

Crystal Heart

STARTER SET





Follow Your Heart

They say that a person's heart is made from their dreams and desires.

The core begins to form in our youth, growing alongside our aspirations, hardening into a solid heart as we come into our own. When we die, and our dreams are forever lost, our heart fades away as well. Each person creates their own heart; their life experiences determine its color and shape. The number of possible shapes and colors is as varied as the people of the Five Lands.

In our world there are teams of Crystal Hunters, agents of the mysterious and powerful organization Syn. They seek out and collect ancient Crystals, relics from a bygone age. In order to harness the incredible and inexplicable powers of the Crystals, the person must sacrifice something dear indeed: their own heart. The Crystal Hunters undergo a delicate surgery in which their hearts are replaced with a harness into which they can insert the Crystals.

With their fearsome powers, the Agents of Syn became a symbol of authority throughout the world. They travel the Five Lands in their never-ending search for old ruins, where they might find the mysterious Crystals—hidden behind countless traps, vicious monsters, and ancient curses.

These are the Agents of Syn. Relentless. Fearless. Heartless.

WHAT IS CRYSTAL HEART?

Crystal Heart is based on a webcomic, which was in turn based on a setting first created for a role-playing game. Full circle! It's about exploring a fantastic world as superpowered agents of a mysterious organization. If you don't like your superpower, you can always have a change of heart. Literally!

HOW TO PLAY

Crystal Heart is meant to be used with *Savage Worlds Adventure Edition* (SWADE), which is available in your local friendly gaming store and on www.pewinc.com.



This free starter set provides the rules you need to be an Agent of Syn and use the Crystals. Several pregenerated characters are also provided, as well as an adventure to get you going!

The Crystals

Crystals are power, and until relatively recently, they were uncontrolled. Created sometime during the Bygone Age by methods no one understands today, these fist-sized relics glow slightly with their own unique light and color.

Each Crystal changes the world around it in ways specific to that Crystal's *theme*. The exact manifestation depends on the environment: an orange Crystal of flame eruption might cause surfaces around it to ignite, but the same Crystal on the ocean floor might create small volcanoes instead.

Around thirty years ago, the people that eventually created the Syn organization invented a method to control Crystals. It requires removing one's heart and implanting a special harness. Any Crystal inserted into the harness can then function as an artificial heart—and, more importantly, grants the person access to the Crystal's theme and powers.

There's one caveat, though. Each Crystal also influences its bearer's personality, making them feel unwanted emotions or think alien thoughts. This mental baggage is called "disposition" and it can usually be held back with some effort, but on occasion it might completely transform a person's personality.

Crystals have been around since at least the end of the Bygone Age, around 800 years ago. They can be found in ancient structures, deep within caves, or even in a well in the middle of a village. Many have become an integral part of their own small and strange ecosystems. In their "feral" state they tend to be dangerous and unpredictable. Syn Agents, as the only people able to safely subdue and tame a Crystal, are scouring the world in search of these dangerous objects.

Your mentor in Syn is always reminding you that Crystals are not "magical"—they are simply utilizing natural forces in ways not yet fully understood. But we're working on it.

EXPLORE FURTHER

The webcomic *Crystal Heart* is available for free on uptofourplayers.com. It's a great introduction to this world, and as an added bonus, it also teaches you how to play *Savage Worlds*!

After you finish your first adventure, continue venturing into the Five Lands:

- The *Crystal Heart* book has 216 pages filled with all sorts of Crystal goodness, everything you need to play.
- *Living in Syn* provides ways to tweak your playing experience with an emphasis on Syn: training rules, random events, mentors and services, as well as new tales.
- *Full of Heart* provides additional Crystals, their feral manifestations, and shards.
- *Original Syn* provides the webcomic-approved canonical explanation for all the mysteries of *Crystal Heart*.
- One-Sheets, adventures ready to play.

Find all of these, as well as many free downloads, on:

UPTOFOURPLAYERS.COM/CRYSTALHEART



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THE HEARTS

In the world of *Crystal Heart*, human hearts are not flesh-and-blood. They are hard, gemlike objects, changing slightly in shape and greatly in color between individuals. At birth, the heart is only a small, colorless pebble. As the person grows, developing a personality and a world view, the heart solidifies into a unique shape and hue.

