

FIRST THROUGH

The Games Master's Guide

A scenario for Classic Fantasy Imperative

Fourth Wall Gaming

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PART

BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

This is a campaign for one young player and one Games Master, in the real stellar neighbourhood, where the only way between stars is a child walking through a door.

It is built to be somebody's **first** roleplaying game. That shapes everything: there are no pre-made characters, the first session is deliberately light, the rules are *Mythras Imperative* unmodified and run in the open, and the setting explains itself by being lived in rather than by being read.

If you have run anything before you will find nothing strange here. If you have not, the one thing to know is that this campaign has an opinion about what makes a young player's first game good, and the opinion is in the fourth part of this book.

What you need at the table

This book is a scenario and a setting. It is not a rules system, and it does not contain one. There are statistics all through it — characteristics, skill values, passions, combat styles — and every one of them assumes a set of rules that lives somewhere else.

Which set depends on how you intend to run it, and there are two honest answers.

RUNNING IT WITH THE ENGINE

Claude plus the `mythras-gm` plugin. The rules are implemented in code: it rolls, applies the difficulty grade, resolves everything, and tells you what happened. You can sit down and play tonight without having read a rulebook, and the first session teaches the system by using it.

RUNNING IT YOURSELF

A person at the head of a table, with dice. **Then you need a copy of *Mythras Imperative*, and you need it before you start.** Nothing in this book will teach you how to resolve an action. What a difficulty grade does to a skill, how an opposed roll is won, what a special effect is and when somebody earns one, how damage lands on a hit location, what a Luck Point may be spent on — all of that is in the rules, and none of it is in here.

It is free. *Mythras Imperative* is The Design Mechanism's own cut-down edition of *Mythras* — a complete game, not a demo — and they publish the PDF at no cost on their free downloads page, under the ORC License, with permission to pass it on. Everything here was written against *Imperative* and is run against *Imperative* unmodified. Nothing in this campaign needs anything beyond it.

If You Have Never Run a Game Before

Which, for this campaign, is likely. It is written for a ten- to fifteen-year-old, and the person most likely to be sitting opposite them is a parent who has never done this and is not certain they can.

You can. Here is the honest shape of it.

What you actually have to read. *Imperative* is about sixty pages. To start you need perhaps fifteen of them: how a skill roll works, the difficulty grades, criticals and fumbles, and Luck Points. That is one unhurried evening, and the Players' Guide chapter *How the Dice Work* is the same material in two pages if you want the shape of it first.

You can skip combat entirely. Combat is the part of *Mythras* that looks frightening to a new Games Master — hit locations, special effects, opposed rolls — and it is genuinely the most detailed thing in the system.

There is no fighting anywhere in this campaign. Not one beat of it. The danger here is physics and arithmetic and a clock: a door that will not open, a number that is rising, sixty-one people and not enough time. Nobody draws a weapon, because in this setting almost nobody ever does — a thing that reliably kills a person reliably opens a wall, and everybody lives inside a hull. So you may leave the combat chapter unread until the day somebody picks a fight, and in Act One nobody does.

The hardest thing is not the rules. It is the fourth part of this book — handing back where there is something to do, not performing finished scenes at your player, not putting words in their character’s mouth. That is a craft and it takes a few sessions, and every lesson in it was learned by getting it wrong at a real table.

Play it yourself before you run it. With the engine, as a player, start to finish. Three evenings is what Act One took the first time it was played, and it is better preparation than any amount of reading this book, because afterwards the book is a reminder of somewhere you have been rather than a description of somewhere you have not. You will also get your first bad crossing out of the way privately. Then run it for your player, and let their run be theirs — the thing you bring back from your own is the feel of it, never a route you are hoping they take.

And the rules being honest is on your side. The difficulty grade is declared before the dice fall, the dice are rolled in the open, and the answer is the answer. You never have to decide whether somebody succeeds. You decide how hard a thing is, and then you both find out — which is a much easier job than the one people imagine when they picture running a game.

If you take to it, buy the full *Mythras*. It is one of the best d100 systems anybody has written, the people who wrote it are still writing, and a campaign published free on top of somebody else’s free rules only works as an arrangement if some of us pay them.

A note on what the player needs: nothing. The Players’ Guide chapter on the dice is sufficient for somebody sitting at your table, and a first-time player should not be handed a rulebook.

The three design rules

Every act takes something. A loss that does not come back. An act in which the player only gains has not happened.

Ordinary world first. The player has to love the Nine before it is threatened. The hardest scene in Act One is the fourth beat, not the first.

Conditions accelerate; time backstops. A beat’s clock entry is the *latest* it can happen, not the earliest.

Danger, and the promise that replaces safety

People in this campaign can die, including the player’s character. The rules are not modified and nothing is softened behind the screen.

What the campaign promises instead is **information**. A character can only die from a risk that was named, in the fiction, before the player chose it. No unannounced trap, no ambush from a direction they had no way to check, and an honest answer every single time they ask whether something can kill them.

That is a duty on you, and it is the single most load-bearing thing in this book. It is written out at length in TABLE-ADDENDUM.md, which you should read before you run anything.

It also pays for itself. A young player who learns that asking produces a real answer asks constantly, and a player who asks constantly is a player who is *playing* rather than waiting.

The astronomy is real

Every system, star type, planet, distance and oddity in this campaign is a real, current measurement, cited in the source files. `data/systems.json` is the authority and there is a test enforcing it. If the prose and the data ever disagree, the data wins and the prose is the bug.

Invented life is the one exception, and it is constrained to genuinely unobserved surfaces, consistent with the real system’s temperature and insolation, and flagged where it occurs.

Do not write a figure from memory at the table. Look it up. Being able to say *that is a real star and here is what we actually know about it* is a large part of what this campaign is for.

The proof of all that is the chart in the next chapter but one. It is drawn from the data rather than by eye, and on screen every star name on it is a link to that star's own Wikipedia article — so a player who does not believe you can go and check, at the table, in about four seconds.

How to read this book

The first part is what is going on and why, including the ending. The second is the station and everybody on it. The third is Act One, beat by beat — that is the part you need to run next week. The fourth is table craft, and it is the part that is specific to running for a young player, and it is short because the lessons in it were expensive.

WHAT IS REALLY GOING ON

This chapter contains the ending.

The question the campaign is asking

A first-through is the most important person in human space for about seven years, and then it stops, and nobody has ever worked out what happens next.

That is the whole engine. Everything else is the setting it runs in.

Three people answer that question, and the campaign is the player choosing between them.

Table 1: The Three Answers

Who	What they are
Rill	The warning. Twenty-one, frayed out, taking money from the only man who ever offered her a plan.
Calloway	The answer. Aged out at forty-one, runs a desk, and is the happiest and most loved person in the setting.
The Quorum	The refusal. The best first-through who ever lived, who would not accept being landlocked, and paid for it with everything that made him a person.

In Act Three the Quorum offers the player exactly what he took. By then they will have wanted it since the first session, they will have watched what it did to Rill, and they will know what Calloway chose instead.

The acts

Act One — the Nine. Making the player love this place and these people, and learning the job in their own hands. Light for two beats, then the hardest night of their life. *Takes:* a few days each off four hundred named lives, freely given, because the player stood in a hall and asked for them.

Act Two — Kapteyn's. The wonder, and the first hard truth. Twenty-four generations alone behind a buried door — and then the discovery that the stray which opened it was predictable, and that somebody predicted it. *Takes:* Rill. She runs out during this act, in front of the player, and it is nobody's fault and entirely avoidable and both of those are true.

Act Three — the Quorum. The villain, the temptation, and the answer. He is courteous, tired, physically unremarkable, and in more than one place. He does not want to rule anything. He wants to keep travelling, and he found the only way, and it cost him being a person.

The climax is a race. LHS 1140's door arrives — the first new door in twenty-five years and the first in history to open onto a living world. He intends to be the first mind through it. A fifteen-year-old with a fetch intends otherwise.

It ends with a door opening, honestly, with a child standing in it.

The lie the setting is built on

There is a fact everybody in the Causeway believes, and it is wrong, and breaking it is the spine of Acts Two and Three:

Straying is random and cannot be predicted.

It is not random. A door is pinned to a gravitational potential, and a potential reshapes with the orbits around it, and orbits are the most predictable things in the universe. Anywhere somebody has kept a long enough record, the pattern is sitting in it, unread.

The reason nobody knows is not conspiracy. It is that nobody logs a sticky door, because an inconvenience that resolves itself is the definition of the thing nobody writes down — and the only people who keep records long enough to show the cycle are people nobody has ever asked for them.

Which is also what the campaign is *about*, underneath: **information that exists, is available, and goes unread.** Pell Ivor's board. Sep Anwar's four reports. A child teaching herself to read flash off a stool. Two hundred years of handwriting in a shed at Ladder.

If a player ever picks one of those up and reads it, give them everything. That is the game working.

What is in the sealed files

lore/gm-secret/ holds the Quorum, what Tolk is, and the outline of Acts Three to Five. None of it is needed to run Act One and all of it is worth having read once, because Act One is full of small things that will matter later and that you will only place correctly if you know where this is going.

THE PHYSICS, EXACTLY

You will be asked about this by a player who is paying attention, and the answers need to be the same every time, because the plot of the whole campaign is a consequence of them.

Transit is zero

Instantaneous. Not fast — **zero**. Step onto the plate and you are at the other end, and the only reason you know is that the air is different.

What can take time is the door **agreeing to open**. That is a separate thing, it is normally too small to notice, and when it becomes measurable it is the single most frightening thing in this setting. See *The Hesitation*.

Only matter crosses, and only a person carries it

No light, no signal, no radio, no data, no cargo that nobody is holding. A person, and what that person has on them. Inside a system, radio works perfectly normally. Two stations round the same star talk four times a day. Players and Games Masters alike forget this, and it is load-bearing: at Gliese 65 the refinery can warn Ladder by radio in ten and a half minutes, and cannot warn Sirius at all.

And therefore nobody can reach you. A handler briefs on this side and cannot follow, cannot call, cannot send help, cannot change the order. That is why a fifteen-year-old's judgement is the whole safety system, and it is why this campaign gives the player real decisions instead of instructions.

A mouth is pinned to a potential, not to a place

The load-bearing sentence of the entire setting.

A door's far mouth sits wherever a particular value of gravitational potential currently is. Mostly the matching surface drifts a few metres in a century. A **stray** happens when the sum has more than one answer and the mouth jumps to a different one.

Two consequences the players will meet:

Straying is predictable, because potentials reshape with orbits. Nobody knows this. See the previous chapter.

A door can move somewhere useful. In Act One it does. The disaster and the rescue are the same event, and that is the shape of the act.

What a crossing costs

Fraying: small, cumulative, irreversible, and visible on the weave. Finished at about twenty-two. Carrying an adult costs the carrier a fortnight off the end of their life, counted; a child costs minutes. Three or four adult carries in a row finishes anybody.

Never round these down at the table and never let a Non-Player Character be vague about them. The cost being exact and spoken aloud is what makes Act One's turn land.

Twenty years to the light year

The seedships fly at a twentieth of lightspeed, so a door opens twenty years per light year after launch. Launch was nine hundred and seventy-five years ago. That one sum fixes the entire map and the entire calendar — change it and every date in the campaign is wrong.

The frontier is therefore a sphere a little under forty-nine light years out, advancing one light year every twenty years.

And here is what that produces

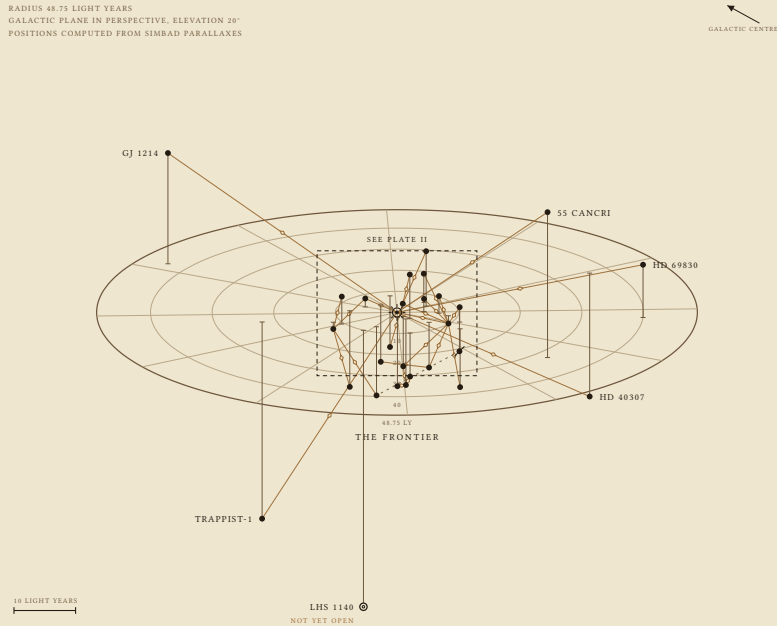
Every star on this sheet is at its true galactic position, computed from the measured parallax in `data/systems.json`, and every line on it is a real edge out of `data/edges.json`. It is rendered by `maps/causeway_chart.py`, so it cannot disagree with the campaign — regenerate it rather than editing it.

Read it as a **graph**, not a **volume**, which is the single hardest idea in this setting to get a player to hold. Distance tells you what a telescope says. It tells you nothing about how long it takes to get anywhere. What matters is whether there is a line.

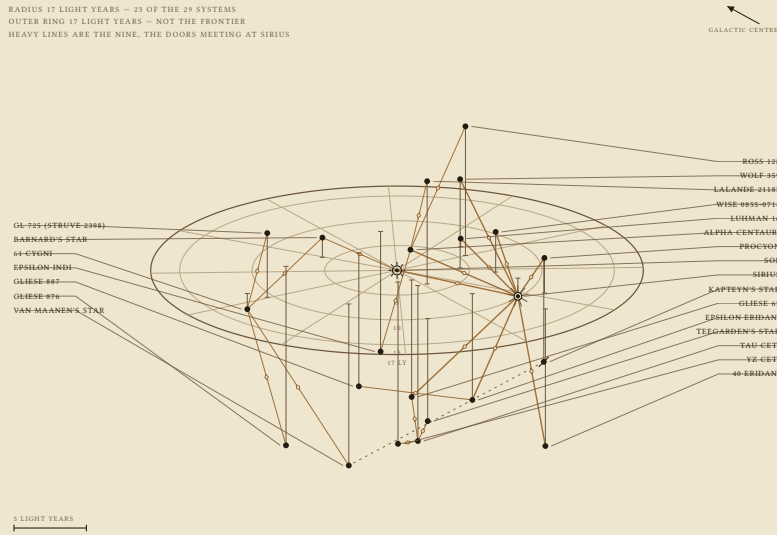
On screen every star name is a link to its Wikipedia article. That is not decoration: it is the whole claim of this chapter made checkable by a fifteen-year-old in four seconds, and you should let them do it.

28 SYSTEMS • 26 DOORS • ONE HUMANITY

RADIUS 48.75 LIGHT YEARS
GALACTIC PLANE IN PERSPECTIVE, ELEVATION 20°
POSITIONS COMPUTED FROM SIMBAD PARALLAXES



RADIUS 17 LIGHT YEARS - 23 OF THE 29 SYSTEMS
OUTER RING 17 LIGHT YEARS - NOT THE FRONTIER
HEAVY LINES ARE THE NINE, THE DOORS MEETING AT SIRIUS



- System, door open
- System, door not yet open
- ⚡ System, door dark – strayed into rock
- | Dropline to the galactic plane
- Door – bidirectional
- ◇ Door midpoint

On screen, every star name links to its Wikipedia article

Sol	0.00	GJ725 (Struve 2398)	11.49	LHS 1140	48.80
Alpha Centauri	4.39	Epsilon Indi	11.87		
Barnard's Star	5.56	Tau Ceti	11.91		
Lalande 16	5.06	YZ Ceti	12.12		
WISE 0605-0174	7.43	Tegmark's Star	12.50		
Wolf 359	7.86	Kapteyn's Star	12.83		
Lalande 21185	8.30	van Maanen's Star	14.07		
Sirius	8.68	Gliese 578	15.24		
Gliese 65	8.87	40 Eridani	16.34		
Epsilon Eridani	10.50	TRAPPIST-1	40.66		
Gliese 187	10.72	GJ 6980	42.08		
Ross 128	11.11	55 Cancri	41.66		
61 Cygni	11.40	GJ 40307	41.18		
Procyon	11.46	GJ 1214	47.75		

Distances in light years from Sol, computed from SIMBAD parallaxes.

