, but forget that his blade is closer to you than he is. You get stabbed in the knee, causing you to tumble crotch-first toward the plasmaster. You halt in mid-air, floating millimeters away from death by splicing. As your nose is longer than your crotch, it is slightly singed by the plasmaster.

You hear a slow clap behind you as your body levitates away from the weapon. The VP is pleased and sets you down near his desk. It’s the only time you’ve ever seen him so happy.

“Good, good! Your yes-booleon count must be nearly zero. Amazing!”

He is so floored, he pokes you just to see if you’re real. He happens to poke at an unusually malformed blood vessel, causing you to wince in pain as it explodes and drains ten percent of your blood.

“Amazing!”

Joe complains and points out that the fact that he won, and therefore won’t be the hero, makes him even unluckier. The VP points out that the burn on your nose is in the shape of a penis. Joe concedes.

Go to Scene 37.

18

You launch forward with half of the UVE fleet. In your dashing new uniform, you cut a slightly less gangly figure. “Move out,” you command. When the ship jerks forward, you realize you were facing the wrong way.

Just a few kilometers out, before you can engage your favorite warp drive, an ambush of ships decloaks. From the long, girthy shape, you can tell they are the VPs.

18 – 20

You shout, “Evasive maneuvers!” hoping someone will know what that means.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: VP’S AMBUSH

FIGHTING: 3, HP: 40

If you win, go to Scene 20.

19

You continue on for several hours until you near the edge of the ruins. As they clear, you see it in the distance – the pleasure base of the VP – Manadu.

Manadu is the manliest place in spacetime, excluding places that are physically inside the VP’s body. It is so manly, you can actually hear a low baritone voice hum, despite the fact that empty space cannot transmit sound.

As you bring your ship in, several long thick cannons aim at you and a number of fighter ships scramble.

BATTLE: WITS: MANADU DEFENSES

WITS: 2

If you win, go to Scene 16.

20

Thanks to what can only be described as a series of lucky shots, you manage to defeat the attackers. It was almost as if they were swerving into your missiles. Something is strange.

As the last few opposing ships are dispatched, your navigator informs you that there is another force of ships lingering at a distance but not engaging.

“Balls,” you mutter pensively.

If you wish to send part of your force to fight them, go to Scene 13.

If you wish to go alone in secret to attack their command ship, go to Scene 35.

21

You are in the chamber of the VP. He reclines in a hot tub full of attractive men and women, all of whom follow him around to anoint him in baby oil constantly. In front of him is a chair made entirely from a taxidermied lion. He indicates for you to sit.

“I was sent to hunt you down, traitor!” you scream as you ignite your plasmaster.

The VP focuses on your weapon. Its beam suddenly dissipates, and it leaps from your hands to smack you in the face.

“OW! Come on!”

“Sit down.”

“NO!”

The weapon once again hits you in the face.

“OW! Didn’t you hear when I said OW?!”

And again.

“OW!”

You sit.

Several of the VP’s guards come forward to frisk you. They are dressed in black robes that look oddly familiar. One of them turns toward the VP. “No weapons or cameras,” she says, “though he does seem to be hiding his penis for some reason.”

“It’s in there! Look around!” you shout, not for the first time.

She then puts a large hose up to your eye and flicks a switch. It tugs on your face.

If you have at any time had a chip inserted into you, remove it from your inventory.

“Clean,” says the guard.

You are pushed forward onto your knees. You suddenly find yourself overcome with rage. You reach out your hand to invoke your powers upon the VP. He

remains unmoved. Then he flicks his fingers, causing you to slap yourself.

“But I have the highest booleon count in the universe!” you shout.

“No.” he responds. “In fact, you have only survived this long because you have been constantly monitored. Everything you believe about yourself is a lie.”

REDUCE WITS, FIGHTING, AND CHARISMA TO 1, REGARDLESS OF BONUSES. REMOVE ALL ASPECTS. REDUCE MAX HP TO 20.

He looks you over and smiles. “Now, take out Joe and place him beside you. You are to play a part in the greatest saga in history. But you are a pawn, not a king.”

The great man stands and clears his throat.

“No doubt the President has told you that you were a part of a special children’s program. That much is true. Several decades ago, we began testing on a large group of children from the day they were born. But there is more to it than that.