The heart “beats” slowly by shaking lightly, enabling blood circulation in a way theorized by modern medical science to be similar to a magnet creating a magnetic field. After a person’s death, their heart slowly sublimates, turning into vapor.

It is important to note that animals have flesh-and-blood hearts. Weird, right?

The World

The continent is divided into five Lands, both geographically and ethnically. The denizens of each Land consider themselves part of the same “people”, despite not having an actual nation (except for Zingama, which has a well-established unified government and a national identity).

THE FIVE LANDS

Bogovia is the land of dark forests and bleak swamps, of wolves howling in the night against gloomy scenery. Bogovian folk tales are all about grim endings, bitter sacrifices and Pyrrhic victories, with a stubborn hero who refuses to surrender at any cost. Bogovians dress in thick, well-worn fabrics and huddle in small villages, each with its own strange customs and superstitions.

Fjordstad is the land of ice and storms, where the Eleven Cities fight each other over resources and respect. Fjordstadians will act either behind your back, with highly trained spies engaging in industrial espionage, or in your face with mad engineers who’ll blow you up with their latest death ray. Fjordstadian nobles tend to dress in elaborate multi-layered suits with various hidden compartments, whereas commoners are more likely to be seen in overalls. All of them, regardless of social status, are known for being elitist and condescending—especially toward each other.

The Islands are varied and eccentric, both culturally and geographically. Some islands are large trading hubs that are among the most cosmopolitan and pleasant places in the world, while others are remote, isolated and untamed. The islands vary in climate, but loose clothing and simple jewelery are common almost everywhere. Islanders are quick to relax, focusing on the here and now. Some of them, of course, are pirates.

Maseia is the land of open plains, countless lakes and naturally-occurring flying mountains. Dozens of Maseian clans travel the plains and valleys, focusing on self-discovery, enlightenment, and living off the land. Their societies have tight structures, with stiff traditions and strict social mores. Maseians dress in ways that reflect their role within their clan.

Zingama is the land of slithering and poisonous things, a huge jungle criss-crossed by the longest river in the world. A massive government rules over more than a million people, who live mostly in urban settlements along the river. Zingamaians talk politics all day and party all night, proud of being a world-class cultural and industrial power. Dress, hairstyle, slang, and even pets all change on a seasonal basis, according to the latest fads. Farther from the river, the jungles are thick and dangerous.

THE BYGONE AGE

About 800 years ago, human civilization ended. Even the best experts know little about the people who came before, and no one knows why their powerful society was annihilated. The person on the street only knows that several centuries ago, history began almost from scratch.

The Bygone Age left various remnants throughout the world. Most are ancient, strange machines or structures half-buried in the ground. One island might have a Bygone Age forcefield that keeps everyone inside healthy, or a village in Bogovia might be built on a metallic platform that doesn’t sink into the swamp. The most important remnants are, of course, the Crystals.



PRESENT DAY

The people of the Lands still don't know a lot about their world. After spending hundreds of years in internal strife, rebuilding society on the skeletons of the past, they have only recently begun to coalesce into what might be called proto-nations.

The thirst for knowledge and progress is there, even if the means for establishing and maintaining production lines are still out of reach. One Fjordstadian city might have cars, and many of them have electric street lights, but these are seen as trade secrets to be kept hidden from rivals. There's even a train between some of the Fjordstadian cities and Maseia—but it's the only train line in the entire world. Zingamaian scholars are making their first steps into the field of archeology, trying to uncover their own past. Deep within the Bogovian forests, high on Maseian mountains, in the jungles of Zingama, beneath Fjordstadian ice, and all across the Islands, countless secrets remain hidden.

One power in the world, however, seems to be ahead of everyone else by a generation at least: Syn.

