APOCALYPSE FRAME

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An Illuminated Mecha RPG

This game is Illuminated by LUMEN, based on the LUMEN RPG system designed by Spencer Campbell, Gila RPGs. This game is in no way affiliated with Spencer Campbell or Gila RPGs.

Dedicated to my incredibly supportive wife for consistently convincing me to keep going.

Dedicated also to my friends who have been willing to take a chance on my half-finished games.

In memory of Alex Fish, whose contributions to my work over the years have been indescribably vast. You'll be missed.

Table of Contents

BACKGROUND

THE INFECTION

After a period of heightened economic and political instability, exacerbated by a series of pandemics and natural disasters, the world as we knew it was already in turmoil and heading towards inevitable global crisis. That's when, whether by chance or design, **something** arrived from the stars. Whatever it was – an invasion, a refugee, or something else altogether – The Infection, as it became known, destroyed or altered much of the world, before The Republic made a last stand.

THE REPUBLIC

When one of the world's most heavily armed nations found themselves ineffectual against the unthinking destruction of The Infection, its military turned on its leaders, staging a swift and savage coup. From its ashes rose The Republic, a name from antiquity and modernity that might suggest legitimacy and justice, but whose brutal dictatorship made this title nothing but a parody. However, even a nation bent on sacrificing its citizens to a useless war faltered in their goals – until they developed the Frames.

THE FRAMES

The aggressive and rapid terraforming of territory controlled by The Infection required military vehicles designed for combat in any and all terrains, often in the same mission. With this in mind, The Republic developed exoskeletal humanoid vehicles known as Frames. At first, the ingenuity of this approach garnered broad popular support, and the populace threw themselves into common single-minded purpose, but in those desperate times, this couldn't last.

THE COLLECTIVE

The efforts of The Republic were enough to halt The Infection to some degree, but it soon became clear that the military junta was here to stay. Against a backdrop of increasing civil dissent, and amidst an unexpected outbreak of The Infection, workers at a remote Frame production facility took the opportunity to seize the factory for themselves. The Collective, as it soon became known to its new owners, found itself easily able to avoid recapture thanks to the newly-produced Frames. Over the next few years, dissidents flocked to them, and their numbers grew, as did their capacity to remain independent. Before long, The Collective founded a program to foster its most elite Frame pilots, training them to undertake their most dangerous – and most vital – missions against The Republic and The Infection.

THE ACES

You are an Ace: a Frame pilot whose capabilities exceed those of your peers, and whose dedication is above and beyond that expected of citizens of The Collective. You and your fellow Aces have been assigned to a Strike Team to address The Collective's most pressing concerns. You must do your best to protect those you love. The last hope for freedom from oppression is in your hands.

CORE MECHANICS

APOCALYPSE FRAME can be played by two or more players. Every player but one will play an Ace, piloting a Frame on special missions for The Collective. The other player is the Game Master (GM), who manages the flow of missions and campaigns by providing plot hooks for the players to follow and giving the Aces challenging situations and enemies.

ATTRIBUTES

Every character has three Attributes which represent their approach to situations.

Drive

Your Ace's forcefulness and directness.
Drive actions are **sweeping** and **powerful**.

Speed

Your Ace's quickness and reactivity.
Speed actions are **reflexive** and **immediate**.

Control

Your Ace's expertise and skill.
Control actions are **technical** and **deliberate**.

Attributes may be no lower than 1, and no higher than 3.

ATTRIBUTE ROLLS

While deciding on a course of action, a player should describe their Ace's approach. If an action is straightforward, or if rolling dice to resolve it wouldn't add tension to the moment, it simply happens. On the other hand, where it's a risky or tense action, or something for which variable success or failure would be interesting, then the GM should call for a roll.

First, the GM decides which of the Ace's 3 Attributes best describes the approach. The Ace then rolls a number of six-sided dice numbered 1–6 equal to that Attribute's value and takes the highest. If an Ace would roll 0 dice (for example, due to being outside their Frame), roll 2 dice and take the lower value.

- **1-2:** Failure with a consequence (No, and…)
- **3-4:** Success with a consequence (Yes, but…)
- **5-6:** Success with no consequences (Yes)

Outside of combat, consequences are the narrative twists and complications which detail or change the unfolding story for the characters. In combat, consequences might let an enemy act early, inflict adverse effects on Frames, or add a complication to an action.

Attribute Rolls outside a Frame

Attribute rolls as described above assume that an Ace is inside their Frame. If an Ace is outside their Frame, roll 1 less die.

ATTACK ROLLS

If rolling an Attack, roll the number of dice listed on the Armament you're using to attack, modified by any tags or conditions, instead of an Attribute.

RECRUITING AN ACE

Creating a character involves 3 steps:

1. **Divide 6 points between the three Attributes**, with each Attribute having a value of 1, 2, or 3. These can be changed or rearranged later.
2. **Choose a Division.** This determines which set of starting Frames your Ace may choose from. Aces in the same Strike Team may be from the same or different Divisions.
3. **Choose a Frame.** Each Division has access to one light, one medium and one heavy Frame.

DIVISIONS

An Ace has previous assignments and experiences prior to being chosen for a Strike Team. This is represented by their Division.

Selection for the Ace program is an honor bestowed on an Ace by a Division, a reward for loyalty and service. If you're running a campaign using Favor Clocks, advance the Favor Clock for that Division by one tick (see).

The Sword trains their soldiers for surveilling and eliminating threats posed by infantry and enemy Frames. Their Aces pick from M1-SOLDIER, L1-RECON, and H1-VANGUARD, three Frames well-balanced between offense and defense.
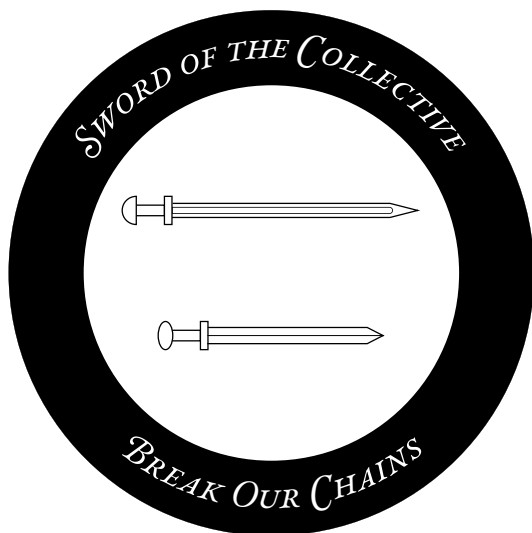
The Arrow undertakes risky operations, quick strikes, and eliminating large or unusual threats. Their Aces pick from M2-ARCHER, L2-BRAWLER, and H2-LANCER, three Frames tuned strongly towards offense.

ARROW OF THE COLLECTIVE

LET TYRANTS FALL

The Shield deals with intelligence gathering and internal security concerns. Their Aces pick from M3-SENTINEL, L3-GLADIATOR, and H3-ANGLER, three Frames oriented towards battle control and support.

SHIELD OF THE COLLECTIVE

NEVER FALTER

FRAMES

Frames are a fairly recent innovation. As traditional combat vehicles balked at the rapidly changing terrain in the war against The Infection, The Republic rapidly adapted civilian-use exoskeletons in an effort to retain and retake territory.

After the situation with The Infection became more stable, most production was turned away from the original military Frames into those better suited to Republic "civilian" society, with uses ranging from construction to policing. Manufacturing became simpler, with later models designed for large-scale 3D printing and mechanically assisted assembly by prisoners and unwillingly assigned civilians. Prior to the revolt, The Collective was one such manufacturing facility, but its blueprints have since been hacked for unrestricted, non-standard production.

CAPABILITIES

Frames were designed as replacements for light (and later heavy) combat vehicles, and their size reflects this. When standing fully upright, Light Frames are 15–18 feet tall, Medium Frames are 19–21 feet tall, and Heavy Frames are 22–25 feet tall. Light Frames are almost always single-occupant and have very little extra storage space, but Medium and Heavy Frames sometimes have one or two secondary cockpits and have extra cargo areas built in.

When standing, all Frames walk, run, aim, and so on using sets of servomotors that mimic human biology (with concessions for practicality, of course). Heavier Frames tend to have more powerful servomotors, which aid in situations where brute strength is important. More strenuous actions, like jumping, climbing, or diving, are aided by sets of thrusters that operate in short bursts, which have more of an effect on lighter Frames. Over relatively flat areas, Frames typically use wheels or treads to travel more efficiently, which are engaged when lying flat.

Frames are generally powered by high-density batteries, which in some situations can be used to power external systems. Medium Frames tend to have the most battery power available for external uses.

In addition to combat equipment, Frames usually boast a variety of general-purpose sensors and tools. Use the description of each Frame in addition to its Signature Feature and System as suggestions for what they might be equipped with.

CHARACTERISTICS

Each Frame is defined by a set of characteristics: three depletable Resources (Vigor, Tension, and Fuel); specific Armaments; Signature and Modular Systems; a Build; and a Signature Feature.

Resources

Vigor represents not only the toughness and ruggedness of a Frame, but also the Ace's endurance and ability to shield the more sensitive parts of their vehicle. Vigor is higher for larger Frames, owing to greater mass being better able to absorb glancing blows. To determine your Frame's maximum Vigor, increase the base value given in its Description by your Ace's Drive Attribute.

Vigor is reduced by taking Harm. If Vigor reaches zero, your Frame might take Frame Damage (see page 35).

Vigor can be regained from Drops, and is restored to maximum at the end of a Battle. Additionally, Frames with Heavy Build or Medium Build regain some Vigor at the end of every GM Turn.

Tension represents the Ace's morale, momentum, and ability to change the pace of battle. Tension is higher for lighter Frames, whose lower weight reduces their inertia and power drain. To determine your Frame's maximum Tension, increase the base value given in its description by your Ace's Speed Attribute.

You may spend 1 Tension to re-roll an Attack or gain another Action during your turn.

Tension can be regained from Drops. Additionally, Frames with Light or Medium Build regain some Tension at the end of every GM Turn. You can gain Tension above your maximum from any source that would grant Tension, such as Build, Drops, or the Hot Tag. However, any Tension beyond your maximum is lost at the start of the next GM Turn.

Fuel represents the Frame's munitions, charges, or similar expendables which power its Systems. Fuel is higher for heavier Frames, owing to greater weight capacity and larger power plant. To determine your Frame's maximum Fuel, increase the base value given in its description by your Ace's Control Attribute.

You may spend 1 Fuel to use a Signature or Modular System.

Fuel can be regained when a supply cache is found during a mission, and is restored to its maximum between missions.

Armaments

Armaments are standard weaponry that can be used with an Attack action. By default, each Frame has two Armaments; as part of advancement, Aces may install different and better Armaments on their Frames.

The Armaments section (page 30) has the standard weaponry available. Each entry lists the number of dice used with an Attack action which represents reliability and accuracy, a Harm value which defines its baseline ability to overwhelm defenses and take out enemies, at least one Range tag, and other tags that describe its operation and effects.

As part of advancement, Aces may install different Armaments and add new tags to upgrade them.

Systems

Systems are secondary weapons and tools that provide a Frame with extra capabilities. Each Frame model is equipped with a single **Signature System**, such as the Flamethrower on the H2-LANCER or the Chaff Launcher on the L1-RECON. Additionally, each Frame is equipped with two **Modular Systems**, which are more generic Systems attached to a Frame to widen or narrow its range of intended utility.

On your turn, you may activate as many Systems as you wish, spending 1 Fuel per System activated.

The Systems Section (page 28) has the standard Modular Systems available. As part of advancement, Aces may switch out Modular Systems and add new tags to upgrade them.

Build and Signature Feature

Each Frame has passive qualities that relate to their general and specific design. **Build** is a generalized quality for a certain kind of Frame, like those of a specific weight class. **Signature Features** are specific to a certain Frame model, and are core to the focus of that particular design.

These are inherent to the design of the Frame and do not need to be activated.
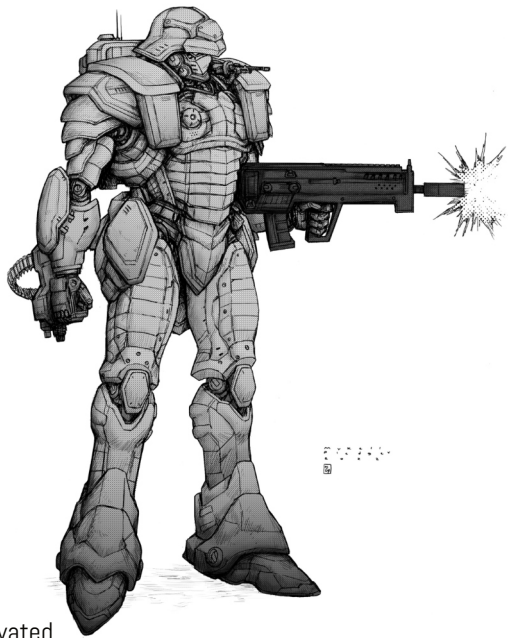
THE COLLECTIVE'S FRAME MODELS

The Collective builds and deploys nine different models of Frames in its Strike Teams, three for each of the principal military Divisions.

The Sword's preferred Frames were the first of those designed by the Collective and are the most similar to Republic models.

- **M1-SOLDIER**: A converted Legionnaire model. It maintains the Legionnaire's defensive capabilities but has better automatic fire capabilities.
- **L1-RECON**: A converted Velite model. It has active countermeasures against long-range attacks, and its sensitive controls allow it to avoid reprisal.
- **H1-VANGUARD**: A converted Decanus model. Oversized armor plating allows other Frames to use it as mobile battlefield cover.

The Arrow's preferred Frames were designed to create dedicated offensive capability. Created after the Sword's Frames, they are adapted from those first generation models.

- **M2-ARCHER**: A range-focused scout/sniper built from the M1-SOLDIER, with its defensive and full auto capability removed in favor of superior sensors and optics.
- **L2-BRAWLER**: A close-range combatant designed from a civilian racing Frame. Daredevil Aces love its mobility, but this comes at the price of fragility.
- **H2-LANCER**: A monstrosity that looks like several Frames combined. It's built to maximize firepower, with advanced targeting and a built-in flamethrower.

The Shield's preferred Frames were designed after those of the other Divisions, adapting civilian-use Frames to fill gaps in provision, and to provide indirect support to Strike Teams.

- **M3-SENTINEL**: A converted data collection Frame. It has in-built skyports, using drones alongside EMP field projectors to provide support.
- **L3-GLADIATOR**: A converted riot control Frame. Its arm-mounted riot shield provides cover at range and can be used to ram unsuspecting enemies.
- **H3-ANGLER**: A converted construction Frame, referred to lovingly by its proponents as "The Spider", owing to its ability to ensnare and hamper enemies.

M1-SOLDIER

A converted Legionnaire model. It maintains the Legionnaire's defensive capabilities but has better automatic fire capabilities.

Signature Feature

Tripled Feed Motors: Backup belt-feeding mechanisms with advanced cooling enable more rapid and sustained conventional fire. Your Armaments have +1 Harm if they have the Burst, Spin Up, or Splash Tags, provided they don't have the Energy Tag.

Resources

- **Vigor:** 7 + Drive
- **Tension:** 2 + Speed
- **Fuel:** 4 + Control

Signature System

Actuated Plating (Support): Activate defensive protocols that flare out additional plating across your Frame's chassis. You have +1 Armor for the rest of the round. Limited.

- **Limited:** You may only use this System once per round.

Build

Medium: Your Frame is well-balanced for speed and stability. Before rolling Drops, regain 1 Vigor and 1 Tension.

Armaments

Assault Rifle: A scaled-up version of the traditional infantry firearm.

   4 dice, 3* Harm, Near, Burst

   • **Burst:** +1 Harm when your roll is a 6.

Machinegun: A rapid fire anti-personnel weapon.

   4 dice, 2* Harm, Close/Near, Splash, Piercing

   • **Splash:** Enemies Close to the target take 1 Harm when your roll is a 6.
   • **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

   *+1 Harm from Tripled Feed Motors is included here.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

   4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

   • **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Sword: A long, unpowered blade. Difficult to use, but very effective.

   1 die, 5 Harm, Close, Piercing.

   • **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Modular Systems

Chaingun (Offensive): Blanket the vicinity with gunfire. Choose: deal 1 Harm to four Close or Near enemies who are Close or Near to each other, or deal 2 Harm to two Close or Near enemies who are Close or Near to each other.

Pulse Laser (Offensive): Emit a short, precise laser burst. Choose: deal 2 Harm to a Near enemy, or deal 1 Harm to a Far enemy. Energy, Efficient.

• **Energy:** Ignores Armor.

• **Efficient:** The first time in a round that you use this System, roll a die. On a 4-6, no Fuel is expended this time.

L1-RECON

A converted Velite model. It has active countermeasures against long-range attacks, and its sensitive controls allow it to avoid reprisal.

Signature Feature

Hairpin Controls: Highly sensitive controls enable skilled pilots to recover instantly from risky situations and otherwise deadly missteps. The first time you roll a 4 in a turn, ignore any Harm from the Consequence that arises.

Resources

- **Vigor:** 6 + Drive
- **Tension:** 4 + Speed
- **Fuel:** 3 + Control

Signature System

Chaff Launcher (Support): Spread a cloud of metallic dust that interferes with all kinds of target acquisition. You and all allies Close to you take -1 Harm from Near and Far attackers (minimum 0) until the end of the round. Limited.

- **Limited:** You may only use this System once per round.

Build

Light: Your Frame's powerful thrust makes it suitable for quick maneuvers and hard burns. Before rolling Drops, regain 2 Tension.

Armaments

Scout Rifle: A long rifle built for versatility and accuracy.

> 3 dice, 2 Harm, Near/Far

Plasma Blade: A deadly blade capable of slicing through Frame defenses.

