

North Star

A campaign for Eclipse Phase

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WHEN YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY DEATH AND STAGNATION, LOOK UP.



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01 ABOUT

1.1: This Campaign

Welcome to the carbuncle, the greatest sore on transhuman society capable of altering course. Here, you will find a well of situations and volatile events that could fling your characters headlong into the books of modern urban lore or send them crashing headlong into the merciless, darwinistic machinery that keeps the heart of this place beating.

This document lays out the factions, characters and their secrets that the players will have to thread their way through to progress.

Whether you're just starting a fresh game and want your players to have some story-relevant background for themselves or you're dealing with a pack of experienced characters with established reputations eager to change something in a big way, this campaign can serve everyone's needs.

North Star has no definite path. Instead; the plot is driven forward by 'hotspots,' events with vague preconditions and open results strung loosely and flexibly together Custom NPCs are included to ease the numerous action-based encounters that are set up for this campaign.

The articles for this campaign are arranged roughly in recommended reading order. Understanding the characters, factions and their motivations before you set out to run this campaign is recommended.

1.2 The carbuncle

North star is set aboard the Carbuncle, one of the anonymous swarm of scumbarges peppered throughout the solar system. This weeping pustule of crime, poverty and internal conflict is unique among low-class colonies in that it travels on a long, slow orbit, picking up supplies on a slingshot around the sun and lingering in the outer systems, where the companies riding the massive structure do their dirty business.

Among the pantheon of scumbarges piggybacking the more prosperous colonies of the solar system, the Carbuncle stands out as one of the most destructive. Its companies wear a hypocritically clean corporate moniker, selling extraction services to colonies it passes on its journey through the system, sometimes completely tapping out colonies' entire local natural resources and removing its entire reason of existence while simultaneously flooding their tiny markets with a glut of commodities.

However, the Carbuncle once had a much more fair and inspiring name and rank among the outbound colonies of Sol. It was a veritable traveling circus, conveying the wonders and excesses of hypercorporate decadence to the uncivilized colonies beyond the asteroid belt. She rode behind a set of large, Fusion-electric engines that even today convey the inhabitants across their varying routes between the static habitats of the system. Its interior was the pinnacle of old-era architecture, evoking a retro-futuristic look of clean, sterile, gleaming chrome and art-deco angles in tribute to a more ancient age of optimism.

After the fall, though, it became unnecessary baggage for the failing hypercorporations. Its funding quickly dried up, paving the way for an influx of refugees, escaping the carnage of the static colonies in favor of the complex, long-period orbit of the Carbuncle.

1.3: Trade and Commerce

The Extropians dominate the lower rings, providing a tap into the jugular of the solar system that helps keep the colony alive between trade runs, carrying a smaller cargo of illicit goods. Blueprints travel in secured, offline data-storage, hidden in plain sight within the teeming chaos of the slums in secure data facilities below street level. Since the Carbuncle operates as its own municipality, seizures are often unauthorized and uncommon.

In modern times, the Carbuncle has reached some modicum of stability, running a route between cometary drop-off points in the outer system, the outer planetary municipalities and the

hypercorp-dominated inner system, expending fuel to stop only when there is demand for their low-end labor or hijacked black-market goods.

The companies serving on the Carbuncle have no presence anywhere else. Most economists who are aware of the Carbuncle end their assessments with “You can check out any time you'd like, but you can never leave.” A combination of bad exterior reputation, sufficient but never excessive profit potential and binding ties and interdependence between companies ensure few ever transcend the colony for bigger things.

1.4: Class Division

The Carbuncle is a den of small companies, unable to compete outside the colony and serving a captive consumer base of material-poor lower class workers. A small clade of hyper-elites rules far above from the crystal windows of their towers in the low-spin upper rings, where they can escape the sickening effects of the Coriolis force while the workers rearward in the small lower rings live uncomfortable lives at high-spin.

The class division in the Carbuncle is stark but frighteningly stable, partly maintained by the physical segregation of the lower rings further to the rear/bottom of the ship and the upper rings near the front/top, separated by the zero-g hub area and a separate spin-down and spin-up to move between the separate habitat zones due to their differing spin frequency.

Though this segregation was originally unintentional, it proved convenient. The upper rings are a city of crystalline, curtain glass facades, open malls and a stable, comparably clean climate graced by pristine, gothic and modernist architecture harkening back to the era before the fall. Some more discerning tourists who recognize the high city's historical value enough to disregard the Carbuncles terrible reputations stay overnight in immaculate hotels.