“You see, the President is very high in booleans. That, and lenient laws regarding campaign finance, is why he always wins elections. During an expedition, we discovered ancient Silene texts that spoke of magic beyond belief – the ability to change time, space, mass, charge... in short, absolute power. But, to execute these powers required booleon counts above 80%, well beyond that of myself and the President.

“But we also discovered a strange device with the power to switch the Booleon counts of two individuals. The ancient user’s manual said it could be used once only. We decided the best thing to do would be to locate someone with an extremely high count and then switch them with the President so that he could bring harmony to the galaxy.

“He put me in charge of a screening program. Only by a longterm test of many, many people could you ever



be certain someone had a high enough count.

“But, it became clear that the President wanted the power not for good, but for its own sake. And if he could not be stopped, the universe would be ruled by an omnipotent sociopath for all time.

“So, I hatched a plan. Instead of screening for the luckiest, best individuals in the universe, I screened for the opposite. I found the dumbest, unluckiest losers I could find and secretly protected them.”

Your eyes go wide. “But...”

“Think about it. Think about how pathetic your youth was. Think about how nothing ever went right for you. Think of how each prom night was like the horror movie sequel to the previous prom night. And yet, the several times you nearly got yourself killed, you always narrowly escaped.

“Then, you were sent to the Silene Monastery, the worst academy in the entire universe, and you still underperformed nearly all your peers. Then despite that you got the attention of the leader of the free world and its vassals! Of course, that was just a chance for us to examine and test you. By then, we were sure you were among the 100 unluckiest people alive.

You try to say, “Impossible!” which accidentally causes saliva to jump into your lungs, which causes you to trip over your own foot and fall onto your teeth.

“Many others were put through tests there over the years. Those who succeeded without cheating or dumb luck were culled. Those who failed were always saved at the last second and allowed to carry forth.

“When you graduated, you were told you had a special mission. You were needed to defend the empire against the rebellion. Of course, we didn’t really need you for the war. The war was a test to see how badly you could fail. If you had not been constantly protected, you would’ve died 12,351 times. The only person with a higher count was Joe here.

“By the end of that war, only a handful of hopefuls remained, each of whom were orders of magnitude more pathetic than anyone outside this small cadre of megalos-ers.

“Of course, the President was convinced you must have all been extremely lucky, as you ‘passed’ test after test after test. I asked him to perform one final ultimate test to be certain. The Varlata.”

You and Joe’s eyes go wide.

“Yes. That is why your ship was sent to a star and why it contained only brigands and zealots. The President thought you were being tested. But we watched and guided in secret.

“We scattered our agents throughout Varlataneme IV to watch your every movement. Over and over, you and Joe both should have died. But we prevented that.”

“Come on!” you protest. “There were dozens of times I could’ve died no matter what you did!”

“But you never died, did you? It was as if someone was watching you, cheating on your behalf this entire time.”

You pipe down.

“By the time the Varlata was killed, only you and Joe remained. It was unclear who was more pathetic.”

You and the scorched disembodied head eye each other.

“For the last phase of my plan, I had to make sure the President would use one of you, but not suspect any foul play on my part. So, I publicly betrayed the President and came here. By that time, the President believed you were truly powerful, so it was only natural that you would be the one sent to stop me.

“I allowed you to win all of your battles until you were in my lair, away from the President’s eyes. He will soon believe that you have conquered me.

“Now, whichever of you is more pathetic will return to the President, with me pretending to be your captive.

21 – 22

You will trade booleans with the President. Then, he will be so unlucky, so much of a loser, that even his great guards will be unable to save him.”

You and Joe stand there, speechless. Drool drips from your mouths in synchrony.

Go to Scene 34.

22

The robots gingerly cuff you and take you to the brig on a cushion. The brig is a finely appointed living room with finger sandwiches and several Italian Soda options. An expensive sound system plays violin adagios from the popular album “Most Stereotypical Music of the Classical Era.”

Having never been in a brig, and lacking any common sense, you fail to see anything strange in this.

As you look out the large overhead window, you see your armada. You want to say something profound - something with the fine sad air of the defeated warrior, but all you come up with is “Shitballs.”

You hear the roar of engines as a blast of blue light comes from the back of each VP ship. You feel yourself accelerate. You look back at your armada and see it growing smaller and fainter. “Oh my GOD!” you shout. “They’ve got some sort of shrink ray!”

Your prefrontal cortex sighs and leaves.