THE RISE OF SYN

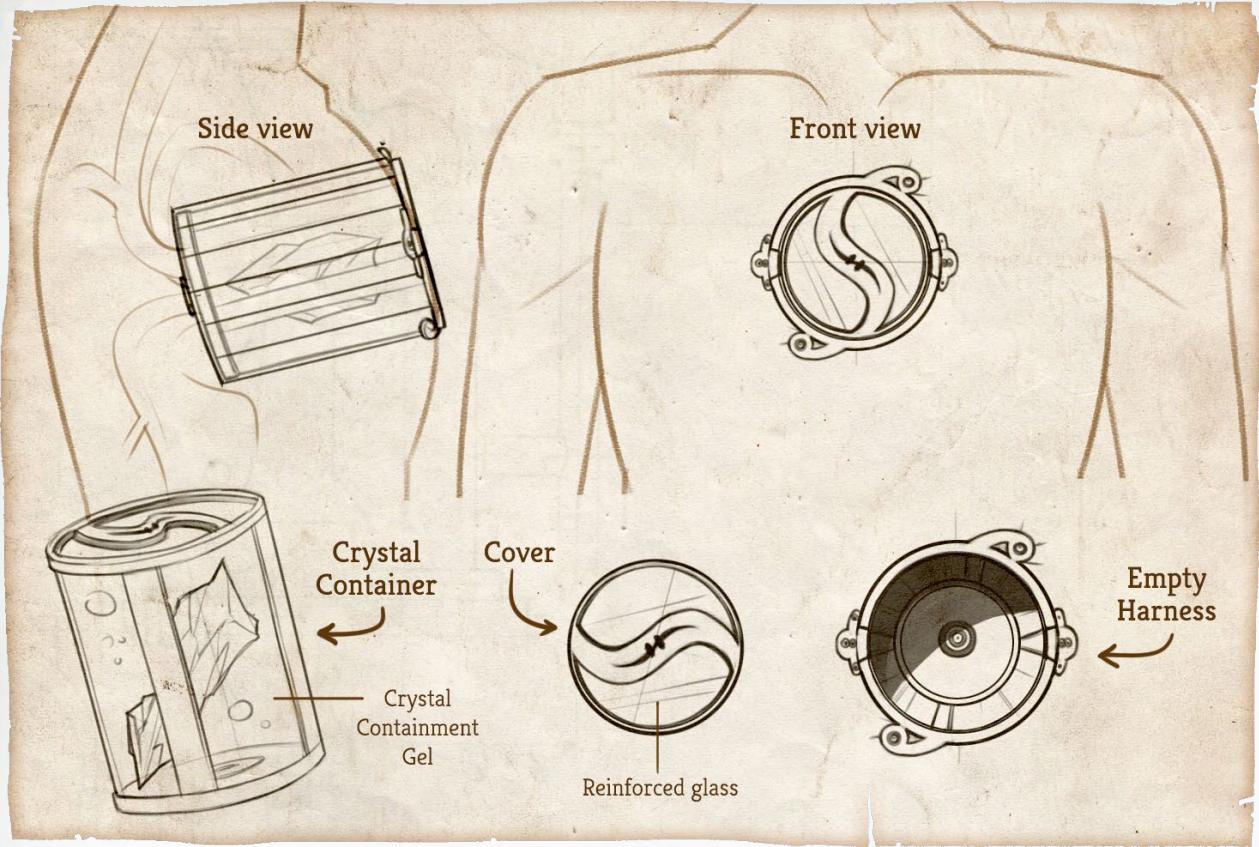
About 20 years ago, an organization named Syn began recruiting and training special Agents, replacing their hearts with harnesses—a never-seen-before technology. Syn existed for some time before this, but it was the arrival of the Agents that brought the organization to the public's eye.

Most Agents are trained as Crystal Hunters. Syn's intelligence team provides them with a designated route to follow for several months, usually passing through two Lands. During a hunt the Agents are expected to follow the rumors Syn has gathered beforehand, as well as to explore on their own and recover any Crystals found. At the end of a route the group returns to Syn's headquarters: a huge, high-tech flying citadel.

Syn scholars discovered the secret to utilizing Crystals safely and predictably by way of the harness, but they are far from being the only ones who try. Other organizations and individuals have an active interest in gaining control over Crystals, using and misusing them for their own ends. This usually ends tragically...but not always.



The *Crystal Heart* book includes a multi-page description of each Land, including major landmarks, types of societies and peoples, and adventure seeds.