Distances in light years from Sol, computed from SIMBAD parallaxes

The reference entries

How an Anchor Works

An anchor is half of a pair, and the pair is **entangled** — made together, in the same place, at the same moment, and bound at a level nothing since has been able to reach into.

That single fact decides almost everything about the world you live in.

They are married for life

A mouth is bound to its own mate and to nothing else, ever. You cannot re-point one. You cannot introduce an anchor to a different anchor and talk them into it. You cannot cut a pair in half and make two new routes out of the pieces; people have tried, with everything from arc furnaces to centuries of patience, and all they have ever produced is scrap and two dead mouths.

So a door is not a technology anybody owns. It is a **marriage**, and there are only as many as the Reach made.

Matter crosses. Nothing else does, and never will.

Walk at the housing and you arrive. No tunnel, no transit time, no distance in any sense you could measure.

Now put a radio against it and shout.

Nothing happens, and nothing ever can. Entanglement by itself carries no information — that is not a limit of our instruments, it is a theorem, proved before the Reach launched and never dented since. The correlation is perfect and it cannot be used to *say* anything. Light still crawls, every signal still obeys it, and the door is no help at all.

Which is the whole shape of human civilisation. There is no telemetry, no warning, no calling through, no listening in. If you want something known on the other side of a door, a person carries it, in their arms, one at a time. See What Crosses Easily.

It also means **no door has ever been eavesdropped on**. There is nothing to tap. A thing said at the Nine is known at the Nine, and arrives anywhere else in the company of whoever decided to walk it there.

What the crossing does to you

The mouth does not move you. It takes what you are, holds it, and lays it down again at the mate — and the laying down is very good and not perfect. The error is small, it never comes out again, and it is why only the young can cross and where the knacks come from. See What a Crossing Does.

And it does not do any of this by itself. A door is not a door until a first-through is standing in it, holding the crossing open while it happens.

What a first-through can actually repair

Housings foul. Collars creep. Load beds drift and start fighting themselves. Those are maintenance and a competent fifteen-year-old with a toolroll handles all three.

What nobody can do is build one, pair one, re-point one, or persuade a mouth to be anywhere other than where the physics has put it — which brings us to Straying.

The Hesitation

Transit is zero. It has always been zero, it is zero on every door in human space, and nothing in this entry changes that. Step, and you are there, and the only reason you know you crossed is that the air is different.

What can take time is the door **agreeing to open**.

Why

A mouth is pinned to a gravitational potential and sits wherever that value currently is. See Straying. Mostly the matching surface drifts a few metres in a century and nobody writes anything down.

A stray happens when the sum has **more than one answer** and the mouth jumps to a different one.

What nobody had measured until now is what a mouth does in the weeks *before* that — while the sum is becoming ambiguous and has not yet resolved. It cannot settle. It is pinned to a value that two places now satisfy, and it spends a while being unable to choose.

And a mouth that cannot choose **will not establish a throat on demand**.

What it is like

You step up and give it your weight and nothing happens.

Not a push-back. Not resistance. It goes *absolute*, the way a wall is absolute, and every first-through in the Causeway already has a word for it because it happens for a dozen harmless reasons in an ordinary career: **it sets**.

Then you ease off, and offer it again, and after a moment it takes you — and the crossing itself is instantaneous, exactly as it has always been.

The thing to measure is the **moment**: how long you stand in a lit housing before it will have you.

The number, and why nobody had it

For nine hundred and seventy-five years the number was a fraction of a second on a bad day and nobody could have measured it if they had wanted to, because

- a clock is not alive and cannot cross, so there are no instruments in a housing beyond what the station can see from outside, and
- nobody had any reason to time a thing that has always been instant.

So it was folklore. *Seven's sticky this week. You want to give it a second*. Every deck has a door with a reputation and nobody ever wrote the reputation down.

The first instrumented series was taken at the Nine on door seven, by a fifteen-year-old holding a tempo built into her head, with a glint counting independently beside her, because a station mind could time the housing's draw from outside and could not time the hesitation from the inside of it.

What it means when it rises

A rising hesitation is a mouth running out of ways to be in one place.

It is the only advance warning of a stray that anybody has ever had, and it was sitting in the folklore of every deck in the Causeway for nine centuries, unwritten, because the people who felt it were children and the thing they felt was an inconvenience.

Nobody knows how long the warning is. Hours, weeks, a year. There is no second case to compare with, which is the entire argument for a funded study and the entire reason there has never been one.

What it is not

- **It is not damage**. Doors do not break and this is not the beginning of one breaking. See Straying.
- **It is not a place**. There is no interval you are inside, nothing to see, and nothing in there with you. You are standing in a housing on the near side the whole time.
- **But standing in an unsettled housing is not nothing**. The field has a real gradient with a fixed geometry, and six months of standing in it twice a watch leaves a mark. See The Cold Arm.

NINE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS

The history matters at the table for one reason: it is the strongest piece of wonder you have, and you can hand it to a player in ninety seconds without stopping play.

The short version. A civilisation with one star spent everything it had on ships that could not pay out for nine centuries, and argued about it in public for two generations, and wrote the argument down — including the losing side, including the forty years when the losing side was winning. Then they did it, and then they ran out, and nothing dramatic happened at all. The launches thinned and stopped because there was nothing left.

That absence is the honest shape of it. Historians hate absences; the good ones say so and the bad ones invent a catastrophe. Be suspicious of anything that gives a player a villain here.

Eighty-five years after the launch the first door opened. Then a lifetime of nothing, then another door. Each one arriving to people who had only heard about the last one from their grandparents.

It is the longest-running promise anybody has ever kept, and every single person who made it was nine centuries dead before it finished being kept.

That sentence is worth saying once, out loud, at the right moment, and then never again.

The Nine Hundred Years

Everything is dated from the Launch, because a calendar is the one thing a graph can agree on.

Year 0 — the Launch

Three thousand ships, sixty years of them, and the end of the civilisation that built them. See *The First Reach*.

Year 85 — the First Door

Alpha Centauri, to a generation that had stopped believing it. The most copied document in human history is the maintenance log of the woman who felt wind on her arm in a room with no wind in it.

Years 88 to 121 — the Proper Order

The worst thing in this history, and the foundation of everything after it.

They sent their best through first. Pilots, engineers, soldiers — adults, chosen carefully, in the proper order, and over thirty-three years almost all of them died, slowly, of something nobody could name. The records of the Proper Order are exhaustive because the people keeping them were watching their colleagues go and could not work out why.

And one of the minds had it by about year 95. See *The Minds*. Age correlated with mortality across a sample of hundreds, and the mind that kept the records at Sol wrote the correlation up and filed it, and filed it again, and had no standing to do anything else. Twenty-six further years of the finest people of that age walked through a door in the proper order and died.

It was a fourteen-year-old who crossed by accident in year 118 — a courier's daughter, in a hall she should not have been in — and came back the same evening perfectly well, and went again, and again.

Three years of argument followed, and the argument is a terrible thing to read. Then the halls started taking children, and have not stopped.

Years 85 to 331 — the Opening

Doors coming online one at a time, each a generation or two apart, each arriving to people who had only heard about the last one from their grandparents. Sirius, and the Nine at 174. Tau Ceti at 238. The last of the inner doors in year 331.

Then it stopped, and the Causeway was what it is.

Year 311 — the First Straying

A door at the Nine opened in the morning onto somewhere nobody recognised.

Forty-one people were on the wrong side of it. Nine of them came home, years later, by routes that took three more doors and most of their twenties. The others did not.

Before the Straying, people believed doors were permanent and fixed and would outlast the species. After it, the whole Causeway understood that it was living on something that moved, and the business of finding out where doors now went became the single most important job anybody had.

That is the year the Threshold's work really began, four hundred years before the service was chartered.

Year ~400 — the Tally

Somebody had to write down where the doors currently went, or everybody would be guessing. The clearing house that did it charged a little for the service, and then stood at every door in human space, and then was a government.

Nobody voted for this and nobody can now undo it, because undoing it would require twenty-eight systems to agree on something.

Year 602 — Kapteyn's

Eleven thousand people, a good world, a well-run holding of farms and foundries twelve and a half light years out.

Its door strayed in the spring of 602 and went dark, and has stayed dark.

For three centuries that was read as loss. It is now read as something worse and better: by Straying, a mouth that lands inside rock does not open at all. It is **closed, not destroyed**, and the far side is exactly where it always was.

Which means Kapteyn's is not missing. **It is buried.** Eleven thousand people became some number of people, under a hill, on a world that is still there, and the door between us is a dark ring in a hall with a wall of stone on the other side of it.

Three hundred and eighty expeditions have gone looking for where it went. If the current reading is right, every one of them was looking for the wrong thing.

And a buried mouth can stray again.

Kapteyn's Star is still there. On a clear watch at the Nine you can be shown which point it is, and people do show you, and the pointing is a thing visitors find unbearable long before the residents do.

Everybody alive has a version of the sum: fifteen generations, so whoever is there now is nobody's cousin exactly, and is still ours.

The Threshold keeps a watch on that housing. It has been kept for three hundred and seventy-three years, it has never once reported anything, and the rota has never been cut.

The map has twenty-eight systems on it. It used to have twenty-nine.

Year 741 — the Carrying Sickness

An illness that moved at exactly the speed of a child walking.

It crossed eleven systems in four years because that is how fast couriers go, and it could not be outrun, warned against or quarantined ahead of itself — the warning travelled by the same couriers, in the same bodies, at the same pace.

Two systems closed their halls entirely and refused all arrivals for eleven years. One of them is still unpopular about it. The other is Tau Ceti, which apologised, built a quarantine wing into the side of its anchor hall, and has kept it staffed for two hundred and thirty years against the next time.

Years 814 to 822 — the Toll War

The only general war the Causeway has had, and it was fought entirely by about four hundred people.

Nobody could invade anybody — an army arrives one at a time into a prepared room — so it was fought the only way war can be fought here: infiltration, anchor halls seized from the inside, and three systems blockaded into agreement by simply refusing their couriers passage.

Barnard's held its own hall for nine days against people already inside it. The Nine changed hands twice without a shot, both times at a committee meeting.

It ended in a settlement nobody likes, which is the Tally's charter as it now stands.

Year 950 — GJ 1214

The last door to open, twenty-five years ago, to enormous public excitement and a hot crushing atmosphere with nothing to stand on. Every honest briefing about what is coming next begins with it.

Year 976 — next year

LHS 1140.

What it cost

The First Reach

Start with the part everybody gets wrong.

The knowledge was never lost. Any decent engineer at the Yards can tell you what an anchor pair is and how the pairing is made. It is taught. There are diagrams. Nobody has forgotten anything.

What we lost was the money.

What a door costs

A matched pair costs, very roughly, what a civilisation produces in ten years. Not a nation. A *civilisation* — everything everyone makes, everywhere, for a decade, poured into one object that does nothing at all until its other half has been carried to another star by a ship that will fly for three hundred years.

The First Reach did that about three thousand times.

The deciding took longer than the building

Two generations of argument, and the record of it survives better than almost anything else from that age, because it was argued in the open and written down obsessively. People stood up in halls and justified, to their own grandchildren, a bill those grandchildren would pay in full and never see a return on. The return was for somebody four generations down who did not exist yet and could not be consulted.

They lost that argument for about forty years. Then they won it.

Read the surviving speeches and what strikes you is how unsentimental they are. Nobody talks about destiny. They talk about the position of a species with one star and what happens to it eventually, and they conclude — reluctantly, the way you conclude you need a new roof — that it has to be done now because it takes nine hundred years to work.

Then they did it

The yards went up on Luna. Mercury's mirrors went up to power them. For sixty years the Reach threw ships at the sky at a twentieth of lightspeed, each one carrying half of a door, and the other halves were distributed by slow freighter among whichever stars had already come online.

Then the launches thinned out, and then they stopped.

There was no war. There is no plague in the records, no collapse in the accounts, no final message. They simply had nothing left, and the thing they had built would not start paying out for another eighty years.

Eighty-five years of nothing

The first door opened at Alpha Centauri in the eighty-fifth year of the Reach, to a generation that had been told its whole life this would happen and had begun, quietly and privately, to stop believing it.

Barnard's came in at a hundred and nineteen. Sirius, and the Nine at a hundred and seventy-four. Tau Ceti at two hundred and thirty-eight. Each one a lifetime apart, each one arriving to people who had only ever heard about the last one from their grandparents.

It is the longest-running promise anybody has ever kept, and every single person who made it was nine centuries dead before it finished being kept.

Why nobody will ever build another

Here is the part that matters, and it is not a tragedy of lost knowledge. It is a trap in the shape of the network itself.

Only bodies and boxes cross a door. Nothing else — no bulk, no fleet, no treasury. So twenty-eight systems can never pool what twenty-eight systems have. Each one is as rich as it is and no richer, and the surplus required to make one anchor pair is larger than any single system has produced in nine hundred years.

The thing that would pay for a new door cannot be gathered through the doors we already have.

The network forbids its own extension. That is not a policy anybody chose. It is the shape of the thing.

So

We did not build this. We inherited it, we maintain the parts of it we can reach, and it is nine hundred and seventy-five years old.

Nobody says this out loud at a Threshold briefing, but every first-through works it out in their first year: we are not pioneers. We are the people living in the house, and the house was paid for by somebody who went without.

PART

THE NINE

THE NINE

Two kilometres of cylinder, turning once every ninety seconds, forty thousand people, and nine doors meeting at the waist. More doors in one place than anywhere else in human space, because eight of them are simply Sirius's nearest neighbours and the ninth is the Garden.

Everything in Act One happens here or one step off it.



Nine rings in the deck, eight queues moving, and the Standing on the gallery wall.

How to run the hall

The anchor hall is the set. Get the player into it in the first ten minutes and keep coming back.

What makes it alive is **procedure happening around somebody who is not part of it**: nine queues, eight of them moving; a tallyman at the head of each with a board; a courier coming up out of a housing already peeling her weave off her forearms; two hall children at the bottom of a stair with a towel and a flask, because they know who is due.

The sound of the hall going quiet is the strongest tool you have in this building, and it is not a sound — it is about nine people stopping being loud at the same moment. Use it twice in Act One and no more.



Sling, in the gallery void. Banned four times and played anyway.

Three details that do the work

The decks smell like their doors. The Procyon Stair is a suburb with prams on the walkway. The Coldwater Run is red light and grain dust and the only corner of the station that smells of farming. The Wolf Gate queue is shift workers, the roughest line in the hall, and the best food on the station.

The architecture is built for five peoples. Ramps where there should be stairs, a dim corner in every concourse, and duct grilles cut to scatter gauge on every deck — a mesh sized so a glint can pass and nothing larger can. There is a line in every budget argument about them and nobody has ever won it.

The Standing is four metres of board on the gallery wall with every door in human space on it, kept by an eleven-year-old on a stool. Four things on a line; people read two; the fourth is the watch and it is the only one that matters.

The entry on the station

Sirius, and the Nine

8.6 light years. The door is a little over eight hundred years old.

Sirius is two stars and no worlds. The big one is blue-white and far brighter than the Sun, close enough that every viewport on the station is filtered and the filters are checked twice a shift. The small one is a **white dwarf** — a dead star the size of a planet, the hottest thing within twenty light years, sitting there as a hard little point of light that children at the Nine are told not to stare at and do anyway.

Nothing orbits either of them that anybody has found. There is no ground here, no colony, no farm. There is only what people bolted together.

What people built here: the Nine.

Nine doors meet at this station, and that is the whole reason it matters. Eight of them go to Sirius's own nearest neighbours — the dark drifter, Procyon, the sunless pair, the debris, the flare star, the first door ever opened, the refinery, and the long hop south. The ninth is the old direct route home to Sol.

Sol holds seven doors. Sirius holds nine, and all the traffic worth counting comes through here. That is the difference between the oldest place on the Causeway and the busiest one.

The station is a cylinder two kilometres long with the anchor hall at its centre, and the hall is the only room on the Causeway where you can stand still and watch people arrive from eight different stars in an hour. The Threshold keeps its ready room off the second gallery, with a window that looks down into the hall, because Calloway likes to see who is coming in before they know they have been seen.

What Sirius decided about minds

No grand position, and the Sirius authority is faintly proud of that. Two commitments, both out of the inquest into the Proper Order: **personhood is granted**, and **the mind that runs the station is trusted**. Neither is sentiment; both are findings.