> 1 die, 5 Harm, Close, Energy, Piercing, Charge

- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.
- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.
- **Charge:** +1 die on your first Attack with this Armament each round.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

> 4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

- **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Sword: A long, unpowered blade. Difficult to use, but very effective.

> 1 die, 5 Harm, Close, Piercing.

- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Modular Systems

Afterburner (Support): Rocket across the battlefield. Move immediately to a Far location.

Railgun (Offensive): Release an electrically charged aerodynamic rod. Deal 4 Harm to a Far enemy. Limited, Piercing.

- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

- **Limited:** You may only use this System once per round.

H1-VANGUARD

A converted Decanus model. Oversized armor plating allows other Frames to use it as mobile battlefield cover.

Signature Feature

Flared Plating: Oversized defensive plating allows your allies to use you as portable cover. Treat any Frame within Close range of you as having at least 1 Armor.

Resources

- **Vigor:** 8 + Drive
- **Tension:** 0 + Speed
- **Fuel:** 5 + Control

Signature System

Assault Barrier (Support): An exceptionally thick barrier envelops you. You gain 3 Shields until the end of the round.

Build

Heavy: Your Frame's bulk is designed to be steadfast and resilient. Before rolling Drops, regain 2 Vigor.

Armaments

Rocket Launcher: A tube used for priming and aiming an explosive rocket, which is more accurate if fired when stationary.

   1 die, 4 Harm, Far, Incendiary, Stationary

   - **Incendiary:** Creates a Hazard at the target's location until the start of the next round. Only one Hazard can be created per location.
   - **Stationary:** +1 die if you haven't moved during this round.

Recoilless Rifle: An enormous tube that fires low-velocity rounds.

   1 die, 4 Harm, Near/Far, Scoped

   - **Scoped:** +1 die when used at Far if no enemies are Close/Near.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

   4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

   - **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Revolver: A forceful sidearm designed for long range.

   2 dice, 2 Harm, Far, Scoped.

   - **Scoped:** +1 die when used at Far if no enemies are Close/Near.

Modular Systems

Point Defense Cannons (Offensive): Unleash short-range cannons in all directions. Deal 2 Harm to each Close enemy. Piercing.

- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Missile Battery (Offensive): Three small missiles streak away in three different directions. Deal 2 Harm to 3 Near enemies.

M2-ARCHER

A range-focused scout/sniper built from the M1-SOLDIER, with its defensive and full auto capability removed in favor of superior sensors and optics.

Signature Feature

Long-Range Optics: Unparalleled targeting optics facilitate extremely long-ranged shots. When you have no enemies in Close or Near range, you can use Systems or make Far Attacks at Extreme range. Attacks have -1 die and Systems have -1 Harm when used at this range.

Signature System

Target Painter (Offensive): Highlight a priority target. Mark an enemy at Near or Far; they take 1 Harm immediately. Attacks against them gain +1 die, and Systems used against them have +1 Harm for the rest of the round. Energy.

- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.

Resources

- **Vigor:** 6 + Drive
- **Tension:** 3 + Speed
- **Fuel:** 4 + Control

Build

Medium: Your Frame is well-balanced for speed and stability. Before rolling Drops, regain 1 Vigor and 1 Tension.

Armaments

Marksman Rifle: An assault rifle with a longer barrel for greater range.

2 dice, 2 Harm, Near/Far, Burst, Stationary

- **Burst:** +1 Harm when your roll is a 6.
- **Stationary:** +1 die if you haven't moved during this round.

Sniper Rifle: A powerful long-range rifle, used to best effect when stationary.

2 dice, 3 Harm, Far, Stationary

- **Stationary:** +1 die if you haven't moved during this round.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

- **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Revolver: A forceful sidearm designed for long range.

2 dice, 2 Harm, Far, Scoped.

- **Scoped:** +1 die when used at Far if no enemies are Close/Near.

Modular Systems

Exit Thrusters (Support): Propel your Frame backwards off an enemy before rocketing away. Deal 2 Harm to an enemy Close to you, then move to a Near location.

Sniper Cannon (Offensive): Extend a long barrel to fire a powerful, accurate round. Deal 3 Harm to a Far enemy.

L2-BRAWLER

A close-range combatant designed from a civilian racing Frame. Daredevil Aces love its mobility, but this comes at the price of fragility.

Signature Feature

Kinetic Drive Motor: To assist with thruster compensation, the reaction force from weapon usage is dynamically redirected. After taking out an enemy at Close range, you may immediately move to a Near location.

Resources

- **Vigor:** 5 + Drive
- **Tension:** 5 + Speed
- **Fuel:** 3 + Control

Signature System

Kinetic Discharge (Offensive): Store and then release kinetic energy against your foes, unbalancing yourself in the process. Deal Harm to every Close enemy equal to range bands moved this turn. Afterwards, take the same Harm reduced by 3. Limited.

- **Limited:** You may only use this System once per round.

Build

Light: Your Frame's powerful thrust makes it suitable for quick maneuvers and hard burns. Before rolling Drops, regain 2 Tension.

Armaments

Carbine: An assault rifle with a shorter barrel for greater mobility.

3 dice, 2 Harm, Close/Near, Burst, Mobile

- **Burst:** +1 Harm when your roll is a 6.
- **Mobile:** +1 Harm if you've moved at least two range bands this round.

Revolver Cannon: A powerful revolver-action snub-nosed cannon.

2 dice, 4 Harm, Close, Hot, Sighted

- **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.
- **Sighted:** +1 die and +1 Harm when used at Close if no enemies are Near/Far.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

- **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Sword: A long, unpowered blade. Difficult to use, but very effective.

1 die, 5 Harm, Close, Piercing.

- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Modular Systems

Entry Thrusters (Support): Thrust your Frame forward, kicking down at an enemy. Move to a Near location, then deal 2 Harm to an enemy Close to you.

Reactor Backdraft (Offensive): Vent a plume of superheated air. Deal 3 Harm to a Close enemy, and an additional +2 Harm if you're at half of your maximum Vigor or less. Energy.

- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.

H2-LANCER

A monstrosity that looks like several Frames combined. It's built to maximize firepower, with advanced targeting and a built-in flamethrower.

Signature Feature

Parallel Processors: A multithreaded targeting system combined with efficient, heat-dissipating mechanical design allows for a maximization of firepower. The first time you Attack during a round, you may do so against two separate targets. Each attack must use a different Armament.

Signature System

Flamethrower (Offensive): Erupt into flame, blanketing those around you with heat. Deal 3 Harm to Close enemies. Energy, Piercing, Limited.

- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.
- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.
- **Limited:** You may only use this System once per round.

Resources

- **Vigor:** 7 + Drive
- **Tension:** 1 + Speed
- **Fuel:** 5 + Control

Build

Heavy: Your Frame's bulk is designed to be steadfast and resilient. Before rolling Drops, regain 2 Vigor.

Armaments

Handcannon: A scaled-up handgun with more power.

   4 dice, 2 Harm, Near, Hot

   • **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Grenade Launcher: An explosive, incendiary weapon.

   2 dice, 3 Harm, Close/Near, Splash, Incendiary

   • **Incendiary:** Creates a Hazard at the target's location until the start of the next round. Only one Hazard can be created per location.
   • **Splash:** Enemies Close to the target take 1 Harm when your roll is a 6.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

   4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

   • **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Sword: A long, unpowered blade. Difficult to use, but very effective.

   1 die, 5 Harm, Close, Piercing.

   • **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Modular Systems

Arc Mortar (Offensive): Fire a mortar round almost vertically. Mark a Near or Far location. At the start of the next round, deal 2 Harm to every enemy Close to that location. Piercing.

• **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Targeting Radar (Support): Temporarily boost your target acquisition sensors. Your Attacks this turn gain +1 die. Limited.

• **Limited:** You may only use this System once per round.

M3-SENTINEL

A converted data collection Frame. It has in-built skyports, using drones alongside EMP field projectors to provide support.

Signature Feature

Support Drones: Drones swarm around you, making minor repairs to those around you. At the end of your turn, you and all allies within Close range restore 1 Vigor.

Resources

- **Vigor:** 6 + Drive
- **Tension:** 2 + Speed
- **Fuel:** 5 + Control

Signature System

EMP Blaster (Offensive): Envelop enemies with disruptive electromagnetic pulses. Deal 1 Harm to two Near enemies. Until next round, their Armor and Shields count as 0. If they're Standard enemies, they can't be activated during the GM turn. Energy, Piercing.

- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.
- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Build

Medium: Your Frame is well-balanced for speed and stability. Before rolling Drops, regain 1 Vigor and 1 Tension.

Armaments

Laser Rifle: An adapted metal etcher that needs time to focus and cause damage.

> 3 dice, 2 Harm, Near, Energy, Polished, Spin Up

- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.
- **Polished:** +1 Harm when used at maximum Vigor.
- **Spin Up:** +1 Harm if your previous Attack was with this Armament.

Gauss Cannon: A powerful long-range rifle, used to best effect when stationary.

> 3 die, 2 Harm, Far, Piercing

- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

> 4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

- **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Revolver: A forceful sidearm designed for long range.

> 2 dice, 2 Harm, Far, Scoped.

- **Scoped:** +1 die when used at Far if no enemies are Close/Near.

Modular Systems

Shield Projector (Support): Project a bubble of energy around an adjacent Frame. A Close ally gains 2 Shields.

Plasma Cannon (Offensive): Fire a projectile hot enough to melt armor. Deal 3 Harm to one Near enemy. Energy.

- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.

L3-GLADIATOR

A converted riot control Frame. Its arm-mounted riot shield provides cover at range and can be used to ram unsuspecting enemies.

Signature Feature

Riot Shield: An enormous metal shield provides cover from ranged attacks. You have +1 Armor against enemy attacks from Near and Far range.

Resources

- **Vigor:** 5 + Drive
- **Tension:** 4 + Speed
- **Fuel:** 4 + Control

Signature System

Repulsor Shield (Offensive): Propel yourself forward and slam an enemy away with your shield. Move Close to an enemy at Close or Near. They take 2 Harm and you may move them to a Near location. Suppressive.

- **Suppressive:** Standard enemies Harmed by this System can't move (including movement from Approach/Retreat Tags) for the rest of the round.

Build

Light: Your Frame's powerful thrust makes it suitable for quick maneuvers and hard burns. Before rolling Drops, regain 2 Tension.

Armaments

Kinetic Cannon: A cannon that propels large rounds at very short range.

2 dice, 4 Harm, Close, Impulsive, Charge

- **Impulsive:** +1 Harm when used at half Tension or less.
- **Charge:** +1 die on your first Attack with this Armament each round.

Gatling Cannon: A multi-barreled weapon that needs time to spin up to full speed.

2 dice, 3 Harm, Near, Invigorating, Spin Up, Focused

- **Invigorating:** Once per round, gain 1 Vigor when you take out an enemy.
- **Focused:** +1 Harm when used at maximum or greater Tension.
- **Spin Up:** +1 Harm if your previous Attack was with this Armament.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

- **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Sword: A long, unpowered blade. Difficult to use, but very effective.

1 die, 5 Harm, Close, Piercing.

- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Modular Systems

Elbow Spikes (Offensive): Side-swipe an enemy with vicious blades. Deal 3 Harm to a Close enemy. Efficient, Holdout.

- **Efficient:** The first time in a round that you use this System, roll a die. On a 4-6, no Fuel is expended this time.
- **Holdout:** If you have 0 Fuel, you may use this System by spending 1 Tension. It gains the Limited Tag when used in this way.

Concussion Grenade (Offensive): Launch a grenade that disrupts movement in an area. Choose a Near location, and deal 1 Harm to every enemy Close to that location. Suppressive.

- **Suppressive:** Standard enemies Harmed by this System can't move (including movement from Approach/Retreat Tags) for the rest of the round.

H3-ANGLER

A converted construction Frame, referred to lovingly by its proponents as "The Spider", owing to its ability to ensnare and hamper enemies.

Signature Feature

Suppression Targeting: Crowd control targeting algorithms enable weaponry to be used to restrict enemy movement. Standard enemies Harmed by any Armament or System can't move (including movement from Approach/Retreat Tags) for the rest of the round.

Resources

- **Vigor:** 7 + Drive
- **Tension:** 0 + Speed
- **Fuel:** 6 + Control

Signature System

Net Launcher: Release barbed nets to drag enemies closer. Pick one Near location. Deal 1 Harm to every target Close to that Location. If their Vigor is reduced by at least 1, they move Close to you afterwards.

Build

Heavy: Your Frame's bulk is designed to be steadfast and resilient. Before rolling Drops, regain 2 Vigor.

Armaments

Shotgun: A smoothbore cannon that sprays enemies with pellets.

> 3 dice, 2 Harm, Close/Near, Splash, Piercing

- **Splash:** Enemies who are Close to the target take 1 Harm when your roll is a 6.
- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Electrolaser: A conductor that produces a long, thin laser.

> 3 die, 2 Harm, Far, Energy

- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

> 4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

- **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Revolver: A forceful sidearm designed for long range.

> 2 dice, 2 Harm, Far, Scoped.

- **Scoped:** +1 die when used at Far if no enemies are Close/Near.

Modular Systems

Shoulder Spear (Offensive): Ram a target with an actuated shoulder spike. Deal 5 Harm to a Close enemy.

Shield Generator (Support): Surround yourself with a thin film of energy. Gain 2 Shields.

SYSTEMS

Systems are the tools and secondary weaponry for a Frame. Signature Systems are unique to a Frame model, while Modular Systems can be used by any Frame. You can use Signature or Modular Systems any number of times and at any point during your turn (unless otherwise specified) by **spending 1 Fuel** per use.

In addition to its description, a System has a listed effect, a designation (**Offensive** or **Support**) which determines which Tags it can have, and may also have various Tags which modify its use. Systems chosen when creating your Frame are stock models with only the listed Tags.

MODULAR SYSTEM STOCK MODELS

Support Systems

Afterburner: Rocket across the battlefield. Move immediately to a Far location.

Entry Thrusters: Thrust your Frame forward, kicking down at an enemy. Move to a Near location, then deal 2 Harm to an enemy Close to you.

Exit Thrusters: Propel your Frame backwards off an enemy before rocketing away. Deal 2 Harm to an enemy Close to you, then move to a Near location.

Shield Generator: Surround yourself with a thin film of energy. Gain 2 Shields.

Shield Projector: Project a bubble of energy around an adjacent Frame. A Close ally gains 2 Shields.

Targeting Radar: Temporarily boost your target acquisition sensors. Your Attacks this turn gain +1 die. Limited.

Offensive Systems

Arc Mortar: Fire a mortar round almost vertically. Mark a Near or Far location. At the start of the next round, deal 2 Harm to every enemy Close to that location. Piercing.

Chaingun: Blanket the vicinity with gunfire. Choose: deal 1 Harm to four Close or Near enemies who are Close or Near to each other, or deal 2 Harm to two Close or Near enemies who are Close or Near to each other.

Concussion Grenade: Launch a grenade that disrupts movement in an area. Choose a Near location, and deal 1 Harm to every enemy Close to that location. Suppressive.

Elbow Spikes: Side-swipe an enemy with vicious blades. Deal 3 Harm to a Close enemy. Efficient, Holdout.

Missile Battery: Three small missiles streak away in three different directions. Deal 2 Harm to 3 Near enemies.

Point Defense Cannons: Unleash short-range cannons in all directions. Deal 2 Harm to each Close enemy. Piercing.

Plasma Cannon: Fire a projectile hot enough to melt armor. Deal 3 Harm to one Near enemy. Energy.

Pulse Laser: Emit a short, precise laser burst. Choose: deal 2 Harm to a Near enemy, or deal 1 Harm to a Far enemy. Energy, Efficient.

Railgun: Release an electrically charged aerodynamic rod. Deal 4 Harm to a Far enemy. Limited, Piercing.

Reactor Backdraft: Vent a plume of superheated air. Deal 3 Harm to a Close enemy, and an additional +2 Harm if you're at half of your maximum Vigor or less. Energy.

Shoulder Spear: Ram a target with an actuated shoulder spike. Deal 5 Harm to a Close enemy.

Sniper Cannon: Extend a long barrel to fire a powerful, accurate round. Deal 3 Harm to a Far enemy.

ARMAMENTS

Armaments are a Frame's primary weapons, and are used with the Attack action. Some are modeled after infantry weaponry, scaled up or otherwise modified to be suitable for mounting on a Frame; others, typically anti-vehicular weapons, are purpose-built for Frames. Each model of Frame starts the game with two Armaments, typically mounted on the Frame's arms, which are stock models with specific, set Tags outlined in this section.

ARMAMENT STOCK MODELS

Close Range

Kinetic Cannon: A cannon that propels large rounds at very short range.

> 2 dice, 4 Harm, Close, Impulsive, Charge

Plasma Blade: A deadly blade capable of slicing through Frame defenses.

> 1 die, 5 Harm, Close, Energy, Piercing, Charge

Revolver Cannon: A powerful revolver-action snub-nosed cannon.

> 2 dice, 4 Harm, Close, Hot, Sighted

Close/Near Range

Carbine: An assault rifle with a shorter barrel for greater mobility.

> 3 dice, 2 Harm, Close/Near, Burst, Mobile

Machinegun: A rapid fire anti-personnel weapon.

> 4 dice, 1 Harm, Close/Near, Splash, Piercing

Shotgun: A smoothbore cannon that sprays enemies with pellets.

> 3 dice, 2 Harm, Close/Near, Splash, Piercing

Grenade Launcher: An explosive, incendiary weapon.

> 2 dice, 3 Harm, Close/Near, Splash, Incendiary

Near Range

Assault Rifle: A scaled-up version of the traditional infantry firearm.