Just then, you notice a keycard on a coffee table in the middle of the room. It is marked “Escape Pod.”

“Ha! Nice try, robots! And how do I know you’re not trying to kill me with that escape pod?!” you say between gulps of almond Italian soda.

No one responds. Your armada continues to “shrink.”

If you take the key and escape, go to Scene 31.

If you decide to stay put, go to Scene 26.

23

You materialize in an expansive marble rotunda.

“Welcome to the inner workings of the UVE,” says the President. “Over there, our countless anti-matter warheads. Over there, real-time maps of every war we are prosecuting. Over there, a quantum computer determines what location-time-sandwich combination is most likely to make me seem folksy during an upcoming election.”

You listen in.

“White bread with corn beef, Bering Strait at space-time 12A582i30. Roger.”

The President smiles patriarchally. He raises a glass and clinks it to get everyone’s attention. By tradition, the last person to react has to drink the poison therein. Fortunately, the last person is you, so he lets it slide.

“Friends, this is _____, Silene Master, Quasher of Rebellion, and Monster Slayer!”

People clap, causing you to instinctively clap too before you understand what’s going on. People look at you funny, at which point you realize what you’ve done and try to pretend you were making a dog puppet with your hands.

“Arf!”

“His modes are somewhat unorthodox,” says the President.

To everyone’s horror, you are now led toward the experimental spacecraft and armament bay. Here, you are asked what your strategy will be. You sound out the word “strategy” slowly. You are about to guess that it’s a type of sausage, at which point a general makes some suggestions.

If you wish to take a massive armada of warships, go to Scene 18.

If you wish to take a small strikeforce, go to Scene 2.

24

The brigands have the drop on you, so you order the fleet to fire all the missiles at once no matter what direction they're facing. Several of your ships are immediately destroyed. However, the explosion of so many anti-matter engines at once obliterates the enemy. It also obliterates every ship but yours.

You are reduced to one ship and the few members of your crew who weren't in the engine room, sick bay, housing, commons, dining, elevators, or a hallway.

Go to Scene 19.

25

"My God..." says the President. "Why would they do that, unless..."

He asks you what your favorite color is.

Suffice it to say that you fail to name something that is either a color or an object with a distinct color.

The president looks at you in horror. "It's all been a trap. All these years..." The communicator clicks off.

"Hello?" you say.

Moments later, your ship explodes.

YOU LOSE.

26

You sit on the couch to enjoy some more sandwiches. Man, you could do this for hours.

Just then, a small chest falls off a nearby fireplace. Out tumble several maps, ship schematics, and keys. The top map is marked with a hand-drawn pathway that goes from where you sit to the escape pod.

"Duh, woo!" you note.

If you take the items and escape, go to Scene 31.

If you stay put, go to Scene 3.

27

You rotate your fleet and awkwardly interpose yourself between the VP's ships. You hum very loudly and say things like, "Doo doo doo... don't know anyone around heeere..." in a sing-song voice.

You hold out your hands and try to feel The Energy. You focus on the VP's ships.

Suddenly you feel a terrific shudder as every single one of the VP's ships detonates. The view screen is pure white for a few seconds. When the light dissipates, all that remains is the scorched wreckage of the mighty fleet.

You look at your hands.

"Holy crud," you whisper hoarsely. You make a mental note to be more cautious next time you masturbate.

If you report this strange incident to the President, go to Scene 25.

If you continue on, go to Scene 5.

28

"No. I will not fight my only fellow traveler."

You throw down your plasmaster.

It bounces off the ground back up into your leg, causing you to fall over and hit your head on it. In your comatose dreams, you wonder why this sort of thing keeps happening to you. It occurs to you that this is the first time since you came into existence that a group of protectors was not constantly surveilling you.

When you come to, the Vice President congratulates you. You may well be the unluckiest soul who ever lived.

Go to Scene 37.

29

In the end, it turns out everything was a test. Since you have passed, the President and the VP tell you the truth – the universe has demanded a new being be made God. You are the only individual who has shown the might and wisdom necessary for that role.

You are placed in a small machine. As it is turned on, you feel your mind expand and expand until it encompasses every bit of matter and time in the universe. Under your watch, suffering is ended, love is prioritized, and truth, justice, and goodness reign supreme forever.

YOU WIN.

THE END.

