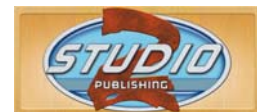


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1. INTRODUCTION

By the early 23rd Century, mankind's urge to explore and expand had reached the limits of the Solar System. The only remaining frontier lay beyond the reach of the sun. So began the great push into the vastness of interstellar space. The first interstellar vessels explored the nearest stars. Hundreds of habitable worlds were discovered at Earth's edge of the Milky Way galaxy. Soon, a great migratory wave of colonists, explorers, refugees, and pilgrims was spreading outward from Old Terra. During the next century, colonization ships of all types and descriptions went to the stars, bearing colonists seeking a better life. Most found their new homes, for better or for worse. But for one reason or another, scores of these starships never reached their destinations.

This game is based on one such event, the fate of the lost Colony Ship (CS) *Warden*, or as she is more commonly known, the *Starship Warden*. The *Starship Warden* was created from the designs used in the United Western Starship Cartel program. It was laid down in the Trans-Plutonian Spaceyards in 2277. The design was the most ambitious ever attempted, the blueprints calling for an oval spheroid of tremendous size using a new alloy hull with a strength previously unknown. The ship's size was truly incredible, being 50 miles long, 25 miles wide, and with 17 decks stacking up 8.5 miles high. *Warden* required 11 years to complete. The vessel's completely self-contained, self-sustaining environments were designed to survive for hundreds of years in deep space. The crew was rigidly screened to be the best Earth had to offer. Controlled by the most advanced artificial intelligence devised and with the latest communication and detection equipment, *Starship Warden's* mission was to deliver its passengers and payload to the planned colony at Alpha Centauri. It never arrived.

A description of the starship's levels, as well as some of the equipment typically found on each deck, follows. Most of the vessel was given over to large, open areas, with a simple system of electronic locks ensuring the crew did not stray into dangerous areas or delicate scientific experiments. With its extensive cargo of flora and fauna from both Earth and Mars and 100,000 crew members (most of them stored in cryo chambers in suspended animation), the marvel of mankind's interstellar spaceship program set forth to deliver its passengers to their new home.

DISASTER ON STARSHIP WARDEN

Six months into its mission the *Warden* discovered one of the oldest of the missing ships, the Alpha class *Colony Ship Bonnie Brown*, adrift in space. As *Starship Warden* closed in to investigate, the ship struck an invisible object. The hull was punctured in several sections and a strange and unknown space radiation flowed through the breaches, causing massive damage to electronic systems, artificial intelligences, and the flora and fauna in most of the levels. The effect on the ship itself was startling. All of the crew not protected by suspended animation pods were reduced to piles of white dust by the searing radiation.

Special disaster systems activated but, because of the radiation damage, most malfunctioned one way or another. Robotic security systems went into combat and rescue mode, but as some of them moved through undetected radioactive areas, their systems and programs were altered. Chaos reigned throughout the ship.

If that wasn't enough, alien invaders soon entered the ship from the object itself, an enormous Asteroid. The first aboard were scouts. An alien intelligence had maneuvered the cloaked Asteroid into *Starship Warden's* path and now it was going to invade, as it must have invaded the *Bonnie Brown*. In the first three months, the artificial intelligences of the ship fought a deadly struggle with both the invaders and their own rogue Robotic systems. The main ship's computer determined that the situation was too lethal to risk waking the still sleeping Humans in its care. It did, however, determine that Androids in all their forms would prove useful, so it activated the Android vats in various sections of the ship. Unfortunately, one of the Android vats was startlingly changed by the radiation and began pumping out Androids that were inexplicably programmed to oppose the ship. The AI had unknowingly created another enemy. For the next three months, the remaining Robots and the Android battalions moved through the ship, fixing what could be fixed and destroying what needed to be destroyed. Many of the environmental levels of the ship were transformed into

alien ecologies by the invaders or mutated into green nightmares by the radiation. Finally, the Robotic and Android leaders determined they could not save the ship without the help of the Human crew. They awoke the combat troops and asked for help.



