

The background is a deep space scene filled with numerous small, dark asteroids of various sizes scattered across a dark, textured surface. In the upper right, a bright, glowing star or light source illuminates the scene, casting a long, thin beam of light across the field of asteroids. The overall color palette is dark, with shades of black, grey, and blue, punctuated by the bright white light of the star.

Open the Pod Bay Door



a story game for 2 to 5 players by Bryan Hansel

While investigating a distant star system, the cryogenic, terraforming, colony starship Appleseed became infected by a computer worm. A planetary scouting team was caught outside on the unarmed, short-range pod, the Snow Day. The ship's infected robot killed everyone awake on the Appleseed and locked the team out. The pod's air supplies are almost gone...

The crew:

1. Michelle the Lieutenant Commander
2. Lancer the pilot
3. Janya the Navy Seal
4. Ruhan the computer expert
5. Misa the exobiologist
6. Kirima the engineer
7. Akio the unpaid intern

First Scene

The first player to take a turn plays Michelle on Snow Day's bridge. Other players play Lancer and Ruhan, and anyone can add outside events. The players must drive Michelle to take an action. After Michelle takes an action – something difficult or something that could cause harm (*see Resolving Actions*) – proceed to the next section.

Meanwhile, Therefore, But

Before play passes to the next player, the person to the right of the current player picks one word from these three: **meanwhile**, **therefore**, **but**. This works as a conjunction for the next scene. The next player then sets the scene based on the word (*see The Next Scenes*).



“Meanwhile” takes the play to a completely different scene, area and characters.

“Therefore” means that the next scene builds on the last.

“But” continues the last scene and introduces an entirely new set of circumstances.

The Next Scenes

Play continues left around the table with each player taking a turn during which he sets a scene, includes characters that aren’t tied up resolving actions and tells us who he is playing. The other players play the other characters in the scene and can add outside events to drive the scene towards an action.

After an action, go back to *Meanwhile*, *Therefore*, *But* and continue until all the characters are either dead, or they have

recaptured the Appleseed.

Add Pressure

The oxygen onboard Snow Day runs out in the two rounds (3 to 5 players), three rounds (2 players). If the crew hasn’t solved this issue somehow, they die. Each character should get to tell the others how she feels about facing death in the void. One round is when all the players have taken a turn.

Resolving Actions

When a character wishes to do something, roll two dice. The first die determines success, and the second the time taken.

If the action is something to do with her job, it succeeds on a 1-4 and takes 1 (1-2), 2 (3-4), or 3 (5-6) turns. If the character



attempts something not related to her job, it succeeds only on a 1-3, and takes 2 (1), 4 (2), 6 (3), 8 (4), 10 (5) or 12 (6) turns. If the first die is not successful, the character still spends the full time indicated by the second die.

Track the number of turns that pass during the game. The character cannot be brought into a new scene until the number of turns pass that were required for the action. If all characters are tied up at the end of a round, all actions fail and *Something Desperate* happens.

Failure

When an action fails and the rolled number of turns passes, pick a player to tell us what has gone wrong. If there was potential of death, roll a die. On a roll of 3-6, the character dies. Tell us how. If others were also in danger because of the

action, they also roll.

Something Desperate

A last ditch effort to save the crew occurs. Play enough scenes to allow all the characters to take an action in an attempt to save the crew. If there are more successes than failures, those that succeeded live and those that failed died. Tell us how. Otherwise, they all die. Tell us how.

Credits

You can find this game and others at my Empty Game Box (www.emptygamebox.com). Cover photo public domain and credited to NASA. Icon from game-icons.net by Lorc CC BY 3.0 (creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).

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Example Turn Tracking Worksheet

One round for four players is four turns long.

Number of turns	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Lt. Commander Michelle															
Lancer the pilot															
Janya the Navy Seal															
Ruhan the computer expert															
Misa the exobiologist															
Kirima the engineer															
Akio the unpaid intern															

An action from turn one takes 4 turns.

Lancer fails and then dies.

Action will take three turns.

Misa's failed action ties her up for 10 turns.

The yellow highlight shows when the air runs out.

Tied up for 4 turns.



Open the Pod Bay Door ***Turn Tracking Worksheet***

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Lt. Commander Michelle															
Lancer the pilot															
Janya the Navy Seal															
Ruhan the computer expert															
Misa the exobiologist															
Kirima the engineer															
Akio the unpaid intern															



Open the Pod Bay Door ***Turn Tracking Worksheet***

	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Lt. Commander Michelle															
Lancer the pilot															
Janya the Navy Seal															
Ruhan the computer expert															
Misa the exobiologist															
Kirima the engineer															
Akio the unpaid intern															

