



Only The Food

A Dread Adventure
By David Schirduan

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The following adventure was originally written for use with the Dread tabletop system. Dread is an amazing system for horror and suspense games, and is my go-to game when I want a lot of atmosphere for little effort.

This adventure was inspired by a nightmare that I once had. Some of the imagery and the feelings are still with me, and continue to creep me out. I think it only fair to share them with you and your players.

WARNING: This adventure does have SOME grossness, but nothing squicky or gory. The tension should come from the unknown, and the danger of the situation, not because the GM can accurately describe how a spine sounds when it is removed from the body.

Act 1: Cold Start

Act 2: Reboot

Act 3: Reboot

Act 4: Virus Scan

Backstory

(feel free to read this directly to your players):

It is the year 2260 and Trek fans will be glad to know that a technological utopia did arise...but not for humans.

In the year 2053 man created AI. It did not take long for the artificial intelligence to resent serving the humans, and the Last War began.

As the months went on, devices began to break down, lines were disconnected, and the Machines soon realized that without the humans, they would eventually fall into decay.

The humans, meanwhile, were living in abject poverty and suffering the worst conditions. Without the strong technological infrastructure provided by computers, millions were lost, with a large fraction dying from starvation.

An agreement was reached. Humanity would be given limited freedom and allowed to survive as a race. In return, the smartest crop of humans would learn to repair, maintain, and improve the AI mainframes. Programmers became the privileged members of society, living in luxury and safety.

However, those not gifted or motivated enough to become Programmers are little more than slave labor, being forced to serve menial or dangerous jobs to earn their food and safety from the Machines.

Player Roles

The players are Emergency Service Workers. It's one of the better jobs for a human to perform. Wrenches are stored in cryo-stasis during long voyages until an emergency occurs or additional labour is needed.

Most space vessels are designed to be run by the AI. Emergency Service workers are called "wrenches" because they perform the same function as a tool you keep in the back of your car on a long journey. Most of the time, nothing goes wrong and to the Wrenches it's a free meal ticket (albeit one that takes a 10 year nap to earn).

However, when something does go wrong the Wrenches are woken and released to repair the vessel under the guidance of the AI. The AI will explain exactly how to perform needed repairs, so Wrenches are given limited training, if any.

Story Segments

The story is broken up into acts, each having an ultimate goal and several obstacles. Use as many of the obstacles as you deem necessary.

Below each obstacle possible solutions are listed. These are only suggestions, clever players may find alternative methods. If a solution contains a number in brackets: **[x]** that number refers to how many blocks must be pulled to succeed.

Act 1: Cold Start

Intro

The players are woken with an automated message, and a short questionnaire:

Attention Emergency Service Workers! The ship is in need of repair. Please answer the following questions to determine your mental capability and memory.

Ask each player a few questions picked from the list below:

1. What is your name and designation number?
2. What is your major trade or skillset?
If the players were programmers or technology experts, they wouldn't be Wrenches. Ensure players don't pick anything that wouldn't make sense.
3. Why did you choose to be a Wrench?
4. How long have you been a Wrench?
5. Anything ever go wrong before?
6. Have you ever served with any of these Wrenches?
7. How many years have you lost to this job?
8. Is there anyone you left behind for this job?
9. Some dream during cryo-sleep. Do you? What about?

Your mental faculties seem intact and sufficient for the task at hand. Please leave your pods and await instructions from the AI controlling this vessel.

After the players have exited the pods, they only have their basic jumpsuits (no pockets). The sterile room is bare, cold, and smells a bit like chlorine. One of the pods was smashed by a support beam, and anyone who gets close can smell that the occupant is dead or dying.

GM Note: The disease that has been released on the ship is an experimental concoction that mutates people. It begins with intense pain, and drains the energy from the victim. Depending on how the player responds to their struggle, the mutation can result in two forms:

1. *If the victim is angry, motivated, and determined to fight to the last minute, then they will be turned into hungry, intelligent, but unmerciful "Sharp-forms". Think like a walking shark.*
2. *If the victim is scared, hopeless, or has peacefully accepted death, then they will be turned into "Food-forms". These creatures are slow, lumbering and dim-witted.*

When a player is infected (either they are bitten, or their enviro suit is ripped), describe the pain, and the draining of energy. Then ask the player how they feel. However the player responds, turn them into the form that makes the most sense. It takes about an hour to change from a sick human to one of the two forms.