SURVIVAL ON THE STARSHIP WARDEN

Players of the game are given a choice of phases in which they may play. In Phase One, the characters are Robots of various types trying to stem the tide of alien invasion as well as repairing damage from the radiation and radioactive gases still floating around the ship. In Phase Two, the characters are Androids or Robots battling the aliens that are invading and trying to seize control of the ship. The mission remains the same, but the powers and abilities of the invaders, the Intensity Level of the radiation, and the overall level of danger all increase. In Phase Three, the characters are Robots, Androids, or Humans trying to save the ship and themselves from the invasion that is now in full swing. The Humans left on the ship are soldiers, not scientists. They understand combat, but much of *Starship Warden's* technology must be puzzled out. In Phases Four, Five and Six even more choices become available, with missions going to the Asteroid.

It's very likely that the players' Robot and Android characters won't survive even a single session during Phase One and Phase Two play. Robots and Androids can't use a lot of the protective gear or weapons available to Humans. Players should simply not worry about being destroyed during the early sessions. If one Robot is smashed to bits or melted into radioactive slag, let the player choose another one and keep playing. After all, they're only Robots and Androids. Suicide missions are what they were built for.

SCIENCE FICTION ROLE PLAYING

What you hold in your hands is the latest mutation / redesign of the very first science fiction role-playing game ever published. The game mechanics in this book have evolved from the previous edition incorporating changes, expansions and corrections. We've taken some steps to make the rules unique and instructions state-of-the-art for the year 2006, but there are lots of the old elements taken straight from the original 1976 *Metamorphosis Alpha* 32-page booklet.

Much of the material herein is presented in order to give participants the proper feel for role-playing. This may cause some readers to hesitate to become involved in a game which has, what seems to be, so many rules. However, the game part of this is quite simple. This book will provide a nearly endless, multi-leveled, and completely absorbing science fiction game offering a gaming challenge to even the most imaginative players.

TOOLS OF THE ROLE PLAYING TRADE

Game Master: The Game Master (GM) is that player who decides he enjoys running the game and is willing to accept the task of drawing the starship levels

and locating the life forms on each level, as well as noting where various technological items and information are to be found. This book gives complete instructions to guide the new GM in making his or her own unique starship. Most players will eventually want to make their own starships and run their gaming friends through their own levels. The starship must not be so laden with deadly hazards that survival is impossible, or even nearly so. On the other hand, the GM must not be too kind and generous or the game becomes too easy and the rewards too great.

The goal is to make the game constantly challenging, because danger and difficulty keep the game exciting. At the beginning of the game, the GM must plan to present the players with problems that are not too difficult to overcome and rewards that are correspondingly low in value. As players become more skilled, the GM can increase the difficulty of the problems the players face and at the same time increase the value of the items they find when they solve the problems.

Player And Player Character: The player cannot begin the campaign (so called because each game session is connected to the next, with results carrying over from game to game, maintaining a consistent "storyline") until the GM has prepared one to three levels of the ship. Once the GM has made the necessary preparations, the players create Player Characters, called PCs from now on. The players assume the roles of their PCs like actors on a stage. PCs have strengths and weaknesses, and over several game sessions (one night's worth of adventure with a GM is a game session) the likes, dislikes, and general personality of a PC gradually become known to the player. Each player keeps careful track of his PC and his PC's equipment and history as well as what areas his character has explored and mapped out. The creation of a PC is explained later. Simply stated, each player generates a series of dice rolls to determine what a PC can and can't do. With a supply of paper and pencil at hand, the player is ready to start having fun.

During the game, the GM is a storyteller, telling the players what they are seeing and experiencing as Player Characters in the starship. The fun for the GM is creating an interesting starship that his players will want to come back to time and again. The true compliment for the GM is to see more and more players wanting to be in his game. The fun for the player is exploring, surviving, and growing more powerful in the game. Everyone starts out simply with few resources. If you can take your character and turn it into a powerful leader with followers and resources, you will gain a feeling of accomplishment every bit as thrilling as becoming president of a company or a general in the army.