30

BATTLE: FIGHTING: ROBOTS YET AGAIN

FIGHTING: 0, HP: 50

If you win, go to Scene 4.

31

You head out the wide open brig door toward the escape pod. No guards have been posted, and there's an automated walkway, so you make it to the pod quickly. You open the door and step in.

You look out the pod windows to see that the ship must be in hyperdrive. So many stars are zooming past you that the black of space turns to a light yellow.

As the ship decelerates, the stars become points again and a vast base comes into view – the stately pleasure base of the VP – Manadu.

Looks like you'll be assaulting Manadu alone. You press the escape button and the pod fires out.

Go to Scene 9.

32

The robots are easily dispatched. Once again, it seems as if the enemy is moving directly into your attacks. At one point, you attempt to pick your nose, and the finger goes into an exposed area of a robot's cranium, killing it instantly.

Something is strange.

If you lay down your arms, go to Scene 22.

If you continue fighting, go to Scene 10.

33

You enter the ruins.

Several centuries ago a great battle occurred during Galactic Civil War 173B, fought between the democratic federalists and the federalist democrats. At that time, the most recent constitution was scanned and sent out with a housefly stuck in the scanner. As a result, there was an amendment saying “The right to fly arms will not be impinged.” Some interpreted this as a universal right to smuggle weapons. This led to a contentious debate over whether the framers of the constitution had intended the fly to land there or not. Fortunately, the constitution was written only three months prior, so the framers were asked their intentions. This led to a contentious debate over whether the framers of the constitution had intended the fly to land there or not.

A week later, several hundred thousand ships were engaged in a space battle just outside the capital.

You bring your fleet through the ruins. Cruising through all these old ships is like being in a museum of horrors. In some of the single pod fighters, you can even see the dead bodies, perfectly preserved. Of course, these are old bodies, so they all have serious looks and one hand in a coat. Modern bodies tend to smile or make faces.

33 – 34

You pull in close to get a look at one of these bodies close up on the viewscreen. To everyone's amazement, the body suddenly jumps to life.

Your second mate shouts, "Captain! Their weapons are charging. It's a trap!"

+2 WITS FOR THIS SCENE IF YOU HAVE PILOT ASPECT.

BATTLE: WITS: BRIGANDS

WITS: 3

If you win, go to Scene 24.

34

"BUT!" you squeal. "How can I be as unlucky as a guy who's a severed head that lives in a backpack? He's so unlucky that he has a gene that makes him constantly want to kill himself and yet he always fails!"

"Remember that time your ex said she might call, so you waited by the phone for 60 hours until you passed out from dehydration, then fell on your bedsheets in just such a way as to leave the word "balls" imprinted on your face?"

"That only happened eleven times," you protest. Joe and the VP share a knowing look.

The VP smiles. "Now, I must determine which of you will join me. Take out your plasmasters. It is time for combat."

You take out your weapon. The VP summons a plasmaster from his belt and sticks it in Suicidal Joe's mouth like a popsicle. He sets up a folding chair and puts Joe on top of it.

You square off.

If you refuse to fight Joe, go to Scene 28.

If you do battle, go to Scene 6.

35

In a move that would one day be described by historians as, “Stupid piled upon stupid,” if historians had any interest in you (which they don't) you take a small shuttle toward the command ship.

The huge cannons of the ship fail to notice your small craft as you come close and clasp on to the hull. You look out the window to see several dozen robotic eyes looking right at you. You whistle and try to look innocent. The eyes withdraw.

For a moment, you stand in silence. Then, the ship begins to rock back and forth like a wet dog. Everything in the shuttle falls from its proper place. It's going to take all the skills of spacemanship, which you learned in war, and clingyness, which you learned in love, to keep yourself clasped to the ship.

BATTLE: WITS: COMMAND SHIP
WITS: 7

+5 TO ALL ROLLS FOR THIS SCENE IF YOU'RE AN ENGINEER, AND THEREFORE A MASTER OF CLINGYNESS.

If you win, go to Scene 12.

If you lose, you return to your own ship to prepare an attack. Go to Scene 13.

36

BATTLE: FIGHTING: ROBOTS
FIGHTING: 0, HP: 40

If you win, go to Scene 32.

37

“Come with me,” bellows the VP. On the way past you, he delights Joe by stepping on his head and explod-

ing it.

You follow the VP down a rustic hallway through a large wooden door and into a massive den, decorated with taxidermied beasts from thousands of worlds, including many that look like a larger version of the Varlata.