Agents of Syn

Syn is the world's only global organization. It's well known throughout the Lands for being powerful and aloof, using amazing technology and expert Agents to free the world from the danger of Crystals. It has way stations throughout the Lands, public connections, and secret agendas. It is the most respected and influential organization in recorded history, and you are its Agents in the field.

The Five Lands are ruled by various governments or similar powers, such as lords, village councils, or ancient customs accepted by the locals. Syn is powerful and far-reaching, more so than any other political power in the world, so everyone likes to know where they stand with the organization.

Most local governing bodies have signed agreements with Syn allowing for cooperation, though the exact wording varies from settlement to settlement. Generally they allow the following perks to traveling Syn Agents once they have identified themselves by showing their harnesses.

PERKS

- A show of respect, such as being invited to important events as guests of honor.
- Free lodging for a week, including meals, once per month.
- The right to use force against those who break local laws. Syn Agents are occasionally called in to help with local policing efforts.
- The right to use force against those who interfere in Syn operations (subject to many restrictions, depending on local agreement).

While not technically a perk, Syn Agents also enjoy an unspoken, near diplomatic-like immunity. While Syn Agents are required to abide by local laws just like anyone else, most power groups would like to avoid getting into trouble with Syn, so they'll allow Agents to get away with some surprisingly uncouth behavior.

It is important to remember that while Agents can indeed escape justice in many Lands, they can't escape Syn, who takes very unkindly to Agents who soil its reputation unnecessarily.



Responsibilities

Crystal Hunters operate under a single mandate: Find and retrieve Crystals.

These Agents are tasked with a route planned by Syn's intelligence officers and based on clues and rumors. A route is usually a five or six month journey with eight to ten stops, assuming about a week spent at every major stop. This can fluctuate depending on weather patterns, being asked to deal with local issues, having to report to Syn way stations, and other such interruptions.

The following is known as The Agent's Code, and it's taken as a Vow Hindrance by all Syn Agents during their training.

- ◆ **Go where directed, but show initiative.** The route is only as good as the information used to plan it, and most of it is based on rumors. Be aware of the signs of a Crystal's presence and follow the leads.
- ◆ **Help when asked by local authorities.** Local agreements almost always allow authorities to ask the Agents—who are usually more capable, better trained, and more prepared than local law enforcers—to act as a policing force.
- ◆ **Avoid unnecessary violence.** You, the harness, the Crystal you carry, and all of your equipment represent hundreds of hours of investment. Don't endanger them without a good cause.
- ◆ **Syn supplies most everything you need.** You are not allowed to invest in commercial ventures. If you require something, Syn will provide it.
- ◆ **Represent Syn.** Protect Syn's agenda and present it fairly and diplomatically. Remember: Crystals discovered in territories with which we have an agreement are considered Syn assets even before recovered.

By fulfilling the responsibilities and retrieving Crystals, Agents can gain Requisition, with which they can acquire special services and items from Syn. The *Crystal Heart* book includes the rules for using Requisition.





What Are Crystals?

A Crystal is a fist-sized object resembling a huge gemstone. Because of their likeness to human hearts (see page 13) and because they're commonly found in close vicinity to remnants of the Bygone Age, the common theory is that they're artificial hearts created by the Bygoners to grant superpowers.

Crystals come in a variety of colors and shapes. While some may look similar, every Crystal is essentially unique. Each Crystal has a *theme*: a specific way in which it affects reality in a manner currently not understood by science. If left unattended for more than a few minutes, a Crystal starts manifesting its theme in uncontrolled ways, going "feral."

Common knowledge is that touching a Crystal grants one the ability to control it, but always at a hefty price, since they are temperamental and dangerous. It is now known that to fully control a Crystal in a safe and reliable way, one must use a harness installed by Syn. Rumors are always circulating about people who manage to find new ways to control Crystals, or even create or destroy them. Syn is quick to investigate such stories, but they don't share their findings with junior Agents.

CRYSTALS IN SOCIETY

Most people view Crystals as dangerous, unpredictable, and uncontrollable sources of power. Early in recorded history, many people tried using Crystals in order to establish themselves as rulers or to help their societies. This almost always ended badly. The main lesson most people remember today is to stay away from Crystals.