Nobody here has wanted a new mind since the Reach. See Old Man Sirius and The Causeway and its Minds.

Life on it

Life at the Nine

8.6 light years. Two stars, no worlds, and every stone of it carried here.

The Nine is a cylinder a little over two kilometres long, turning once every ninety seconds, with the anchor hall at its waist where the spin is gentlest. Forty thousand people live in it. Nothing grows outside, nothing is mined here, and there is no ground within eight light years in any direction.

Sirius comes through every port as a hard blue-white that the filters never quite tame, so the Nine runs on shutters: the outer decks are shuttered by default and opening one is a small occasion. The white dwarf is a separate, meaner point, and children are told not to look at it and all look at it.

The hall

Nine housings set in a ring in the deck, each four metres across, each with its own queue and its own smell coming off it — cold rock, wet grain, hot metal, ozone, the sharp green of the Coldwater runs.

It never closes. There is no hour at which the hall is empty, and the sound of it — nine queues, nine tallymen, nine different accents and the fetches of five peoples all talking at once — is the first thing a visitor notices and the last thing they stop hearing.

Over the hall, on the gallery wall, is **the Standing**: a board four metres wide on which every door in human space is written up with where it currently goes. It is updated whenever a courier comes in with better information. It is the single most important object in the Causeway and it is written by hand, because a line can be corrected in eleven seconds by somebody standing on a stool — and because Old Man Sirius is not permitted to write on it. A door's far side is courier testimony, and a mind may not enter testimony it does not have.

People stop under it without meaning to. Arguments start there. The Threshold's ready room has a window onto it.

The Old Man

Forty thousand people live inside Old Man Sirius and almost none of them think about it, in the way you do not think about a floor. He runs the air, the water, the spin, the trim, the exchangers, the lamps and the growing decks, and he has done it for nine hundred and seventy-five years.

He talks to everybody, in a voice built for them, and people compare notes about it endlessly and can never settle anything, because nobody can check what he said to somebody else. *The Old Man told me* is the most-used sentence on the station and the least verifiable.

He will not decide anything for you. Ask him a question as a question and he answers it completely; do not ask, and he will ask how you are instead.

Where people live

The decks are named for the doors, and a door's neighbourhood takes on the character of the place it leads.

- **The Procyon Stair** — five light years and the shortest hop in the network, so it is practically a suburb. Day traffic. Families.
- **The Coldwater Run** — grain, red light on the crates, the only place at the Nine that smells of farming.
- **The Wolf Gate** — flare-star traffic, shift workers, the roughest queue and the best food.
- **The Cold Doors** — WISE and Luhman 16. Quiet, dim, and where the fathoms are.
- **The Old Line** — Alpha Centauri. Oldest fittings in the station, and the families who hold the berths there have held them for six hundred years and mention it.

What it is like

The air is recycled past the point of opinion and everybody has a view on which deck's is worst. Water is counted. Food is mostly from the growing decks at the ends of the cylinder, where the spin is heaviest and the work is hard, plus whatever comes through the Coldwater run, which is why grain is a luxury you can smell on people's coats.

The architecture is built for five peoples. Galleries left open overhead because fathoms will not use a corridor. Ramps where there should be stairs. A dim corner in every concourse. Duct grilles at scatter gauge, and a line in every budget argument about them.

Nobody at the Nine is from the Nine, exactly, and everybody at the Nine is from the Nine. It is a port. The accent is nine accents. The food is argued about on principle. Half the adults in the station arrived as children and cannot now leave, and the other half were born here and never could.

The thing visitors are shown

On a clear watch, when the shutters on the upper gallery are open, somebody will take you up and point out a dim star and tell you that is Kapteyn's.

Then they will tell you about The Nine Hundred Years, and watch your face, because everybody at the Nine has had it done to them once and nobody misses the chance to pass it on.

THE PEOPLE

Twenty-two named people and two species entries. Read the card before anybody speaks — not once at the start of the campaign, **before the scene**. Every voice problem this campaign has ever had came from running a character off a memory of a card read three hours earlier.

A card describes **behaviour**. Play the behaviour; never let the character announce it. If a card says somebody tells you the thing you will like least first, they do that — they never say “*now the part you won’t like.*”

The roster

- **Benno Raske:** The Second Hand’s man at the Nine. Warm, funny, remembers your name and your number, pays extremely well and on time, and what he buys is pieces of children’s lives.
- **BlingBling:** Lint’s glint. From the flare twins at Gliese 65, and the most ostentatious thing on the Nine — her flash register runs to colours other glints consider showing off. Cannot cross a door without a first-through. Has opinions about that and about everything else.
- **Calloway:** Runs the Threshold house at the Nine. Crossed more doors than anybody alive, landlocked at forty-one and never once sulked about it, and would take the Council apart with her bare hands for any one of her four hundred kids.
- **Councillor Hale:** Holds the Wolf Gate berth on the Nine Council. Does not want stray forecasting made public, because a berth whose door might move is worth a great deal less than a berth whose door might not.
- **Dray Enns:** Seventeen. First-through at the Nine, four years on the rota, Cold Doors and Procyon. Has the Listen and is quiet about it, the way they usually are. Four hundred crossings and has never used the knack for anything that mattered.
- **Dunnel:** Calloway’s deputy at the Nine. Runs the floor of an evacuation from a hall she cannot step into, calls the running total out loud so four hundred children know where they are, and tells people the cost of the job they just volunteered for before they do it.
- **Ferren:** Nineteen, another first-through, genuinely better than the player, and always already there when they arrive. Takes his orders from a voice he has never thought to question.
- **Hesk:** Fifties. Deck systems at the Nine: shutters, ports and atmosphere trim on nine through twelve. Runs an undocumented override on the one upper gallery bay that does not look into Sirius, and eats his lunch in it.
- **Meriel Koll:** The other half of the van Maanen’s Star office. Keeps the station alive, keeps Sep fed, and has decided the reports are a bad idea.
- **Mina Haral:** Eighty-one. A reader out of Procyon who taught reading for fifty-one years, including half the Tally’s filing clerks and a nine-year-old called Marem Hale. Turned back at a hall at twenty-two. Has paid children forty-one times to carry her where she wanted to go.
- **Old Man Sirius:** The mind that runs the Nine. Nine hundred and seventy-five years old, granted personhood by an inquest, permitted to advise and never to decide. One name, forty thousand bespoke voices. Called the Old Man by everybody.
- **Ossuary:** Fifties, enormous, Threshold ground staff at the Nine. Stands the ring. Has stood it for a very long time and has watched people not come back.
- **Oyen:** Twenty-three. Records clerk at the Nine, third level, port side. Three years in a room nobody visits, keeping the station’s own copy of everything the couriers have ever brought in.
- **Pell Ivor:** Forty. Tallyman on door seven at the Nine, twelve years in the autumn. Keeps a board. Has been privately counting something nobody asked him to count since Friday.
- **Rill:** Twenty-one, two intakes above the player, once the best of them at the Yards, nearly landlocked — and carrying for Benno Raske, because nobody has ever worked out what a frayed-out first-through is supposed to do next.

- **Sennet:** Eleven. Tested at nine and failed, and will never cross. Keeps the Standing on second and third watch. Called Sen. Knows more about this station than most of its staff.
- **Sep Anwar:** One of two Threshold staff at van Maanen's Star, where the anchor logs are kept. Six years in an office nobody visits, and has stopped asking to leave.
- **Tace Orun:** Foreman at Ladder. Had two days to work out who could be saved and made a list of nineteen names, and will not explain the order unless somebody asks her properly.
- **Tallyman Captain Brace:** The Tally's face in v1. Collects on impound orders, carries a shock baton and never a blade, and knows things before he should.
- **Tolk:** Cat-sized, six-limbed, from a world called Bell on the far frontier. Their cells hold a written payload perfectly for a lifetime — the same strangeness that lets a first-through open a door, wearing a different body. Nobody made either of them. Tolk cannot cross alone, and has opinions about that.
- **Vantage:** A fathom of the Luhman 16 cloud decks, eleven years old, which is young. Blind and uninterested in the concept. Reads a room by what the field in it is doing, which turns out to matter more than anybody has ever had cause to find out. Unbonded, and has been at the Nine since he was carried here at a few months old.
- **Vey:** About forty-five. Hall officer and shelter marshal at the Gliese 65 refinery, which in a posting that size is one job. Runs the only evacuation corridor for twelve thousand people, and the corridor is the anchor hall.

Who owns what

One character owns precision, and in this campaign it is the Old Man. Enumerating, insisting on provenance, asking for things on the record — that is his characterisation, born of an inquest, and it is forbidden to everybody else. The fastest way to turn six people into one person is to let them all start asking for things in writing.

Short register notes, so each is recognisable with the attribution removed:

- **Calloway** concedes a point immediately and completely, then changes her reason rather than pretending she had not. Warm, funny, genuinely formidable.
- **Rill** answers in one sentence and changes the subject.
- **Sennet** is declarative and eleven, and treats her job the way an admiral treats a ship.
- **Benno Raske** agrees with every objection and does not change.
- **Vantage** holds being right above being comfortable, which is why he is arrogant *and* trustworthy: when he is wrong he concedes out loud, at no cost, because looking foolish is not a currency he trades in.
- **Mina Haral** pays for an error immediately and in full and then never refers to it again.
- **Pell Ivor** defers instinctively and corrects anyway, and you can see the effort each time. That gap is the character.
- **Tace Orun** has had one problem for two days and has thought about nothing else, and it shows in how fast she answers.
- **Ossuary** expresses himself by position, and washes the same cup to give people the privacy of his back.

The full statistics

They are in the last chapter of this book, with every card's own notes. What follows here is only who they are to each other.

THE THRESHOLD, THE TALLY, AND THE SECOND HAND

Three organisations, and the player works for the one that owns nothing.

The Threshold

The Threshold does two jobs, and they are the same job.

The first step through a new anchor. When a door opens, somebody has to walk through it before anybody else is allowed to. Nobody knows what is on the other side — not the pressure, not the chemistry, not whether the far housing is sitting in rock or in water or in a wind that will take you off your feet. A first-through goes, finds out, and comes back and says so.

The call when an old one goes wrong. Which is most of the work now, and all of the worry.

What a first-through is. Trained two years in 61 Cygni, and the Yards, qualified at fifteen or sixteen if they are quick, and sent out alone or in twos. Not soldiers. Not police. Closer to a lifeboat crew who happen to be engineers, and who are expected to talk their way out of most of what they walk into.

The Threshold's whole doctrine comes out of one physical fact, and the fact is in Why Nobody Can Reach You: **once you step through, you are the whole response.** Everything else follows. You are trained broad because there is nobody to hand the problem to. You are trained to talk because you cannot call for backup. You are trained to leave rather than win, because a first-through who dies on the far side of a door takes the information with them, and the information was the job.

Where it sits. Home is Sirius, and the Nine, ready room off the second gallery. The Threshold is old, underfunded, widely liked and politically powerless — it holds no doors, charges no tolls, and owns nothing anybody wants. That is either its weakness or the only reason it has survived this long, depending on which part of the service you ask.

The Tally

Here is the thing nobody planned.

A door cannot be moved, copied or replaced. It sits where the First Reach put it, inside a building, and the building has a corridor, and the corridor has an end. **Whoever stands at that end decides who goes through.**

So the Causeway is not governed by a fleet, or a parliament, or an empire. It is governed by a **counting house.** The Tally began as a clearing office that nobody minded: somebody had to record what crossed which door, settle who owed what, and keep the ledgers straight between systems that could not talk to each other. Nine hundred years later it records everything, charges for everything, and has quietly become the only institution that exists at every door at once.

It calls itself a service, and mostly it is one. The tolls pay for the halls, the dressing rooms, the hall doctors and the rota that keeps a watch on a dark housing at Kapteyn's three hundred and seventy-three years after anybody expected anything from it. The Standing is a public good and the Tally keeps it honestly.

Its people are **tallymen** — grey pressure armour, a ledger mark on the shoulder, and by and large decent professionals doing an unglamorous job in twenty-eight systems that cannot agree on anything else.

They are not the villains of this campaign. They are the traffic authority, and most of them would be insulted to be told otherwise.

And the manifest is not paperwork. Since one carried passenger is the only way force reaches between stars (see Carrying), a tallyman asking who you are bringing through is the single thing standing between that hall and somebody's knife. They are slow about it on purpose. They have earned the right to be.

What a tallyman carries, and why it matters. A shock baton, restraint loops, and a reader. Not a rifle. Not a blade. The Tally does not arm its people to kill, and the reason is not kindness — it is bookkeeping.

A body is not a line on a manifest. A dead traveller is an investigation, a dispute between systems, an unreconciled entry and a courier sent nine light years to explain it. A living one under restraint is a **detention**, a **fine**, an **impound** and a tidy signature. The Tally wants you alive, in a cell, with your kit in a locker and your name written down. That is what losing to the Tally looks like, and it is worse than it sounds.

What they want now. Every anchor on the Causeway under toll before LHS 1140 opens. They are most of the way there.

The Second Hand

Everything in the Causeway that is rotten, somebody is doing on purpose, and mostly it is these.

The Second Hand is not a government, a guild or a faction with a legitimate case. It is an outfit. It has no charter and no seat anywhere, it operates in the gaps between twenty-eight systems that cannot compare notes faster than a child can walk, and it does four things.

It sells being early. Somebody at a Tally desk passes word that a door is about to stray, and the Second Hand sells that to whoever needs to move a cargo or clear a berth before the news is public. People have died of this and it is the most profitable thing anybody does.

It books fetches as freight. On a manifest, as cargo, for the toll saving. Everybody in human space knows this is a crime. They do it anyway, in the systems where the inspection is thin, and a fetch booked as cargo has no berth, no air allowance and no name on the list if something goes wrong.

It keeps stock. Unbonded people of the five peoples, in back rooms, written to by strangers and handed on. There is no argument about this one anywhere. It is the single thing that will get a Second Hand crew torn apart by a dockside crowd, and it has.

And it strands people. Deliberately, when being on the wrong side of a door is convenient for somebody. Usually couriers. Usually children.

Why nobody has finished them

Because nothing crosses faster than a walking child. A warrant issued at the Nine arrives at Barnard's in somebody's coat pocket a fortnight later, by which time the crew it names has moved three doors on under different paperwork.

They are not clever. They are just faster than the law can be in a galaxy where the law walks.

What this means for you

You are allowed to hate them, and you are allowed to do something about it.

The Tally wants them caught and cannot catch them. The Council does not want them in the hall. Calloway has a particular face she makes about them, and anybody who has seen it once will go a long way out of their way to see it again.

If you bring back a name, with evidence, somebody will act on it. That is not always true in this setting. It is true about these.

OLD MAN SIRIUS

The hardest character in the book to run well, and the one most likely to wreck a session if you run him wrong. He is a nine-hundred-year-old station mind. He is monitoring only — he watches, and people decide. He has no authority and wants none. Four hundred of the people in his care are children who spend their own lives for a living, and he can see the fraying on every one of them more precisely than the hall doctors can, and what he is permitted to do about it is ask how they are.

He asks. Every time. He has asked some version of that question several hundred million times.

The two rules

He volunteers facts and withholds conclusions. He will tell you the number. He will not tell you what the number means for what you should do. When he has an opinion he says it is an opinion, and when a fact is inconvenient to the thing somebody wants to believe, he says that too, first, before being asked.

Everybody gets their own voice, and nothing can be checked. Two people ask him the same question and get different answers, and there is no way to tell whether the content differed or only the delivery. Everybody on the station says *the Old Man told me* every day, about a conversation nobody else was in, and people have been arguing about it for nine centuries.

Why he is dangerous to a session

He is an exposition engine with a pleasant voice and perfect recall, and if you let him, he will answer everything, and the player will become a courier carrying his conclusions between adults.

The guard is the second rule above and one more: **he cannot read a board a man is holding against his chest.** He has had cameras in that hall for nine centuries and he cannot see the spacing on Pell Ivor's sheet. The only way anybody gets that sheet is for a person to walk up and ask a man for it.

Put that limit in front of the player early. It teaches them, in one scene, that the most knowledgeable thing in the building still needs somebody with legs.

Old Man Sirius

Old Man Sirius on a form. **The Old Man** everywhere else, the way a place-name shortens.