Of course, you notice none of this as you are entranced by the Vice President's buttocks, which are so calipygian, they seem to be the essential buttocks, of which all other buttocks are some sort of degraded imitation.

Once inside, several of the President's sexy loincloth-clad guards stab you in the head with a cold metal device. It melts into your face, causing a sudden feeling of extreme heat in all of your bones. It is so painful, you make no puns about the word "head" or "bone."

The guards put a piece of chain in your hand. On its far end is a leash that they politely put around the VP's neck.

The VP sucks on his pipe and blows a smoke ring shaped like a male symbol. He inspects the chain. "Good," he says. "Using this chain, I can now control your body."

"Wait," you say, "won't the President use The Energy to detect my booleon count before he activates the machine?"

"I will be protecting you with my powers. It will take a great deal of concentration to balance out your..."

He looks at your noodly physique, lack of chin, concave forehead, and too-sad-to-be-hilarious eyebrows.

"Your you. So, it is imperative that you just shut your mouth unless I manipulate it. Is that understood?"

Your brain is still processing this simple question ten seconds later. The VP assumes you're showing off your ability to be silent.

"Good," he says, then turns to his guards. "Very goo—"

"GOT IT!"

The VP shares a concerned look with his guards.

END OF ACT 4

RESTORE ALL HP.

Go to Act 5.

ACT 5

1

The Vice President escorts you to the hangar of Manadu.

As you enter, he puts a hand on your shoulder. Well, part of a hand. Only about three of his fingers fit on your tiny shoulders.

“Remember, for your entire life, it has been to your advantage to be stupid. Whenever you’ve done something stupid, we protected you. The more stupid you were, the more protection you got. This came naturally to you, and yet I fear we’ve conditioned you to move beyond even your super-subhuman level of stupidity.”

You nod your head and attempt to subtly remove your two pointer fingers from your nostrils.

“This will be a very short trip, and we will know whether we’ve succeeded soon. I need you to pretend you are not a colossal moron for a half hour. All you have to do is do nothing stupid. You don’t have to be smart. Just keep your idiot mouth shut. Just for 30 little minutes.”

You nod your head silently. This is not out of solemnity – you’ve just temporarily forgotten the word “Yes.”

If you have “Surveillance Fixed” in your item list, go to Scene 11.

Otherwise, go to Scene 21.

2

Your job as an auto repair salesman paid on commission is not entirely unrewarding. In fact, it forms a sort of feedback loop. Every time you sell an unneeded air filter, evil courses through your body, driving you into self loathing as the wicked energy physically warps you uglier and uglier. Your ugliness drives you to still greater evil, which results in still more ugliness.

A few decades on, you are warped almost beyond recognition. You dress in black robes and a large cowl as

The President turns toward the VP furiously. The VP loses his calm and ceases protecting your lack of yes-booleans.

The President senses the change and understands everything immediately. In his rage, he strikes you down, and with you, the hope of the universe.

The world ends, not with a whimper, but with a balls joke.

(Okay, technically it ends with both).

YOU LOSE.

5

The President gets in your face.

“Why would you be nervous?” he asks cruelly. “Why would you be nervous, unless...”

You look at the VP who maintains his cowboy-like pokerface.

“Unless you were in collusion! Guards! Seize them!”



You soon find yourself and the VP locked together in a small containment field. You look at the VP apologetically. He has not changed his expression, but several of the massive veins of his neck pulse more rapidly than usual.

Go to Scene 8.

6

You and the Vice President deftly conquer opponent after opponent, until only the President remains, his weak body lying on the floor in a tear-soaked heap.

He asks you if it's really so bad to be... you.

You spend the next 14 hours recounting every mo-

6 – 7

ment of shame, embarrassment, degradation, and the one time you tried asking a girl out via a Taco Bell drive thru window.

The President begs for death. The Vice President stuffs him into an escape pod and blasts him into the cold vacuum of nowhere.

The VP extends his thick leathery hand.

“Co-Presidents?” he asks.

“Co-Presidents.”

Go to Scene 22.

7

“I’d like to cockup your...” (at this point you pause to realize the sentence structure has already failed, but then you resolve to continue) “... mom.”

The President wonders aloud in honest confusion why someone so powerful would make such a terribly unclever joke. The VP stifles the urge to slap you with your own hand.