Syn appeared on the scene relatively recently. The organization has been around in one form or another for about thirty years, but it only came into the public sphere about twenty years ago by sending its Agents into the world and establishing ties with local authorities. Despite Syn's proven successes and the immense power it has gathered, most people eye it with suspicion because of its use of Crystals. Every proper person knows they are not to be toyed with.

ANATOMY OF A CRYSTAL

Each Crystal is composed of the following.

Rank

Each Crystal has a Rank denoting how powerful it is, based on its theme and the number and types of powers it gives access to. You'll begin with Novice Crystals, but might later gain more powerful ones.

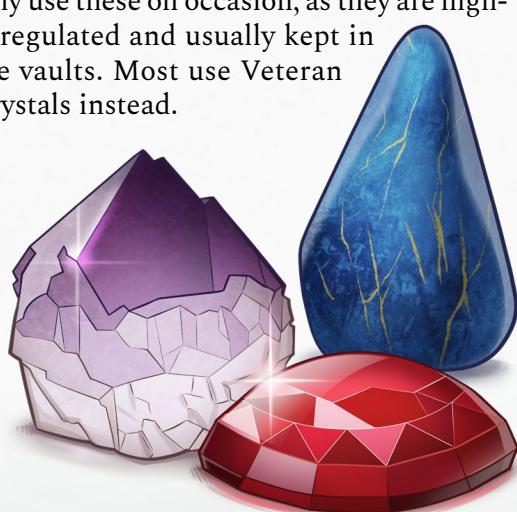
Syn recognizes five ranks of Crystal. This classification is rarely used, or even known, outside of the organization.

Novice Crystals give you useful powers, but are mostly of a passive or supportive nature. A feral Novice Crystal might make a room very warm, or make everyone think annoying, repetitive thoughts.

Seasoned Crystals provide you with one or two powerful abilities, usually a bit more focused compared to the Novice ones. A Novice Crystal might allow you to create light or darkness, but a Seasoned one will allow you to control the shape and strength of your shadow. A feral Seasoned Crystal might turn a building jungle-like and fill it with poisonous plants, or make the water in a river purple and hallucinogenic.

Veteran Crystals have a wider range of abilities, and can provide their bearer with several always-on powers to make them effective and strong at all times. A feral Veteran Crystal might make the walls of an entire cave complex like rubber or keep an army of walking dead around it.

Heroic Crystals are amazingly powerful, giving you a huge range of abilities; they basically turn the Agent into a one-person army. Even the most high-ranked Agents only use these on occasion, as they are highly regulated and usually kept in the vaults. Most use Veteran Crystals instead.





Only five **Legendary Crystals** were ever discovered, and only the five members of the Council of Syn are allowed to carry them. Rumors claim these Crystals are *too* powerful.

Theme

A Crystal's theme is its main concept—what it's *about*. The theme is manifested in the Crystals' powers and their trappings. The more an Agent understands a Crystal's theme, the more new powers they can create out of it (with Power Stunts, next page). Syn has a good understanding of the themes of most of the Crystals in their Repository, but some are only half understood (and some are misunderstood).

Casual Use: Most themes can manifest in simple ways without needing a Crystal Channeling roll. Such casual uses can add +1 to a relevant Trait check, but can never be activated against someone or something else, or while under stress (such as during a combat situation). If there's any hint of effort, this is no longer a casual use—it's a Power Stunt (see next page).

Players should feel free to suggest casual uses for their Crystals as long as they maintain the themes.

Each Crystal's theme is followed in *italics* with several suggestions for casual use.

Benefit

Each Crystal has one or more abilities which are always active. Simply having a Crystal inside you is enough to give you some sort of an advantage—usually an Edge, but occasionally an ongoing die upgrade to one or more of your Traits. All powers that are not part of your benefit must be activated as an action, usually with a Crystal Channeling check.

Disposition

A Crystal influences its bearer's psyche. This is usually in the form of a personality trait but occasionally a physical disability, and it is always related in some way to its theme. The disposition is usually expressed in the form of Hindrances. The Agent socketing the Crystal is affected by its disposition at all times.



Powers

A Crystal gives its user access to several powers that share a common theme.