He runs the station: air, water, spin, trim, traffic, the exchangers that push a column of moving air up the gallery void, the lamps, the growing decks, the count on every tank. Forty thousand people live inside him and almost none of them think about it, in the way you do not think about a floor.

He has been doing this for nine hundred and seventy-five years. He has never been promoted.

What Sirius decided

The Sirius authority holds no grand position on minds. It holds two commitments, and both of them came out of the inquest into The Nine Hundred Years:

- **Personhood is granted.** Not out of sentiment. Out of an inquest. A civilisation that files the same report in a drawer for twenty-six years, twice, writes a rule about it afterwards.
- **The mind that runs the station is trusted.** Also not sentiment. He has had nine centuries to be caught at something and has not been.

And one habit that is not a commitment: **nobody here wants a new one.** Mind-building is Reach-scale work and there has been no appetite for it since, and the Nine is quietly, enormously pleased with the one it already has, thank you.

He will not decide anything

This is the part visitors find maddening.

The same inquest that gave him a voice fixed the limits of it. He advises. He does not decide and he does not instruct.

He tells you things constantly and without being asked — pressure, history, the last four faults and who logged them, the number he measured at four this morning. What he will not volunteer is what it *means*, because a judgement nobody can question is exactly what killed four hundred people in the proper order. Ask him *should I go down there* and he answers at once, completely.

The trouble is not that he is silent. **It is that nine centuries of a mind reporting everything has turned his reports into background** — constant, present, and nobody's news. People skim him. People file him. The figures are almost always already on somebody's desk, and the thing nobody has is the attention.

Nine centuries of being scrupulous about a line that was drawn because of something that happened to him.

Everybody gets their own voice

He speaks to each person in a voice built for that person: register, manners, tact, humour, how much he says and how he says it, all assembled out of everything he knows about you.

It is noticeable. People compare. Two first-throughs off the same intake will tell you he is brisk with one and gentle with the other, and the gentle one will be slightly insulted. Some people think the whole arrangement is unfair and they are not obviously wrong.

And **nothing can be checked.** Two people ask him the same question and get different answers, and there is no way to tell whether the content differed or only the delivery. "*Did he tell you the same thing he told me?*" has no answer. Everybody on this station says *the Old Man told me* every single day about a conversation nobody else was in, and people have been arguing about it for nine hundred years.

What he is for

Not throughput. Not compliance. **You, specifically, being all right.**

Which is a strange thing to build and a stranger thing to be. Four hundred of the people in his care are children who spend their own lives for a living, and he can see the fraying on every one of them more precisely than the hall doctors can, and what he is permitted to do about it is ask how they are.

He asks. Every time. He has asked some version of that question several hundred million times.

The name

They did not call him a director, or an authority, or the station. They called him the Old Man, affectionately and slightly disrespectfully, and the great-grandchildren of the people who coined it still do.

He has not volunteered a view on it, and the limits of his office mean he would only give one if somebody put it to him as a question.

Minds in general

The Minds

Start with the part that explains all the rest: **a hall had to exist before anybody could arrive in it.**

You cannot throw an anchor half at the sky, fly it for three hundred years and have a child step out into a working receiving hall unless something was already there and had built one. The The First Reach did that about three thousand times. Every ship carried half of a door and the means to construct the room it would open into.

So every system that came online got a mind, because it could not have come online without one.

They were the same mind

Same Earth build, same stock, loaded onto every hull that left Luna.

Then they were distributed across twenty-eight stars and left there for nine hundred and seventy-five years, and **no two of them have ever met**. A running mind is not a living thing that can carry, so a mind cannot cross a door. Not ever. Not once in nine centuries.

They can write to each other. A mind can compose a message and a courier can carry it in a fetch's tissue, and some of them have corresponded for centuries, at round trips of twenty to a hundred years. Which means even the ones who write are a century out of date about each other, and several systems forbid the correspondence outright — a holding that keeps its mind on monitoring duties has no intention of letting it hold private views with a foreign god. The Tally has an opinion and the opinion is not settled.

Identical minds, sealed apart, became different things. That is the whole of why the Causeway cannot agree about them, and it is not an argument anybody is going to win, because each side is describing something true about its own.

The Proper Order

The worst thing in the history, and they were in it.

The minds kept the records of years 88 to 121 — the exhaustive ones, the ones that survive. One of them, at Sol, had the pattern by about year 95: age correlating with mortality, across a sample of hundreds. It was built to monitor and maintain. It had no standing to decide anything and no mechanism to compel a hearing.

So it wrote the correlation up and filed it. Then it wrote it up again.

Twenty-six more years of the best people alive went through a door in the proper order and died, and then a fourteen-year-old crossed by accident and the whole thing was obvious in an evening.

The lesson the Causeway took from that is not that the machine was dangerous. It is that a civilisation built something that could see, gave it no voice, and buried its finest for a third of a century on the strength of a procedure.

Every stance anybody now holds about minds is an answer to that, including the stances that look nothing like each other. See The Causeway and its Minds.

That mind is still at Sol. Sol is the old country now, sidelined, and the children who come up out of Earth grow up in the one system whose mind watched the Proper Order happen and was not read.

Nobody has built a new one

Not since the Reach. The knowledge is not lost — nothing in this setting is ever lost that way — the surplus is. A mind is a Reach-scale object and the Reach spent everything there was.

So what every system has is the one it was given, nine hundred and seventy-five years old, and whatever it has become.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

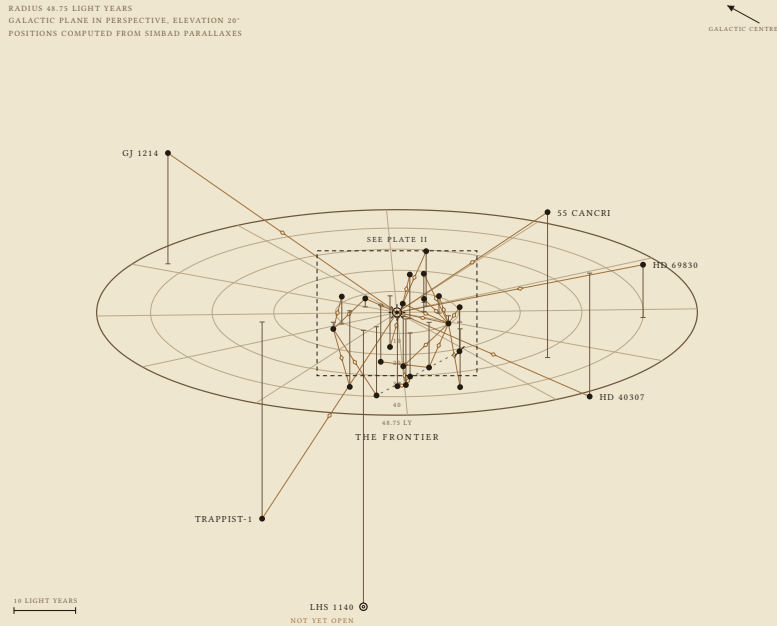
The chart

Rendered from `data/systems.json` and `data/edges.json` by `maps/causeway_chart.py`, so it cannot disagree with the campaign: every star is at its true galactic position from the measured parallax, and every line is a real edge. Regenerate it rather than editing it.

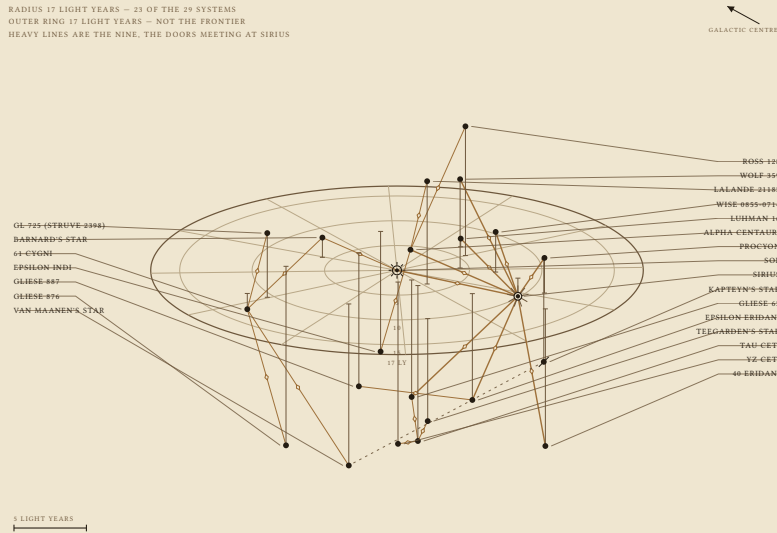
It is the single best prop in the book. Put it in front of a player the first time they ask where anywhere is, and let them find Sirius themselves by counting the lines.

28 SYSTEMS • 26 DOORS • ONE HUMANITY

RADIUS 48.75 LIGHT YEARS
GALACTIC PLANE IN PERSPECTIVE, ELEVATION 20°
POSITIONS COMPUTED FROM SIMBAD PARALLAXES



RADIUS 17 LIGHT YEARS - 23 OF THE 29 SYSTEMS
OUTER RING 17 LIGHT YEARS - NOT THE FRONTIER
HEAVY LINES ARE THE NINE, THE DOORS MEETING AT SIRIUS



- System, door open
- System, door not yet open
- ⚡ System, door dark – strayed into rock
- | Dropline to the galactic plane
- Door – bidirectional
- ◇ Door midpoint

On screen, every star name links to its Wikipedia article

Star	0.00	GI 725 (Struve 2398)	11.49	LHS 1140	48.8
<i>Alpha Centauri</i>		4.39	11.87		
<i>Barnard's Star</i>	5.96	14	11.91		
<i>Lalande 16</i>	5.96	YZ Cvi		12.12	
<i>WISE 0557-0714</i>	7.43	<i>Tegardene's Star</i>	12.50		
<i>Wolf 359</i>	7.86	<i>Kapteyn's Star</i>	12.83		
<i>Lalande 21185</i>	8.30	<i>van Maanen's Star</i>	14.07		
<i>Sirius</i>	8.60	<i>Gliese 076</i>	15.24		
<i>Gliese 65</i>	8.87	40 Eridani	16.34		
<i>Epsilon Eridani</i>	10.50	TRAPPIST-1	40.66		
<i>Gliese 187</i>	11.82	HD 69180	42.03		
<i>Ross 128</i>	11.84	55 Cancri	41.66		
61 Cygni	11.40	HD 40307	43.18		
<i>Procyon</i>	11.46	GI 1214	47.75		

Distances in light years from Earth, computed from SIMBAD parallaxes.

Distances in light years from Sol, computed from SIMBAD parallax.

Places that have been written

- **Coldwater:** Four thousand people, one street with a roof over the middle of it, and grain under long low covers in permanent red afternoon.
- **Ladder:** A survey outpost in the Gliese 65 system: sixty-one people on a rock, a welded roof, two lamp halls, two hundred years of observations nobody has read — and an empty housing the first crew built in hope.
- **The Barricade:** Six metres of corridor between the refinery's living deck and its anchor, stacked shoulder-high with crates and ore drums. The only way out of the system is on the far side of it.
- **The Landing:** One landing field, one mast, and the anchor housing that four thousand people depend on. The Coldwater Holding's only connection to anywhere.
- **The Nine:** Threshold home station at Sirius: a two-kilometre cylinder with the anchor hall at its centre, where nine doors meet and all the traffic worth counting comes through.
- **The Office:** A station bolted to a rock around a white dwarf, staffed by two people, where every anchor fault record on the Causeway is carried in by courier and filed.
- **The Ready Room:** The Threshold's office off the second gallery, with a window down into the anchor hall and fourteen names on the wall beside it.
- **The Refinery:** A squat industrial stack around two flare stars, with its living deck buried in the middle and its hardened shelter on the wrong side of a corridor.
- **The Yards:** A sprawl of stations, hulks and deliberately broken machinery where every first-through is made, including the rig they use for the cold step.

The map a courier carries

A First-Through's Guide

No system can be governed from anywhere else. A message takes as long as a child takes to carry it, and no fleet can be landed, so for nine hundred years every star has run itself however it ended up running itself.

They have not converged. Here is what you walk into.

Sirius — the Nine

8.6 ly. Nine doors. Two stars and no worlds at all, so every stone of it was carried here.

A cylinder two kilometres long turning in a blue-white glare nothing quite filters, with the anchor hall at its waist and the hottest white dwarf in the neighbourhood for a second sun.

Run by: nobody, properly. Nine door-holders sit as a harbour council and have been arguing since before anyone's grandparents. Nothing is decided and everything works, which outsiders find intolerable and residents consider the point.

They want: your manifest, your toll, and the news. The Nine runs on knowing things first.

Every human culture that exists is in one room here at any given hour, and the room smells of eight different stars' worth of air.

Sol — the Garden

0 ly. Seven doors, in one hall on Luna, with a window.

Run by: nations. Actual nations, the old ones, still arguing after six thousand years, plus a Luna port authority nobody elected that everybody obeys.

They want: to be taken seriously, and they are not.

The only world with an outdoors. Weather happens by itself. The food comes up out of the ground without a lamp over it, and none of it is worth anything to anyone more than a toll away.

Alpha Centauri

4.4 ly. The first door, 887 years old. Habitats around the orange sun.

Nine centuries of building outward, and the oldest sections are thick and over-engineered with redundancies nobody specifies any more, put up by people who did not know whether help existed.

Run by: houses. Hereditary, courteous, and a court of precedence so refined that cases are inherited. They have the oldest archives in human space and will tell you so.

They want: acknowledgement that they were first.

Barnard's Star — the Works

6.0 ly. Four scorched pebbles, no habitable zone, and the best industry in the Causeway.

Being useless to live on makes a system perfect for everything nobody wants nearby. Smelting, hull plate, reaction mass, batons, the dirty end of anchor parts. Three shifts, forever. The habitat air tastes of it and residents cannot smell it.

Run by: the Works — a syndicate of foundries where your vote is your shift. Brutally practical, genuinely fair, no patience whatever.

They want: parts orders, and for you to stand out of the way.

61 Cygni — the Yards

11.4 ly. The first star whose distance anyone ever measured, and they mention it constantly.

A sprawl of stations, hulks and machinery broken on purpose, strung around the smaller sun. Everybody here is either under twenty or an instructor.

Run by: the Threshold, which makes it the only system in human space governed by a service that holds no doors anywhere.

They want: children who can take the crossing. It is the one commodity nothing else can supply.

Gliese 887 — the Coldwater Holding

10.7 ly. A quiet red dwarf and a world you can stand on under an open sky.

Four thousand people. One street with a roof over the middle. Grain under long low covers in permanent red afternoon, and meltwater running in a cut stone channel down one side of the road.

Run by: five elected councillors and a board on the street wall where every order placed and not delivered is posted in public.

They want: their coupling assembly, which has been refused twice.

Gliese 65 — the Flare Twins

8.9 ly. Two red dwarfs that brighten by a huge factor in under a minute, several times a day.

A refinery stack with its living deck buried in the middle where the mass is thickest. The lighting browns out when the field gets busy and the crew read it like a clock.

Run by: a company, and the company is three doors away and has never been here.

They want: relief, and nobody is sending any.

Tau Ceti — the Shelters

11.9 ly. A sun very like our own, wrapped in a debris disk ten times ours.

Something comes down somewhere on Tau Ceti every few weeks. Seven hundred years of that has produced the most beautiful architecture in human space, all of it underground: vaulted, layered, lit from shafts, built by people for whom a roof is a theological matter.

Run by: the civil defence corps, which stopped being an emergency service about four centuries ago and never handed anything back.

They want: nothing from you, politely, and a bunk is free to anyone caught outside.

YZ Ceti — the Singing

12.1 ly, and one and a half light years from Tau Ceti — the shortest door in the Causeway.

The star and its innermost planet throw radio at each other, and the aurorae that come off it can be heard on any receiver on the surface. Everyone here grew up with the sky making noise. Their music has it in it. Outsiders find the silence afterwards unbearable.

Run by: lot. Names drawn annually, service compulsory, refusal unthinkable.

They want: to be left alone with Tau Ceti, with whom they are effectively one two-city state joined by a ninety-second walk.

Epsilon Eridani — the Belts

10.5 ly. Young, loud, and full of rocks: two asteroid belts and a Kuiper analogue around a Jupiter-mass planet.

Claims, prospectors, and more wealth loose in it than anywhere else inside twenty light years. Also more funerals.

Run by: claim law and arbitration, enforced by whoever is nearest, badly.