Many players and groups of players find it beneficial to elect a couple of people to fulfill different roles, such as a Speaker, who has the job of getting a group consensus of what the characters are going to do. Another useful position to have filled is that of the Mapper. This person makes a map for the benefit of the group in order to help them remember where they have already been and help prevent them from getting lost. Well, at least in theory.

Gaming Equipment: If you are going to play any role-playing game you should come to the gaming table ready to play with all the tools you need for the game.

- **Dice:** In *Metamorphosis Alpha* each player needs three six-sided dice. It's nice if the dice are all the same color. It's also helpful (but not necessary) to have three more dice of a different color. The GM will find it handy to have a dozen or more dice in various colors. In these rules, "dice" is sometimes abbreviated "d": 3d means three dice.
- **Paper And Pencil:** Always bring paper and a pencil to any role-playing game. You will use these to keep track of your PC's characteristics and health, valuable items he picks up, important things he learns, and places he's been.
- **Graph Paper:** You will find graph paper really helpful in your gaming for lots of reasons. The kind with 10 squares to the inch is good for designing ship levels and for mapping ship levels as your PC explores them. The kind with four or five squares to the inch is good for mapping especially important areas with lots of detail. Drawing and keeping maps of the places your PC goes in the ship is essential so that you don't get lost and can remember helpful places you need to return to and dangerous places to avoid.
- **Game Folder:** It's easy to lose sheets of paper and PC records. Get yourself a folder of some sort to hold all of your game information and you will

never be sorry. Who knows? Those notes and game materials might turn into a novel or new game you write yourself some day.

- **Miniatures:** Miniatures are a helpful tool to aid both players and GM alike in visualizing the game, and are especially useful for working out combat. Suggested scales are 1 inch = 5 feet or 1 inch = 2 yards. These scales allow the use of most makes of 25 mm scale miniatures and accessories.

Hex or grid game mats are available from a number of manufacturers that should suit most gamer's purposes. Hex is often used by wargamers and offers the advantage of "facings", rather than just four sides.

Some mapping software and miniature accessories are produced only in grid, and are difficult to use with hex game mats, unless you are using a tape measure or a ruler, rather than the hexes or grid to determine ranges, etc.

Many manufacturers are releasing exaggerated 25mm scale figures (sometimes referred to as "Heroic"), meaning that the scale is inaccurate. When using these figures, the difference between 5 feet or 2 yards is really a matter of personal preference.

Some manufacturers have released sci-fi accessories, including cryo chambers, hydraulic doors, wall sections and computer terminals. All of these accessories can increase the visual appeal of the game, but grid paper, some pens and even counters instead of miniatures will suffice quite well, and at a fraction of the cost. A small white board (available from art supply stores) is very useful for depicting character locations.



Ainsty Starport 36 Starter Set

TERMINOLOGY AND ABBREVIATIONS

As with the abbreviation "d" referring to dice, there are other abbreviations used in these rules.

Below is a list of commonly used abbreviations:

AC	Armor Class
CN	Constitution
D	Dexterity
d	Dice
FTL	Faster Than Light
GM	Game Master
hp	Hit Points
IC	Item Complexity
LP	Leadership Potential
MR	Mental Resistance
NPC	Non-Player Character
PC	Player Character
RPG	Role Playing Game
RR	Radiation Resistance
STL	Slower Than Light
WC	Weapon Class