In the lower city, things are very different. The structures and living spaces there evolved from refugee tent cities into more permanent structures. What rises triumphantly from the refuse of that place is not necessarily pretty so much as it is functional and raw. Security in this area is lax and the proxy gangs and company unions (which are not very different from the former) roam the streets, letting their disputes spill out into whatever space they're in.

The many cheap teleoperators and mine workers that handle the most numerous and menial jobs are often in flat or case morphs, while elites like smugglers, enforcers and dealers can afford more enhanced bodies. For active gang members, death can be very cheap, so combat occurs often. Workers caught in the crossfire may not be so lucky.

02 LOCAL FACTIONS

2.1: Opal Mining Company

Opal Company, as it is commonly called, is one of the big three of the colony, providing the bulk of fuel that allows the colony to correct course and stop at more permanent orbits. They are the lifeblood of the colony as, without the ability to move somewhere else, the colony's business practices would likely lead to their own demise.

Opal came aboard just after Green Horizons, associating with the Carbuncle soon after the fall. Though extremely auspicious in modern times, Opal began as a group of prospectors running a family fleet of tugs stolen from a fallen colony. But a great gulf of time separates their inception from their current state, providing them a strong pedigree through seniority.

They run themselves much like a traditional Zaibatsu, with all control ultimately leading back through a maze of subsidiaries and holding companies to a board of inheritors from the families that have risen to power within the company ranks.

The board predominantly serves company survival first and profit second, their ties to their workers are thinner than the other major companies, but the difference is largely cosmetic, as workers' rights on the Carbuncle remain poor throughout.

Agenda (board)

The board is a bloc of power decades old that has no intention of changing and every intention of maximizing its power. The board is primarily composed of pure-blood anglo-saxons and Englishmen (though one or two are only so by morph.) They carry subdued mannerisms that speak of culture but it is often just to hide their true agenda.

- Maximize profit
- Usurp other board members (secret, no one is that stupid)
- Eliminate the other major companies
- Take-over smaller companies.

Opal Company

NPCs: Insurgent Grunt, Insurgent Hotshot, Insurgent Radioman

The rabble of loyal workers that constitute Opal Company, OMC's unofficial security detail, behave more like a gang than a professional organization. They are, primarily, cronies for the board. Most Opal Company soldiers are poor and are at times poorly equipped. The board often abuses them as a set of pawns, making many members bitter and mistrusting. For the higher ups and members, priorities are, in order of importance.

- Survive.
- Promote up to command to escape grunt status.
- Look after people immediately down the chain of command for them (their friends.)

03: IMPORTANT CHARACTER REFERENCE

3.1: Tabitha Sinqdot

Opal Mining Company Chairwoman

Public Profile

Tabitha takes great pains to make sure anyone who would otherwise be a threat to her fears her personality and leverage too much to ever be so. Public opinion sees her as a miser, bitter and entrenched in old patrician culture. Other company men often call her "Singularity Sinqdot" in regards to her black-hole-like monetary hoarding. She is well known as an ex-glitterati, which is credited as the source of her political ruthlessness and decadence.

She maintains an opulent abode and holds frequent socials, all the better to keep the board loyal and insubordinate members close at hand and busy. Under this neo-gentry model, she has steered Opal to prominence, increasing the company's political leverage and, by proxy, her own. Since her aggressive rebranding of Opal as the most civilized of the Big Three, many a lowly citizen has flocked to the siren song of pomp and prosperity which she's engendered, joining the ranks of the Opal Company militia. Some syndicated stories about Tabitha include;

- Increase the wealth of Opal Mining Company
[Publicly known and circulated, her most infamous and ubiquitous goal.]
- A dossier detailing aggressive monopolistic practices under her rule.
- Published by Svetsnika through a fence. This can be hidden.
[Available on the local mesh document depositories.]
- OMC's growth rose after her installation as chairwoman.
[Local market analysis, available by request from the local broker bot.]

Private profile

Tabitha may be the most outwardly infamous corporate executive on the Carbuncle, cultivating a feared image, but her goals are murkier the deeper one digs. It is clear she's not working well with the board. They don't know exactly where she's taking the company but they don't like it.

Some evidence of this is as follows;

- Board meeting minutes from a week ago.
- Protests fielded by multiple majority shareholders in regards to disappearing funds.
- Civilian deaths due to botched Opal Company raids are down, seen as sign of weakness.
- Local involvement up, but money going to bribery down.
[Black document leaked onto the ad-hoc network. Requires well-engineered search query.]
- Leaked communique from Tabitha directly to an opal company courier.
- Courier notes that no prospective sellers of the Golden Goose have materialized.
[In a poorly secured area of the OMC network, accidentally left under poor security.]
[Will require a minor hack.]