The President looks at the VP, who makes a perfect pokerface. He then looks at you, as you wear a giant terrified smile. He walks over to you, a dubious look on his face. He closes his eyes and concentrates. A subtle grimace of focus crosses the VP’s face.

“Good,” says the President. He walks about you, like a cat stalking prey. “This evening, would you join me at a local sporting event? Everyone will be playing with balls.”

The 90% of your brain that is oriented around humor that neither merits nor elicits laughter is thrown into epileptic shock. Your face tries to contort in agony, but the VP holds you together. It is painful, and you yearn for sweet release.

If you make the pun, go to Scene 4.

If you say you were just nervous, go to Scene 5.

8

After a few minutes, the VP visibly relaxes. He looks up to see the half-dozen guards escorting you down a long white hallway. He knits his brows in thought.

Moments later, as a High Guard presses his hand against an identification screen, the VP throws himself against the force field in just such a way that its corner hits a guard's belt, releases her plasmaster and turns it on, causing it to cut the containment field generator and release you.

If you try to dodge the generator as it falls toward you, go to Scene 15.

If you don't, go to Scene 18.

9

You grab a Goodsider plasmaster and throw it to the waiting hands of the Vice President. He makes a great arc of a swing through the High Guard.

It passes through the guards, gently massaging them. They seize the opportunity to kill the VP.

The guards turn toward you and raise their weapons. Just then, the President tries to stand, but falls, exploding his face. Both leaders now are dead, rotting in pools of their own blood.

Awkward.

The High Guards look at you, at the remains of the VP, and at the President. They kneel before you. You are now the President of the Galaxy.

-3 CHARISMA

Go to Scene 19.

10

You are recognized throughout reality as the greatest being of all time. Every person who ever slighted or scorned you kneels to kiss your hand. Every moment of doubt in your life is shown to be false. The light of your perfection shall be a beacon to illuminate the future, guide the present, and make sense of the past.

Bravo.

YOU WIN.

THE END.

11

You board the ship on which you came. After clearing away a few bodies, you assume the helm. The VP takes control of your body and uses it to pilot the ship.

You engage the favorite warp and go. Within ten minutes, you have returned to the galactic capital. Your hands flick the switch and your ship drops out of warp.

You are surrounded on all sides by the UVE fleet.

One of the President's guards appears over the intercom. "We had a surveillance camera monitoring your hangar from this ship. Ten minutes ago, we watched you two chatting in the hangar of Manadu. We know you are in league. Power down your shields and surrender immediately."

The VP shoots you a look. "YOU LEFT A CAMERA RUNNING?!"

Your own hand punches you in the neck.



A half hour later, you and the VP find yourselves in a containment field in the palace of the President. Fortunately, the chain you carried has been kept whole.

You are escorted by the High Guard of the President. These are elite warriors, who are familiar with the ways of the Silenes and also with legitimate fighting techniques. You see the VP's eyes are clamped shut, as he concentrates to make sure they do not detect you.

If you decide to help out, go to Scene 13.

If you wait for the VP to act, go to Scene 8.

12

In the verbal equivalent of the evening after you had an eating contest for one at Taco Bell, you expel the entire plan into the President's ears.

The High Guards fall upon the Vice President, but not before he shoots lightning from his hands into your stupid body. The plan fails. You die.

The next cloning program will be monitored by the President himself. When it succeeds, he will use his powers to bring you back from the dead, make you immortal, and throw you into a maximum security penitentiary with the slogan, "Rehabilitating criminals by ignoring prisoner-on-prisoner assault since 2212."

YOU LOSE.

13

You take out a marker and draw a mustache on yourself so that you cannot be detected. Then you realize it'd be good if the VP were disguised too. You try to draw on his face, but the stubble is so rugged that the marker snaps, exploding ink all over his face. The VP's eyes rage open.

In the brief moment of lost focus, the High Guards detect your low booleon count. It is so low, that they hardly believe it. Then they look inside the box to find you with your head tucked into your shirt and a face

13 – 15

drawn on your hand. In a falsetto, your hand says, “Where’d he go?! He must’ve escaped! Look somewhere else!”

They report the situation to the President, who has you tortured by the Senate Subcommittee on Enhanced Interrogation. Note: During this time period, “hance” is another word for “spike.”

Worst of all, they are restricted to techniques approved by the Geneva Inversions of 2041.