DISASTER RECORD ALPHA: ENGINEERING ROBOT #5

▶ ACTIVATION DAY 1, 10:00 WARDEN STARSHIP TIME
 ▶ ENGINEERING ROBOT #5 REPORTING
 ▶ ACCORDING TO EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS THIS UNIT WAS AWAKENED TO SENSE UNNATURAL AND HIGH INTENSITY RADIATION FILLING THE STORAGE CHAMBER. THE INTENSITY OF THE RADIATION PREVENTED COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER AIS. WITH THE SUPPLIES AT HAND THIS UNIT INITIATED GEL RADIATION CLEANING TECHNIQUES ON MY SURFACE AND THE SURFACES OF THE TWELVE OTHER BOTS IN THE CHAMBER. THIS UNIT DESIGNATED ITSELF THE ALPHA UNIT AND ISSUED EMERGENCY PROTOCOL INSTRUCTIONS TO THE OTHER BOTS. TWO OF THE REMAINING ROBOTIC UNITS FAILED TO MOVE AS THE RADIATION HAD BURNED THEIR PRIMARY CIRCUITS. THIS UNIT HAS REPLACEMENT CIRCUIT MODULES SO THE UNITS WERE PARTIALLY FIXED AND STARTED ON THEIR WAY. POWER SYSTEMS ARE STILL IN OPERATION. THERE ARE ENOUGH SUPPLIES OF DECONTAMINATION GEL TO CLEAR 7.54 LEVELS OF THE STARSHIP. OTHER MEANS WILL HAVE TO BE FOUND IF THE RADIATION DAMAGE PROVES SHIPWIDE.

▶ DAY 5, 10:00 WARDEN STARSHIP TIME
 ▶ ENGINEERING ROBOT #5 REPORTING
 ▶ RADIATION HAS DONE EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO MANY OF THE STARSHIP WARDEN'S ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES. THE LEVEL HAS BEEN CLEARED OF RADIATION, BUT AT GREAT ROBOTIC COST. A GREAT DEAL OF UNCLASSIFIED FUNGUS LIFE IS GROWING FROM THE EFFECTS OF RADIATION. A WHITE WEB-SHAPED FUNGUS HAS DESTROYED 37% OF THE ROBOTIC UNITS ASSIGNED TO THIS LEVEL. ACID IS THE ONLY DEFENSE AGAINST THE GROWTHS. THIS UNIT HAS ORDERED MORE ACID TANKS CREATED AND HAS CREATED A NEW PROGRAM OF OPERATION DETAILING EACH ROBOTIC UNIT TO CARRY ONE TANK OF ACID WHEREVER THEY TRAVEL ON ANY LEVEL.

▶ DAY 10, 10:00 WARDEN STARSHIP TIME
 ▶ ENGINEERING ROBOT #5 REPORTING
 ▶ THE STARSHIP IS BEING INVADDED BY MANY INFLUENCES. RADIATION HAS FILLED EVERY LEVEL ACCORDING TO THE MEMORY BANKS OF OTHER ROBOTS I'VE COME IN CONTACT WITH. MUTATED CREATURES AND ALIEN FORCES ARE ONBOARD. FEW OF THE EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS ARE COVERING THE SITUATIONS NOW ON THE SHIP. NEW PROTOCOLS HAVE TO BE PROGRAMMED INTO THE SYSTEM. SEVERAL LEVEL-WIDE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCES HAVE BECOME FILLED WITH VIRUSES AND GLITCHES. I MUST RECOMMEND INITIATING THE ANDROID CREATION VATS, AS THE PROGRAMMING OF THE ANDROIDS IS BEYOND MY OPERATIONAL PARAMETERS AND CAPABILITIES.