Secret profile

Tabitha has done well to bury her true plan under layers of double games and lies. It would be too much to risk the plan before it has reached anywhere near its final stages. The petty infighting within the board has always disgusted her, as has their general agenda. However, she had no illusions about winning them over. In fact, she brings as few people into her schemes as possible.

She has ancillary issues with lording over what is essentially another anonymous scumbage. As such, she feels the need to elevate the people of the carbuncle in order to elevate her own status. Since this doesn't strictly make sense in the 'get richer' mindset, this should tell you something about her true

character beneath her seemingly villainous facade.

- Find a definite way to elevate the carbuncle.

[Known among her upper echelons. Details are handed out only when needed.]

- Evade discovery until this plan is complete.

- Avoid death, she can't enjoy her new status if she's dead.

[The more her collaborators think she is self-sacrificial the better for her.]

Quotes:

- ”Oh yes. I am the undisputed queen of this place, make no mistake. But being the ruler of a festering sore isn't very vogue, now is it? This place needs medicine – proverbially speaking, of course.”

- ”Just the person I've been looking for. I can't say much over this line, call me old fashioned, but I prefer to meet my thralls in person.”

- ”Good of you to come, darling! It's about time that I got a hold of someone with some modicum of competence approaching my own.”

Basic stats:

Relevant skills:

3.2: Junyiko Czechvastyin

Svetsnika Group CEO

Junyiko is the current head of the Svetsnika group, a trust of smaller heavy industries companies brought under one moniker to “compete with Opal's oppressive extraction services monopoly.” He has pursued the standard Svetsnika line of extreme growth as a means of survival with abnormally aggressive zeal, but no one has uncovered why.

Agenda:

Junyiko has done a very good job of looking out for his company's interests and he is about to make sure that doesn't change. He's interested in acquiring a cornucopia machine under exclusive control of his company, an advantage the other two major companies of the carbuncle do not and, if all goes well, should not have.

This is at the heart of his agenda, to bring the conflicts on the Carbuncle to an end by bringing every interest under one company. In his own way, he sees this as a greater good and, who can blame him? Unlike Tabitha, he's taking the conservative rather than anarchist route, but for something he would view as roughly the same ethical end. That said; his means are anything but scrupulous. But, in his view, he does the things no one will pony up to but must be done.

- Obtain a cornucopia machine for exclusive use by the company.

Agenda (public)

Quotes:

- ”Gentlemen, it's good to be able to enlist your services. Never has there been a greater time of need, you see.”

- ”Understand that you mustn't tell anyone. Endangering this plan would endanger the future of this entire colony.”

-”No one stands between me and this. It's the only reason I pushed for this position. It takes an efficiency-minded man to make the best of what we've got. So, maybe you'll at least CONSIDER my view. For your own sake, I ask you now to step aside.”

Sohjiin Liao

Morpheus

No-one (public)

No-one is the lynchpin of the quasi-legal smuggling operations of the Carbuncle. As such, he tries very hard to remain anonymous. People know of him but very rarely know him. Asking any one man generates a different story. To some, he is an arms dealer. Others, an elite software pirate. He has an extensive network of these loose followers who provide him with connections and convey his goods. He never arranges appointments in person, though he has been known to accept them when, by random chance, he is found.

Known motivations:

- Evade any threats from outsiders.
- Protect anonymity.
- Preserve contacts.

No-one (secret)

No-one is not exactly the agendaless orchestrator of anarchy he seems, nor is he a liberator or democratizer, though he has been this to some. What he wants most is to move on. He is not a young ego. The Carbuncle made him, but he wants to leave for greener pastures and greater opportunities before it destroys him. He would like to leverage his contacts to ensure safe passage and get his greatest thorn out of his posterior – the pro-order Svetsnika group.

Beneath his public haze, No-one is a potent speaker who keeps good friends, whether this is because he seems or is actually genuine is up for contention. And, whether or no Svetsnika is right in pursuing him for his destructive practices depends on the game and the game-master, or may, ultimately, be left ambiguous, because you are a dastardly GM with a nihilistic streak.

Hearsay:

- Leave the carbuncle permanently.
- Leave with all financial assets intact.
- Preserve the lives of close contacts (optional)
- Keep negotiation promises related to the above three (optional.)

No-one quotes

“In this business I have to protect myself. If you knew my name, you'd know how to ask about me. If you knew how to ask about me, so would corporate security. If corporate security could ask for me they could get one of my lackeys to out me. Do you see my logic? Good, because there was none.”

“I prefer the solidarity of investment to the excesses of flesh. Bodies will die, gentlemen, but I can keep myself in repair forever. Do you realize what that does for me in the money markets? Quite a bit, thank you.”