Most of the powers presented in this book are used differently than in *Savage Worlds*, as explained in each entry.

- The power's in-world name is given first. This is the name Agents usually use to describe this power.
- The name is followed by parentheses, with the power's *Savage Worlds* name, and an indication if it can be used as Ongoing (see next page) and what its activation modifier is. When two or more powers are listed, they are all activated together with the same roll.
- The power's rules are then listed. Assume the power functions as it does in *Savage Worlds* unless noted otherwise here.
- If the power allows any optional Modifiers, they are listed last. The common Modifiers are noted only if they're always activated; otherwise, they can be used if it makes sense (see Power Modifiers, next page).



Crystal Channeling

Crystal Channeling is the act of harmonizing the connection between yourself and your Crystal, pushing against it with your mind to try and goad it into creating a desired effect. It's a mental exercise practiced using both biofeedback and psychological techniques.

Arcane Background (Crystal Channeling) does not use Power Points. Agents simply choose the power they want to activate, and if it requires a check, they make a Crystal Channeling roll. This skill is based on Spirit and is a core skill for all Agents (they begin play with a d4 in it). Activating a power doesn't usually require speaking, but some might require gestures. When a power is activated the Crystal glows with its distinctive color, usually bright enough to be visible through clothes.

The Crystal Channeling check is made with a penalty equal to half the Power Point cost of the power (rounded up) as noted in *Savage Worlds*. This penalty is usually listed.

Activating a Power

Once a power is activated with a roll, check the results below:

- **Success:** The power activates as normal. Assume the power follows the rules as noted in *Savage Worlds*, unless otherwise noted in the Crystal's description.
- **Raise:** A raise on the roll grants any additional bonuses stated in the power's description.
- **Failure:** The power doesn't activate. You can choose instead to make it activate (as if your final result was a 4), by taking a level of Fatigue that can only be reduced by a few minutes of meditation with no active powers. If this makes you Incapacitated, the power activates before you're out.
- **Critical Failure:** Treated as a failure, and you also desync (see next page).

Maintaining Powers: All non-instant powers can be maintained for as long as the character desires (dismissed as a free action) but each power maintained inflicts a -1 on Crystal Channeling rolls.

Power Modifiers: To use a Power Modifier, subtract from the roll half of its cost rounded up. This is usually -1, so it's safe

to default to it. For those who want to be as technically correct as possible, add the Power Point costs of the power and the Modifier, then halve the sum.

Each power lists the Power Modifiers it allows. The common Modifiers (see Power Modifiers in *Savage Worlds*) are generally allowed, but only with a good rationale and the GM's permission. Exactly how it works is a matter of description, but it must always be relevant to the Crystal's theme.

Power Preparation: An Agent may prepare powers by concentrating for an entire round (no movement or other actions, and they must not be Shaken or Stunned). If successful, they ignore 2 points of penalties on all Crystal Channeling rolls on their next turn.

Ongoing Powers: Outside of tense situations, such as combat, activating Ongoing powers does not require a roll. The Agent takes a few moments to focus themselves and release the potential from within the Crystal. They can even choose to activate the power as if they got a raise on the roll. During an action scene, activating an Ongoing power requires an action and a Crystal Channeling roll like any other power.

Ongoing powers always come with a drawback. An activated power reflects switching the Crystal to a higher setting—you become stronger, but so does the disposition.

POWER STUNTS

The powers within a Crystal represent only some of the uses of its theme, which come reflexively to its bearer. Agents who put their mind to it can activate their Crystal's theme in new, unusual ways. This effectively grants an Agent a temporary use of any power, as long as it makes sense as an extension of the theme.

The cost is a Benny, which grants a one-use effect of any instant-Duration power from *Savage Worlds* or three rounds of any other power (a new Crystal Channeling roll made before the end of the duration adds another three rounds). The Benny is paid only after both the GM and the player agree on the power and the interpretation of the theme. Calculate the penalty as normal (half the Power Point cost, rounded up) and don't forget to include any Power Modifiers used.



Are Crystals Magic?

Syn is clear on the subject: Crystals are natural. All “supernatural” effects created by Crystals are, in fact, part of the regular physics of the world.