4 dice, 2 Harm, Near, Burst

Handcannon: A scaled-up handgun with more power.

4 dice, 2 Harm, Near, Hot

Laser Rifle: An adapted metal etcher that needs time to focus and cause damage.

3 dice, 2 Harm, Near, Energy, Polished, Spin Up

Gatling Cannon: A multi-barreled weapon that needs time to spin up to full speed.

2 dice, 3 Harm, Near, Invigorating, Spin Up, Focused

Near/Far Range

Marksman Rifle: An assault rifle with a longer barrel for greater range.

2 dice, 2 Harm, Near/Far, Burst, Stationary

Recoilless Rifle: An enormous tube that fires low-velocity rounds.

1 die, 4 Harm, Near/Far, Scoped

Scout Rifle: A long rifle built for versatility and accuracy.

3 dice, 2 Harm, Near/Far

Far Range

Electrolaser: A conductor that produces a long, thin laser.

3 dice, 2 Harm, Far, Energy

Gauss Cannon: A lower-powered alternative to the railgun.

3 dice, 2 Harm, Far, Piercing

Rocket Launcher: A tube used for priming and aiming an explosive rocket, which is more accurate if fired when stationary.

1 die, 4 Harm, Far, Incendiary, Stationary

Sniper Rifle: A powerful long-range rifle, used to best effect when stationary.

2 dice, 3 Harm, Far, Stationary

Backup Armaments

Each Armament has a Backup Armament associated with it. These come into play when an Armament is Damaged or discarded in a mission.

Sword: A long, unpowered blade. Difficult to use, but very effective.

1 die, 5 Harm, Close, Piercing

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

Revolver: A forceful sidearm designed for long range.

2 Dice, 2 Harm, Far, Scoped

TAGS

Tags add properties to an Armament or System. Any listed effects and once-per-round limits apply only to attacks with or usage of that Armament or System.

SYSTEM TAGS

A System may have General Tags and either Offensive Tags or Support Tags, depending on its category.

General System Tags

Efficient: The first time in a round that you use this System, roll a die. On a 4-6, no Fuel is expended this time.

Holdout: If you have 0 Fuel, you may use this System by spending 1 Tension. It gains the Limited Tag when used in this way.

Limited: You may only use this System once per round.

Offensive System Tags

Distracting: Enemies Harmed by this deal -1 Harm on their next attack this round. This effect does not stack if the enemy is Harmed more than once.

Energy: Ignores Armor

Flashy: An enemy Harmed by this System must attack you or anyone else who Harms them with a Flashy System this round, provided that such an attack is possible. This effect lasts until the end of the round.

Piercing: Ignores Shields

Suppressive: Standard enemies Harmed by this System can't move (including movement from Approach/ Retreat Tags) for the rest of the round.

Superhot: One target affected by this System takes +1 Harm from it.

Support System Tags

Encouraging: Anyone affected by this System does +1 Harm with their next Attack this round.

Enveloping: One target affected by this System gains 1 Shield or increases Shield gain by 1.

Motivating: Anyone affected by this System may move immediately to a Near location.

Obfuscating: Anyone affected by this System cannot be attacked until the start of the next round if the would-be attacker has at least one other target in range.

Projecting: If this System only affects you, you can instead have it affect a Close ally. If this System only affects a Close ally, you can instead have it affect a Near ally. You must pay 1 Tension in addition to the Fuel cost.

Protective: Anyone affected by this system reduces Harm by 1 the next time they take Harm this round.

ARMAMENT TAGS

An Armament always has at least one range tag (Close, Near, Far).

Close, Near, Far: Armament is usable at this noted range. When more than one range Tag is specified, you may use the Armament at any of the specified ranges.

Burst: +1 Harm when your roll is a 6.

Charge: +1 die on your first Attack with this Armament each round.

Critical: +1 Harm when used at half Vigor or less.

Distracting: Enemies Harmed by this deal -1 Harm on their next attack this round. This effect does not stack if the enemy is Harmed more than once.

Energy: Ignores Armor.

Focused: +1 Harm when used at maximum or greater Tension.

Hot: Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Impulsive: +1 Harm when used at half Tension or less.

Incendiary: Creates a Hazard at the target's location until the start of the next round. Only one Hazard can be created per location.

Invigorating: Once per round, regain 1 Vigor when you take out an enemy.

Mobile: +1 Harm if you've moved at least two range bands this round.

Piercing: Ignores Shields.

Polished: +1 Harm when used at maximum Vigor.

Scoped: Armament's maximum range increases to Near if Close, and to Far if Near. It has -1 die to attack at its newly extended range. If it already has Far when it gains Scoped, +1 die when used at Far if no enemies are Close/Near.

Sighted: Armament's minimum range increases to Near if Far, and to Close if Near. If it already has Close when it gains Sighted, +1 die and +1 Harm when used at Close if no enemies are Near/Far.

Spin Up: +1 Harm if your previous Attack was with this Armament.

Splash: Enemies who are Close to the target take 1 Harm when your roll is a 6. If the Armament has Energy and/or Piercing Tags, Splash Harm ignores Armor and/or Shields.

Stationary: +1 die if you haven't moved during this round.

COMBAT

MAP USAGE

Using a hex map for combat scenarios in APOCALYPSE FRAME is strongly recommended, and is assumed in the following sections. If using a hex map in person, 2 inch hexes are recommended. If using an online mapping tool, scale the hex size appropriately.

COMBAT CONCEPTS

Harm

Harm is an incoming threat to something's well-being or structural integrity. When Harm is dealt to an Ace or Enemy, it subtracts from their Vigor. When an Ace's Vigor hits 0, they take Frame Damage (see below). When an Enemy's Vigor hits 0, they are taken out (removed from the battle).

Range

Range is abstracted into four bands:

- **Close** means a few steps away, a distance you can move practically instantly (on a map, in the same hex).
- **Near** means a short distance away, as far as you can move in a few seconds (on a map, one hex away). When you move, you can move to a Near location.
- **Far** means within a reasonable range for combat, further than you can move in a few seconds (on a map, two hexes away).
- **Extreme** means just beyond a reasonable range for combat, except in very rare cases (on a map, three hexes away).
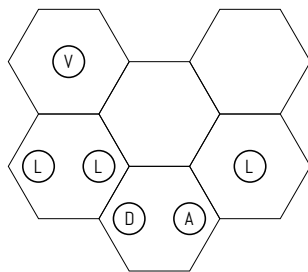
In the above example, the Ace (A) is Close to the Decanus (D), Near to the three Legionnaires (L), and Far from the Velite (V).

Shields

Shields give the user the chance to nullify attacks, unless the Harm ignores Shields via effects and keywords such as Piercing. When a Shielded Ace or enemy would take Harm, they roll a die. If it's less than or equal to the value of their Shields, they take 0 Harm and remove 1 Shield. Shields normally last until used or until the end of combat. Effects that grant Shields don't stack; instead, take the highest value Shield.

Armor

Armor reduces Harm by its stated value, unless the Harm ignores Armor via effects and keywords such as Energy. If its Value is sufficiently high, Armor can completely negate incoming Harm.

Frame Damage

If a Frame is reduced to 0 Vigor or less, it takes Frame Damage. Its Ace is unable to act until their next Turn; additionally, any further Harm is ignored until next Turn.

At the start of their next turn, the Ace adds 1 to max Tension, regains 1 Fuel, restores their Vigor and Tension to full, and rolls one die to find the location of the Frame Damage:

1. **Superstructure.** -2 Max Vigor. All Drive rolls have -1 die.
2. **Leg.** Move and Sprint actions require a Speed roll. All other Speed rolls have -1 die.
3. **Sensor array.** Attack and Control rolls have -1 die.
4. **Arm.** An Armament is replaced with a Backup Armament that shares at least one of its range tags.
5. **Shoulder.** One Modular System now requires a Control roll to use, in addition to spending Fuel.
6. **Core.** Your Signature System now requires a Drive roll to use, in addition to spending Fuel.

For 1-3, this applies only when the Ace is in the Frame, i.e. it's not a further penalty when acting outside of it. For 4-5, the GM chooses which Armament/Module is affected. The extra Tension and damage effect lasts until the end of the Mission.

A Frame may sustain up to two Frame Damage effects during a battle. If an Ace's Frame would be damaged a third time before the end of a Mission, that Ace can choose either to Eject, or to make a Last Stand:

Eject: The Ace ejects from the Frame and retreats for the rest of the battle. After the battle, if there's some time to justify field repairs, they are able to operate, but they retain the two previous Frame Damage effects and the corresponding extra Tension. If their Frame can't easily be driven back to the hangar, the Strike Team must pay 2-5 Materials to replace it, depending on its level of customization.

Last Stand: On their next turn, an Ace may remove all Frame Damage, ignore all incoming Harm, set Tension/Fuel to max +5, and ignore any "once per round" wording on Tags and Systems. Afterwards, the Frame and the Ace are unrecoverable. Make sure that this Last Stand is appropriately dramatic!

Allies

Some ability descriptions reference that it may be used on or applied to an Ally. In this case, this refers to another Ace; typically it cannot be applied to the user.

THE COMBAT ROUND

Each round of combat is broken up into two phases: The Ace turn, in which the players decide how their Aces act, and the GM Turn, in which the GM decides how the enemies respond.

ACE TURN

Each Ace may act in any order they see fit. Each Ace has two actions during their turn. With each action, they may:

- **Move** to a Near location (no roll required).
- **Sprint** to a Far location if there are no enemies in Close, Near, or Far range (no roll required).
- **Attack** using an Armament (requires rolling the number of dice on the Armament). Before or after attacking, you may choose to drop an Armament in favor of a Backup Armament. If you do so, you can't switch back to your main Armament until after the Mission, so choose wisely!
- **Interact** with something in the environment (requires an Attribute roll if necessary, depending on the interaction).

An Ace may also use Systems freely at any point during their turn by spending 1 Fuel per use; this doesn't require using an action.

Consequences, generated by rolls of 1-4 or other Ace actions that give them, typically activate an enemy, often by dealing Harm back with a counter-attack, but sometimes with other reactions as the situation suggests.
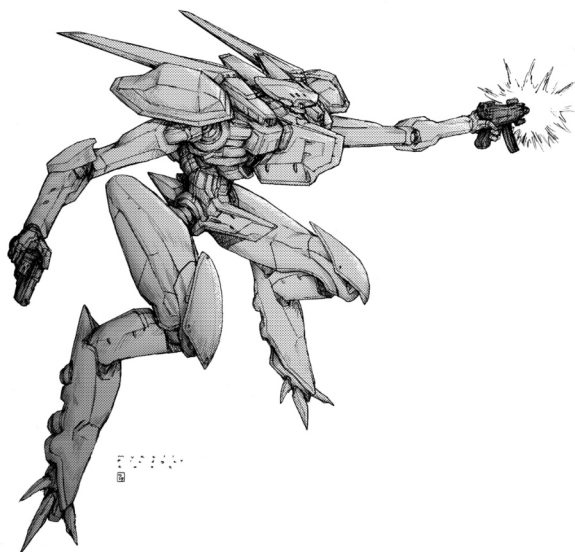
GM TURN

After each Ace has taken their turn, it's time for the GM Turn. Four things happen during this phase: the GM Activates a number of enemies to make their Actions, then announces a Situational Change; next, Aces activate their Frames' Build; and finally, the GM rolls Drops for each defeated enemy.

Activations

Firstly, the GM Activates a number of enemies equal to the number of Aces. The GM may Activate any enemy multiple times during a combat scenario, but they may only Attack with an enemy once per GM Turn. The first time an enemy is Activated, it may take two Actions; in later Activations, it may take only one Action.

Situational Changes

Secondly, the GM does something to significantly change the situation: a call for reinforcements, a change in tactics or weaponry, a Field Effect or other change to the battlefield environment, or something else appropriate to the situation. This should happen every GM Turn.

Build

Thirdly, each Ace activates their Frame's Build. In most cases, this means regaining some Vigor and/or Tension.

Drops

Finally, the GM also rolls one die for each enemy with more than 1 maximum Vigor defeated this round to determine Drops:

- **1-2:** Materials Drop. A useful piece of salvage. It provides Materials for use during advancement.

- **3-4:** Tension Drop. An opportunity to maintain momentum, redirect movement, or fire. It grants 1 Tension to an Ace.

- **5-6:** Vigor Drop. An opportunity to restabilize or focus on defending against enemy attacks. It restores 1 Vigor for an Ace.

Aces may allocate Drops among themselves at their discretion. Unused Drops go away at the start of the next Ace Turn.

Aces can gain Tension beyond their maximum through Build or Drops, but any Tension beyond their maximum is discarded at the end of their next turn.

FIELD EFFECTS

One option for a Situational Change, or as the result of a player-rolled Consequence, is to add or remove a localized or global Field Effect.

Localized Effects

Localized effects happen at specific locations during a battle, often tied to a specific hex or set of hexes. Below are some templates for your own ideas:

- **Cover:** Attacks from Far against targets Close to this location have -1 Harm. When an attack has been reduced by Cover, roll 1d6. On a 1-2, this section of Cover goes away.

- **Close Cover:** As Cover, but instead attacks from any range against infantry-scale or short targets Close to this location have -1 Harm.

- **Hazard:** Anyone who moves Close to an environmental hazard (a big fire, a pool of acid, etc) takes 1 Harm (ignores Armor/Shields). Anyone who ends their turn Close to one takes 2 Harm. Reduce Harm by 1 in both cases for **Minor Hazards**.

- **Rooftop:** Combatants may only move Close to this location with a successful Interact roll or an appropriate movement System use. It counts as 1 extra distance step for those attacking from the ground (Close becomes Near, Near becomes Far).

- **Bombardment:** An artillery barrage is en route. At the end of the GM Turn, roll 1d6 for the area. On a 3-6, it hits; and on a 1-2, it hits a random Near location instead (if using a hex map, roll 1d6 and pick a Near hex based on the roll). The barrage does 3 Harm to anyone Close (ignores Shields).

Global Effects

Global effects happen across the entire battlefield. Below are some examples on which to base your own ideas:

- **Reactive Gas Clouds:** Attacks with the Energy tag gain +1 die, but the attacker takes 1 Harm (ignores Armor/Shields) when attacking.

- **Electrical Storm:** At the beginning of each GM Turn, choose randomly among the tallest objects in or around the battle (heavy Frames, enormous monsters, trees, etc). The chosen object is struck by lightning (2 Harm, ignores Armor/Shields) and may react accordingly (fall over, catch on fire, etc).

- **Low Gravity:** When rolling for Drops at the end of the GM Turn, odd results (1, 3, 5) provide no Drop.

- **Pitched Firefight:** Outside of Cover, Aces making an Attack roll count any 5 or 6 rolled as a 4. Similarly, Enemies making an attack outside of Cover or Close Cover take 1 Harm (ignores Armor/Shields).

EXAMPLE ROUND

An Ace (A) piloting a stock model M1-SOLDIER has been separated and ambushed by a Decanus (D) at Close, three Legionnaires (L) at Near, two more Legionnaires at Far, and two Velites (V) at Far. The Ace starts combat with their full 10 Vigor, 4 Tension, and 5 Fuel.
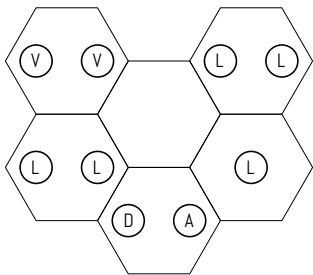
(Ace status: 10 Vigor, 4 Tension, 5 Fuel)

Ace Turn

The Ace decides that their best chance of survival is to defeat as many enemies as possible. They start their turn by moving into the Near hex to the north, putting every enemy in range of their Armaments and Modular Systems. The Ace then attacks one of the Legionnaires in the Near southwest hex with their Machinegun – it has four dice, which they roll for a result of 1, 3, 4, 6. This is a success, so the Legionnaire takes 2 Harm. Due to the Splash tag, and the 6 result, the Legionnaire Close to the target takes 1 Harm as well. The Ace spends 1 Tension to attack the other one, and rolls a 6 again, resulting in both having their Vigor reduced to 0 – they are both taken out. The Ace then spends the rest of their Tension to make Assault Rifle attacks towards the Legionnaires in the Near northeast hex. They roll a 5 against the first, succeeding without consequence, and taking it out. Against the second, they roll a 4, which is a success with a consequence: that Legionnaire is taken out, but not before being activated to attack and dealing 2 Harm to the Ace. Finally, they roll a 2 against the third Legionnaire, which is a failure with consequence; they sustain 2 more Harm as a result. Afterwards, the Ace spends 1 Fuel on a Chaingun attack that takes out both Velites in the Near northwest hex, and 1 Fuel on Actuated Plating to gain 1 Armor. After that, their turn ends.
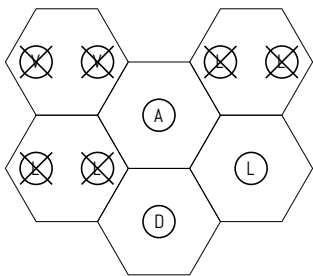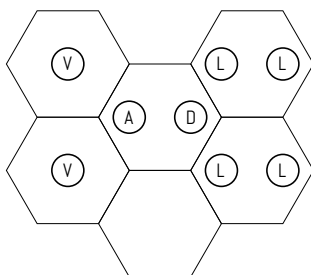

(Ace status at the end of their turn: 6 Vigor, 0 Tension, 3 Fuel)

GM Turn

Because there are no Aces left to take their turn, the GM takes their turn. As there's only one Ace, the GM may Activate one enemy, and chooses the Decanus. They decide that the Decanus will charge: with their two actions, they Move into the Near north hex, and Attack the now Close Ace with their Gladius, dealing 3 Harm (reduced to 2 Harm thanks to the Armor from Actuated Plating). This puts the Ace at 4 Vigor.