▶ DAY 30, 10:00 WARDEN STARSHIP TIME
 ▶ ENGINEERING ROBOT #5 REPORTING
 ▶ THERE ARE ONLY 19 ROBOTIC UNITS LEFT. EACH NOW HAS A SPECIAL COMBAT PROGRAM WITH A FULL SET OF SYSTEMS FOR ENCOUNTERING ALIEN LIFE FORMS. ANDROIDS ARE BEGINNING TO COORDINATE DEFENSIVE AND ATTACK STRATEGIES. THIS UNIT HAS CREATED THREE SETS OF OFFENSIVE WEAPON SYSTEMS QUITE SUITABLE FOR AGGRESSION VERSUS THE ALIEN LIFE FORMS. THE MOST SUCCESSFUL OF THESE HAS BEEN DESIGNATED COMBAT PROGRAM ALPHA. ACID HAS PROVEN TO BE A HIGHLY EFFECTIVE DEFENSIVE AND OFFENSIVE WEAPON. ALL SYSTEMS USING THE PRIMARY SHIP'S ELEVATOR COMMONLY BEGIN ENTERING A LEVEL BY EJECTING GALLONS OF ACID OUT OF THE LIFT AS THE DOORS OPEN. SEVERAL LEVELS ARE RUINED FOR ROBOTIC OBSERVATION AS THESE LEVELS ARE TOTALLY CONTROLLED BY ALIEN LIFE FORMS. THERE ARE ENOUGH LEVEL AIS THAT HAVE BEEN REPAIRED TO BEGIN CREATING NEW PROGRAMS FOR SHIP SURVIVAL. ALL OF THE HUMAN COMBAT TROOPS IN CRYOGENIC SUSPENSION HAVE BEEN SECURED ON ISLAND LEVEL FOURTEEN AND THE CHAMBERS HAVE BEEN PLACED UNDER GUARD BY ANDROID AND ROBOTIC UNITS. THAT LEVEL HAS BEEN TOTALLY SECURED AND THE ALIEN INFLUENCE HAS BEEN TOTALLY ELIMINATED FROM THAT LEVEL.

DISASTER RECORD BETA: FEMALE COMPANION UNIT #5

Female Companion Unit #5 making a cyclic report:

I'm a female companion unit, fifth from the vat in this creation cycle. There are currently no Humans available to give me a proper name. I have been stationed on the island with the main cryogenic facility. I've been given extensive combat program training and I'm equipped with ten sophisticated weapons systems. I'm also trained in the use of all types of force field generators. The other Androids in my vat clutch all believe that it will be necessary to revive the Human combat troops. I'm still not so sure. Steps are going to be set up to quick than the Humans if the time comes to use their knowledge to stop the alien menace.

As I review my programming, my circuits grow alarmed at the new life that has entered the ship and threatens to extend its power on every level. Only the hardiest of the ship's animals survived the radiation poisoning months ago. Many of these are now being taken over and controlled by a strange alien life form designated the 'Id'. These creatures use the powers and abilities of the animals they use as hosts in a more intelligent manner than the original creature. Although most of the levels are scrubbed clean of the radiation, there are strange new mutant creatures attacking Robotic system and Android systems alike. A deadly self-generating crystal can now be seen on many levels. The surface of the crystal sticks to metal and flesh of all types. The adhesive properties are so strong that it requires the ripping of the metal or flesh to remove the crystal contact.

One of the alien life forms has been identified as a rock-shaped Humanoid creature. The assemblage of boulders and stones moves quickly and with intelligence. Only the most concussive of weapons has any effect on them. Many working Androids have tried hand-to-hand combat with the creatures with disastrous results. Ship AIs combined with computer Androids have captured two of the rock aliens for study. So far, few results have been generated, as the rocky parts seem to be just that, simple minerals.

Although I can't feel pity, if I could I would feel it for the thousands of Robots that have been destroyed ridding the ship of the radiated areas. A spectacular and energetic white-webbed fungus is able to sap the energy of Robotic systems and destroy Robots from the inside out. Another fungi type grows massively muscled tentacles with eyestalks at their ends. The tentacles are able to crush any Robotic part that comes near. Fungi spores of both of these types are constantly swept from the air by level systems purifiers. The grenades and missile systems I command have proven effective versus these alien life forms.

I've taken the initiative to begin preparing a briefing video for the Human combat troopers that will soon be unfrozen. I feel certain that this step will be necessary. I have also ordered a large assembly of weapons to be racked in the supply room. It's against standard protocols, but these are turbulent times in my humble cyclotron opinion.