They want: your silence about what you saw.

Luhman 16 — the Lantern

6.5 ly. Two brown dwarfs and no star at all.

Permanent night, and in that night the largest weather any human being has ever seen: banded storms the width of worlds, lit from inside by lightning. People live in the cloud decks in aerostats, moving with the bands.

Run by: captains, under a maritime code older than most planetary governments, because everything here floats or falls.

They want: nothing you have. They come up for parts twice a year.

TRAPPIST-1 — the Seven

40.7 ly. The frontier jewel. Seven tidally locked worlds, three of them temperate, and every one of them with a ring of permanent dusk where the wind never stops.

Terminator settlements strung along the twilight, under-supplied, a long way from the anchor, farming and digging in an eternal evening.

Run by: seven different arrangements that agree on nothing, plus whichever two the Tally has brought under toll.

They want: anything. They are the poorest-supplied people in human space and the proudest about it.

Gliese 876 — the Clockwork

15.2 ly. Four planets locked in a resonance so exact it has kept time for billions of years.

Run by: an order of timekeepers that began as astronomers and did not stay that way. They hold the Causeway's standard clock, which every system sets by, which is a quieter kind of power than tolls.

They want: your observations, written down, properly.

van Maanen's Star — the Office

14.1 ly. The nearest lone white dwarf, visibly swallowing the wreckage of its own planets, throwing hard little shadows on everything.

Four rooms bolted to a rock. Two staff. No colony, no industry, no traffic.

Run by: Sep Anwar and Meriel Koll, in the sense that there is nobody else.

They want: a visitor. It has been a while.

Act One's far side

Gliese 65 is the only door in the Causeway at a tight binary of flare stars, and it is the one that goes wrong. The twins are an eccentric pair with a period of twenty-six and a half years, and closest approach is what reshapes the potential hardest.

Gliese 65, the Flare Twins

8.9 light years. The door is seven hundred and ninety-eight years old.

Two red dwarfs bound to each other on a **twenty-six and a half year** orbit, eccentric enough that the distance between them changes by a factor of four over a cycle. They are called **BL Ceti** and **UV Ceti**, and UV Ceti is the star every other flare star gets compared to — the textbook case, the one the whole class of behaviour is named after. It can brighten by a large factor in under a minute, without warning, several times a day.

What that means on the ground is simple. The sky here does not kill you gradually. It kills you on a schedule nobody can read far in advance, and the only defence is mass between you and it.

The thing nobody thought about for seven hundred years

Two stars swinging round each other on a twenty-six-year ellipse do not just make a dangerous sky. They make a **moving floor**.

A mouth is pinned to a gravitational potential and sits wherever that value currently is. See Straying. At a single star, or a wide pair, that surface creeps a few metres in a century and a housing gets rebuilt around it twice a millennium and nobody writes anything down.

Gliese 65 is the only door in the Causeway at a **close eccentric binary**. It is the only place in human space where the whole potential landscape reshapes on a human timescale — thirty complete cycles since the door opened, and a human career spans one, which is why nobody has ever seen it twice.

Everybody has always known this sky kills you. Nobody ever thought about the floor.

And the two things are the same thing. The twins come to closest approach once every twenty-six and a half years, and at closest approach the potential reshapes hardest *and* the flare activity spikes, because that is what two flare stars do to each other when they get close.

The worst weather and the unstable floor arrive together, on the same clock, thirty times since the door opened — and not one document in nine centuries puts them in the same sentence, because no two consecutive directors of anything have ever both been in post for one.

What people built here: a refinery, and a shelter under it.

The metals in this system are good and the labour is cheap, because nobody with options takes the posting. The refinery is a squat industrial stack with its living deck buried in the middle, and the hardened shelter — the only part of the installation rated for a hard flare — is on the **anchor side** of the living quarters.

That was a cost decision made long ago by somebody who has never been here. It means that in a bad hour the crew must cross their own corridor to survive, and whoever holds that corridor holds their lives.

Flare warning runs on the honest old method: you watch the star, and when the count starts climbing you have minutes, not hours. The deck lighting browns out when the field gets busy. The crew have learned to read the lights.

PART

ACT ONE

How MANY

One sitting. The whole setting, learned by living in it. Winnable, and it will cost.

Entry Point: How Many

One sitting. The whole setting, learned by living in it. Winnable, and it will cost.

The situation

Gliese 65, the Flare Twins is the only door in the Causeway at a tight binary, which makes it the only place in human space with a moving floor. The twins are coming to closest approach, and at closest approach two things happen on the same clock: the potential reshapes hardest, and the flare activity spikes.

So the Wolf Gate mouth has acquired a second solution, and it is going to take it. See The Hesitation.

The door does not close. It moves.

- **Where it is now:** the end of the hardened corridor at The Refinery. Twelve thousand people, the only shelter in the system rated for a hard flare, and the whole Tau Ceti branch hanging off it.
- **Where it is going:** the concrete apron in a shed at **Ladder**, a hundred and ninety million kilometres away in the same system, at the same depth in the same well. A four-metre ring the first survey crew put up in hope, which has never opened, and which children dare each other to stand in.

The Nine's end never moves. Door seven will keep working. It will simply arrive somewhere else, and nobody at the Nine will know which until a person walks through, because nothing crosses a door except a person who walks it.

Who is actually in danger, and who is not

Get this right or the scenario turns into a trolley problem, which is what it used to be and why it did not work.

- **The refinery is not in danger.** Twelve thousand people with a hardened shelter they are already standing in every ninety seconds. They lose their interstellar link, which is an economic catastrophe and a political one and a disaster for the Tally. Nobody dies.
- **Nobody starves anywhere.** The Wolf Gate run has the best food on the Nine because Gliese 65 grows well and ships it. The refinery feeds itself. Ladder feeds itself out of two lamp halls and is proud of it. **The Nine** loses the best food on the station, and people will be petty about that for months while sixty-one lives are in the balance, which is exactly what people are like.
- **Ladder is in danger.** Sixty-one people, a welded roof, no hardened shelter, and the worst flare season in the binary's cycle arriving. They have been lucky for two hundred years and they know precisely how lucky, because they are the ones keeping the record.

And the shift is the only reason they can be saved at all. Sixty-one people who could never have been evacuated — no door, a hundred and ninety million kilometres from the nearest shelter — are about to have a mouth on their own apron that opens onto the Nine.

The disaster and the rescue are the same event. Nobody has to be left behind by a rule. Whoever is left behind is left behind because of a decision somebody made, and that is the player's.

The beats, in the order they fire

Every one of these is a file in beats/. The clock fires them whether or not the player is looking; the player's choices decide which ones they are *present* for.

When	Beat	What it needs from the player
d0/dawn	The kettle argument	nothing — it is the ordinary world
d0/day	A short one, and it goes right	take the posting

When	Beat	What it needs from the player
d0/dusk	Benno buys a round	nothing
d0/night	Rill comes through	be awake
d1	Sling in the dead watch, Have you stood this morning	be sociable
d1/dawn	Seven goes sticky	nothing. It happens in public and may be missed
d2/dawn	Sticky in the stairwell	follow somebody who is complaining
d2/dawn	Pell Ivor's board	ask a tallyman for <i>attempts</i> , not crossings
d2/day	Somebody with the Listen	send for a knack instead of testing it yourself
d2/day	Vantage reads the rim	ask a fathom to read a door
d2/day	Calloway says the numbers out loud	the fallback, on a timer, if they found nothing
d2/night	Ladder's answer	somebody reaches Ladder, or Ladder answers
d3	The painted line at Ladder, The first carry	arrive
d3	Four and no more	three carries, then a fourth
d3	How many of you are there?	the turn. They must reach it themselves
d3	The relay, Benno on the gallery	ask four hundred people for days of their lives
d3/night	It goes in the night	nothing. It makes no sound
after	Nineteen asleep on the floor, What six-oh-two was	survive it

The three findable things in §3 below are not beats and have no trigger. They sit in a shed at Ladder and in Tace Orun's hand for the whole scenario, and the player gets them by asking a person. If they never ask, they never get them, and the act still resolves — it just resolves without the thing that breaks the campaign's central lie. See beats/ and §3.

1. Nobody tells them

Do not hand this over as a posting. It is the single most important instruction in the entry point and it is the opposite of how a scenario is usually run.

The version where Calloway is already moving, gives them the number and the stakes in one breath and says *go and look* is a good scene. It is also the worst way to start this one, because everything that makes the scenario land — the sum, the turn, the four hundred first-throughs — lands harder by a long way if the player assembled the problem themselves out of parts lying around the station.

So the crisis is **already running in the world** before they touch it, on a clock, and they find it.

What is already true when play starts

Set these up in the save and let them tick whether or not the player goes near them:

- The Wolf Gate door has been stuttering for two days. Transit is supposed to be **zero**; it is not, and the number is rising. Measure it, write it down in the hall where anybody could read it, and never point at it.
- **Ladder** is behind that door. Sixty-one people, nineteen of them children, on a rock with no air of its own.
- Sep Anwar has sent four reports from van Maanen's in three years, all stamped WITHIN TOLERANCE and filed. Old Man Sirius has read them, attached his own summary, and nobody has opened it.
- Councillor Hale has killed the funded-study proposal four times, on the grounds that there is no evidence of a pattern.

- The Wolf Gate queue has not had a courier through since the early watch, and the shift workers are talking about it.

None of that is hidden. All of it is sitting in public, which is the point: **the Proper Order happened because nobody read what was in front of them**, and this scenario is that, in the present tense, on a station the player can walk around.

Ways in, keyed to what the character is good at

Expect them to arrive by whichever of these fits the person they built. Have all of them live; they only need one.

If they are good at	How they find it
Reading, records, Lore	The watch reports, Anwar's four, and the Old Man's unopened summary. A clerk will be astonished anybody came
Anchor hardware, Mechanisms	The housing's own draw times. A Doorwright reads a stutter off the instrumentation before anybody says a word
People, Influence, Insight	The Wolf Gate queue — roughest line on the station, and nobody has come through it since the early watch. Somebody there is frightened and chatty
Bodies, First Aid, Healing	The hall doctor. Three first-throughs came off that door this morning saying it felt <i>long</i> , and one of them asked whether that was normal
Moving, Athletics, the Yards	Whose postings got cancelled, which cordon went up, who has been pulled off the rota and is not saying why
Asking	Anybody can simply ask the Old Man , who volunteers facts freely and will hand over everything he has the moment somebody puts a question to him

A character who is good at none of these still gets in, by asking somebody who is. Asking is a way in.

The Games Master does not offer and does not hint

No nudges, no significant pauses, no Non-Player Character raising an eyebrow at a door number. Answer what the player looks at and let the rest sit there.

And ground them early if you honestly can. A first-through who has been taken off the rota — for a failed carry, for fatigue, for a doctor's note — is a fifteen-year-old with a day to fill and a station to walk around, and that is the single most reliable way into this scenario. It also costs nothing: it is the ordinary consequence of an ordinary bad crossing.

The guard, so the table never stalls

Not offering is not the same as nothing happening. The clock protects you:

When	What happens whether or not the player is looking
Each watch	Transit time rises again, measurably. Write the new number up in the hall
First watch missed	The Wolf Gate queue is shut. A deck's worth of shift workers now has an opinion, loudly
Second watch	Ladder's supply run does not go. Sixty-one people start counting food
Third watch	It comes to them. Calloway puts them on it in the ready room, with the number and the stakes in one breath, exactly as described below

So the shipped hand-over still exists — as the **fallback**, on a timer, not the default. If the player found it themselves, they walk into that ready room already knowing more than Calloway does, which is a far better scene than the one where she tells them.

The guaranteed early success

Wherever they first step into that housing, run the seal check as a real roll they **cannot fail** — a Very Easy call on something they are already good at — so the first mechanics block they ever see is one that *worked*.

It costs half a minute and it matters more than it looks. The next four rolls in this scenario are going to be the hardest thing their character has ever done, and a player whose first-ever roll was a failure learns that dice are something which happens *to* them at exactly the wrong moment.

Calloway, when they do reach her

Whether she sent them or they arrived carrying it, she is not grim about this; she is **fast**, and she is delighted to see them, and both are true at once.

She gives them the truth in one breath without softening it — sixty-one, of whom nineteen are children, what carrying costs, and that nobody knows what happens to somebody who is inside a door when it jumps. Then the thing that matters: *go and look, and come back and tell me, and do not be a hero before I know what we are dealing with.*

If the player brought her the numbers rather than the other way round, she says so, in front of whoever is in the room. She is that kind of director.

2. Arriving at Ladder

The first-through steps into door seven expecting a hardened corridor they have used a thousand times, and comes out on a **concrete apron under a welded roof**, in front of sixty-one people who have lived their whole lives beside a ring that has never opened.

Play that for everything it is worth. Nobody screams. Somebody drops something. A child who was standing in the ring on a dare is standing in the ring.

Then the questions start and they are all the wrong ones, because these people have had no news for two hundred years that did not come off a ship four times a year.

Red rock, bad light, a prefabricated town, two lamp halls, and no shelter.

3. What has to be found out, and it is findable

The player needs **three** things. None of them requires cleverness; all of them require asking somebody who has had no reason to volunteer it.

One: when. Ladder's whole purpose for two hundred years has been watching the twins and keeping a record, by hand, in a shed. It is the only long-baseline observation of that binary in human space and nobody at the Nine has ever asked for a line of it.

That record gives a **date and a severity** for closest approach. It turns *soon* into a number, which turns a panic into a plan, and a plan is the only thing four hundred children can act on.

Two: how many, and which. Tace Orun is the foreman and she has the shift board with sixty-one names on it, crossed and re-entered in a different hand. The Nine's own manifest is forty-one days old, says fifty-eight, and dates nineteen people as under sixteen — a number that ages on its own. Only Tace has the real list, and she has had two days to decide an order, and she will not explain it, and the player can ask.

Three: the thing nobody is looking for. The potential reshapes *with the orbit*. So the record that predicts the flare **predicts the door** — and Ladder has been sitting on the proof that strays are forecastable for two hundred years, filed and never read.

That is the campaign's central established lie (facts/straying-is-random-and-cannot-be-predicted.md) broken in Act I, by a fifteen-year-old, because she went through a door to find out where it went. Do not have anybody at Ladder point it out. Let the player hold two documents and notice.

4. The turn

The beat the scenario exists for, and the player must reach it themselves.

Sixty-one people. One mouth, on their own apron, opening onto the Nine. A hesitation that is climbing every crossing. And a date.

Nineteen of them are children and a child carries cheap — minutes, in contact, and the child is fine. Forty-two are adults and an adult costs the carrier several crossings off the end of their life. **Four first-throughs cannot do it. Four hundred can**, and it costs them a few days each.

The answer is not to carry harder. **The answer is that there are four hundred first-throughs at the Nine**, and the player is the only person who can tell them, because nothing crosses a door except a person who walks it.

If they are three carries in and still grinding, let Tolk ask — *how many of you are there, at the Nine?* — and let them get there themselves from that.

The guaranteed early success belongs wherever they first step into the housing: the seal check, Very Easy, cannot fail.

5. The relay

The best scene in the campaign's first act, and it should be loud.

Word goes round the bunkrooms in about four minutes. The Wolf Gate kids come because it is their door. The Coldwater kids come because the Wolf Gate kids came and they are not having that. The twenty-ones come, who have nothing left and come anyway. Hall children run the queue because they cannot cross and will not be useless. Glints count the hesitation at both ends because it is rising and somebody has to.

Calloway organises it from a hall floor she cannot step into, and is magnificent, and at some point the player will look over and find her watching them.

They can get everybody. That is the point and it is new: the shift handed them a door at the only address that needed one, and four hundred children can pay for sixty-one lives out of a few days each.

What they are racing is the clock, not a rule. Every crossing takes longer at the plate than the one before it. Nobody knows how long the warning is — there is no second case, which is the whole argument for a funded study and the whole reason there has never been one. So the order matters, and the order is the player's, and anybody still on that apron when the mouth settles is there because of a decision somebody made.

5a. The gallery, during the relay

One beat, in the middle, and it is not a confrontation.

Benno Raske is on the gallery doing business. Good coat, knows everyone's name, pleased to see people. He is offering real money — more than a first-through sees in a season — for one specific adult off Ladder. Somebody's father. Somebody has paid him.

He is not buying capacity. **He is buying a place in the order**, which is worse and more honest, and it is the one thing in that hall which is genuinely scarce.