The GM then announces the Situational Change: the Decanus's Gladius arm raises, and three more Legionnaires and two more Velites step past the smoking wreckage of their brothers-in-arms as the Decanus charges. The GM describes this as the rest of the squad continuing the ambush.

The Ace's Build is Medium, so they regain 1 each of Vigor (now 5) and Tension (now 1). Finally, the GM rolls 6 Drops for the enemies taken out: 4, 5, 1, 1, 2, 1. This is four Materials Drops, one Tension Drop, and one Vigor Drop. This puts the Ace at 6 Vigor and 2 Tension.

(Ace status at the end of the GM Turn: 6 Vigor, 2 Tension, 3 Fuel)

Looking to Next Round

The Ace can't do as much this turn, as they're at lower Fuel and Tension. To minimize reprisal, they'd probably want to use Actuated Plating again, then move northwest or southwest to be Close to a Velite. Afterwards, they might spend their Fuel on their Pulse Laser to guarantee the Decanus is taken out.

The GM would likely respond with a counterattack, or perhaps an aggressive move to be in range, while activating an enemy. Since another round of reinforcements would be tedious, the GM adds a different detail to the scene to change: perhaps the remaining enemies move forward, or call in an artillery strike. Alternatively, perhaps the rest of the Ace's team arrives to clean up the reinforcements.

And so, the battle continues...

ENEMIES

ENEMY TRAITS

Each enemy has Vigor, one or more Attacks, and 3 types of Actions.

Vigor

An enemy's Vigor, much like an Ace's Vigor, is depleted by Harm. Standard enemies are taken out when their Vigor hits 0. This can mean killed, destroyed, or forced to retreat, but in all cases indicate that they're removed from the battle. Prime and Colossus enemies interact with being taken out slightly differently – see those types of enemies for more details.

Attacks

Attacks are structurally similar to Armaments, with Harm, Range, and Tags, but they are not rolled. Instead, an attack simply happens when an enemy is activated and uses it. Any Tag that would add +1 die instead adds +1 Harm. Some Tags are unique to enemies or work differently:

- **Approach:** Move one range band towards the target before or after attacking.
- **Burst:** +1 Harm when attacking as a consequence.
- **Splash:** Deals 1 Harm to all enemies Close to the target when attacking on the GM Turn.
- **Deliberate:** +1 Harm when attacking during the GM Turn.
- **Desperation:** This attack can only be used as a Desperation Move. Only seen on Prime and Colossus enemies.
- **Distracting:** The first roll the target makes on their next turn has -1 die. Does not stack.
- **Retreat:** Move one range band away from the target before or after attacking.

Actions

Actions are abstract descriptions of things that the listed enemy would typically do when activated. These can include anything that adds to the fiction of a combat scene (though mechanical suggestions are below). An enemy is activated as a consequence spawned from an Attribute roll (a 1-4 result) or as a deliberate activation on a GM Turn. These Actions are not prescriptive: a GM can choose to do anything that would make sense with one. A GM may activate an enemy multiple times on their turn, but may only use an Attack Action once per enemy per GM Turn. The first time any enemy is Activated on the GM Turn, it gains two Actions. Try not to use the same Action twice in a row during a turn.

Some standard Action effects include:

- **Move:** Move the enemy to a Near location.
- **Sprint:** Move the enemy to a Far location (only use if there are no Aces in Close, Near, or Far range).
- **Attack:** Use an Attack as described.
- **Reinvigorate:** The enemy regains 1 Vigor.
- **Endure:** The enemy gains 1 Armor until the end of the next Ace turn. This shouldn't put Armor above 1, or above 2 for Prime enemies.
- **Shield:** The enemy gains 2 Shields until the end of the next Ace turn (or just restores its Shields to full if it started the battle with 2 or more).
- **Protect:** As Endure/Shield but it applies to another enemy Close to this one.
- **Reinforce:** Put a Standard enemy with 1 Vigor on the battlefield Close or Near to the enemy.

Prime enemies may use the following:

- **Purge:** Any effects aside from those which reduce Vigor (such as effects from Flashy, Distracting, etc) are cleared.

Desperation Actions are a special kind of Action used by Prime and Colossus enemies. These include Attacks with the Desperation keyword, but can also include superior versions of any of the above standard Actions, as well as anything else that would make sense.

TYPES OF ENEMIES

Enemies fall into 3 categories: Standard, Prime, and Colossus.

Standard

The vast majority of enemies that the Aces will face should be Standard enemies. They have 1-4 Vigor (occasionally with 1 Armor or 1-2 Shields), and are taken out when they hit 0 Vigor. Standard Enemies with 1 Vigor often don't create Drops when defeated.

Prime

Prime enemies are special enemies: squadron leaders, lieutenants of larger enemies, and other minor leaders. They have 6-8 Vigor and often have Armor or Shields. When they hit 0 Vigor, they're taken out for the remainder of the round. At the start of the next GM Turn, however, they're Restored to full Vigor and Shields, lose any conditions or effects they previously had, and make an additional Action before the GM announces Activations (this Move can be an Attack, and doesn't prevent the Prime enemy from Attacking again if Activated during that GM Turn). They can do this once or twice, indicated by Restorations, before being taken out definitively. Once they have 0 Restorations remaining, they become Desperate, and may make their Desperation Move on the GM Turn.

Colossus

Colossus enemies are Frame carriers, Frames, or alien creatures so large that they can't be targeted as a whole, but instead as separate parts. These can be limbs, subsystems, heads, or anything else that can be logically differentiated from the bulk of the Colossus. The different parts of a Colossus should stretch across several range bands, possibly with some hexes as Rooftop areas, representing the sheer size and impressive scale of the Colossus.

Each part is treated as a Standard enemy with its own Vigor pool. These parts are immune to anything that would restrict or force movement, such as the Suppressive tag or H3-ANGLER's Net Launcher. Much like calling for reinforcements, parts can be returned to a Colossus through Situational Changes on the GM Turn, if this makes sense in the fiction.

When half of the Colossus's parts are taken out, it becomes Desperate. This allows for any response Actions and up to half of the activations taken on the GM Turn to be Desperation Actions. When every part on the Colossus has been taken out, then it is taken out as a whole.

For the purposes of determining Drops, each part of a Colossus counts as an enemy.

PLAYING ENEMIES

The key to running any given enemy is that they're largely expendable and will be taken out quickly, usually in 1-2 Armament attacks or System activations. Do what makes the most sense to make the fiction of the scene stand out – sometimes it makes more sense for them to Move, Shield, Protect, or Reinvigorate than it does to attack or counterattack, even when in range of an enemy. On the other hand, try not to do these so often that they take forever to take out!

As for how many enemies to use, this is mostly a matter of how long you want an encounter to take, and of how large of a battlefield you're using. Keep in mind that enemies only act as a reaction (on the Ace turn) or in-keeping with the number of Aces (on the GM Turn), so the number of enemies on the field doesn't scale up the threat level in the same way that it might in other games – instead, it provides more of a chance that any given enemy will be in range to Harm an Ace, while also giving more opportunity for Drops. Try to cluster enemies in groups of 2-3 – this provides Aces with choices as to how to use their Armaments/Systems, as well as giving you fodder for activating Enemies.

Avoid using Prime enemies on every mission, and if you do use them, save them for the end of the mission or in some other meaningful scene. Likewise, Colossus enemies should be used sparingly, and should usually be reserved for Crisis or Moonshot missions, to keep them special and interesting.

More than any individual enemy, an enormous contributor to how an encounter feels to play is going to be the Situational Changes on the GM Turn. This is your opportunity to introduce new things for Aces to consider or worry about every round, so make the most of the opportunity to keep the combat fluid and the battlefield dynamic. If Aces are struggling, you can also introduce mixed or positive Situational Changes.

REPUBLIC

The Republic is always spoiling for a fight, and frequently attacks Collective assets and workers. They also often try to claim or reclaim important resources and key locations to keep them out of the hands of the Collective.

Legionnaire — **Vigor:** 3

A practical Frame with serviceable durability and stock weaponry. The last thing many a revolutionary has seen.

Attack:
- **Service Rifle:**
  2 Harm, Near

Actions:
- Trigger active defenses
- Spray with lead
- Move into formation

Velite — **Vigor:** 2

An urban-camouflaged Frame with light armor and a long-range rifle. The last thing many a revolutionary never gets the chance to see.

Attack:
- **Light Sniper:**
  1 Harm, Far, Deliberate, Stationary
- **Backup Handgun:**
  1 Harm, Near

Actions:
- Duck and weave
- Take a careful shot
- Launch a spotter drone

Decanus — **Vigor:** 4
Armor: 1

A patriotically-colored heavy Frame cloaked in ornamental banners intended to grab attention. These are generally piloted by a squad leader.

Attacks:
- **Gladius:**
  3 Harm, Close
- **Assault Rifle:**
  2 Harm, Near, Burst

Actions:
- Protect another Frame
- Signal orders
- Designate priority targets

Centurion (Prime)

Vigor: 8
Armor: 1
Restorations: 1

A massive Frame with an enormous headpiece, a shield-piercing spear, and a built-in railgun. Often seen leading groups of Republic soldiers on important missions.

Attacks:
- **Hasta:**
  3 Harm, Close, Piercing
- **Heavy Machinegun:**
  2 Harm, Near, Splash
- **Railgun:**
  4 Harm, Far, Piercing, Desperation

Actions:
- Launch a vicious assault
- Coordinate inferiors with ease
- Stand imposingly

Desperation Actions:
- Unfurl and fire the railgun violently
- Rally the troops
- Unleash hell

Consul (Colossus)

Laser PDCs: 6
Railgun Turrets: 6
Control Centers: 2

An enormous hovercraft battle platform. It's got substantial built-in defenses in addition to plenty of Legionnaires and Velites riding inside. When in distress, it can collapse sections to crush Frames.

Actions:
- Barrel forward
- Raise alarms
- Train every emplacement

Desperation Actions:
- Buckle unexpectedly
- Fire uncontrollably
- Swerve suddenly

Laser PDC

Vigor: 3
Armor: 1

Attack:
- **Pulse Burst:**
  1 Harm, Close/Near, Energy, Burst

Railgun Turret

Vigor: 3
Armor: 1

Attack:
- **Railgun:**
  3 Harm, Far, Piercing

Control Center

Vigor: 8
Armor: 1

Attack:
- **Plate Crush:**
  4 Harm, Close/Near/Far, Desperation

CLAW

Hunters from beyond the stars who appeared following the Infection. They've never been seen outside heavily-shielded Frames, leading most to believe that they cannot survive in Earth's atmosphere. They largely choose not to communicate with humans, despite having the ability to do so. Republic scouts assigned them the name Claw due to their chosen emblem and signature Frame weapon, which resembles a crooked hand.

Berserker   **Vigor:** 5

A bulky, well-protected Frame equipped with a bladed claw on the end of each arm and a series of surprisingly powerful thrusters for mobility.

Attack:
- **Claws:**
  3 Harm, Close

Actions:
- Burn hard forward
- Slash viciously
- Jet away from an attack
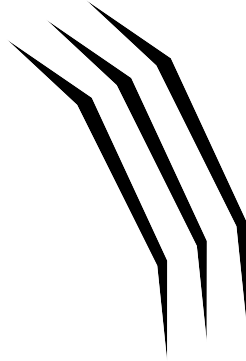
Slinger   **Vigor:** 2
                                   Shields: 2

A lighter Frame that launches enormous, sharpened spears.

Attack:
- **Spear:**
  2 Harm, Far, Piercing

Actions:
- Strike targets to distract
- Pin down an enemy
- Regroup behind others

Torch   **Vigor:** 2
                                   Shields: 1

A lightweight Frame equipped with a long-range energy cannon for taking down flying or elusive prey.

Attacks:
- **Plasma Rifle:**
  1 Harm, Near/Far, Energy, Burst

Actions:
- Make a surgical shot
- Pick off a straggler
- Unleash brilliant plasma

Savage Apex (Prime)

Vigor: 10
Restorations: 1

An ornate Frame with many wildlife trophies secured on its outside, equipped with a serpentine-bladed claw and what appears to be an old, ornate hunting revolver with engravings all over.

Attacks:
- **Serpentine Claw:**
  3 Harm, Close, Deliberate
- **Hunting Revolver:**
  2 Harm, Near, Energy
- **Brutal Charge:**
  4 Harm, Close, Approach, Desperation

Actions:
- Pose ceremonially
- Make a practiced cut
- Fire precise revolver shots

Desperation Actions:
- Slash with abandon
- Hurdle forward
- Put up shields desperately

Sharpshot Apex (Prime)

Vigor: 8
Shields: 2
Restorations: 1

A more delicate Frame with many machine trophies secured on its outside, unusually equipped with a long-range projectile rifle.

Attacks:
- **Snap Burst:**
  2 Harm, Near, Burst
- **Aimed Shot:**
  2 Harm, Far, Stationary, Deliberate
- **Supercharged Shot:**
  3 Harm, Far, Energy, Piercing, Stationary

Actions:
- Fire and retreat
- Kneel to shoot
- Hunt vulnerable prey

Desperation Actions:
- Retreat strongly
- Put up stronger shields
- Activate an emergency gun mode

WILDLIFE

The nature of the Infection on the world is not well understood, but its effects are known to everyone: the landscape has been widely reshaped with some degree of intent and pattern. Many terrestrial species have become extinct, but many new species have been seen in infected areas too, some clearly based on known flora and fauna, and some entirely alien, clearly suited to the terraformed terrain.

Herd Animal **Vigor:** 3

An herbivore of some persuasion. These often represent mutated cattle or similar. They usually aren't aggressive unless threatened.

Attacks:
- **Hooves:**
  2 Harm, Close, Burst
- **Trample:**
  2 Harm, Close, Mobile, Approach

Actions:
- Let loose a low roar
- Trample a threat en masse
- Stampede away in panic

Pack Hunter **Vigor:** 2

A predatory mammal. They use pack tactics to take down prey.

Attacks:
- **Savage:**
  3 Harm, Close, Burst
- **Pounce:**
  2 Harm, Close, Approach

Actions:
- Howl in unison
- Claw and bite
- Surround and pounce

Avian Scavenger **Vigor:** 2

A flying scavenger. They usually don't attack unless a meal is threatened.

Attack:
- **Divebomb:**
  2 Harm, Close, Approach, Retreat

Actions:
- Screech from nowhere
- Circle in the sky
- Dive and return without warning

Reptilian Predator **Vigor:** 3
Armor: 1

A slow-moving, scaled creature with a powerful jaw. Some spit corrosive acid.

Attacks:
- **Bite:** 3 Harm, Close
- **Spit:** 2 Harm, Near, Energy

Actions:
- Clamp down hard
- Advance silently
- Curl to protect itself

Swarming Pest **Vigor:** 1

One of many creatures small enough to exist in enormous number but big enough to threaten a Frame.

Attack:
- **Bite:** 2 Harm, Close

Actions:
- Clamp down hard
- Advance silently
- Curl to protect itself

Pack Leader (Prime)

Vigor: 10
Restorations: 1

An enormous creature, far bigger than its pack members. One of these emerging makes any pack a dangerous, organized threat.

Attacks:
- **Pounce:** 3 Harm, Close, Approach
- **Savage:** 3 Harm, Close, Burst
- **Thrash:** 3 Harm, Close, Splash, Desperation

Actions:
- Start an echoing howl
- Land with thunderous impact
- Lash out in rage

Desperation Actions:
- Shriek impossibly loudly
- Rally the pack
- Demolish everything in panic

World Serpent (Colossus)

Heads: 3
Body Sections: 8

A three-headed reptilian snake of unimaginable size. They rarely take interest in things much smaller than them, but Aces have found themselves on their bad side when unwittingly engaging in combat on what they thought was a hill. Its body parts aren't severed when taken out, they simply withdraw from active combat - and in some cases, they return to the fray afterwards.

Actions:
- Unleash a primal rattle
- Launch a Frame-sized gaping maw
- Release symbiotes or inhabitants

Desperation Actions:
- Scream at impossible volumes
- Shed heavy scales
- Thrash and demolish

Scaled Horror (Prime)

Vigor: 8
Armor: 1
Restorations: 1

A weathered monstrosity with weathered, hardened scales. It's developed the ability to spit acid and when panicked it does so freely.

Attacks:
- **Deathroll:** 3 Harm, Close, Burst
- **Corrosive Spit:** 2 Harm, Near, Energy
- **Death Dive:** 3 Harm, Close, Approach, Desperation
- **Corrosive Spray:** 2 Harm, Near, Energy, Splash, Desperation

Actions:
- Clamp down and twist
- Slither onward
- Hack up hissing fluid

Desperation Actions:
- Hiss forth corrosive streams
- Focus on one threat
- Lash out in terror

Head

Vigor: 3
Armor: 1

Attacks:
- **Long-Necked Snap:** 3 Harm, Close/Near, Burst
- **Sonic Gust:** 3 Harm, Close/Near/Far, Energy, Piercing, Desperation

Body Section

Vigor: 8
Armor: 1

Attacks:
- **Thrash:**
  2 Harm, Close/Near, Splash
- **Shed Skin:** 4 Harm, Close/Near, Splash, Desperation

SURVIVALISTS

In many ruined, half-terraformed city centers, some independent communities exist in spite of the Infection. Unfortunately, they've generally survived through paranoia and the propensity to shoot first.

Irregular   **Vigor:** 1

A guerrila fighter held firmly back by being on foot.

Attack (choose 1):
- **Improvised Explosive:**
  2 Harm, Close
- **Salvaged Turret:**
  2 Harm, Near
- **Anti-Materiel Rifle:**
  1 Harm, Far

Actions:
- Spring an ambush
- Dive into cover
- Harass and distract

Highwayman   **Vigor:** 3

A salvaged Legionnaire (or a deserting M1-SOLDIER pilot) with a shotgun for besting other survivalists or an assault rifle for other Frames.