“Why am I giving you these weapons? Well, it's fair to say it's not financially mindful. You can't sell lower than free. However, there are idiots outside with the bomb. Survive and we do business. Die and... well, the results speak for themselves. Off with you, I'm off to go take shelter.”

04 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

It's not so much that a time a change has finally come upon the carbuncle, but that pressures have been building among all sides for quite some time. It will take only a straw to break the camel's back.

The Carbuncle is a common destination of society's fallen, refugees from disaster and those whose lifestyles have collapsed, joining the other refugees via an open immigration program backed almost exclusively by Green Horizons (the more demand, the more potential supply and actual price ceilings rise.)

There is also always demand for professionals of all sorts. Researchers attempt to get the leg up on their chosen of the big three companies. Mercenaries and enforcers provide muscle behind negotiations and are called in droves to join the gangs of workers as trainers and commanders. Investigators, as of recent times, have been in great demand as well, as the number of shady events have risen exponentially since (or as a result, if it happens during play) of the bombing of the lower city. Fixers, smugglers and negotiators are valued for their connections and flourish in a world where open conflict is just a few poorly chosen words away and intrigue is the only card played so far. Intellectual visitors to the upper city are a common. Sightseers, historians, auctioneers looking to get at ancient relics from the pre-fall glitterati dynasties' collections (and even some theifs who know how to navigate the closed society there.)

There are a number of reasons to go to the Carbuncle ranging from marginally distasteful to outright monstrous. However, once things get going, it may get very hard, indeed, to leave.

No-One's Proposition

“You step through what seems like a large loading dock entrance, flanked by bouncers and an uncharacteristically long line. A huge room opens up ahead of you with a central floor filled with a huge crowd of people dancing and fighting to what some people might call music. Booths and VIP areas full of busy people rise upward from the floor like grandstands below a rolling terrain of bizzare shapes, alien clouds and visualizations moving to the frenetic beat of the music.”

Such is the state of monopoly in the Carbuncle's isolated market that there is now only one club servicing the entire lower city. Red Sky, as it's known, is famous for simultaneously providing some of the experiences of the scumbarges, such as pan-sensorial integration, while still maintaining some modicum of business and safety.

The club is over a city block in size, nearly 600m on a side of the building's plot. It is formed from two large arenas. Booths, private areas and entrances to small offices operated by the owners climb the grandstanding on the sides, surrounding a central, open floor in each venue. However, Red Sky is known and so-named for its spectacular AR display, run by custom built ecto devices delivering alien vistas more real than any visitor could imagine (at least, until they experience it.)

No-One has an office here. His privileged contacts often spend time doing their business at the club, and they know exactly where his office is. However, he makes a point of not telling the entire club populous (attention minions, I am in room 3a, thank you.) So your players will have to talk their way in if they have any wish to see him.

No-One is sometimes interested in bringing in new contacts, especially experienced launderers and smugglers. Just about anyone else must go through his lower agents first, unless your players sweet talk their way in well enough.

Since security in the carbuncle is tight (with most factions trying to keep down a massive inter-gang arms escalation) getting on No-One's good side is a good way for them to procure weapons. Work under him could lead to contact as a messenger to other, more legitimate factions inside the carbuncle (someone has to get them their covert materiel with which to fight their political and paramilitary

skirmishes.) Similarly, his club is a target for those with political ends in mind, as outlined in a possible second event (See: Body In Motion.)

Lower City Bombing and Aftermath

The internal conflicts of the carbuncle have never been the concern of Celestis Risk Control – until recently when a major hull breach vented a section of the lower city into space. As such an event was most definitely an apolitical existential threat to the colony, Morpheus took it upon itself to make it CRC's problem.

CRC's experience is primarily diplomatic, as a shooting war between fleets of LASERstars in close proximity of the carbuncle would only go badly. As such; he wants researchers, detectives and other background negotiators who can find the guilty party, prove them overwhelmingly so and deliver them into the arms of the big three corporations, something Morpheus thinks would buy quite a bit of diplomatic favor for his company (and, more importantly, keep the eople his company is obligated to defend safe.)

The Mirror Gambit

There are tow parties who want a cornucopia machine. Tabitha wants to covertly acquire one (if her board finds out she's doing it for non-profit reasons, they could try to oust her, violently) and Junyiko wants one for exclusive use by his company. The sooner the players know this the sooner the fun of this scenario drains. Guile, intrigue and ambiguity stem from this gambit. Most set events are echoes of this ghost conflict. Events such as the first bombing, a second attempted bombing, Tabitha's recruitment of players and the People's front all lead back to here.

Resolution of this conflict could very well put the possessing faction in a position to tip the stalemate between the big three companies.