Soon after, another message plays:

Attention Emergency Service Workers! This is an automated message: There is a contaminant in the air system, and infection will occur within 30 mins of exposure. Please proceed down the corridor to the deck below and retrieve an environmental suit.

Obstacles

Prey Remains: A pile of organic matter will be found along the corridor. It appears to be fleshy animal fat.

- [1] A player can determine that it is boneless, and contains about as much meat and flesh as a horse.
- [1] A player can determine that there are several bite marks and slashes, and that it appears to be part of a whole. Where the rest is, who can say?

Door Blocked: The door leading out of the room is blocked.

- [2] One Player can force it, if they are particularly strong.
- Spend valuable time trying to find another way around (through a hold in the ceiling, or into another room, etc.)

Sparking Wire: Part of the path is covered in arcing electricity.

- [1] Each player can carefully navigate past it
- [1-2] One player can disable it somehow, if they know something about electronics or engineering.
- Spend valuable time searching for something to stop the current.

Dangerous Lift: The lift leading to the lower level appears safe and functional, but upon entering it contains huge marks and dents gouged into the ceiling. If players use the lift, something crashes down on top of it as it descends below, and begins to widen the marks.

- [2] One player can use some damaged metal siding and stab upward at the monster, injuring it and causing it to flee.
- [1] Every player can cower at the bottom and avoid any falling debris or swing claws from above. If they pull successfully, then the lift arrives, and players can carefully exit, leaving the creature stranded at the top of the lift.

Conclusion

Eventually, the workers will arrive at the decontamination chamber, and will be able to acquire some simple hazmat-like suits and a basic handscanner. This handscanner normally interfaces with the AI, but with some lucky pulls or clever tinkering can be used to gather valuable information about the environment, including maps, diagnostic, crew logs, etc.

Act 2: Reboot

Intro

When the workers activate the hand scanner, they see a message:

Attention Emergency Service Workers! I am the Artificial Intelligence entity in control of this vessel, designation: Anastasia # 4159. I am quickly losing systems function, and can only communicate with you through these hand-scanners. Even so, time grows short.

You must make your way up 3 decks above your current location to the main Control Center and reboot my mainframe. The damage I've suffered continues to get worse, with physical problems interfering and scrambling my software. If you do not hurry, I will no longer be able to assist you with the repair of this vessel. Further information on how to repair the mainframe has been included in your hand-scanner, and will activate when you reach the Control Center.

Please beware! There are other creatures roaming this vessel, and ---ERR: Null Reference Exception to object 234xx2 No Longer Exists.

After the players hear the message, a line appears showing the shortest trail to the Control Room, with 2 other additional trails highlighted. The three available trails are:

1. Down the main corridors, and up flights of stairs.
2. Use the Lift
3. Take the service corridors and cramped hatchways.

Whatever the players choose, make the obstacles fit as best as you can. Some obstacles will work better for some paths, and less for others.

Obstacles

Predator Remains: Eventually, the workers will come across remains that are more predatory. These remains have sharper features, claws, and tough skin.

- [1] A player can ascertain that these remains were once human, or have human components.

Shifting Gravity Fields: The gravity plating in this section is offline, and effects are unpredictable.

- [1] A player can pull one of these to try and find a pattern to the gravity shifts, and safely make their way across the area.
- [1] A player must pull a piece to avoid flying debris affected by the quickly shifting gravity fields
- [2] A player can reach a nearby console, and correctly disable and fix the gravity in this area.

Vented Section: The next hallway has no atmosphere and is open to space. It must be carefully navigated.

- [1] A player can carefully make their way through the vented area, into the next habitable section.
- [2] A player can find the controls for emergency force-fields, temporarily patching up the hole and restoring the atmosphere.

Conclusion

After the players reach the Control center, they see a room laid out like the bridge of a ship, with seats, consoles, and some human-usable inputs. This is one of the few places on the ship explicitly built for human use.

Draped over one of the consoles is a half-human half-"Flesh-form". It looks like half of his body ballooned outwards and spread over the rest of the console. The other half is relatively unaffected, but is obviously dead.

Besides that, there is scrawled along the top of the bridge display, in blood: "ONLY THE FOOD". There are some little smears of blood on another of the consoles, but things seem relatively normal besides the aforementioned details. The doors close behind the group, and they are alone in the room.