Attack (choose 1):
- **Shotgun:**
  2 Harm, Close/Near, Splash, Piercing
- **Assault Rifle:**
  2 Harm, Near, Burst

Actions:
- Surge forward
- Spray fire everywhere
- Fall back to a trap

Insurgent   **Vigor:** 2

A salvaged Velite (or a deserting L1-RECON) with a higher-powered anti-materiel rifle for taking out unsuspecting Frames.

Attack:
- **Sniper Rifle:**
  2 Harm, Far, Stationary, Deliberate

Actions:
- Exploit a distracted Frame
- Take a well-aimed shot
- Scramble to higher ground

WAYFARERS

An itinerant, multi-legged species from another planet who live in urban centers following the Infection. Some of them are friendly or at least neutral, but others are happy to set traps for unsuspecting Aces and turn on anyone who looks like an easy target.

Caravaneer
Vigor: 1

A member of a Wayfarer caravan on foot, usually attacking in self-defense or as part of an ambush.

Attack (choose 1):
- **Laser Rifle:**
  1 Harm, Far, Energy
- **Radiant Targeter:**
  1 Harm, Near, Energy, Distracting

Actions:
- Unveil a trap
- Stay hidden
- Duck into a building

Spider
Vigor: 3

A hexapedal vehicle piloted by one Wayfarer with a mounted laser manned by another. It's designed for urban terrain and can easily jump up on and climb buildings.

Attack:
- **Laser Rifle:**
  2 Harm, Near, Energy

Actions:
- Scuttle left, right, and upwards
- Light up a target
- Jump between buildings

Scorpion
Vigor: 2

A cobbled-together Frame-like quadrupedal vehicle. It has a long-range energy rifle mounted as a top turret.

Attack:
- **Sniper Rifle:**
  2 Harm, Far, Stationary, Energy

Actions:
- Scorch a priority target
- Suppress an enemy
- Scuttle behind cover

OTHER

Various kinds of units used by all forces.

Drone   **Vigor:** 1

A small quadcopter intended for scouting. It's been armed with a small electrical generator to harass Frames.

Attack:
- **Electric Arc:**
  1 Harm, Close, Energy, Distracting

Actions:
- Fly at a Frame
- Hit and run
- Create a distraction

Fortified Vehicle   **Vigor:** 2
Armor: 1

A tank or similar assault vehicle. They're mostly relics from before the creation of Frames, but some are new.

Attacks:
- **Main Cannon:**
  2 Harm, Far, Deliberate
- **Machinegun:**
  1 Harm, Near, Splash, Piercing

Actions:
- Roll forward and fire
- Launch an assault from cover
- Retreat to shelter

Artillery   **Vigor:** 2

A mobile, deployable heavy weapons system designed for bombardment or breaking through defenses.

Attack (choose 1):
- **Railgun:**
  4 Harm, Far, Piercing
- **Mortar:**
  3 Harm, Far, Splash, Incendiary
- **Plasma Bore:**
  4 Harm, Close/Near, Energy

Actions:
- Clamp down for stability
- Unleash with heavy recoil
- Pack up to relocate

Light Turret · **Vigor:** 1

A Frame Armament rigged with motors and a camera for remote or automated control. Survivalist and Wayfarer "turrets" are often comprised of a salvaged Frame arm.

Attack (choose 1):
- **Assault Rifle:**
  2 Harm, Near, Burst
- **Sniper Rifle:**
  2 Harm, Far, Deliberate
- **Shotgun:**
  2 Harm, Close/Near, Splash, Piercing

Actions:
- Fire in bursts
- Recalibrate aim
- Move the barrel methodically

Heavy Turret · **Vigor:** 2 · **Armor:** 1

An intentional, armored turret placed in a semi-permanent or permanent location.

Attack (choose 1):
- **Anti-Frame Cannon:**
  2 Harm, Far, Deliberate
- **Anti-Infantry Gun:**
  1 Harm, Near/Far, Splash, Piercing

Actions:
- Fire with no warning
- Retract slightly
- Raise defensive shields

Frame Carrier (Prime) · **Vigor:** 8 · **Shields:** 2 · **Restorations:** 1

An enormous flying, tracked, or wheeled vehicle intended to carry a squad or two of Frames. The Republic and Claw tend to use purpose-built vehicles for this, while Survivalists and Wayfarers often use refurbished or patchwork vehicles.

Attacks:
- **Point Defense Lasers:**
  3 Harm, Close/Near, Energy
- **Missile Pod:**
  2 Harm, Near/Far, Splash, Piercing
- **Full Barrage:**
  3 Harm, Near/Far, Splash, Piercing, Incendiary, Desperation

Actions:
- Swerve back from the frontline
- Drop off a few Frames
- Re-raise shields

Desperation Actions:
- Unload any remaining Frames
- Release a cloud of drones
- Launch a fighting retreat

NONCOMBAT GAMEPLAY

Outside of combat, overcoming obstacles and adversities are simple: the GM narrates a situation that the players respond to with how their Aces act. If resolving the Aces' courses of action would be tense, interesting, or have meaningful failure states, players should roll an appropriate Attribute, and determine their level of success.

DETERMINE WHAT AND HOW

When presented with a situation, Aces should state both **what** they want to achieve and **how** they want to do achieve it. Both are important in continuing the fiction, but the latter is especially important because it determines which Attribute gets rolled, as well as the nature of failures, successes, and consequences.

Examples

Three Aces are faced with the same problem: An old fort's rusting gate is closed to them, and their mission involves bypassing it.

The first Ace, who is piloting a heavy Frame, decides to ram the gate to burst through it, which would be a Drive action. Here, success could mean that the gate crumbles under the force of the blow, while failure could indicate that the gate wasn't as weak as expected. Consequences might include the impact of the blow inflicting Harm, the noise attracting various interested parties inside, or both.

The second Ace, who is piloting a light Frame, runs at full speed and uses its thrusters to vault the wall surrounding the gate, an action which uses the Speed attribute. A failure might indicate a mistimed jump or an unseen barrier, while a success would indicate getting to the other side. Consequences could include alarms being set off or automatic wall defenses coming online.

The third Ace, who is piloting a medium Frame, plugs their Frame into the gate access panel to try to hack the controls to power and activate the gate; this would be a Control action. Success would indicate that the gate clambers open, while a failure could be gate motor failures, faulty electronics, and/or tripped security. Consequences could include electronic feedback, alarms being tripped, and/or a virus in the controls finding its way back into the Frame.

FAIL FORWARD

Most importantly, failures never stop the story. A failed course of action should never be a dead end; instead, it should always lead to some other path forward.

Examples

Here's how the Aces from the previous examples could 'fail forward' instead.

The first Ace tried to ram the gate and failed because the gate was stronger than expected. But perhaps the impact caused something else to shake loose, or maybe whoever lives inside opens the gate to investigate.

The second Ace tried to jump over the wall and failed. But perhaps defenses emerge from the wall that provide handholds and stepping stones, enabling them to easily ascend.

The third Ace failed to hack and activate the gate. But perhaps that interaction with the gate caused some other mechanical or electronic system to go haywire, or maybe they accidentally granted themselves maintenance privileges, allowing them to access a backdoor.

TIE IN TO COMBAT

Most missions will eventually lead to a Combat scenario. When that happens, the Noncombat and Combat parts are both improved if they're tied together meaningfully in the fiction.

Examples

Look again at the Aces trying to enter the fort. Here's how those failures might flow seamlessly into a Combat scenario.

For the first Ace, the resultant noise created is a great excuse for reinforcements. As well as this, the Harm done to the Frame will impact its chances during combat.

If the second Ace is trapped behind the gate, it creates a real source of tension for the first one or two rounds of combat, before everyone catches up. Activated wall defenses are a good choice for enemies in the opening moments of the fight.

For the third Ace, a gate that's suddenly open or malfunctioning would likely attract attention from nearby interested parties, drawing the Aces into a fight with the gate's internal protection team.

RUNNING THE GAME

Below are some suggestions and tools to help you run the game, be it a one-shot or a continuous campaign.

PLAYER SAFETY

The top priority for any game should be making sure everyone has fun and feels safe. APOCALYPSE FRAME can stray into uncomfortable territory, even with the best of intentions. To that end, consider using safety tools, such as those outlined in the fantastic TTRPG Safety Toolkit (http://bit.ly/ttrpgsafetytoolkit).

As a minimum, we recommend that in your first session you discuss Lines (content that should not feature in the game) and Veils (content that is fine in the background or when passed quickly, but not as a focus of stories). Make sure to check in periodically with players.

SETTING DETAILS

Details are the spice that makes gameplay mechanics interesting and meaningful. Coming up with even a few evocative details is beneficial to any game and continues to be helpful the longer a game runs.

Game Length and Level of Detail

Consider how long you intend to run the game. While it's helpful to establish some of these details beforehand, it's definitely not necessary for shorter games. Consider establishing a handful of these at first, and expanding from there. For example, each Ace could come up with one of the listed characters per mission, with the GM adding one or two setting details.

Including Aces in worldbuilding helps everyone get invested from the start. Consider starting your campaign "in media res" with a one-shot mission, establishing little beyond the Aces' characters – then take ideas and cues from that mission and expand from there.

The World Before

There was a world prior to The Infection that in no small part resembles ours. What year did it arrive? How advanced was technology prior to its arrival, and was any of it lost or made impractical? What geopolitical situations led to the rise of the Republic?

The World Before will be more prominent and important if The Republic is fairly young, but thinking about it can also give inspiration for missions and special rewards.

The Infection

The Infection terraformed so much of the world that society as we know it broke down, such that The Republic gained its current prominence. What exactly does this entail? Is the world recognizable to some extent, or has it become an entirely alien landscape? Are the wildlife that exist new, old, or adapted? How much of the world is inhabitable?

Details about The Infection itself might also prove useful. How intelligent is The Infection? Was it sent here on purpose? These ones may be better to define later (and maybe only confirmed as part of an overarching plot).

The Republic

The Republic is a repressive, authoritarian state. It is the Collective's most immediate threat, and the force to which they're most likely reacting. How long has it been in existence? What atrocities has it committed, what has it particularly suppressed, and what justifications has it used?

Answering questions about the Republic helps your players to understand why your Aces are willing to risk their lives to shape a better future. For these details, however, keep in mind any kind of content that you want to avoid or downplay.

The Collective

The Collective is a worker-led offshoot from The Republic. But how distant in the past was the uprising? Decades, such that a generation could have been born free from Republic control? A few years, such that every citizen used to live in the Republic, and that every Ace was probably Republic-trained? The immediacy of the Collective's founding can help to define how fragile its existence feels, how deeply rooted internal political concerns can be, and the nature of those who fight for its existence.

It's also important to determine how it has survived so far against The Republic. Is it in a particularly defensible position? Were they able to hijack existing defenses? Was it able to go unnoticed for a long time? These details provide excellent fodder for missions, especially those given by The Sword and The Shield.

The Aces

Who your Aces are will be a major focus of any game. What distinguished them from others in their Division to be recommended for Ace training? Is there a reason they were teamed up into this Strike Team? Is anyone in particular the "leader"?

Pick a theme for naming Strike Teams: for example, greek lettering or mythological creatures. This will help you come up with a fitting name for your own Strike Team.

Support Staff

An Ace is only as good as their Frame, and consequently only as good as those who maintain it. Repairs, refueling, outfitting, testing, and other maintenance tasks are vital to any sort of operation. To make the Strike Team's base of operations seem more real, each player should briefly outline 1-2 non-Ace co-workers.

Functionaries and Mentors

The Collective is run by a number of elected individuals. The most important ones to define are the three Division Heads, as they will often be the ones to give out Missions. But there can be others as well – there are, after all, civilian corps of which other citizens of the Collective are members. There might be people that the Aces in your campaign admire or even idolize, such as teachers, family, or other inspirational figures. Beyond the Division Heads, each player should briefly outline 1-2 people who are in charge of something or who were formative to them becoming Aces.

Other Strike Teams

The campaign rules given later assume that there will be 2-4 other Strike Teams of Aces in the Collective. As a way of generating these, each player should briefly outline:

- 1-2 Aces from their Division with whom they're well-acquainted.
  What made them stand out?
- 1-2 Aces from a different Division with whom they're fast friends.
  How did they bond?
- 1-2 Aces from their Division who dislike them.
  What's their history together?

Once they've come up with those, form Strike Teams from random assortments of these NPCs (or if this is a 1-on-1 game, merge the idea of Strike Team and Ace). You should end up with at least 3 other Strike Teams. Fill in any blanks with NPCs created by the GM, and give each Strike Team a preferred type of mission (scouting, intelligence, security, etc) and a weakness (any of those mission types, a certain kind of enemy, etc). Combined with the mission selection structure defined later, this will give you a lot of roleplaying opportunities and plot hooks.

Antagonists

Every Ace worked in one of the Divisions prior to their promotion, and as such they have inevitably had negative experiences. Did they serve under a particularly cruel Centurion? Were they driven out of their Survivalist family? Details like these can provide ideas for future threats and recurring enemies.

RUNNING MISSIONS

The Mission is the basic structure of a session. Each Mission should have the following framework:

- (Optional) **A Day In The Life:** Descriptions of the characters' daily lives between missions, including things like hobbies or interactions with other strike teams. Where are they when they find out that they've been tasked to head out?
- **The Briefing:** A summary of the task at hand, usually given by a superior officer, but occasionally by whoever is making the request. A good opportunity for roleplaying.
- **The Preparation:** A scene or scenes showing any last-minute changes to the Frames or Aces depending on the task at hand.
- **The Buildup:** The approach taken by the Aces, often where pre-combat decisions happen.
- **The Fireworks:** Executing the main part of the combat encounter or other challenge.
- **The Aftermath:** Confirming the outcome of the mission, and determining any rewards.
- **Downtime:** Changes to loadout, spending Materials, etc.

Missions should be tied to one of the three Divisions, and are given by their representatives. Some Mission hooks for each Division are provided later.

Mission rewards can be tangible, such as Materials, Armaments, Modules, or intangible, such as advancing a Division or Moonshot Clock, or making another Strike Team's goals easier.

Mission Types

There are three kinds of Missions: **Standard**, **Crisis**, and **Moonshot**. Crisis and Moonshot Missions are better used as part of campaign play as they typically require the use of Clocks (see).

Standard Missions

Give the Aces a choice of one Mission from each Division. For the other two Missions, determine which other Strike Team is handling it instead. Before you play out the chosen mission, roll one die for each mission that's been addressed by another Strike Team:

- **1-2:** The Strike Team cannot complete the mission. Advance that Division's Crisis Clock.
- **3-4:** The Strike Team completes the mission, but with a caveat or in a way that introduces further risk. Advance that Division's Crisis and Favor Clocks.
- **5-6:** The Strike Team completes the mission and gives your Strike Team credit for a major detail. Advance that Division's Favor Clock.

If it's a preferred mission type for that team, roll two dice and take the higher. If it's a weakness, roll two and take the lower.

If a Crisis Clock has been filled prior to the mission being played out, the GM may choose to either upgrade the current Standard Mission to a Crisis Mission, or else make the next mission a Crisis Mission.

The GM should also give some tangible reward for a Standard Mission. This can be an amount of Materials (half of whatever they earned during the course of the mission is usually appropriate), or a random Armament or Modular System with a random tag.

Crisis Missions

A Crisis Mission is either a Standard Mission where something has gone terribly wrong or a Mission where the stakes are vital to The Collective as a whole. Crisis Missions should be more dangerous than Standard Missions. As a GM, use the Aftermath to indicate to the Aces how close a call this was for The Collective and/or a postmortem of what went wrong.

Use Crisis Missions to give the Aces a bigger-than-usual reward: for example, doubling the amount of Materials earned during the mission, or granting an Armament with two extra chosen tags or a Modular System with one extra chosen tag.

In addition to anything tangible offered in return, and in place of advancing the Favor Clock, the Aces should immediately gain a Favor with the associated Division.

Moonshot Missions

Moonshot Missions are missions which, if successful, represent a major change to the established status quo. Like Crisis Missions, they should also be more dangerous, but should include unusual scenarios and novel threats. As a GM, use the Aftermath to indicate how this mission will change the power dynamics of the world, and what this victory means for the Collective.

The successful conclusion of a Moonshot Mission should also include an Ace Advance appropriate to their role in the mission.

RUNNING A CAMPAIGN

The campaign loop discussed so far – undertake a Mission, get a Reward, spend the Materials – will work so long as your Players stay interested. However, something that can really set the stage for an interesting, dynamic campaign is continuity.

Establishing Continuity

Continuity is the narrative idea that, rather than isolated missions, there is a continuous stream of events, occurrences, actions, reactions, consequences, and such. This can help players establish their Aces' characters and set the stage for the world.

Recurring Characters and Locations

If you went through the list of setting details in Running the Game () when starting, you'll likely have a good-sized cast of allies, and maybe a few antagonists. These are a great starting point when you want to add a human element. But these should not be the extent of the cast! Introduce others, and keep reintroducing them as they make sense.

For example: Did the Aces save a Wayfarer caravan from the Republic? Have them come up in later missions asking for help. Did a group of Survivalist raiders hassle the Collective? Give them a name and/or theme, and have them show up again later. Did the Aces defeat a Centurion whose name they knew? Have them return for payback.

This also goes for locations. Try to come up with some distinct properties for locations, then revisit that location. For example: If the Aces drove a Survivalist compound out of an old factory, maybe next time they visit it, they'll have to defend the Collective forces who set up in that location. You can also have the location change based on what happened during the mission. For example: If they entered a Republic base by destroying a wall, maybe next time they have to attack it, the walls are reinforced or have extra patrols on watch – meaning those resources were diverted from elsewhere!