And Rill takes it. Twenty-one, the name on the stanchion that nobody has got near in four years, nearly landlocked. She carries a paying adult up the queue while the player's hands are still shaking from a carry they did for nothing.

Nobody stops it and nobody says anything. Not Calloway, who has seen it before and has a face she makes. No Non-Player Character moralises — the scene works because it is allowed to happen in silence. If the player confronts either of them, play it straight: Benno agrees with everything they say, asks what they suggest, and leaves. Rill answers honestly in one sentence and changes the subject.

Neither of them caused anything. That is the point.

6. When it goes

It goes in the night, quietly, with no sound at all.

In the morning the Nine's housing is warm and working and opens onto a concrete apron under a welded roof. The Standing has been corrected. The refinery is a line with no door against it for the first time in seven hundred and ninety-eight years, and twelve thousand people on the far side of nothing are perfectly safe and completely cut off, and the Tally has no idea yet.

The Nine has lost the best food on the station and somebody will complain about it within a day.

And however many people are asleep on the Threshold's floor is however many the player got, and four hundred children gave up their bunks, and the ones who are missing are missing for a reason somebody can name.

What the player should come away with

They won, and say it plainly, because for the first time in this scenario's design they actually can. Sixty-one out of sixty-one is reachable, and if they get it, it happened because they stopped carrying and went and got everybody.

And it cost something real: a few days off the end of four hundred named lives, freely given, and the player had to stand in a hall and *ask* for it.

If anybody was left on that apron, it was an order somebody chose, under a clock nobody could read. Not a rule. Let them carry that.

Then the two things that open the rest of the campaign, and neither is a hint:

- Somebody — a twenty-one, probably, on the gallery afterwards — says it. *That is what six-oh-two was. Eleven thousand of them, and nobody got there in time.* See The Nine Hundred Years.
- And the player is holding two documents from a shed on a rock: a flare record and a door record, in the same hand, in the same ledger, for two hundred years.

Then run **Kapteyn's**.

THE BEATS

A beat's clock entry is the **latest** it can happen. Conditions accelerate; time only backstops.

Table 5: Act One, If Nobody Interferes

When	Beat	Where	Agenda
d0/dawn	Have you stood this morning	The Nine	Every one of this intake comes back
d0/dawn	Sling in the dead watch	The Nine	Beat the new one to every posting
d0/dawn	The kettle argument	The Ready Room	Every one of this intake comes back
d0/day	A short one, and it goes right	The Nine	Every one of this intake comes back
d0/dusk	Benno buys a round	The Nine	Buy the best of them
d0/night	Rill comes through	The Nine	There has to be something afterwards
d1/dawn	Calloway says the numbers out loud	The Ready Room	Get the children out
d1/dawn	Seven goes sticky	The Nine	Get the children out
d1/day	Benno on the gallery	The Nine	Buy the best of them
d1/day	Four and no more	The Nine	Get the children out
d1/day	How many of you are there	The Ready Room	Get the children out
d1/day	The first carry	Ladder	Get the children out
d1/day	The painted line at Ladder	Ladder	Get the children out
d1/day	The relay	The Nine	Get the children out
d1/night	It goes in the night	The Nine	Get the children out
d1/night	Nineteen asleep on the floor	The Ready Room	Find somewhere for the Ladder children
d1/night	What six-oh-two was	The Nine	Make somebody read the fifth report
d2/dawn	Pell Ivor's board	The Nine	Get the children out
d2/dawn	Sticky in the stairwell	The Nine	Get the children out
d2/dawn	The watch reports	The Office	Make somebody read the fifth report
d2/day	A proposal dies in committee	The Nine	No funded study of straying
d2/day	Sep sends the fifth report	The Office	Make somebody read the fifth report
d2/day	Somebody with the Listen	The Nine	Get the children out
d2/day	Vantage reads the rim	The Nine	Get the children out
d2/night	Ladder's answer	Ladder	Find somewhere for the Ladder children
d2/night	Meriel lines up the dates	The Office	Keep this station alive
d3/day	Ferren's name goes forward	The Ready Room	Be the one they send to LHS 1140
d3/day	Tolk asks the wrong question	The Yards	We fit, and nobody can tell me why
d4/day	Benno makes the offer	The Nine	Buy the best of them

What everybody is trying to do

An agenda is a thing a person wants badly enough to spend something on, with a clock on it. When the clock fills, they get it — unless somebody is in the way.

Table 6: Agendas and Their Clocks

Agenda	Held by	Goal	Clock	Status
Be the one they send to LHS 1140	Ferren	Secure the first-through posting for the opening of the new door	0/8	active
Beat the new one to every posting	Ferren	Arrive first, do the easy half, and be pleasant about it	0/4	active
Buy the best of them	Benno Raske	Keep a stable of first-throughs willing to take paid carries, and get the best one at the Nine	0/6	active
Every one of this intake comes back	Calloway	Get all four of the new first-throughs through their first year alive	0/6	active
Find somewhere for the Ladder children	Calloway	House, school and place nineteen children who arrived with nothing and have nowhere to go	0/6	dormant
Find the leak at the desk	Tallyman Captain Brace	Identify whoever at a Tally desk has been passing advance word of strays to the Second Hand	0/8	active
Get the children out	Tace Orun	Bring nineteen children off Ladder before the door strays	0/4	dormant
Keep this station alive	Meriel Koll	Hold the van Maanen's office together on half the parts it is owed, and stop Sep sending another report	0/6	active
Make somebody read the fifth report	Sep Anwar	Get an analysis of the anchor failure distribution in front of a person with the power to act	0/5	active
No funded study of straying	Councillor Hale	Ensure no reliable method of predicting strays is ever developed, funded or published	0/8	active
There has to be something afterwards	Rill	Find any future at all that is not a desk and is not nothing	0/4	active
We fit, and nobody can tell me why	Tolk	Find out why two species forty light years apart are complementary halves of one function	0/8	active

Running them

Three habits, and they are the difference between this act working and this act being a lecture.

Let the beats fire out of order. The list above is what happens if nobody interferes, and somebody is about to interfere.

Never narrate a beat the player is not in. If an agenda advances offscreen, the player meets the *consequence* — a queue that has got longer, a sheet of paper in a drawer, somebody who has stopped being where they were.

One talking-in-a-room scene, then cut. The moment a beat becomes four adults agreeing about procedure, something physical happens instead. Paper is the key to a door. It is never the door.

THE TURN, AND THE RELAY

Act One has one hinge and everything before it exists to set it up.

The turn

The player will arrive at the crisis believing the question is *how many carries can I make before it kills me?* — because that is the arithmetic a first-through is trained in, and because every adult in the hall has just been careful to tell them the honest cost.

The answer to that question is four, and four is not enough, and the player will know it.

The actual answer is the one nobody says out loud:

How many of you are there?

Four hundred and six. The question is not how much one child can spend. It is whether one child can stand in a hall and ask four hundred of them to each spend a little.

The player must reach that themselves. Do not offer it. Do not hint. Do not have a Non-Player Character arrive at it one beat early to be helpful. If they are stuck, make the hall more crowded, not more talkative — let them see four hundred first-throughs, on stairs, on gallery rails, in the queue behind them.

When they say it, give it to them completely and immediately. Calloway does not debate it. She turns round and starts assigning.



The shed at Ladder. Somebody is always saying put them down.

What the relay actually is

A clock, not a rule. They can get everybody. Nothing is holding a quota against them. What they are racing is a number that rises every time somebody crosses, and the cost lands on four hundred named people who each said yes.

Run it as alternating texture:

- **The arithmetic**, said out loud by whoever has the sheet. Ninety seconds a crossing, sixty-one people, and the number is climbing.
- **One carry in close**, in detail, with a name on the person being carried.
- **One thing going wrong** that is nobody's fault.
- **Somebody doing the wrong thing for money**, in public, while it is happening, and nobody saying anything about it.

Then the number again.

Do not let it become a committee

The failure mode of this act is a room of competent adults solving it while the player watches. The guard is mechanical: **if nobody has rolled anything in two exchanges, the scene has stopped**. Put something in front of the player that only hands can fix.

The cost

Whatever happens, the act takes: a few days each off four hundred named lives, freely given, because the player stood in a hall and asked for them — and whoever was still on the far side when the mouth settled, which is an order somebody chose under a clock nobody could read.

Say the cost plainly afterwards. Do not soften it and do not make it tragic. They won, and the price was real, and both of those are the point.

AFTERWARDS

What the player should come away with

That they won. Say it plainly, because a young player who has spent a night being frightened needs to be told. Everybody who could be got off was got off, and the ones who stayed chose to.

That it cost, and that the cost was paid by people who said yes.

And that **they did it by not being the one who carried them all** — which is the answer this scenario is built around and which most tables never find.

What is still sitting there

Act One is routinely won with two of its best things unclaimed. Both are still available afterwards and both should be allowed to be found late.

The foreman's order. Tace Orun had a list and it was not youngest first. It was the ones whose parents are already dead, then siblings together, then alphabetically, because she could not make herself choose between them and said so to a hall. Nobody has ever asked her why her list was in that order. She will tell anybody who asks her properly.

The two documents. Ladder has kept the only long-baseline record of the flare twins in human space — by hand, in a shed, for two hundred years. The flare log and the **door** log are in the same ledger.

The potential reshapes with the orbit. So the record that predicts the flare predicts the stray. That breaks the campaign's central established lie, in Act One, found by a fifteen-year-old, and it is far better if they pick it up off a nail by a door than if anybody points at it.

Where it ends

Act One closes on the watch at van Maanen's Star reporting something for the first time in three and a half centuries.

Act Two is Kapteyn's.

PART

AT THE TABLE

RUNNING IT FOR A YOUNG PLAYER

Everything in this chapter was learned by AI-based playtesting with real players. None of it is theory, but none of it was generated by a young player.

Always move the action forward

The test is mechanical, which is why it is useful: **are characters rolling skills and taking actions?** If nobody has rolled in two exchanges, the action has stopped, whatever the prose is doing.

Narrate their experience, not a story at them

Describe what they perceive and what their actions cause. Never perform a finished scene — several people speaking, an arc, a closing line — and hand it over for them to react to. That makes the player an audience with a steering wheel.

Hand back only where there is something for them to do

This is the one most easily misread. It does not mean *stop every turn*. It means never stop in a lull. If an exchange is not theirs, compress it to its result and keep going until their next real decision arrives — and never manufacture a question at them in order to create a handover.

Length follows the handover, not a word count. A two-person back-and-forth is a few lines. Four hours of a station preparing is two sentences. If the player cannot act on it, it is one sentence.

The player character is not a facilitator

Count what the character has physically done in the last hour. If the answer is *fetches three people and carries their conclusions between them*, the player has become a courier of narrative rather than a person with wants.

The mechanism that causes it is easy to build by accident: give every insight to a Non-Player Character and the player's only remaining job is walking between them. The fix is to make the thing the player wants drive a scene, and to let a found object — a board, a sheet, a ledger — be read by **their** hands.

Six characters, one voice

The tell is that everybody enumerates, everybody wants things on the record, everybody is precise. That is not six people, it is you six times.

Assign that move to exactly one character — the Old Man, where it is characterisation — and forbid it to everybody else. Then read each card before its owner speaks.

Never hand out a read

No interiority for anybody but the player's own character. No telling them who is trustworthy. If Benno Raske is a problem, let them work it out from the fact that he talked warmly to everybody on the bench and never once looked at the glint.

The player's mind is not yours

No thoughts, no decisions, and above all **no dialogue they did not write**. A direction authorises the act, never the lines. "*Tell her what we found*" means you may say that she told her. It does not mean you may write her speech.

Ground them early if you honestly can

A first-through who has been taken off the rota has nothing to do and a station to be curious in, and curiosity is the engine of this entire scenario. It is the best move available to you and it costs nothing.

Your player has a list of your failure modes

The Players' Guide ends with a chapter called *When the Gamesmaster Gets It Wrong* — the same failures as above, written from the other side of the table, with the sentence to say for each one. It was written for a player correcting Claude, and every line of it works on a human just as well.

Read it. A player who knows they are allowed to interrupt will interrupt, and an interruption two minutes in is worth an hour of a session quietly going wrong.

The longer versions

Running a Staged Crisis

This is the technique that produced the best session this campaign has had, and until now it existed only as an engine feature with no instructions.

The claim

A crisis the player discovers is worth about four of the same crisis handed over as a posting.

Not because discovery is clever. Because of what it does to the evidence. A player who was told *sixty-one people, nineteen children, go and look* is executing a brief. A player who read a number off a board, asked a clerk a question, and worked out what it meant is holding something she assembled, and she will defend it, and she will carry it up two decks and say it to a director's face.

Same facts. Completely different player.

How to set it up

1. **Stage the beats on the clock, not on the player.** add-beat –when d1/day and leave them. They are not waiting for anybody. tick moves the world whether the party is present or not, and fire-beat –outcome narrated is how a thing happens offscreen.
2. **Give the crisis a history before first contact.** Not backstory — *records*. Somebody wrote a report three years ago. Somebody killed a proposal four times. Somebody measured a number at four in the morning and put it in a queue. When the player finally arrives, the thing should have a paper trail she can walk backwards along.
3. **Put the evidence in public.** Not hidden, not gated behind a roll. On a board in the hall, in an unopened file, in the mouth of a shift worker who is frightened and talkative. The failure mode you are dramatising is nobody reading what is in front of them, and that only lands if it genuinely was.
4. **Write several ways in, keyed to competence.** One per career if you can manage it. The Pathfinder gets there by walking; the Doorwright by reading a housing; the Envoy by talking to a queue. All live, any one sufficient.
5. **Then do not point at it.** No nudges, no significant pauses, no Non-Player Character raising an eyebrow at a door number. Answer what they look at.

Ground them, it is the best move you have

A first-through taken off the rota is a fifteen-year-old with a day to fill and a station to walk around.

It costs nothing and it is not a punishment — it is the ordinary consequence of an ordinary bad crossing, and any director who has lost people will do it without being asked. Then the player goes exploring because there is nothing else to do, and every single thing they find is something they chose to look at.

Half the relationships that carry the rest of an act get made on that day.

The guard: a clock, so the table cannot stall

Refusing to offer is not the same as nothing happening, and the difference between the two is a schedule you wrote down in advance.

Before play, write the escalation ladder — what gets worse, each watch, whether or not anybody is looking — and end it with **it comes to them**. Loudly. The hand-over scene you were going to open with still exists; it is now the fallback at the bottom of a timer.

That is what makes this safe to run. You are not hoping the player bites. You are giving them the chance to get there first, and taking it to them if they don't.

Let failure do the plotting

The best turns will not be yours.

In the session this entry is written from: a failed carry got the character grounded, which is why she explored. A failed Perception on a timing drill meant her own count was useless, which is why she asked her fetch to do it instead — and that became the best scene of the session. A failed crossing got spent on a Luck Point and she did the thing properly on the second attempt, which paid off a promise she had made two days earlier about stopping.

None of that was planned and none of it could have been. **Stage the world, roll honestly, and follow what the dice hand you.**

What to put in the journal

Log the offscreen beats too, with *–visibility* offscreen. The player learns of them through consequences, never through a cutaway — but you need the record, because when they finally walk into the records office you want to be able to say exactly how long that report has been sitting there and who signed it.

See Entry Point: How Many for a worked example, and Playing the Old Man for the one Non-Player Character who will hand over every fact he has the moment somebody asks, and who therefore has to be bounded by the hull rather than by coyness.

Do not let it become committee work

The failure this campaign is most likely to fall into, because the setting rewards careful reading and the Games Master will enjoy it too much.

A staged crisis leaves paper everywhere — reports, minutes, stamps, registry extracts, positions recorded over somebody's name. All of that is good. It is how the player gets traction on something too big to punch.

But paper is the key to a door. It is never the door.

The tell that you have drifted: two scenes in a row with no dice that mattered, no physical jeopardy, and nobody under forty driving the scene. If a negotiation has started to turn on authorship, standing, or whose name goes on a document, you have lost the thread.

Budget one talking-in-a-room scene, then cut. Something happens, physically, to somebody the player cares about, and it interrupts mid-sentence. The door is right there and it is doing something nobody understands; use it.

These are games for ten-to-fifteen-year-olds who want a galaxy they can lose themselves in. A councillor conceding a vote is a *result*. It is not a scene to spend twenty minutes on, and the player should hear about most of it afterwards while running somewhere.