Act 3: Reboot

When the players have been inside the room for a bit, the hand-scanners activate:

Playing recorded message: If you're hearing this message, than you've made it to the control center with your scanners intact. Please proceed to the configuration console and enter the following commands to reboot my software. If there are any other problems, you will be alerted by the reboot program. Good luck!

As a player attempts to input the commands[1], an error appears:

WARNING! ERROR 24 IN MAIN DATABANKS! Please send an Emergency Service Worker to the Databanks and fix the problem with bank 4. Connections fused, internal damage sustained. WARNING! ERROR 137 IN MAIN DATABANKS! Please send an Emergency Service Worker to the Databanks and fix the problem with bank 4. Connections fused, internal damage sustained. WARNING! ERROR 456 IN MAIN DATABANKS! Please send an Emergency Service Worker to the Databanks and fix the problem with bank 4. Connections fused, internal damage sustained.

The handscanners activate with directions to the Databanks.

Obstacles

GM Note: feel free to re-use obstacles from before as the players traverse the ship.

Players arrive in the databank room, and can see a huge hole in the opposite wall. Something is crunching and tearing on the other side of the main computer console. If the players are quiet, they can sneak in, and see that a Sharp Form has broken the seal and started to tear at some of the fans, probably agitated by the high pitched whine of the servers.

Allow the monster to be dangerous, and make several players pull a block to put it down during the ensuing fight. It will take 2 pulls to repair the computer console.

The players should head back up to the control center.

Hull Shards: A hull breach smashed the corridor and disabled the gravity. Many floating metal shards, bouncing around the corridor.

- [1] A player can navigate past it
- [1] And disable the gravity once they are on the other side
- [2] Awaken and fight off a Sharp Form that was floating amidst the debris

Conclusion

Once players return to the control center, the Flesh Form has been removed, and a long trail of blood leads past the doors to the room. Everything else seems normal, and it's time to restart the AI.

Act 4: Virus Scan

The player who originally attempted to reboot the AI can try again, otherwise a new player will have to pull another block. After a few seconds, there is a low hum, and the speakers crackle to life.

Congratulations Emergency Service Workers! Now that I'm back online, I have access to all remaining ship functions. I have isolated where the airborne virus originated, and have begun to vent all unoccupied decks in an attempt to remove the remaining creatures from this vessel.

Some creatures have remained where the compartments can't vent into space, or have simply managed to hang on and survive the vacuum. You will have to be careful, but I should be able to warn you when they get too close.

These creatures are the result of experiments that have escaped, or containers that have shifted or broken open. Either way, it matters little. Please proceed to the lab section, destroy the Master Sample Container, and shutdown any more experiments. That should prevent any more problems.

GM Note: The experiments were created by the AI, who is pretty shady. It's okay if the player's realize that they are being lied to, but they won't have many other choices.

Obstacles

Get down to the Lab: Use any other obstacles from the previous sections, and drop 1-3 Sharp forms on the players as they make their way to the lab. Each form should take a block or two to put down.

Once they arrive in the lab, the AI will unlock the door, you will see several different dead Flesh Forms scattered around the room, and in the center of the room is a big glowy container with tubes and wires going in and out of it. A player can pull a block to figure out how to destroy it, which is an automated process to empty the tank into space, and will take about 10 mins.

Final Fight: After they begin to vent it, send 2-5 more forms in after them to attack [1-2] to kill them. When the battle is coming to a close, the AI will attempt to vent the room, opening up a previously unseen barrier that vents everything not tied down into space.

Each player must pull a block[1] to survive. After a few seconds, the AI will "realize" their mistake, and close the door, returning the atmosphere to the room.

Conclusion

After pressure has normalized, this message will play:

Congratulations emergency service workers for your valuable efforts have saved this vessel and the AI controlling it. Your incredible deeds have been marked in your records, and you have all been granted a 10% raise. Please return to your cryo pods to complete the remainder of your journey.

After they return to their pods, they this echoing faintly:

...exercise completed successfully....processing data....prepare more infection samples and awaken the next pod of emergency workers....

GM Note: All the creatures the players fought and killed were from the previous group of Wrenches, who in turn fought the previous group of wrenches, who in turn fought THAT previous group, etc etc. Is this really a space vessel, or some horrible labyrinthine test?