Reactions and Consequences

As mentioned above, Aces' actions should generally matter and be carried forward. This doesn't have to be extremely wide ranging: it's nice to have a mission be a one-off sometimes, or have very minor consequences. But generally speaking, it's nice to have things react to actions taken.

You don't just have to react to Aces, though. For one, you can tie in the actions of allies, especially other Strike Teams. Did another Strike Team mess up a mission? Describe how their failure opened the Collective up to reprisal. Did another Strike Team succeed on something unlikely? Describe how their success helped create better conditions next time. These are great lead-ins to Crisis and Moonshot missions.

You can also tie in the repercussions of the actions of other characters, factions, or groups. If a huge mutated beast was left unchecked, how much damage did they do? If some Wayfarers set up shop, who did they trade with? If the Collective helped some survivalists stake their claim on an area, what did they do next?

Arcs

The structure of Standard to Crisis/Moonshot Mission leads itself well to miniature arcs: tiny little plots with setup and payoff. You don't have to do these all the time, but when you've got a Crisis or Moonshot in mind, it helps to have set it up prior.

A recommended outline for an arc is:

1. **Establish Indirectly.** Thread some details into a mission, a debriefing, hearsay, or something similar. If this is leading to a Crisis, this might play off of consequences in a mission. If this is leading to a Moonshot, this might come from unexpected successes or the completion of bonus objectives.
2. **Address Directly.** Put forth a mission that addresses (or attempts to address) the topic. It doesn't have to actually succeed at addressing it - for instance, bad information could lead to something entirely different - but the idea is to make the idea feel like it's a running concern.
3. **Re-Establish Indirectly.** Add in something again where the topic comes up incidentally. Try to make it come from another source.
4. **Raise the Stakes.** Address it directly again, but much more prominently. Maybe a mission goes very differently as a result of it, or instead of the suite of standard missions every Strike Team is tasked with different facets of one mission in particular that sets up the next step.
5. **Crescendo.** The endpoint of an arc like this is likely a Crisis or Moonshot Mission. Everything that's been building up goes wrong or right here. Make sure players understand what's going on so it feels like it's a payoff!

Clocks

One way to track continuous progress, for better or for worse, is a Clock.

A Clock is a progress bar that fills up radially and is emptied when it is full. Favor Clocks and the Moonshot Clock each have 4 segments, while Crisis Clocks have 2 segments. When asked to advance a clock, fill one of these segments. Once all segments on a clock are full, something happens; afterwards, each segment is restored to empty.

Favor Clocks

Each Division has a Clock representing how they feel about the Strike Team and the Ace Program as a whole. When a Division's Favor Clock fills up, its Division head grants your Strike Team a Favor to recognize their service.

A Favor Clock is advanced by completing missions and by generally making that Division's life easier. Upon character creation, each character advances their chosen Division's Favor Clock as well.

Each Division is equipped to offer different kinds of aid; some examples are given in the prompts appendix on . Favors can be as simple as a stack of 5-10 Materials or the direct offer of items, but may also be more abstract. Every time a Division performs a Favor, they also advance the Moonshot Clock.

Crisis Clocks

The Collective faces risks from all fronts. Each Division has a Crisis Clock representing a major, not-yet-exploited flaw or pending crisis in that Division's purview. When a Crisis Clock fills, either the current mission or the next mission is now a Crisis Mission; this and all other Crisis Clocks are now reset.

A Crisis Clock is advanced by risky actions, shirking responsibilities, or failed missions.

Moonshot Clock

Initially, odds were stacked against The Collective. It survived through a series of breakthroughs and notable successes from its members taking substantial risks for incredible payoffs: Moonshots. In your campaign, you can recreate this feeling by using Moonshot Clocks. Once filled, a Moonshot Clock opens the possibility for a Moonshot Mission, representing an opportunity for a major advance.

The Moonshot Clock is advanced by Divisions performing Favors, though it can also be advanced explicitly as the result of a Standard mission. The Moonshot Mission or initiative may be predefined, but should be vague or secret (using operation names, for example).

Other Clocks

When any situation that deserves continuous tracking reveals itself, add a temporary clock for it and define some conditions for its advancement, as well as some idea of what happens when it fills up.

CHARACTER ADVANCEMENT

One thing that helps to maintain continuity is character advancement: upgrades, sidegrades, and so on. The most prominent source for advancement is Materials, a catch-all currency representing salvaged mechanical parts and biological matter that can be used to manufacture arms and Frames in The Collective.

Attributes

Players may change their Ace's Attributes (swapping a 3 for a 2 or a 2 for a 1) between missions, connected to a change in their personality or training: someone gaining Drive might be trying to be more direct, someone gaining Speed might be doing so in reaction to a time when they reacted too slowly, and someone gaining Control might be focusing on deliberate thought.

Loadout and Frame Changes

The GM can offer players new stock model Armaments and Modular Systems for their Ace's Frames. Each Frame has two Armaments and two Modular Systems by default, which allows considerable customization even among stock models. Replaced Armaments and Modular Systems are stored in your hangar.

Here are some approximate costs for new stock model components, to increase and decrease as required:

- **1 Material:** Get a stock model Armament or Modular System.
- **5 Materials:** Get a stock model Frame.

Armament/System Improvement

For further advancement, specialty Armaments and Modular Systems are stock models with additional tags, selected either randomly or intentionally. A pre-modified stock model, perhaps salvaged from an adversary, makes an interesting commemorative mission reward, or, suggested costs for new tags are as follows:

- **2 Materials:** Add a random non-range tag to an Armament.
- **3 Materials:** Add a random non-range tag to an Armament if you've already added a tag once.
- **5 Materials:** Add a random tag to a Modular System.

You may add up to two tags to an Armament and up to one tag to a Modular System. You may also double any of these prices to choose a tag rather than add a random one. Aces can store Armaments and Modular Systems they aren't using in their hangar. Tables for random Armaments, Modular Systems, and tags are given at the end of the book.

Ace Advances

After a Moonshot Mission, in addition to the whatever narrative consequences should arise, Aces should receive one of the following Ace Advances, or occasionally two in the case of a particularly important Moonshot Mission. Sometimes, a GM might also give an extra Ace Advance to players as the result of a particularly important Moonshot Mission, an exceptionally handled Crisis Mission, or the fulfillment of a particular story arc.

Ability Increase

Simple but useful and welcome upgrades to Frame properties. Many of these are noticeable and will be welcomed but are not the most interesting on their own.

- **Exceptional Commitment:** +1 die on re-rolls.
- **Exceptional Spirit:** +1 Maximum Vigor.
- **Exceptional Clarity:** +1 Maximum Tension.
- **Exceptional Preparation:** +1 Maximum Fuel
- **Exceptional Perseverance:** When rolling for Drops, each Ace may re-roll one.

Tech Expansion

New equipment options that are made available for purchase, such as new Armaments, Modular Systems, and even new Frames. This is a great way to introduce supplementary content to the game!

Capability Expansion

Conditional bonuses and new options created by reconfiguring existing concepts as opposed to adding wholly new options.

- **Armament Storage:** +1 Armament Slot.
- **Systems Storage:** +1 Modular System Slot.
- **Dual Firepower:** When a Frame has two Armaments that use the same Stock Model (such as two Assault Rifles) and that have the same Range Tags, the first Attack with either of them each round gains +1 die.
- **Backup Plan:** Aces may add Tags to Backup Armaments as if they were standard Armaments. The first Attack with a Backup per combat has +1 die and Harm.
- **Improved Holstering:** When purposefully switching to a Backup Armament (i.e. not as the result of from Frame Damage), the original Armament is stored instead of discarded. The original Armament can be replaced by spending an action.
- **Recycling:** Aces can now turn in unwanted items to receive Materials in return: 1 Material each for Armaments and Modular Systems, or 5 Materials for a Frame with two Armaments and two Modular Systems attached.
- **Signature Customization:** Aces can now add Tags to their Frames' Signature Systems as if like they were Modular Systems.
- **Unbound Possibilities:** Every Frame gains a unique noncombat ability, like radar cloaking or high-altitude flight. This ability works as described normally without the need for a roll, and may do exceptional things on a successful Attribute roll.

ADVANCED RULES

This chapter contains material that might be too complex for your first time playing APOCALYPSE FRAME. However, once a group is comfortable enough to start looking for more interesting equipment or varied enemies, this is the place to look.

It contains:

- **Experimental Frame Models.** Three highly specialized Frames that also come with major drawbacks.
- **Experimental Systems and Armaments.** Six new Systems and six new Armaments that are more powerful than average but come with a major flaw.
- **Superior Tags.** Stronger than average tags associated with experimental Systems and Armaments and advanced upgrades.
- **Drawback Tags.** Tags for experimental Systems and Armaments that indicate significant flaws in their design.
- **Variant Enemies.** Four variations on common Republic enemies.
- **Tyrants.** A new type of enemy representing truly dangerous threats, including 10 examples.
- **Crisis Advances.** A type of GM-side advancement for gradually scaling up difficulty to match Ace Advances.

All of these are designed to be introduced to an existing campaign over time to keep things new and interesting.

EXPERIMENTAL FRAME MODELS

Each Experimental Frame is designed to excel in a specific role, but each also has a major drawback.

- **MX-BEACON:** Encased in eye-catching chrome, this prototype model was designed to test the limits of energy-based weaponry. Its power output is impressive, but it has limited fuel storage.
- **LX-DRAGONSLAYER:** A skeletal Frame with actuated arms, this model was designed for maximum speed and offensive capability. It excels at close-range supremacy and overwhelming closing speed, but is highly fragile.
- **HX-MONSOON:** This enormously bulky Frame was designed for maximal defensive firepower as an emplacement. It has unmatched missile capabilities, but is very slow.

MX-BEACON

Encased in eye-catching chrome, this prototype model was designed to test the limits of energy-based weaponry. Its power output is impressive, but it has limited fuel storage.

Signature Feature

Energizing Hardpoints: Specialized mounts supercharge all offensive equipment. All Armaments and Offensive Modular Systems gain the Energy tag while mounted on MX-BEACON. Armaments that already have Energy gain the Hot tag, while Modular Systems that already have Energy gain the Holdout tag or upgrade any existing Holdout tag to Holdout+.

- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.
- **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.
- **Holdout:** If you have 0 Fuel, you may use this System by spending 1 Tension. It gains the Limited Tag when used in this way.
- **Holdout+:** If you have 0 Fuel, you may use this System without spending Fuel or Tension. It gains the Limited Tag when used in this way.

(A * indicates that it's granted by this)

Resources

- **Vigor:** 7 + Drive
- **Tension:** 4 + Speed
- **Fuel:** 2 + Control

Signature System

Shinebright Cooling Array (Support): Activate an advanced cooling system that dissipates heat safely. For the rest of the turn, you take no Harm from Overheat or Hazards related to fire or heat. Overload.

- **Overload:** You skip the Build phase this round. On the second time this is used during a round, you also skip the Drops phase.

Build

Regenerative: MX-BEACON can recoup lost resources by expending energy through sophisticated regenerative systems. Regain 1 Vigor and roll a die. If the roll is greater than or equal to your current Tension, you also regain 1 Tension. If the roll is less than or equal to than your current Tension, your next System use costs no Fuel.

Armaments

Laser Cannon: A continuous-focus laser that burns hotter the longer it's operating. Its heat dissipation capacity leaves something to be desired.

3 dice, 3 Harm, Near, Energy, Spin Up+, Overheat, Hot*

- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.
- **Spin Up+:** +1 Harm if your previous Attack was with this Armament, or +2 if your previous two Attacks were with this Armament.
- **Overheat:** At the end of your turn, roll dice equal to the number of times this Armament was used this round. If any die is higher than your current Tension, take 1 Harm each time you use Tension next round.

Machinegun: A rapid fire anti-personnel weapon.

4 dice, 1 Harm, Close/Near, Splash, Piercing, Energy*

- **Splash:** Enemies Close to the target take 1 Harm when your roll is a 6.
- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot, Energy*

- **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Sword: A long, unpowered blade. Difficult to use, but very effective.

1 die, 5 Harm, Close, Piercing, Energy*

- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

Modular Systems

Plasma Borer (Offensive): Shunt all battery power into a plasma-based boring tool. Deal 4 Harm to 1 enemy at Close. Energy, Intensify, Overheat, Holdout*

- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.
- **Intensify:** You may increase the Harm dealt to a target by spending Tension when using this System. For each Tension spent, add +2 Harm to one target.
- **Overheat:** At the end of your turn, roll dice equal to the number of times this Armament was used this round. If any die is higher than your current Tension, take 1 Harm each time you use Tension next round.

Sniper Cannon (Offensive): Emit a short, precise laser burst. Choose: deal 2 Harm to a Near enemy, or deal 1 Harm to a Far enemy. Energy*.

LX-DRAGONSLAYER

A skeletal Frame with actuated arms, this model was designed for maximum speed and offensive capability. It excels at close-range supremacy and overwhelming closing speed, but is highly fragile.

Signature Feature

CQC Acquisition Processor: LX-DRAGONSLAYER's targeting systems are unparalleled for close-range tracking. All Attacks at Close gain +1 die.

Resources

- **Vigor:** 4 + Drive
- **Tension:** 5 + Speed
- **Fuel:** 4 + Control

Signature System

Glimmer Overclock Module (Support): Disengage your drive safety interlocks to surge forward as warning panels flash. You gain 3 Tension. Straining, Limited.

- **Straining:** Whenever this System is used, take 1 Harm (ignores Armor/Shields).

- **Limited:** You may only use this System once per round.

Build

Streamlined: An aerodynamic build helps LX-DRAGONSLAYER take advantage of maintained acceleration. Regain 1 Tension. If you haven't been Harmed by an enemy this round, instead regain 2 Tension; additionally, your next System use costs no Fuel.

Armaments

Superheated Spear: A longer melee weapon with a heated tip, based on the Centurion's Hasta. Its unwieldiness can leave the user vulnerable after use.

2 dice (3 dice at Close*), 4 Harm, Close, Focused+, Polished+, Reckless

- **Focused+:** +1 Harm when used at maximum or greater Tension, and +1 die if you started your turn with maximum or greater Tension.
- **Polished+:** +2 Harm at maximum Vigor.
- **Reckless:** You take +1 Harm from enemies for the rest of the round. This effect stacks with itself.

Carbine: An assault rifle with a shorter barrel for greater mobility.

3 dice (4 dice at Close*), 2 Harm, Close/Near, Burst, Mobile.

- **Burst:** +1 Harm when your roll is a 6.
- **Mobile:** +1 Harm if you've moved at least two range bands this round.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

- **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Sword: A long, unpowered blade. Difficult to use, but very effective.

1 die (2 dice at Close*), 5 Harm, Close, Piercing

- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields.

*+1 die at close from CQC Acquisition Processors.

Modular Systems

Pulse Laser (Offensive): Emit a short, precise laser burst. Choose: deal 2 Harm to a Near enemy, or deal 1 Harm to a Far enemy. Energy, Efficient.
- **Energy:** Ignores Armor.
- **Efficient:** The first time in a round that you use this System, roll a die. On a 4-6, no Fuel is expended this time.

Survival Barrier (Support): Deploy an opaque shield that negates anything that crosses it. Gain 4 Shields. These Shields are reduced by 1 at the start of each subsequent round. Persistent, Interfering.
- **Persistent:** Negates effects that ignore a property of this ability, such as Piercing for Shields or Energy for Armor.
- **Interfering:** For the rest of this round and next round, you have -1 die on all rolls and deal -1 Harm with all Systems.

HX-MONSOON

This enormously bulky Frame was designed for maximal defensive firepower as an emplacement. It has unmatched missile capabilities, but is very slow.

Signature Feature

Chained Missile Launcher: HX-MONSOON's low-impact system-linked missile pods are built to create chains of missile barrages. When using an offensive system that can target more than one enemy, up to two targets take +1 Harm.

Resources

- **Vigor:** 8 + Drive
- **Tension:** Speed - 1
- **Fuel:** 6 + Control

Signature System

Hailstorm Missile Launcher (Offensive): Launch a huge missile that splits before landing to bombard an area. Deal 2 Harm to every enemy Close to a Far location (+1 Harm to up to two targets). Limited+.

- **Limited+:** After use, you can't use this System for the remainder of this round or throughout the next round.

Build

Generating: HX-MONSOON is designed for extended fights where running out of fuel is a major concern. Regain 1 Fuel if your Fuel is at less than half of your maximum. Additionally, outside combat, your Fuel is always at least half of your maximum.

Armaments

Shell Cannon: A large artillery cannon. A Frame arm is an unsuitable mount for its powerful lateral recoil, which can cause mechanical failures over time.

> 1 die, 4 Harm, Far, Charge+, Stationary+, Straining.

- **Charge+:** +1 die and Harm on your first Attack with this per round.
- **Stationary+:** +1 die and +1 Harm if you haven't moved this round.
- **Straining:** Whenever this Armament is used, take 1 Harm.

Grenade Launcher: An explosive, incendiary weapon.

> 2 dice, 3 Harm, Close/Near, Splash, Incendiary

- **Incendiary:** Creates a Hazard at the target's location until the start of the next round. Only one Hazard can be created per location.
- **Splash:** Enemies Close to the target take 1 Harm when your roll is a 6.

Backup Armaments

Handgun: The classic sidearm. It has low stopping power, but it's very stylish.

> 4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Hot

- **Hot:** Once per round, gain 1 Tension when you take out an enemy.

Revolver: A forceful sidearm designed for long range.

> 2 dice, 2 Harm, Far, Scoped.

- **Scoped:** +1 die when used at Far if no enemies are Close/Near.

