

## **EP CAMPAIGN INTRODUCTION NOTES**

### **Introduction**

This is a quick, but surprisingly long write-up on how I'd like the campaign to work out. I think it is important that people are on the same level - a group that doesn't work, in terms of player expectations, PC motivations that don't go along, PCs that don't complement each other so the team don't function well, it will only result in a lot of headache and a lot less fun.

Almost everything here is up for debate :)

### **Campaign style**

I don't think the Die Hard movies are the pinnacle of the industry, but it does have many things going for it. The protagonist figuring out the plot, plenty of action (both sort of realistic while still allowing for some epic things to happen), some humor and fun, a protagonist that both gets in a lot of a trouble and really gets to carry out his plans, a personal involvement, excellent story pacing, plot twists. The plots has villains motivated by everything from just money to revenge, the magnitude going from just holding some office workers hostage to bringing the entire US infrastructure to its knees. Combine it with some of the more "intellectual" elements from Mission Impossible 1, and you have the tone I prefer. Of course, set in the EP universe, with lots of sciency bits added.

For EP, I think there's a wide range of adventures to explore: horror habitat survival, intrigue and plotting from personal to political, spy stuff, science mysteries, exploration, seeing the solar system, action going from gritty (a small room and a stronger morph opponent with a lead pipe) to the epic destruction potential at these tech levels.

I'm not really into gate exploration for its sake alone, that would probably be as part of a story that gave you a reason to go there. And I'm not into only fighting x-threats.

And I really, really dislike downright silly gaming where everyone acts like 10-year olds.

### **Character motivation**

This will start out as an autonomist campaign (unless, before I start designing too much, the players want something else - this isn't set in stone, I just need there to be a "motivational platform" that I can build adventures from). Please make characters that will want to act "on the sharp end" of the autonomist agenda - spreading autonomy, freedom and equality, sticking it to the hypercorps, protecting and advancing transhumanity, exploring, ending indenture, etc. That doesn't necessarily mean you're a noble anarchist - you could be in it for the adventure, because you can't settle down, for the rep, the social status, because you don't know anything else. Maybe you think anarchism is silly but you're doing it to spite your inner system family, or you're trying to build up favors needed to track down your lost sister. Maybe your current motivation only works short term, but you have a PC story arc that will work long term. If you can work up a nasty criminal type that could work in the group, go ahead. Whatever you decide, you need to be able to give a positive answer to questions like "we think that hypercorp is up to something in that habitat, could you look into that?"

### **A note on autonomists**

Autonomists are not all nice guys. They're a varied bunch, like people everywhere are. Especially at the "top" and at the sharp end, you see driven, vicious people. Look at labor unions - everyone there is fighting for the terms of the average member, and their election system brings high rep members to the top. But the guys at the top, for all the work they do for the little guy, are still often lying, vicious bastards who'll gladly backstab rivals in the union. The "frontline heroes" who fight police at illegal blockades and sabotage company equipment are likely to be brutish, short-tempered bastards.

Is the outer system a nicer place than the inner system? Sure. The incentives in hypercapitalism point individuals and organization towards seeking influence, status, and personal wealth. In the new economies, the incentives point towards seeking influence, status, and advancing the greater good. While that makes for a better society because striving for power tends to align with doing good, the lack of money in no way abolishes things like personal ambition and jealousy.

Of course, the outer system has more honestly helpful people who truly buy into the autonomist ideologies, and more high-rep benefactors than the inner system has philanthropic millionaires. But you can in no way count on autonomists to play nice and not have an agenda.

### **No disruptive characters**

I'm all for PCs with interesting quirks and flaws - and few things are less interesting than the perfect, rational, stone cold character. By all means, impose your character's personality on the encounters and story. Inherently disruptive chars are totally off limits though. If every 2nd encounter, I have to strain my mind and bend over backwards to figure out how the NPCs can react realistically to your batshit crazy without the story derailing, you're doing it wrong. A significant minority of players seem to like this and maybe it works at some tables, but it doesn't work with me as the GM. Please make PCs that won't routinely and obsessively offend NPCs or do awkward things, or that can't pass for normal (with respect to the very wide range of normal in EP of course).