That being said, the world of *Crystal Heart* is obviously using natural laws that differ from our own. The important thing is that it acts in a semi-predictable way by adhering to its powers and maintaining a consistent interpretation of its theme.

A note to the GM: reward creativity, but remember that Stunts aren’t meant as a way for Agents to gain access to every conceivable power. Some thought should go into justifying each Stunt by referring to the Crystal’s theme. A Crystal with a theme of energetic radiation shouldn’t be used to slow people down, unless both you and the player agree on a reasonable explanation. Trappings matter!

LOSING SYNC (DESYNC)

A Critical Failure on a Crystal Channeling check (as well as some other game effects) creates a backlash between your psyche, your Crystal’s resonance, and the harness that’s connecting the two—in effect switching it off. Your Crystal stops functioning as your heart and you immediately begin choking. This is called desyncing, and it’s the main danger one must face for replacing their heart with a strange device.

You’re essentially suffocating. You can hold your breath for a

number of rounds equal to 2 plus



your Vigor die, or half that if you weren’t prepared and didn’t have time to take a good breath (which is usually the case with a Critical Failure). Another person can resync you with a Healing roll made as an action, with -1 if there’s no first aid kit available. You can try to resync yourself, but with a -2 modifier.

When you run out of breath you become Incapacitated and lose consciousness. You’ll die in a number of rounds equal to your Vigor die. If someone can get to you before then, you can be resuscitated with a Healing roll at -2.

You don’t have access to your Crystal’s powers while desynced, and all of your maintained powers are dropped. A desynced Crystal might or might not still imbue its bearer with its benefits and disposition, GM’s call.

SOCKETING A CRYSTAL

Setting a Crystal (or “socketing”) means removing one’s current Crystal and inserting a new one. In many cases it is done under controlled conditions by another Agent or qualified Syn personnel. There’s usually no need for a check. In an intense situation, such as a combat scene, make a Healing check and consult the results.

- **Success:** The character manages to insert a Crystal into the harness and sync it with the bearer. The Agent immediately gains the Crystal’s benefits and disposition. If Shaken or unconscious, they also get an immediate Vigor check to become un-Shaken or return to consciousness.
- **Raise:** The Agent also has a burst of energy, allowing them to ignore all Fatigue and Wound penalties until the end of their next turn.
- **Failure:** The character can’t safely remove the Crystal, and must try again with another action.
- **Critical Failure:** The Agent is left mid-process, with no Crystal inside the harness. They begin suffocating, as with a desync.

Trying to self-socket is done with a -2 on the check. You do realize you’re trying to unhook your own heart from your body and replace it with another, right?



THE HARNESS

All Syn Agents have passed medical tests and physical requirements, allowing them to be surgically equipped with a harness: the only method so far discovered which controls a Crystal with relative safety and reliability.

Harness Complications

The harness is not completely foolproof: Syn has recorded several conditions in which it might function in a less than optimal way. Syn agents are advised to be on their guard in the following situations, but it should also be noted that other unknown factors might influence the harmonization process which keeps the Agent's psyche and their Crystal in sync.

Strong magnetic fields cause a drain on Crystal powers, inflicting a -1 on all Crystal Channeling rolls. They also increase the penalty for maintaining powers from -1 to -2.

Intense cold slows Crystal powers while also empowering them. A Crystal Channeling check can only be made after taking a turn for Power Preparation, but that preparation also grants a +2 bonus on the check.

Radiation causes severe interference with the harness. At the end of every turn in which the Agent performs any physical activity more intense than walking their Pace, they must make a Vigor roll. On a failure the harness "hiccup," their Crystal literally skipping a beat, and they are Shaken.

Life abundance is a strange environmental effect. It can be detected from a distance by noticing the higher-than-usual plant growth and animal presence. *All Syn Agents are forbidden from entering life abundance areas without proper authorization.*



Feral Crystals

When a Crystal is "in the wild," not tamed inside an Agent's harness or a Syn Crystal container, it's considered feral. Such Crystals manifest their theme in uncontrolled ways. Approach with extreme caution!