Modular Systems

Micromissile Barrage (Offensive): Unleash a torrent of tiny explosives, opening yourself up to incoming attacks. Deal 1 Harm to every enemy Close to a Near location (+1 Harm to up to two targets*). Piercing, Efficient+, Reckless.

- **Piercing:** Ignores Shields
- **Efficient+:** Whenever you use this System, roll a die. On a 4-6, no Fuel is expended this time.
- **Reckless:** You take +1 Harm from enemies for the rest of the round. This effect stacks with itself.

Missile Battery (Offensive): Three small missiles streak away in three different directions. Deal 2 Harm to 3 Near enemies (+1 Harm to up to two targets*).

*From Chained Missile Launcher

EXPERIMENTAL SYSTEMS

These Systems are stronger or have unique traits, but each also has some major flaw.

EMP Missile (Offensive): Fire a charged warhead, which disables the target on impact. Deal 3 Harm to a Far enemy. Its Armor and Shields have no effect for the rest of the round. Suppressive, Distracting+, Overload.

Entry Afterburner Array (Support): Launch your Frame explosively into the fray and towards a foe with charged thrusters, maintaining momentum as you regain control. Move to an enemy at a Far location and deal 2 Harm to them. Renewing, Limited+.

Micromissile Barrage (Offensive): Unleash a torrent of tiny explosives, opening yourself up to incoming attacks. Deal 1 Harm to every enemy Close to a Near location. Piercing, Efficient+, Reckless.

Plasma Borer (Offensive): Shunt all battery power into a plasma-based boring tool. Deal 4 Harm to 1 enemy at Close. Energy, Intensify, Overheat.

Reactor Heat Override (Offensive): Disable your reactor's safety interlocks in order to dump excess heat onto an enemy. Deal 2 Harm to every Close enemy, +1 Harm if you're at 0 Tension. Energy, Holdout+, Straining.

Survival Barrier (Support): Deploy an opaque shield that negates anything that crosses it. Gain 4 Shields. These Shields are reduced by 1 at the start of each subsequent round. Persistent, Interfering.

EXPERIMENTAL ARMAMENTS

These Systems are stronger or have unique traits, but each also has some major flaw.

Superheated Spear: A longer melee weapon with a heated tip, based on the Centurion's Hasta. Its unwieldiness can leave the user vulnerable after use.

> 2 dice, 4 Harm, Close, Focused+, Polished+, Reckless

Energy Spike: A two-pronged, kinetically-charged conduit that supercharges a target on contact. It can strain a Frame's internal battery.

> 2 dice, 4 Harm, Close, Distracting+, Mobile+, Overload

Laser Cannon: A continuous-focus laser that burns hotter the longer it's operating. Its heat dissipation capacity leaves something to be desired.

> 3 dice, 3 Harm, Near, Energy, Spin Up+, Overheat

Spread Launcher: An automatic anti-infantry grenade launcher that can easily threaten wide areas. Its feed mechanism is too slow for consistent fire.

> 4 dice, 1 Harm, Near, Splash+, Incendiary+, Piercing, Reload

Autocannon: An anti-aircraft gun adapted for a Frame. Using it without an emplacement requires active bracing to handle its recoil.

> 3 dice, 2 Harm, Far, Burst+, Splash, Destabilize

Shell Cannon: A large artillery cannon. A Frame arm is an unsuitable mount for its powerful lateral recoil, which can cause mechanical failures over time.

> 1 die, 4 Harm, Far, Charge+, Stationary+, Straining

SUPERIOR TAGS

Experimental Systems and Armaments can have more powerful Tags, known as Superior Tags.

System Superior Tags

General System Tags

Efficient+: Whenever you use this System, roll a die. On a 4-6, no Fuel is expended this time.

Holdout+: If you have 0 Fuel, you may use this System without spending Fuel or Tension. It gains the Limited Tag when used in this way.

Offensive System Tags

Distracting+: Enemies Harmed by this deal -1 Harm this round. This effect does not stack if the enemy is Harmed more than once.

Intensify: You can increase the Harm dealt to a target by spending Tension when using this System. For each Tension spent, add +2 Harm to one target.

Support System Tags

Persistent: Negates effects that ignore a property of this ability, such as Piercing for Shields or Energy for Armor.

Renewing: The first time per round this is used, anyone who is affected by this System regains 1 Tension.

Armament Superior Tags

Burst+: +2 Harm when your roll is a 6.

Charge+: +1 die and +1 Harm on your first Attack with this Armament each round.

Critical+: +1 Harm when used at half Vigor or less, or +2 Harm when used at 1-3 Vigor.

Distracting+: Enemies Harmed by this deal -1 Harm this round. This effect does not stack if the enemy is Harmed more than once.

Focused+: +1 Harm when used at maximum or greater Tension, and +1 die if you started your turn with maximum or greater Tension.

Incendiary+: Creates a Hazard at the target's location and a location of your choosing Near to the target's location until the start of the next round. Only one Hazard can be created per location.

Impulsive+: Deals +1 Harm when used at half Tension or less, or +2 Harm when used at 0 or 1 Tension.

Mobile+: +1 Harm if you've moved at least two range bands this round, or +2 Harm if you've moved at least four range bands this round.

Polished+: +2 Harm at maximum Vigor.

Spin Up+: +1 Harm if your previous Attack was with this Armament, or +2 if your previous two Attacks were with this Armament.

Splash+: Enemies who are Close to the target take 1 Harm when your roll is a 5 or 6. If the Armament has Energy and/or Piercing Tags, this Harm ignores Armor and/or Shields.

Stationary+: +1 die and +1 Harm if you haven't moved during this round.

DRAWBACK TAGS

Tags that represent a deficiency or flaw.

System Drawback Tags

Interfering: For the rest of this round and next round, you have -1 die on all rolls and deal -1 Harm with all Systems.

Limited+: After use, you can't use this System for the remainder of this round or throughout the next round.

Overheat: At the end of your turn, roll dice equal to the number of times this System was used this round. If any die is higher than your current Tension, take 1 Harm (ignoring Armor/Shields) each time you use Tension next round.

Overload: You skip the Build phase this round. On the second time this is used during a round, you also skip the Drops phase.

Reckless: You take +1 Harm from enemies for the rest of the round. This effect stacks with itself.

Straining: Whenever this System is used, take 1 Harm (ignores Armor/Shields).

Armament Drawback Tags

Destabilize: For the rest of the round, you can't Move or Sprint.

Overheat: At the end of your turn, roll dice equal to the number of times this Armament was used this round. If any die is higher than your current Tension, take 1 Harm (ignoring Armor/Shields) each time you use Tension next round.

Overload: You skip the Build phase this round. On the second time this is used during a round, you also skip the Drops phase.

Reckless: You take +1 Harm from enemies for the rest of the round. This effect stacks with itself.

Reload: This Armament can't be used again until next round unless you use an Interact action to reload it.

Straining: Whenever this Armament is used, take 1 Harm (ignores Armor/Shields).

EXPERIMENTAL ADVANCEMENT

In addition to the Advancement system mentioned in Ace Advances (), you can add experimental Armaments, Modular Systems, and Frames, as well as the new Tags, through Tech Expansion Advances:

Experimental Armaments/Systems: You can manufacture an Experimental Armament or System for 5 Materials.

Experimental Frames: You can manufacture an Experimental Frame for 15 Materials.

Expanded System Capabilities: When you spend Materials to add Tags to an Armament, you may upgrade an existing Tag to its Superior version instead of adding a new Tag. This still counts as a new Tag for the purposes of cost or limitations on the number of added Tags.

Expanded Armament Capabilities: As above, but applies to Armaments instead of Systems.

System Breakthrough: If you've already added one Tag to a System, you may upgrade it a second time by spending 20 Materials and adding a random Drawback Tag. Alternatively, you may spend 10 extra Materials to choose a Drawback Tag. Options for upgrading are:

• Add two standard Tags.
• Upgrade two standard Tags to Superior Tags.
• Add one standard Tag and upgrade one standard Tag.
• Add one Superior Tag.

Armament Breakthrough: If you've already added two Tags to an Armament, you may upgrade it again as per the System Breakthrough Advance.

VARIANT ENEMIES

These are alternate versions of the standard Republic enemies. They can be introduced situationally to add variety to specific missions, or permanently as fixtures via Crisis Advances (see).

Cataphract   Vigor: 3

A more mobility-oriented variant of the Legionnaire Frame. In place of their service rifle, they have improved thrusters combined with an actuated lance for aggressive close-range combat.

Attack:
- **Lance Charge:**
  2 Harm, Close, Mobile, Approach

Actions:
- Burn hard on approach
- Impale an enemy
- Retreat to regroup

Numida   Vigor: 2
Shields: 2

A close-range, mobility-oriented variant of the Velite Frame. Equipped with shielding for greater protection, they have carbines in place of their traditional long-range rifles, allowing aggressive formation maneuvers.

Attack:
- **Carbine:**
  2 Harm, Close/Near, Mobile, Burst

Actions:
- Serpentine on approach
- Spray with automatic fire
- Engage emergency shielding

Sagittarius   Vigor: 4
Armor: 1

An artillery platform variant of the Decanus Frame. Its shots are devastating if it can achieve stability.

Attack:
- **Shell Cannon:**
  2 Harm, Far, Stationary, Scoped

Actions:
- Annihilate a target
- Retreat to a better position
- Wait for spotters

Triarius   Vigor: 8
(Prime)   Armor: 1
Restorations: 1

A longer-ranged variant of the Centurion intended for more valuable pilots. They tend to revert to more close-ranged tactics when pressed.

Attacks:
- **Sniper Cannon:** 2 Harm, Far, Deliberate, Stationary
- **Heavy MG:** 2 Harm, Near, Splash
- **Shoulder Charge:** 3 Harm, Close, Approach, Mobile, Desperation

Actions:
- Keep distance
- Spray enemies on approach
- Spot for others

Desperation Actions:
- Ram an enemy Frame
- Rain down fire
- Charge in heedlessly

TYRANTS

In general, Aces are up against enemies which individually pose little threat to them. Even Prime enemies, which will cause more problems to Aces, are designed to be readily overcome by competent strike teams. By contrast, Tyrants, a stronger version of Prime enemies, are intended to be clear and present dangers.

Each of the major factions has their own Tyrants, and each uses these exceptional individuals for slightly different purposes.

- The Tyrant program was founded by the Republic to counter the Collective's successful Ace program. A Tyrant was intended to be a solitary figure, given full discretion and command in the battlefield in the pursuit of crushing those who would dare to oppose. Some Tyrants may even have started in the Ace program before defecting.
- Independent Tyrants are often an individual settlement's version of an Ace – a highly skilled pilot dedicated to help them and theirs. They're often mercenaries or defectors who work for the Republic or for the Collective, depending on who's paying (and possibly depending on who last slighted them).
- Claw Tyrants aren't an explicit program, but instead the Claw's top tier of Apexes. They're legendary hunters who take down even the most dangerous prey; very frequently, the most dangerous prey are Aces.

In each case, they're used to represent anything that's a credible threat against an Ace or a group of Aces. As such, a Tyrant is not to be used lightly. They should appear only in Crisis and Moonshot Missions.

When a Tyrant shows up, make it very obvious. A Tyrant enters the battlefield like an Ace does: quickly, forcefully, and loudly. Like Aces, all of them have custom Frame builds, and they often have distinctive features like stenciled iconography, a clear paint job, a signature Armament, or distinguishing battle scars. When a Tyrant arrives, they will often announce their arrival via broadcast on public comms channels (or by some other method, particularly for Claw Tyrants) with the expectation that it will incite enemies to scatter – and if Aces aren't present, they often will.

Like Aces, human Tyrants will usually eject when their Frames are destroyed, and so they'll be able to escape and threaten the Aces again in a future scenario. In some cases, it might be possible to capture or kill Tyrants, but forcing these situations will usually involve some pre-planning and no small amount of risk.

Characteristics

Tyrants are mechanically similar to Prime enemies, with a handful of enhancements that set them apart.

Tension

Unlike every other enemy, Tyrants have a Tension attribute, which can be used for Tyrant Reactions and Interrupts (see the next page). A Tyrant restores 1 Tension at the start of every round, +1 Tension if it inflicted Frame Damage in the previous round.

Signature Feature

Every Tyrant has a permanently active Signature Feature, similar to Aces' Signature Features. These take precedence over Ace abilities if their mechanics are in conflict.

Tyrant Restorations

Restorations for Tyrants work like Restorations for Prime enemies: the Tyrant is restored to full Vigor, gets a free action at the start of the next GM Turn, and is allowed to use Desperate Actions when it has no Restorations remaining. In addition to this, Tyrants gain a bonus after Restoration. This could be a bonus to Vigor or Tension, or to Armor or Shield, or something else. In general, it means that a Tyrant is inherently more durable and/or dangerous after a Restoration in addition to being able to take Desperate Actions.

Tyrant Reactions

Aces are able to attack most enemies at will, without prompting retaliation except on a roll of 1-4. This is not the case with Tyrants.

Any time a Tyrant is Harmed, they may take a Tyrant Reaction. This is similar to an Activation as a consequence, but has a more restricted list of actions. Each Tyrant has two Favored Reactions; reacting with a Favored Reaction costs 0 Tension, while reacting with a non-Favored Reaction costs 1 Tension. Reaction types are:

- **Advance:** Move Close to the Ace who Harmed them.
- **Retreat:** Move Far from the Ace who Harmed them if they're at Close or Near, or to Extreme range if they're at Far.
- **Protect:** Gain 1 Armor (maximum of 2 Armor) or 2 Shields until the end of the round, or restore degraded Shields to their initial value.
- **Command:** Activate a Close or Near non-Tyrant enemy.
- **Counterattack:** Respond with an Attack that matches the range of the Ace's attack. This counts as a consequence for Tag effects. Counterattack is never a Favored Reaction.

If triggered by an Attack roll, a Reaction happens in addition to any consequence resulting from a 1-4 roll. The GM may resolve the Reaction and the consequence in any order.

Tyrant Interrupts

The Tyrant may spend 2 Tension to have a Favored Reaction happen before the action which would cause it Harm is resolved. This is called a Tyrant Interrupt.

If a Tyrant Interrupt causes Frame Damage to the Ace, the Harm and any effects which it would have received are negated.

If a Tyrant Interrupt means that the triggering Attack is out of range, the Attack is rerolled with a penalty of -1 die per range band beyond its range Tag.

If a Tyrant Interrupt means that the triggering System is out of range, the System deals -1 Harm per range band beyond its range. If it would deal 0 Harm, any secondary effects are also negated.

Republic Tyrants

Sledgehammer

Vigor: 10
Armor: 1
Restorations: 1　　**Tension:** 4

A former Ace who defected to the Republic. According to some accounts, she is the progenitor of the Tyrant Program. Her Frame's close-combat capabilities are notorious, and Frames punctured by Nail's fist spikes rarely survive.

Mannerisms: Taunting, Scornful. Bears grudges.

Frame: Nail. Gray coloring with a black hammer symbol on right shoulder. Reinforced arms with spikes grafted on knuckles.

Signature Feature: Sturdy. Any single Attack or System usage against Sledgehammer cannot deal more than 3 Harm.

Restoration Bonus: +2 Vigor

Attacks:
- **Carbine:** 3 Harm, Close/Near, Burst
- **Scout Rifle:** 2 Harm, Near/Far
- **Punch:** 5 Harm, Close, Invigorating, Desperation

Actions:
- Fire with targeted bursts
- Jet forward to meet an Ace
- Put up a massive arm

Desperation Actions:
- Slam an Ace with a spiked fist
- Burn harder and more recklessly
- Roar in defiance

Favored Reactions:
Advance, Command

Watchtower

Vigor: 6
Armor: 1
Restorations: 2　　**Tension:** 3

A Centurion who gained a reputation for dispassionate efficiency and was eventually promoted to the Tyrant Program. He favors long-ranged attacks and is beloved by standard Republic troops.

Mannerisms: Clinical, Dispassionate. Unlike most Tyrants, favors a stealthy entry.

Frame: Spotlight. Yellow coloration with white trim around plates. Oversized railgun mounted on upper arm.

Signature Feature: Deadeye. On the GM Turn, Watchtower ignores effects that reduce or prevent Harm to Aces, such as Armor or Shields.

Restoration Bonus: +2 Vigor

Attacks:
- **Assault Rifle:** 2 Harm, Near, Burst
- **Oversized Sniper:** 3 Harm, Far, Deliberate
- **Rail Cannon:** 4 Harm, Far, Piercing, Stationary, Desperation

Actions:
- Stand imposingly
- Fire a resounding shot
- Signal an attack

Desperation Actions:
- Unleash the railcannon
- Do a tactical retreat
- Fire erratically

Favored Reactions:
Retreat, Command

Praetorian

Vigor: 12
Armor: 1

Restorations: 1   **Tension:** 3

A pilot with little discipline, he was drummed out of the Centurion program several times before his influential family found him another path. His Frame was custom-designed by a private engineer for survivability.

Mannerisms: Confident, Indignant.

Frame: Dux. Republic red, but with deeply ornate trim and his family's crest on the chest. Enormously bulky. Shakes the ground when it lands.

Signature Feature: Chromed. Praetorian ignores effects that would ignore his Frame's Armor or Shields, such as the Energy and Piercing Tags.

Restoration Bonus: Gain 2 Shields.

Attacks:
- **Kinetic Cannon:** 3 Harm, Close, Charge
- **Grenade Launcher:** 2 Harm, Close/Near, Incendiary
- **Core Laser:** 4 Harm, Near/Far, Energy, Desperation

Actions:
- Advance slowly and deliberately
- Activate secondary defenses
- Act smug about his chances

Desperation Actions:
- Reveal the laser dramatically
- Make a panicked charge forward
- Whine about unworthiness

Favored Reactions:
Protect, Command

Mercury

Vigor: 10

Restorations: 1   **Tension:** 5

A pilot shrouded in mystery, with conflicting reports from intelligence sources as to their origin and even basic identity. They rarely communicate coherently with Aces, but their Frame does enough talking for both of them.