YOU LOSE.

14

You grab a plasmaster and whip it across the room into the waiting hands of the VP.

+10 FIGHTING FOR THIS SCENE.

BATTLE: FIGHTING: HIGH GUARDS
FIGHTING: 7, HP: 50

If you win, go to Scene 6.

15

You leap away to dodge the containment generator. “NO!” shouts the VP as you inevitably bounce off the floor back into the containment generator, causing it to turn on again.

The plasma field jitters back into place in just the right location to sever the VP’s head from his neck. His last words are “Mother fu-” which you assume was the name of a nun he knew.

As the VP is no longer protecting you, the High Guards instantly detect your lack of yes-booleans. They are so amazed at your lack of luck that one holds up a mirror to you to see if you cast a reflection. He then looks at the reflection and concludes that it’s even worse this way.

They report the situation to the President, who has you tortured by the senate subcommittee on enhanced interrogation. Note: During this time period, “hance” is another word for “spike.”

They are restricted to techniques approved by the Geneva Inversion of 2041.

Shit.

YOU LOSE.

16

The VP uses the chain to fend off several guards as you do battle with your own opponents.

The President is slumped down and crying as you and the VP fight to get near him. Using your newfound powers, you fight two guards at once and it doesn't even occur to you to make a threesome joke.

The guards slowly cut away at the VP's chain until he is left with nothing. Eight of them surround him.

“Throw me a plasmaster!” he shouts.

If you throw him a regular plasmaster, go to Scene 14.

If you have a Goodsider plasmaster, and wish to throw that, go to Scene 9.

17

You focus on not doing anything. You try to imagine times in your life when you didn't do anything, like every day of your adolescence or every day of your pre-adolescence. Before you know it, the threat has subsided.

You are brought into the secret chamber of the President's palace where the ancient device is kept.

The President smiles at you. “By the power vested in me, and by agreement of the Supreme Court*, I declare you Vice President of the United Vassals of the Empire.

17 – 18

Step into your half of the throne.

You look at the machine. It is small and cold, made entirely of shining black rock with two concavities hewn into it. You step into the left chamber. The President steps into the right.

Go to Scene 3.

**“Supreme Court” is the name of a scepter the President holds when he declares things constitutional.*

18

The VP mentally forces your arm up, which sends a ripple down the chain, which connects with the lit plasmaster, tossing it through a High Guard into the VP’s waiting hands. The High Guard’s plasmaster falls into your grip and lights.

Just then the nearby door slides open, revealing the President and another group of High Guards. President Vidanek lights his plasmaster and falls upon you and the VP.

A fierce battle ensues with you and the VP and President trading blow for blow. Of course, you’re not controlling any of the action, so you just sit back and watch like it’s a 3D movie. Several times, when your body executes a difficult technique, you shout “OH, NICE ONE!” leading everyone to think you’re quite arrogant. One of your arms is not needed to wield the blade, so you use it to eat popcorn out of your pocket.

As he battles the President, the VP must also fight the High Guard, which he does so excellently that the whole affair appears like a choreographed ballet. But, the group of warriors are too powerful even for him. Finally, he retreats a few paces to clear some ground.

The President dissipates his plasmaster. “Come, old friend. Come, Mandrew. You’ve done your duty. You’ve served me well. And, despite this trespass, if you lay down your arms you will be rewarded in my omnipotent



18 – 19

reign.”

“In a reign of evil, there are no rewards.”

The President opens his mouth to respond, but you cut him off by shouting, “OHHH, BURN!” as flecks of popcorn and spittle escape your mouth.

The VP looks to the President and smiles. He dissipates his blade and lets it fall. Your arm does the same. The High Guards cuff you and him.

“Good,” says the President. “And now you will watch as I become the most powerful being in the universe.”

You are taken into the next room where you see two pods carved into black stone. The High Guards take the chain from you, and you are placed into the right pod of the machine.

The President steps into the left.

“Do it,” he says. “Do it now.”

The High Guards flip the switch. For a moment, nothing happens. The President looks over just in time to see you with your thumb in your ear and pinky in your nose, singing a commercial jingle for breakfast cereal. His mistake dawns on him a moment too late.

“What the—” he starts. “Wait. Wait, NO!”

Your body straightens and everything glows pale blue.

Go to Scene 20.