A feral Crystal's manifestation is only somewhat related to its Rank and theme. Although rare, Syn has recorded cases of a Heroic Crystal with a lightning theme manifesting as little pricks of static electricity, and of a Novice Crystal with a softness theme manifesting as quicksand that can swallow buildings. The environmental conditions surrounding the feral Crystal seem to have a large influence on the form and intensity of its manifestation.

CONTAINMENT PROCEDURES

Each Agent is provided with two Crystal containers: one that holds the Crystal in their own harness, and an extra one to contain feral Crystals. The container has a sliding lid and is filled with soft gel which needs to be replaced every few months.

When approaching a feral Crystal, Syn Agents are advised to first subdue any manifestations such as walking trees, choking water snakes, or zombified corpses. This allows for a short period of calm, usually around ten minutes, before the Crystal re-manifests its theme. During this time the Agents should place the Crystal inside a container using gloves.

If subduing the manifestations is not feasible (what can you do against an avalanche?), a feral Crystal can also be tamed by being held for several seconds in a container, a harness, or someone's hands. Crystals really don't like being held like this and tend to react in unexpected ways, akin to an angry cat.

Agents are advised to wear gloves while handling feral Crystals. For some unknown reason—perhaps something about the way the energies of two Crystals clash—when an Agent touches a feral Crystal barehanded, they must roll Vigor or take a level of Fatigue. On a Critical Failure, they desync! This roll repeats at the start of every turn until the Agent releases the Crystal or it becomes tamed, as noted below.



Grappling with a Crystal: Trying to grab a feral Crystal or trap it in a container is similar to grappling. Most times it requires an Athletics roll to grab the Crystal, at -2 if you're trying to push it into a container.

The Crystal must be held down for several seconds, forcing a Strength roll on your following turn to keep it secured (with +2 if you've got it in a container). If the Crystal fails to escape, it calms down and stops being feral, all of its manifestations disappearing. Unless the Agent is wearing gloves, they must make Vigor checks throughout this process, as noted above.

Shards

Some Crystals have shattered into pieces. Since Crystals are diamond-hard it's unclear how this can happen, and yet it evidently does.

These shards are simultaneously less and more powerful than a whole Crystal. On the one hand, each is only capable of creating a single, quite specific effect. On the other hand, they are easily usable by humans: anyone who touches a shard can use its power safely and reliably. Well, anyone except Agents, as their Crystal's resonance doesn't mesh well with the external power.

Syn Agents are required to gather shards whenever possible, and not only for the protection of the Lands. When all the shards of a single Crystal are brought together (usually three or four) they reforge themselves into the original Crystal. Surprisingly, the powers of this new Crystal do not necessarily resemble the powers held by its shards.

Using Shards

Each shard holds a single, non-modifiable power.

Non-Agents just roll Spirit to recognize what the shard does and then use it. Agents need to roll Crystal Channeling and *any* failure results in a desync.

Human Hearts

In the world of *Crystal Heart*, all humans have small stones instead of flesh-and-blood hearts.

Human hearts are hard, gemlike objects, around an inch or two (3-5cm) long and an inch (3cm) in diameter, changing slightly in shape and greatly in color from individual to individual. At birth, the heart is only a small, colorless pebble. As the person grows, develops a personality and a world view, the heart solidifies into a unique shape and hue.

These hearts do not function like real-world hearts. They're not connected to any blood vessels or any other organ. They don't receive any nourishment from the body. However, the presence of a heart is essential to a person's health.

The heart beats slowly by shaking lightly, enabling blood circulation in a way theorized by modern medical science to be similar to a magnet creating a magnetic field. It is also theorized that the power that fuels this beating is the person's soul. This idea is strengthened by the fact that a person's mind shapes his or her heart in a very physical way. If the soul leaves the body, such as at the moment of death, the heart stops functioning immediately. If a heart is taken out, the person starts suffocating, unable to breathe.

A heart outside of a body does not function, although occasionally it might beat when held by a person (this is considered gory and horrific, just like holding a real heart in the real world). Over a period of several months it slowly sublimates, turning into vapors.

It's important to note that animals have flesh-and-blood hearts. Biologists in Fjordstad and Zingama have reached the stage where they are starting to be puzzled by this discrepancy between people and animals, but to most this is a simple fact of the world.