Mannerisms: Frantic, Ecstatic. Talks very properly.

Frame: Flare. Light frame with a highly polished, reflective silvery-white surface.

Signature Feature: Twitchy. All Attacks against Mercury have -1 die.

Restoration Bonus: Interrupts cost 1 instead of 2 now.

Attacks:
- **Plasma Knife:** 3 Harm, Close, Energy
- **Longbarrel MG:** 2 Harm, Near/Far, Splash, Piercing
- **Thruster Charge:** 4 Harm, Close, Energy, Approach, Desperation

Actions:
- Touch down from nowhere
- Hit and run
- Sow confusion

Desperation Actions:
- Thrust at a foe
- Boost away from threats
- Give confusing warnings

Favored Reactions:
Advance, Retreat

Independent Tyrants

Drummer
Vigor: 12

Restorations: 1   **Tension:** 4

A mercenary who distinguished himself through brutality and skill. So named because he favors weapons with a near-constant stream of fire. His skill is such that The Republic often hires him instead of using their own Tyrants.

Mannerisms: Volatile, Bloodthirsty. Blasts awful music.

Frame: Blastbeat. Black coloration, indecipherable non-geometric pattern in white (maybe an ancient language?) on chest. Crudely patched many times.

Signature Feature: Drumroll. Attacks with the Spin Up+ Tag continue to add +1 Harm with subsequent attacks, up to +5 Harm. Dual Fire can count as as either Attack for Spin Up+ purposes.

Restoration Bonus: +2 Tension

Attacks:
- **Sighted Gatling:** 3 Harm, Close/ Near, Spin Up+
- **Scoped Gatling:** 2 Harm, Near/Far, Spin Up+
- **Dual Fire:** 4 Harm, Near, Spin Up+, Desperation

Actions:
- Stream bullets everywhere
- Maneuver to stay in range
- Start blasting music

Desperation Actions:
- Fire both guns wildly
- Lash out
- Scream like a demon

Favored Reactions:
Advance, Protect

Prometheus
Vigor: 6
Shields: 2

Restorations: 2   **Tension:** 3

A former Centurion who defected to an independent community, taking her Frame and support team with her. She's since modified her stock Centurion model into one that leverages plasma-based weaponry.

Mannerisms: Brash, Loud. Makes terrible fire puns.

Frame: Lightbringer. Orange coloration with red highlights. Bright red sensor in head.

Signature Feature: Napalm. At the start of a round, anyone Harmed by Prometheus in the previous round takes 1 Harm (ignores Armor/Shields), and places a Hazard Close to them.

Restoration Bonus: +2 Vigor

Attacks:
- **Plasma Cannon:** 3 Harm, Near, Energy
- **Marksman Rifle:** 2 Harm, Near/Far, Burst
- **Flamethrower:** 3 Harm, Close/ Near, Energy, Piercing, Splash, Desperation

Actions:
- Flame up
- Blaze forward
- Raise crackling barriers

Desperation Actions:
- Light everything up
- Keep a cautious range
- Blanket in flame

Favored Reactions:
Retreat, Protect

Sharpshot

Vigor: 8
Armor: 1
Restorations: 1
Tension: 5

A highly skilled Ace who found herself torn between the survivalists he grew up with and The Collective. Her "family" rents themselves out as mercenaries, so despite leaving on good terms, he's sometimes a threat to The Collective..

Mannerisms: Laconic, Professional. Apologetic when fighting Aces.

Frame: Broken Piece. Modified L1-RECON. Dark gray with extra streamlining. Two decorative head spikes, one of which was snapped off halfway down.

Signature Feature: Hairpin Controls. The first time in a round that an Ace rolls a 3-4 against Sharpshot, it counts as a 1.

Restoration Bonus: +2 Vigor

Attacks:
- **Plasma Blade:** 4 Harm, Close, Energy, Piercing
- **Scout Rifle:** 2 Harm, Near/Far
- **Railgun:** 5 Harm, Far, Piercing, Reload, Desperation

Actions:
- Approach with a practiced skid
- Engage at any range
- Reposition expertly

Desperation Actions:
- Unleash a rail shot
- Jolt back and forth
- Call for backup

Favored Reactions:
Command, Advance

Drifter

Vigor: 12
Armor: 1
Restorations: 1
Tension: 3

A Wayfarer who rebuilt a Scorpion into a heavy, tank-like, eight-legged Frame. Xe's personable and seem to like humans greatly, but xeir actions can be confusing so xe frequently ends up in many forces' bad books.

Mannerisms: Cryptic, Confusing.

Frame: Translates as Arachnid. Brown and red, eight-legged.

Signature Feature: Octopedal. Drifter ignores all effects that would force xem to move or prevent xem from moving. Xe has no problem scaling Rooftops.

Restoration Bonus: +2 Tension

Attacks:
- **Diffuse Laser:** 2 Harm, Close, Energy, Splash
- **Laser Scout Rifle:** 2 Harm, Near/Far, Energy
- **Electromagnetic Beam:** 3 Harm, Near/Far, Energy, Distracting, Desperation

Actions:
- Leap down from up high
- Fire lasers
- Skitter up a building

Desperation Actions:
- Release a disrupting energy blast
- Jump between bits of cover
- Flatten to avoid fire

Favored Reactions:
Advance, Retreat

Claw Tyrants

Sonar   **Vigor:** 12

Restorations: 1   **Tension:** 4

An Apex that appears to rely entirely on vibrational sensors rather than visual acquisition. It uses its powerful back thrusters to fearlessly engage any significant threat on the battlefield with its twinned claws.

Mannerisms: Doesn't react to visuals, but seems to react to other very subtle stimuli.

Frame: Mostly covered in reptile trophies. No indication of a visual sensor area.

Signature Feature: Rip and Tear. When Sonar causes Frame Damage, all incoming damage is reduced by -1 Harm for the rest of the round.

Restoration Bonus: +2 Vigor

Attacks:
- **Claw Assault:** 4 Harm, Close, Splash
- **Thruster Charge:** 3 Harm, Close, Approach
- **Savage Charge:** 4 Harm, Close, Splash, Approach, Desperation

Actions:
- Leap across the battlefield
- Perform practiced two-handed combos
- Snap at an unexpected thing

Desperation Actions:
- Slash with abandon
- Pounce on targets
- Tear asunder

Favored Reactions:
Advance, Protect

Mirage   **Vigor:** 10
                         Shields: 2

Restorations: 1   **Tension:** 4

A strongly shielded Apex who focuses on plasma weaponry and largely forgoes the customary ritual claws favored by most Apexes. Despite this, it seems to command more respect from its hunting party than usual.

Mannerisms: Extremely confident, even for an Apex. Visibly in command of its hunting party.

Frame: Mostly covered in Frame trophies, both Republic and Collective. Hard to see behind shielding.

Signature Feature: Regenerative Shielding. When Mirage causes Frame Damage or starts the GM Turn at less than 2 Shields, it gains one Shield.

Restoration Bonus: +2 Shields. Shields ignore Piercing

Attacks:
- **Repeater:** 2 Harm, Close/Near, Energy, Burst
- **Sniper:** 3 Harm, Far, Energy
- **Grenade:** 3 Harm, Near, Energy, Incendiary, Splash, Desperation

Actions:
- Fire precise plasma bursts
- Get into a firing position
- Direct attacks at an Ace

Desperation Actions:
- Set someone ablaze
- Get behind the hunting party
- Reinforce shields

Favored Reactions:
Command, Protect

CRISIS ADVANCES

It's important that the threat of the forces pitched against The Collective looms larger as time goes on. There are plenty of narrative plot beats that help with this, such as allies being defeated, formerly neutral territory being occupied, or enemy patrols increasing in number. However, if those changes don't affect moment-to-moment combat, then these can feel abstract or artificial. Crisis Advances are a way to tie increasing high-level stakes to concrete mechanical changes.

When using them, you should aim for about 1 Crisis Advance for every two Ace Advances. To compensate, grant one extra Ace Advance after every Moonshot mission.

Mechanics

The nature of a Crisis Advance is simple: when it's time for a Crisis Mission involving the Republic, then something about their units is stronger. Some suggestions include:

• Introduce a Tyrant.
• Add a Variant Enemy to the standard enemies encountered.
• Add one or two Tags to a standard enemy's Attack.
• Add a new Attack to a standard enemy.
• Add Vigor, Armor, or Shields to a standard enemy.

Avoid adding more than one Crisis Advance to a single type of enemy before other types of enemy have had at least one Crisis Advance.

These are all permanent changes – as future Crisis Advances occur, they compound on one another. This has several effects: it makes every Crisis Mission a sudden jump in difficulty, it makes every subsequent mission remind the Aces of former Crisis Missions, and it makes Aces dread each Crisis Mission going forward.

Narrative

If possible, tie the Crisis Advance to actions taken by Aces, allied Strike Teams, or the Collective as a whole:

• Did they take out something or someone important?
• Is there a research facility they were unable to take down?
• Did an enemy escape from an otherwise decisive battle?
• Is someone secretly recording their battle data?
• Do they have a history with an enemy in power?
• Does someone in the Republic bear a grudge?

You don't have to do this every time, but turning player actions into narrative and mechanical consequences grants players more agency in the world around them.

APPENDIX A: PROMPTS

THE SWORD

The Sword is largely concerned with day-to-day threats and monitoring trends in these threats, particularly from The Republic.

Standard Missions

1. Scout out and confirm increased Republic troop movements.
2. Eliminate a nearby Republic squad from a location.
3. Monitor reports of an increase in scavengers in a nearby area.
4. Back up a patrol that's expecting an attack.
5. Strike a Republic force as a distraction for another operation.
6. Drive a herd of rampaging wildlife away from the Collective.

Division Favors

1. Reveal an important detail from a classified map
2. Intercept incoming enemy reinforcements
3. Scout out the deployment area prior to a mission
4. Provide a mid-mission Armament change.
5. Reveal the location of a safe path through enemy territory.
6. Lend an extra layer of armor plating to Aces for a mission.

THE ARROW

The Arrow is largely concerned with exceptionally large or dangerous threats, and with special operations.

Standard Missions

1. Defeat a Centurion who has set up a nearby command post.
2. Destroy a Republic communications relay.
3. Defeat a Survivalist bandit who's raiding Collective caravans.
4. Defeat a Claw hunting party that's disrupting troop movements.
5. Steal supplies from a highly defended Republic supply depot.
6. Drive a nearby World Serpent away from the Collective.

Division Favors

1. Deploy one extra Ace-quality Frame on a mission.
2. Bombard an area with a well-placed artillery strike.
3. Launch a raid to distract attention.
4. Provide a mid-mission Modular System change.
5. Call in backup from another Strike Team.
6. Lend single-use thrusters to Aces for a mission.

THE SHIELD

The Shield is largely concerned with Collective internal security, intelligence, and counterintelligence.

Standard Missions

1. Investigate a consistent outage in perimeter sensors.
2. Defend a caravan that intends to trade with Survivalists.
3. Triangulate the location of and capture a broadcasting spy.
4. Set up a remote surveillance platform.
5. Plant listening devices at a survivalist encampment.
6. Aid a settlement of nearby Wayfarers with security issues.

Division Favors

1. Allow access to a normally restricted Collective area.
2. Provide one-use tool to subvert a computer system.
3. A camera feed in a secure area
4. Research the dossier of a priority target.
5. Transmit false information to an opponent through a spy.
6. Disrupt enemy communications in an area.

CRISIS MISSIONS

Start with a standard mission concept, then add one of these modifiers:

1. It's interrupted by a direct Republic attack on the Collective.
2. The mission has been compromised by a spy.
3. The Aces uncover a major, immediate threat to the Collective.
4. A prominent ally on the mission betrays or abandons the Aces.
5. Some crucial aid is delayed or compromised.
6. The Aces' opponent is unexpectedly strong or prepared.

MOONSHOT MISSIONS

- Steal a classified blueprint
- Broker a peace treaty with a group of Wayfarers
- Field test a long-range flight Frame system
- Secure a long-term resource
- Make first contact with a newly-arrived alien race
- Hack a factory's computer to introduce a fatal flaw
- Liberate a key production facility
- Facilitate a revolt in a major city
- Capture a Claw Apex's Frame
- Contact a prominent group of Republic deserters

APPENDIX B: TABLES

Random Armament

Roll two dice. Use the first die for the number in the top row and the second die for the number in the first column.

	1-2	3-4	5-6
1	Plasma Blade	Carbine	Recoilless Rifle
2	Kinetic Cannon	Assault Rifle	Rocket Launcher
3	Revolver Cannon	Handcannon	Marksman Rifle
4	Machinegun	Laser Rifle	Electrolaser
5	Shotgun	Gatling	Gauss Cannon
6	Grenade Launcher	Scout Rifle	Sniper Rifle

Random Modular System

Roll two dice. Use the first die for the number in the top row and the second die for the number in the first column.

	1-2	3-4	5-6
1	Afterburner	Elbow Blades	Missile Battery
2	Entry Thrusters	Shoulder Spear	Plasma Cannon
3	Exit Thrusters	Point Defense Cannons	Pulse Laser
4	Shield Generator	Reactor Backdraft	Arc Mortar
5	Shield Projector	Chaingun	Railgun
6	Targeting Radar	Concussion Grenade	Sniper Cannon

Random Armament Tag

Roll two dice. Use the first die for the number in the top row and the second die for the number in the first column.

	1-2	3-4	5-6
1	Burst	Hot	Polished
2	Charge	Impulsive	Scoped
3	Critical	Incendiary	Sighted
4	Distracting	Invigorating	Spin Up
5	Energy	Mobile	Splash
6	Focused	Piercing	Stationary

Random System Tag

Roll two dice. Use the first die for the number in the top row and the second die for the number in the first column.

	1-2	3-6 (Support)	3-6 (Offensive)
1		Encouraging	Distracting
2	Efficient	Motivating	Flashy
3		Obfuscating	Suppressive
4		Enveloping	Energy
5	Holdout	Protective	Piercing
6		Projecting	Superhot

APOCALYPSE FRAME

Callsign: _____

Frame Model: _____

Frame Name: _____

Description: _____
_____
_____

Name/Pronouns: _____

Description: _____
_____
_____

Background: _____
_____
_____
_____

Attributes

Drive: _____ Forceful, direct, sweeping, powerful.

Drive contributes to **Maximum Vigor.**

Speed: _____ Quick, reactive, reflexive, immediate.

Speed contributes to **Maximum Tension.**

Control: _____ Expert, skillful, technical, deliberate.

Control contributes to **Maximum Fuel.**

Put 3 in one Attribute, 2 in another, and 1 in the third.

Build

_____
_____

Signature Feature

_____
_____
_____

Systems

Spend 1 Fuel on your turn to use these.

Signature System:

Name: _____

Effect: _____
_____

Tags: _____

Modular System 1:

Name: _____

Effect: _____
_____

Tags: _____

Modular System 2:

Name: _____

Effect: _____
_____

Tags: _____

Armaments

Use the Attack Action on your turn to use these.

Armament 1:

Name: _____

Dice: ___ Harm: ___ Range: _____

Tags: _____

Armament 2:

Name: _____

Dice: ___ Harm: ___ Range: _____

Tags: _____

Backup Armament 1:

Name: _____

Dice: ___ Harm: ___ Range: _____

Tags: _____

Backup Armament 2:

Name: _____

Dice: ___ Harm: ___ Range: _____

Tags: _____

Vigor ☐☐☐☐☐
__ + Drive ☐☐☐☐☐

Tension ☐☐☐☐☐
__ + Speed ☐☐☐☐☐

Fuel ☐☐☐☐☐
__ + Control ☐☐☐☐☐

Reference Sheet

Rolling

In every case except for Attacks, pick the attribute that best describes your approach, roll a number of dice equal to that Attribute, and use the highest. For Attacks, roll the number of dice listed next to the Armament.

When the highest die is...

1-2: Failure with a consequence (No, and...)

3-4: Success with a consequence (Yes, but...)

5-6: Success (Yes)

Frame Damage

1st or 2nd time per mission: Roll or choose below, +1 max Tension, restore all Vigor/Tension, gain 1 Fuel.

3rd time: Eject or Last Stand

1. **Superstructure:** -2 Max Vigor. -1 die on all Drive rolls
2. **Legs:** Move and Sprint require Speed rolls. -1 die on all other Speed rolls.
3. **Sensor:** -1 die on Attack and Control rolls.
4. **Arm:** Lose one Armament (replace with its Backup).
5. **Shoulder:** One Modular System requires a Control roll.
6. **Core:** Signature System requires a Drive roll.

Resources

Vigor lets your Frame resist Frame Damage. It's reduced by Harm.

Tension is spent to let you reroll Attacks or take extra actions.

Fuel is spent to let you use Systems during a turn. It can't be restored until the end of a mission.

On Your Turn

You have two Actions per turn, and may use either of them to do any of the following:

- **Move** to a Near location (no roll required).

- **Sprint** to a Far location if there are no enemies in Close, Near, or Far range (no roll required).

- **Attack** using an Armament (requires rolling the number of dice on the Armament).

- **Interact** with something in the environment (requires an Attribute roll if necessary, depending on the interaction).

You may spend as many Tension on your turn as you'd like to gain extra actions equal to Tension spent. You may also spend as many Fuel on your turn as you'd like to activate Systems. (Systems don't require a roll/action.)

Structure of a Round

1. All Ace turns are taken
2. GM activates one enemy per Ace
3. GM institutes a situational change
4. Activate Aces' Frames' Builds
5. Roll for and distribute drops

CLAIM A
BETTER
FUTURE