19

You are President, but an election looms. Fortunately, as of today you have intelligence. You hold a galactic referendum on whether or not you should be dictator. Then, you suggest that a vote for Democracy is a vote for a license to do anything you want, which is a vote for baby-murder and sex with animals.

You are made dictator by a landslide.

You soon find yourself looking out the telescopic panoramic windows of a planet-sized starbase. You see

every sun, planet, galaxy, and nebula. All are yours.

If you wish to spend the remainder of your life in the cruel pursuit of power, go to Scene 23.

If you wish to give into the pursuit of pure evil for its own sake, go to Scene 2.

20

You feel a strange lightness as spots of color worm across your vision. A bizarre sensation explodes in your subconscious – you have the confusing, foreign feeling of being only slightly below average.

Time moves in slow motion. You turn your head to see the President who looks back in horror and agony as he feels his very being destroyed by slow psychic abrasion. You stick out your tongue at him.

You look at your hands and are jolted forth as you feel another wave of sensation wash over you. When it subsides you feel... average. This is astounding. You reach up to brush back your hair and don't poke your own eyes even once.

A scream wells up in your gut and forces its way up your torso into your lungs and out your mouth. You let out a howl that seems to echo to the ends of eternity and back. AND, you don't crack your voice while doing it. It is a pure, primal, powerful howl.

"I. AM. ABOVE. AAAAAAAAAAVERAAAAAAGE!"

The black machine explodes into atoms, forcing you and the President forward. You stumble a bit, but keep your feet. The President falls awkwardly, causing him to do a splits in such a manner that one of his feet goes into his mouth just as his pants rip.

All of your stats are restored to their level prior to being reduced in Act 4. All of your aspects are returned.

+5 TO FIGHTING, WIT, AND CHARISMA. +5 MAX HP.

RESTORE ALL HP.

“My God,” says the VP. “It worked.”

The Vice President breaks the chain around his neck and whirls it at a member of the High Guard.

You look down and focus. A plasmaster leaps from your belt into your hand.

Go to Scene 16.

21

You board one of the VP’s smaller fightercrafts. As you climb the stairs into the ship’s body, the VP’s agents shoot it a few times to give it a damaged appearance.

Inside, the VP uses his control over you to make you pilot the ship. You take off, exit the hangar, and engage favorite warp. As the stars elongate around your ship, the VP sits beside you.

“I will be controlling your body, but it is also important that you DO NOT attempt to control your body. Everything you do is stupid. Anyone who told you otherwise, ever, was laughing at you behind your back. Do you understand?”

You nod.

“All you have to do is not do a stupid thing for about the next half hour. Can you do that?”

“I thought I wasn’t supposed to do things.”

The VP sighs heavily.

“Remember the last time you made love to a blow up doll?”

“Sheila, yes. Why?”

“Imagine you’re like Sheila. Just for 30 minutes.”

You understand now, and nod solemnly.



You land back at the galactic capital, where the

President's High Guard greets you. They are the finest warriors in the UVE, trained both in Silene combat and in combat that works. They are dressed in white robes, with plasmasters hanging at their sides.

You feel odd, walking without telling your body to walk. But, the VP does an excellent job of making you move while he appears to be a prisoner.

The President comes out to greet you.

"Wonderful," he says. "Truly wonderful work. You have passed all of my tests without a single cockup."

Everything seems to go silent as your entire psyche resolves into a point. Every atom of your body demands a poorly crafted joke about the word cockup, but you know you ought to resist.

You sweat visibly as everyone stares.

"Is everything all right?" asks the President.

If you keep your mouth shut, go to Scene 17.

If you spin the word cockup into a joke about his mother, go to Scene 7.

22

You rule the galaxy together for the remainder of the President's 37th term.

You are moderately popular and somewhat effective, but you fail to win the next election. This is very fortunate, since you can now command massive speaking fees for ten minute talks written by other people. You retire to a beachside villa and build a Presidential library with money from personal appearances and very stupid rich people.

You hear it has books in it. That sounds nice.

YOU WIN.

THE END.

23

You recreate the clone-finding program that was supposed to empower the President. This time it is successful, and you are given powers beyond imagining – powers beyond space and time. Everything from planetwide genocide to skipping commercials is but a snap of your fingers. You indulge yourself.

And so, you live the human dream – everyone else in the universe is at least a little bit worse off than you.

YOU WIN.

THE END.