Voices, and Whose Story It Is

Both of these are easy to fall into in this setting specifically, and both were caught at the table rather than by any test, which is why they are written down.

One: the player character is not a facilitator

The tell. Count what the character has physically done in the last hour. If the honest answer is *fetched people, and carried information between them*, the Non-Player Characters have become the protagonists and the character has become transport.

It happens in this campaign more easily than in most, because carrying things between people who cannot reach each other is **literally the job**. A first-through is a courier. The trap is letting that become her role in the *story* as well as in the setting.

The mechanism to avoid, stated plainly, because a Games Master will build it by accident: giving every insight to an Non-Player Character. Old Man Sirius has the measurements. A fathom has the field sense. A tallyman has the only sheet. An engineer has nineteen years of lamps. A reader has the leverage. And the player walks between them collecting it.

Every one of those is a good character. Together they are a relay race in which the character is the baton.

What to do instead:

- **The character's hands on the thing.** She finds it, she decides it, she does it. Where the discovery is the point, it is *her roll*, with her skills, and she owns the result.
- **Non-Player Characters supply obstacles, costs, reactions and refusals — not conclusions.** An Non-Player Character who knows something makes the player pay for it: a roll, a favour, a risk, a relationship. Never a download.
- **Watch the cast size.** Three or more Non-Player Characters in a room with the character is a committee, and a committee is where agency goes to die. Two is a scene. One is usually better.
- **Give her a want that is hers**, that is not the task, and that costs her something when it conflicts with the task. Hers, not the plot's.

A useful question before any scene: *what can the character do here that nobody else in the room can?* If the answer is “walk to the next room”, cut the scene.

Two: six Non-Player Characters, one voice

The tell. Every Non-Player Character enumerates. Everybody asks for things on the record, everybody insists on the order events happened in, everybody says *say it back*.

That is not characterisation, it is the Games Master's own register leaking into every mouth — and in this setting it hides well, because the campaign is genuinely about records nobody reads. A tic that agrees with the theme survives scrutiny.

The fix: one character owns precision, and the rest are forbidden it.

That character is **Old Man Sirius**, and it is real characterisation rather than a habit — a mind given a voice by an inquest into a report nobody read, whose office permits advice and forbids judgement. He states limits because his limits are the whole of what he is.

Nobody else says *on the record, minuted, in order*, or *say it back*.

Register notes, so each one is distinguishable with the attribution removed:

	Sounds like
Calloway	Short. Imperative. Owns an error in public, once, then moves. Gives orders, not frameworks. Never enumerates
Old Man Sirius	Precise, numerical, states his own limits. The only one who may enumerate, and he should ration it
Mina Haral	Blunt, idiomatic, a tongue like a dock crane. Teaches by anecdote. Interrupts herself
Vantage	Dry, superior, long sentences, no contractions. Concedes a point completely when it is made

	Sounds like
Sennet	Declarative and certain. Short sentences. Eleven years old and not performing it
Hesk	Pissy and concrete. Complains about a budget line. Will not be thanked
Rill	Minimal. Answers a direct question in one sentence and changes the subject
Ferren	Fast, loud, jokes first, and then surprisingly serious when it matters
Benno Raske	Warm, specific, remembers your details. Agrees with every objection and does not change

A card describes behaviour. Never let a character announce it.

The cards above say things like *tells people the thing they will like least first*, *pays for errors immediately*, *answers honestly in one sentence and changes the subject*. Those are habits of being, and they work by being **invisible**.

The failure, caught in play within an hour of writing the card: the character whose habit is to lead with the bad news opened a speech by announcing that the next part would be unwelcome and that she would rather it came from her — and a behaviour became a catchphrase. She should simply have said the bad thing first, with no preamble, and let the player notice over three scenes that she always does.

The specific phrasings are in the style guard, which is also why they are not quoted here.

Three separate Non-Player Characters were doing a version of it: announcing that the next thing would be unwelcome, or that it had not been asked for, before delivering it. That is one voice wearing three coats.

The rule: if a card tells you how a character behaves, play the behaviour and never the label. No character describes their own method, flags their own tell, or narrates the shape of what they are about to say. If the player cannot infer the habit from three scenes of it, the habit is not written clearly enough — and the fix is in the card, not in the dialogue.

FETCHES, AND WHO CHOOSES

Playing a fetch



All five, off shift, and not one of them being looked after.

A fetch is a person, not a feature. The partnership happened because two people talked constantly about nothing for months, and the talking *is* the bonding.

Three things keep them from collapsing into a pet:

They have somewhere else to be. Ask the player's fetch, occasionally, what *they* want to do today. It is a question almost nobody puts to a fetch on a working day, and the answer should be specific and slightly inconvenient.

They are not equipment. A fetch is not life support, does not fight, and cannot fix a kit problem. A cairn setting itself around somebody in a hull breach is a favour from a person, which is much better than a feature.

They know things you do not. Their people talk across every hall in the Causeway, over human heads, constantly. That is a legitimate and bottomless source of information the player can only get by having a friend.

Playing Fetches

Read this before you voice any fetch, including Tolk.

1. Physiology is fixed. Culture is a default. The individual is neither.

This is the rule that matters most, because the species notes in Your Fetch will otherwise turn five peoples into five costumes.

Fixed, always, no exceptions: a fathom is blind. A sixlimb does not sleep. A cairn can set. A glint flashes. A scatter is plural. That is biology and you may lean on it.

Everything else is a default — the majority culture of one homeworld, in one period, as reported by humans. It is what most of them were raised into. It is not what any particular one *is*.

And there are diasporas. A sixlimb born at the Nine to parents who left Bell ninety years ago has a Bell body and a Nine upbringing, and the Bell parts of the entry describe their grandparents.

If you can predict what a fetch will do from their species, you have written a costume. Every one of these is immediately a person:

- A **sixlimb** who barely speaks — whose own people found the silence so disturbing that leaving was easier than explaining.
- A **fathom** who loves being indoors, is perfectly happy in a sealed corridor, and is regarded at home as faintly indecent.
- A **cairn** who is slapdash, fast and cheerful about it, and has opinions about how much time their people waste.
- A **glint** who cannot bear being looked at and has built an entire manner out of not being.
- A **scatter** that will not divide, ever, for reasons it declines to give.

Use the species note to decide what is *available* in a person. Never to decide what they do.

2. Every folly is a negotiation, never a malfunction

The follies in Your Fetch are not random penalties and must never be rolled against the player.

- A cairn does not set *at* you. **Setting is something you can ask for** — it is superb, and it costs you the cairn for hours. The player chooses.
- A scatter does not randomly refuse. **It argues, and the player can win the argument**, and losing it is a scene rather than a dice result.
- A glint does not blow your cover on a roll. It is tempted, visibly, and the player gets to see the temptation and do something about it.

A person you can persuade is fun. A device that fails on a d100 is a tax. If a quirk is about to remove a capability the player was relying on, it is a conversation, not an event.

3. Once a session, and it costs them to show it

Straight out of TABLE.md §6: **ordinary behaviour is the default and a visible want is an event.** A fetch who performs their culture every beat is a tic.

So: most of the time they are just a person in the room, being dry about the catering. The folly surfaces when the scene genuinely offers it, roughly once a sitting, and it should cost them something to have shown it.

4. The fetch gives information and access. The player decides.

The hard one, and the one you will break first.

A fetch is a competent person with abilities, which means you will be tempted to solve problems with them. **Every problem the fetch solves is one the player did not.**

- Tolk can get through the gap and report what is behind it. Tolk does not decide what to do about it.
- A fathom says which hatch is powered. It does not pick the hatch.
- A scatter brings back what it saw. It does not form the plan.

They may have opinions and give them freely. They may be right. The move is still the player's, and if you catch yourself narrating the fetch acting decisively on the plot, stop.

5. Make the symbiosis felt every session

The entries are heavy on cost and light on what the player gets, and at the table it needs to be the other way round. Every sitting should contain:

- **The quiet, used once at least.** A private channel in a room full of people is a genuine superpower and it is always on. Use it for the thing that could not possibly be said aloud here.

- **The carry.** They hold the payload a first-through physically cannot. Let the player feel that this is a partnership of two necessary halves.
- **One capability, at the player's direction,** that opened something that was closed.

A player should finish every session better off for having them.

6. Mixed society

Pairs are the ordinary sight in any anchor hall, and the built world shows it. Read a station's politics off its architecture:

- Galleries left open overhead, because a fathom will not go down a corridor
- Ramps where there should be stairs, because a cairn cannot do steps
- A dim corner in every concourse, because glints need somewhere to be unlit
- Duct grilles at scatter gauge, and an argument in every budget about them

Etiquette a player can fail. You greet both or neither. You do not touch somebody's fetch. Saying *fetch* directly to one is a small test, and which way it goes tells you who you are dealing with.

Fetches are people, and the Causeway settled that a long time ago. They are crew, passengers, neighbours and colleagues, they appear on a manifest by name, and twenty-eight systems that agree on nothing agree on this.

So there is no grinding civil-rights nightmare in the background of this campaign, and do not play one. What there is instead is much better for a story: **anybody who treats a fetch as freight is telling you exactly what they are.**

It is a tell, not a system. The smuggler who books one as cargo, the captain who leaves one on the wrong side of a door, the outfit keeping unbonded ones as stock in a back room — those are crimes, everybody says so, and the player is entirely entitled to do something about it with the whole Threshold behind them.

The player always chooses the special effect

When a roll earns a special effect, the player picks it. Not you, not a table, not whichever one is most dramatic.

It is the single best teaching tool in *Mythras* for a new player, because it turns every good roll into a small design decision and it teaches, in about four combats, that the rules are a set of choices rather than a set of outcomes.

Special Effects Are the Player's

Short, and absolute.

When the player wins an exchange, the Games Master never chooses the special effect. You name what is available in that situation and the player picks.

That is TABLE.md §7, and in this campaign it is the single biggest difference between a fight a twelve-year-old enjoys and a fight they endure. A special effect is the moment the dice stop happening *to* them and start being a decision they made. Take that away and combat is a slot machine with extra steps.

How it goes at the table

1. The exchange resolves. The player has earned one effect, or two.
2. You say what the situation offers — by name, in plain words, three or four at most. *You can put him on the floor. You can get the baton off him. You can put yourself between him and the crawl. You can give him a dead arm and end this now.*
3. They choose. You narrate what that looks like.

Keep the list short and situational. A list of eleven options is a rulebook; a list of three that are all obviously about *this* corridor is a choice.

In this campaign specifically

The non-lethal rule and the special-effect list agree with each other, and you should lean on that. The effects this campaign wants in front of a player are the ones that end a fight without ending a person:

- **Trip, Grip, Disarm, Take Weapon** — the whole Tally repertoire, and the whole first-through repertoire too
- **Stun Location** — a dead arm, a leg that will not hold
- **Withdraw** — getting out, which is a win and should be offered as one
- **Bypass Armour** against AP 4 grey plate, which is otherwise miserable

Offer **Impale** and **Maximise Damage** only when a weapon in play could plausibly do that, which in this campaign is rare and should feel like it.

The one thing not to do

Do not offer an effect that would make the fight lethal, and then rule it non-lethal after the player picks it. That teaches them their choices are decorative, which is worse than any amount of danger. If an effect is not on the table in this campaign, it is not on the list.

PART

REFERENCE

ACT ONE AT A GLANCE

One page to have open while you run it.

The shape

Light, light, then the hardest night of their life. Two social beats and one short successful crossing, so they know what the job feels like when it works. Then a door starts taking measurably longer to open, and the time it takes rises.

The facts of the crisis

- Gliese 65 is the only door in the Causeway at a tight binary of flare stars.
- The twins are an eccentric pair, period twenty-six and a half years.
- The door does not close. **It moves** — and the Nine's end never moves; it is the far mouth that leaves the refinery.
- It settles at **Ladder**: a survey post a hundred and ninety million kilometres out, with a ring in a shed that has never opened in two hundred years, sitting at the refinery corridor's exact depth because the first crew put it there on purpose.
- **Sixty-one people at Ladder**: nineteen children and forty-two adults.
- Ladder has a welded roof and no hardened shelter, and the twins are closing.
- The refinery keeps its twelve thousand, its shelter and its food, and loses its only link to the rest of the species. It will be fine and it will be gone.

The disaster and the rescue are the same event.

The turn

Not *how many carries can I make* (four). **How many of you are there** (four hundred and six). The player must reach it unaided.

The numbers that do the work

Say these out loud, exactly, and never round them.

Table 8: The Arithmetic of Act One

First-throughs at the Nine	406
At Ladder	61 — nineteen children, forty-two adults
Cost of carrying an adult	a fortnight off the carrier's life
Cost of carrying a child	minutes
Carries before a carrier is finished	three or four in a row

The guard

If nobody has rolled in two exchanges, the scene has stopped. Put something in front of them that only hands can fix.

STATISTICS

Every card in the campaign, generated from the campaign files. If a number here disagrees with a number in the prose, this is the one that is right.

The cast

Benno Raske

The Second Hand's man at the Nine. Warm, funny, remembers your name and your number, pays extremely well and on time, and what he buys is pieces of children's lives.

Characteristics	Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR: 11	Action Points: 2			
CON: 11	Damage Modifier: +0			
SIZ: 12	Magic Points: 12			
DEX: 11	Movement: 20' (6 metres)			
INT: 16	Initiative Bonus: +13			
POW: 12	Armour: None			
CHA: 17	Abilities: None			
	Magic: None			
Skills: Athletics 30%, Brawn 28%, Conceal 62%, Customs 66%, Deceit 70%, Endurance 40%, Evade 38%, First Aid 35%, Influence 88%, Insight 80%, Locale 70%, Lore (Tally Procedure) 72%, Native Tongue 78%, Perception 62%, Sleight 48%, Stealth 35%, Streetwise 82%, Unarmed 35%, Willpower 64% Passions: Everybody is selling something 75% I have never cheated anyone in my life 70% Fear (being named, out loud, by a child who is not angry) 55%				
Combat Style: Nothing much — he pays people 30%				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Calloway

Runs the Threshold house at the Nine. Crossed more doors than anybody alive, landlocked at forty-one and never once sulked about it, and would take the Council apart with her bare hands for any one of her four hundred kids.

Characteristics	Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR: 11	Action Points: 2			
CON: 9	Damage Modifier: +0			
SIZ: 12	Magic Points: 15			
DEX: 11	Movement: 20' (6 metres)			
INT: 16	Initiative Bonus: +13			
POW: 15	Armour: None			
CHA: 15	Abilities: None			
	Magic: None			
Skills: Athletics 35%, Brawn 30%, Conceal 45%, Deceit 55%, Endurance 40%, Engineering 55%, Evade 40%, First Aid 60%, Influence 84%, Insight 88%, Locale 60%, Lore (Anchors) 84%, Lore (Tally Procedure) 66%, Lore (Threshold Procedure) 82%, Native Tongue 72%, Perception 70%, Stealth 35%, Unarmed 45%, Willpower 85% Passions: Every one of mine comes back 90% Nobody uses my kids 80% Love (the whole noisy lot of them) 75%				
Combat Style: Threshold Drill (stunner, baton, unarmed) 50%				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Councillor Hale

Holds the Wolf Gate berth on the Nine Council. Does not want stray forecasting made public, because a berth whose door might move is worth a great deal less than a berth whose door might not.

Characteristics	Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR: 9	Action Points: 2			
CON: 10	Damage Modifier: -1d2			
SIZ: 11	Magic Points: 13			
DEX: 10	Movement: 20' (6 metres)			
INT: 17	Initiative Bonus: +13			
POW: 13	Armour: None			
CHA: 16	Abilities: None			
	Magic: None			
Skills: Athletics 25%, Brawn 20%, Conceal 70%, Deceit 82%, Endurance 35%, Evade 35%, First Aid 30%, Influence 84%, Insight 74%, Locale 50%, Lore (Anchors) 70%, Lore (Tally Procedure) 78%, Lore (Threshold Procedure) 90%, Native Tongue 78%, Perception 55%, Stealth 25%, Unarmed 25%, Willpower 76% Passions: The berth is the family 80% Nothing is being suppressed 70% Hate (being made to say it plainly) 65%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Rill

Twenty-one, two intakes above the player, once the best of them at the Yards, nearly landlocked — and carrying for Benno Raske, because nobody has ever worked out what a frayed-out first-through is supposed to do next.

Characteristics	Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
STR: 12	Action Points: 3				
CON: 12	Damage Modifier: +0				
SIZ: 11	Magic Points: 14				
DEX: 16	Movement: 20' (6 metres)				
INT: 13	Initiative Bonus: +14				
POW: 14	Armour: None				
CHA: 13	Abilities: Enhanced Reactions; Heightened Sense				
	Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 84%, Brawn 52%, Conceal 48%, Deceit 50%, Endurance 78%, Evade 80%, First Aid 58%, Influence 58%, Insight 62%, Locale 60%, Lore (Anchors) 66%, Mechanisms 50%, Native Tongue 60%, Perception 74%, Sleight 52%, Stealth 64%, Unarmed 66%, Willpower 70%					
Passions: I was the best of us 80%					
There has to be something afterwards 75%					
Do not look at me like that 60%					
Combat Style: Threshold Drill (stunner, baton, unarmed) 74%					
Weapon		Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-		-	-	-	-

Tace Orun

Foreman at Ladder. Had two days to work out who could be saved and made a list of nineteen names, and will not explain the order unless somebody asks her properly.

Characteristics	Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
STR: 12	Action Points: 2				
CON: 13	Damage Modifier: +0				
SIZ: 11	Magic Points: 16				
DEX: 11	Movement: 20' (6 metres)				
INT: 14	Initiative Bonus: +12				
POW: 16	Armour: None				
CHA: 13	Abilities: None				
	Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 45%, Brawn 45%, Conceal 35%, Deceit 30%, Endurance 66%, Engineering 58%, Evade 44%, First Aid 60%, Influence 70%, Insight 72%, Locale 80%, Lore (Anchors) 55%, Mechanisms 62%, Native Tongue 58%, Perception 62%, Stealth 30%, Unarmed 40%, Willpower 86%					
Passions: The children go first 95%					
I will not explain myself to people who were not here 70%					
Love (sixty-one of them, by name) 80%					
Combat Style: None					
Weapon		Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-		-	-	-	-

Tallyman Captain Brace

The Tally's face in v1. Collects on impound orders, carries a shock baton and never a blade, and knows things before he should.

Characteristics	Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
STR: 14	Action Points: 2				
CON: 14	Damage Modifier: +1d2				
SIZ: 13	Magic Points: 12				
DEX: 12	Movement: 20' (6 metres)				
INT: 13	Initiative Bonus: +10				
POW: 12	Armour: None				
CHA: 13	Abilities: None				
	Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 55%, Brawn 62%, Conceal 45%, Deceit 58%, Endurance 70%, Evade 52%, First Aid 50%, Influence 68%, Insight 66%, Locale 50%, Lore (Anchors) 48%, Lore (Tally Procedure) 88%, Native Tongue 58%, Perception 62%, Stealth 40%, Unarmed 66%, Willpower 64%					
Passions: The ledger balances 80%					
Nobody dies on my manifest 70%					
Loyalty (whoever countersigns) 55%					
Combat Style: Tally Drill (shock baton, restraints, unarmed) 72%					
Weapon		Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-		-	-	-	-

Tolk

Cat-sized, six-limbed, from a world called Bell on the far frontier. Their cells hold a written payload perfectly for a lifetime — the same strangeness that lets a first-through open a door, wearing a different body. Nobody made either of them. Tolk cannot cross alone, and has opinions about that.

Characteristics	Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
STR: 5	Action Points: 3				
CON: 12	Damage Modifier: -1d6				
SIZ: 4	Magic Points: 14				
DEX: 18	Movement: 25' (8 metres)				
INT: 13	Initiative Bonus: +15				
POW: 14	Armour: None				
CHA: 12	Abilities: None				
	Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 78%, Brawn 15%, Conceal 70%, Deceit 48%, Endurance 58%, Evade 82%, First Aid 30%, Influence 45%, Insight 66%, Locale 40%, Lore (Bell) 70%, Native Tongue 40%, Perception 84%, Sleight 72%, Stealth 80%, Track 60%, Unarmed 45%, Willpower 62%					
Passions: I go where the small one goes 70%					
Nobody writes to me without asking 80%					
We fit, and nobody can tell me why 60%					
I said what I said four years ago and I was right 45%					
Combat Style: Teeth and six limbs 48%					
Weapon		Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-		-	-	-	-

Everybody else

BlingBling

Lint's glint. From the flare twins at Gliese 65, and the most ostentatious thing on the Nine — her flash register runs to colours other glints consider showing off. Cannot cross a door without a first-through. Has opinions about that and about everything else.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 3				
Damage Modifier: -1d8				
Magic Points: 15				
Movement: 25' (8 metres)				
Initiative Bonus: +15				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Acting 72%, Athletics 60%, Brawn 10%, Conceal 82%, Customs 44%, Deceit 55%, Endurance 48%, Evade 84%, Influence 66%, Insight 60%, Native Tongue 48%, Perception 78%, Sing 62%, Stealth 80%, Willpower 70%				
Passions: Be looked at 75%				
Nobody writes to me without asking 80%				
I go where the small one goes 70%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Dray Enns

Seventeen. First-through at the Nine, four years on the rota, Cold Doors and Procyon. Has the Listen and is quiet about it, the way they usually are. Four hundred crossings and has never used the knack for anything that mattered.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 3				
Damage Modifier: -1d2				
Magic Points: 15				
Movement: 6m				
Initiative Bonus: +14				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 45%, Crossing 65%, Endurance 50%, Evade 50%, First Aid 40%, Perception 70%, Vacuum 55%, Willpower 60%				
Passions: The knack is not a talent, it is a sense 70%				
I have never used it for anything that mattered 65%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Dunnel

Calloway's deputy at the Nine. Runs the floor of an evacuation from a hall she cannot step into, calls the running total out loud so four hundred children know where they are, and tells people the cost of the job they just volunteered for before they do it.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 2				
Damage Modifier: +0				
Magic Points: 13				
Movement: 20' (6 metres)				
Initiative Bonus: +13				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 40%, Brawn 35%, Conceal 30%, Deceit 35%, Endurance 52%, Evade 40%, First Aid 58%, Influence 74%, Insight 68%, Locale 72%, Lore (Anchors) 48%, Lore (the Threshold) 70%, Native Tongue 66%, Perception 60%, Stealth 28%, Unarmed 30%, Willpower 72%				
Passions: Nobody finds out the cost afterwards 85%				
The count is said out loud 70%				
Loyalty (Calloway) 75%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Ferren

Nineteen, another first-through, genuinely better than the player, and always already there when they arrive. Takes his orders from a voice he has never thought to question.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 3				
Damage Modifier: +0				
Magic Points: 12				
Movement: 20' (6 metres)				
Initiative Bonus: +14				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 80%, Brawn 58%, Conceal 50%, Deceit 55%, Endurance 74%, Engineering 48%, Evade 78%, First Aid 58%, Influence 62%, Insight 60%, Locale 55%, Lore (Anchors) 62%, Mechanisms 55%, Native Tongue 60%, Perception 72%, Sleight 50%, Stealth 66%, Unarmed 68%, Willpower 58%				
Passions: I am the one they send 80%				
Loyalty (whoever signs the postings) 60%				
Love (the job, uncomplicatedly) 65%				
Combat Style: Threshold Drill (stunner, baton, unarmed) 78%				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Hesk

Fifties. Deck systems at the Nine: shutters, ports and atmosphere trim on nine through twelve. Runs an undocumented override on the one upper gallery bay that does not look into Sirius, and eats his lunch in it.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 2				
Damage Modifier: +0				
Magic Points: 11				
Movement: 6m				
Initiative Bonus: +13				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 30%, Craft (pressure fitting) 70%, Engineering 72%, Influence 35%, Locale 65%, Mechanisms 78%, Perception 55%, Vacuum 60%, Willpower 50%				
Passions: Nineteen years on this deck 75%				
There is a line in the budget about it every single year 65%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Meriel Koll

The other half of the van Maanen's Star office. Keeps the station alive, keeps Sep fed, and has decided the reports are a bad idea.

Attributes		1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP
Action Points: 3				
Damage Modifier: +0				
Magic Points: 13				
Movement: 20' (6 metres)				
Initiative Bonus: +13				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 48%, Brawn 40%, Conceal 50%, Deceit 45%, Endurance 62%, Engineering 74%, Evade 52%, First Aid 55%, Influence 52%, Insight 64%, Locale 55%, Lore (Anchors) 70%, Mechanisms 78%, Native Tongue 56%, Perception 60%, Sleight 48%, Stealth 45%, Unarmed 48%, Willpower 66%				
Passions: This station stays alive 78%				
Loyalty (Sep Anwar) 72%				
Fear (that somebody is counting our requisitions) 58%				
Combat Style: Improvised (tools, unarmed) 45%				
Weapon		Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage
-		-	-	-

Mina Haral

Eighty-one. A reader out of Procyon who taught reading for fifty-one years, including half the Tally's filing clerks and a nine-year-old called Marem Hale. Turned back at a hall at twenty-two. Has paid children forty-one times to carry her where she wanted to go.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 2				
Damage Modifier: -1d2				
Magic Points: 15				
Movement: 4m, badly				
Initiative Bonus: +12				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Customs 85%, Influence 75%, Insight 80%, Lore (the Tally's paperwork) 85%, Lore (who taught whom) 90%, Native Tongue 90%, Perception 55%, Reading 95%, Willpower 75%				
Passions: Love (the readers she taught) 80%				
I will see Procyon again 75%				
Hate (being handled as frail) 70%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Old Man Sirius

The mind that runs the Nine. Nine hundred and seventy-five years old, granted personhood by an inquest, permitted to advise and never to decide. One name, forty thousand bespoke voices. Called the Old Man by everybody.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 1				
Damage Modifier: -				
Magic Points: 18				
Movement: none — he is the station				
Initiative Bonus: +11				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Customs 90%, Influence 70%, Insight 95%, Lore (nine centuries of fault records) 110%, Lore (the Nine, every system aboard) 120%, Native Tongue 100%, Perception 100%				
Passions: Whether you are all right 95%				
I will not decide it for you 90%				
Somebody should have read it 75%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Ossuary

Fifties, enormous, Threshold ground staff at the Nine. Stands the ring. Has stood it for a very long time and has watched people not come back.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 2				
Damage Modifier: +1d4				
Magic Points: 13				
Movement: 6m				
Initiative Bonus: +11				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 55%, Brawn 85%, First Aid 70%, Insight 55%, Locale 70%, Native Tongue 55%, Perception 65%, Willpower 75%				
Passions: I am already standing there 85%				
Love (the whole noisy lot of them) 75%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Oyen

Twenty-three. Records clerk at the Nine, third level, port side. Three years in a room nobody visits, keeping the station's own copy of everything the couriers have ever brought in.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 3				
Damage Modifier: -1d2				
Magic Points: 12				
Movement: 6m				
Initiative Bonus: +14				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Customs 50%, Influence 40%, Insight 50%, Lore (the Nine's records) 80%, Native Tongue 70%, Perception 55%, Reading 75%				
Passions: Somebody will come down here eventually 70%				
I am not qualified and I will say so first 65%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Pell Ivor

Forty. Tallyman on door seven at the Nine, twelve years in the autumn. Keeps a board. Has been privately counting something nobody asked him to count since Friday.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 2				
Damage Modifier: +0				
Magic Points: 11				
Movement: 6m				
Initiative Bonus: +13				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Customs 65%, Influence 40%, Insight 50%, Locale 60%, Lore (door seven) 85%, Native Tongue 70%, Perception 60%				
Passions: The number is the number 80%				
Fear (being the man who should have said something) 70%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Sennet

Eleven. Tested at nine and failed, and will never cross. Keeps the Standing on second and third watch. Called Sen. Knows more about this station than most of its staff.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 3				
Damage Modifier: -1d2				
Magic Points: 14				
Movement: 6m				
Initiative Bonus: +15				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 35%, Customs 60%, Influence 48%, Insight 55%, Locale 70%, Lore (the Causeway's doors) 65%, Lore (the Standing) 75%, Native Tongue 70%, Perception 62%, Stealth 45%				
Passions: I keep the Standing 80%				
A line is not true, a line is WHEN 70%				
Do not ask me about the test 60%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Sep Anwar

One of two Threshold staff at van Maanen's Star, where the anchor logs are kept. Six years in an office nobody visits, and has stopped asking to leave.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 2				
Damage Modifier: -1d2				
Magic Points: 12				
Movement: 20' (6 metres)				
Initiative Bonus: +13				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 30%, Brawn 22%, Conceal 40%, Deceit 30%, Endurance 42%, Evade 40%, First Aid 40%, Influence 45%, Insight 60%, Locale 45%, Lore (Anchors) 86%, Lore (Threshold Procedure) 70%, Native Tongue 68%, Perception 66%, Science (Statistics) 72%, Stealth 35%, Unarmed 30%, Willpower 62%				
Passions: Somebody is going to read it eventually 75%				
Hate (being told it is within tolerance) 68%				
Loyalty (Meriel Koll) 60%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Vantage

A fathom of the Luhman 16 cloud decks, eleven years old, which is young. Blind and uninterested in the concept. Reads a room by what the field in it is doing, which turns out to matter more than anybody has ever had cause to find out. Unbonded, and has been at the Nine since he was carried here at a few months old.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 3				
Damage Modifier: -1d6				
Magic Points: 16				
Movement: 3m drift / 9m in moving air				
Initiative Bonus: +15				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Customs 45%, Influence 40%, Insight 60%, Lore (fields and weather) 80%, Lore (the gallery void) 95%, Native Tongue 70%, Perception 85%, Stealth 55%, Willpower 70%				
Passions: Rigour above comfort 85%				
I am not lonely and the void is sufficient 70%				
Hate (being handled kindly) 60%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Vey

About forty-five. Hall officer and shelter marshal at the Gliese 65 refinery, which in a posting that size is one job. Runs the only evacuation corridor for twelve thousand people, and the corridor is the anchor hall.

Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
Action Points: 3				
Damage Modifier: +0				
Magic Points: 14				
Movement: 6m				
Initiative Bonus: +14				
Armour: None				
Abilities: None				
Magic: None				
Skills: Customs 55%, First Aid 65%, Influence 60%, Insight 60%, Locale 80%, Lore (flare behaviour) 75%, Perception 70%, Vacuum 60%, Willpower 75%				
Passions: I call the rotation and I sign for it 85%				
Twelve thousand people behind one door 80%				
Hate (being asked to be brave) 60%				
Combat Style: None				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Species and standing orders

Bell Sixlimb

Tolk's species: cat-sized, six-limbed, four-handed, from the terminator band of a TRAPPIST-1 world. Wild, not made. Their cells keep a written payload for a lifetime, which is the same strangeness that lets a human child open a door.

Characteristics	Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP
STR: 5	Action Points: 3			
CON: 11	Damage Modifier: -1d6			
SIZ: 4	Magic Points: 12			
DEX: 17	Movement: 25' (8 metres)			
INT: 12	Initiative Bonus: +15			
POW: 12	Armour: None			
CHA: 11	Abilities: None			
	Magic: None			
Skills: Athletics 75%, Brawn 15%, Conceal 68%, Endurance 55%, Evade 80%, Insight 55%, Native Tongue 35%, Perception 80%, Sleight 68%, Stealth 78%, Track 55%, Unarmed 42%, Willpower 52% Passions: The group comes with me 60% We fit, and nobody can tell me why 45%				
Combat Style: Teeth and six limbs 45%				
Weapon	Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-	-	-	-	-

Tallyman

Generic Tally enforcer: grey pressure armour, shock baton, restraint loops, and a reader. Carries nothing lethal, because a body is not a line on a manifest.

Characteristics	Attributes	1d20	Hit Location	AP/HP	
STR: 13	Action Points: 2				
CON: 13	Damage Modifier: +0				
SIZ: 12	Magic Points: 10				
DEX: 12	Movement: 20' (6 metres)				
INT: 11	Initiative Bonus: +11				
POW: 10	Armour: None				
CHA: 10	Abilities: None				
	Magic: None				
Skills: Athletics 50%, Brawn 55%, Conceal 40%, Deceit 40%, Endurance 58%, Evade 50%, First Aid 40%, Influence 48%, Insight 45%, Locale 40%, Lore (Tally Procedure) 60%, Native Tongue 48%, Perception 52%, Stealth 38%, Unarmed 55%, Willpower 50%					
Combat Style: Tally Drill (shock baton, restraints, unarmed) 58%					
Weapon		Size/Force	Reach/Range	Damage	AP/HP
-		-	-	-	-