### **Wellrounded characters**

Most encounters will revolve around combat, social interaction, or smarts (science, investigation, McGuyver-style survival). Everyone must at least be able to function or contribute something in all 3 areas - it is much more fun when no players are sidelined for prolonged periods. I'd love to say that its your own call, but the reality is I'm too nice a guy to feel good about a player being left out for a session, when all it takes is just one social skill so I can work something into an encounter that will make that PCs involvement make sense. Dumb and antisocial (not merely asocial) characters have a hard time in EP, and even the geekiest argonaut could have been in a habitat involved in skirmishes with ultimates, criminals or hypercorps where they had to learn to use a weapon, so it shouldn't be a problem with any character concept that isn't intentionally handicapped.

This does not in any way mean that characters have to be broad generalists, at all. If you still feel this interferes with your character concept, go ahead and ask.

### **Team roles**

Ideally, most of the following skill areas would be covered in the team, or at least be defaulted to. Lacking the majority of them would make story telling difficult and limit options. We should coordinate the PCs a bit if needed.

Hacker

Combat

Infiltration

Soft social skills (like Persuasion, Protocol)

Hard social skills (like Intimidation, Deception)

Engineering/hardware

Medical/biology

Psychosurgery/mental

Sociology/politics

Nanotech

Research/Investigation

Space operations

Artificial intelligence

Physics

### **Character knowledge skills**

I will provide short “player handouts” where needed if PCs have appropriate skills to justify it. I think it’s cool when players can present their PCs specialist knowledge rather than the GM doing it, and of course it lets you run characters that know stuff you don’t.

Also, if you as a player know stuff you want to use in-game, please provide your character with corresponding knowledge skills. Being a great shot is one thing, but handling any situation like Jack Bauer requires the planning that comes from Profession: One Man Army, even if you watched enough 24 to do it or you’re a real life SWAT leader. It’s a small thing, but applying your player knowledge to your PCs actions can be immersion breaking.

Many knowledge skills will allow players to ask questions like “what will happen if I do this” or “how will they/it react to this”.

Also the house rules list a few uses for knowledge skills.

### **No invincible characters**

I’m not sure it is a problem in EP, I haven’t really been exposed to munchkins here, but in other games, I hate invincible chars. Combat monsters that can only be scratched by heavy weapons makes it impossible for me to provide realistic challenges, and any threat to him will instagib the other PCs. Not fun. A character that can spot any lie will ruin most good stories. Not fun either. Powerful is fine. Invincible, whatever area it is in, is not.

### **No psi characters**

I’m not sure that I ever want to deal with mind-reading PCs with mental disorders and any NPC being just a player decision away from getting exposed to “magic” and having their world-view turned upside down. But I certainly don’t want to do it as part of my first EP campaign.

So no characters with psi.

## House rule motivations

Why I made the house rules I did:

Flashbacks: Unless that's what the session/challenge is about, I hate hours of boring recon, endless contingency plans, etc.

Cumbersome Weapon Ratings: Really, bigger isn't always better. I have to bring this rule to all games ;)

Armor: I strongly dislike stacking armor to invincible levels, and having some types of armor be mandatory because they stack penalty-free.

Weapons: Beam weapons need a buff, and pistols are too deadly.

Emotion implants/synthmorphs: Mechanically, as written these bonuses are just too big for any serious grifter to not have them.

Implants: I really don't like it when every morph is kitted out with a ton of low/moderate cost implants and all are nearly identical in their abilities. Choose the implants that define your role - it makes everything more interesting.

VR/simulspace acceleration: With x60 speed in simulspace, infomorphs would soon dominate.

People in biomorphs would be in VR all the time, ruining the setting's bias for biomorphs.

Knowledge skills: This is just a fleshing out of what is suggested in the rules already - and Art and Interest skills could use the buff compared to Professions and Academics imo.

## ---- House rule section ----

### Flashbacks

When doing recon and making plans to for example infiltrate a facility, this can be done with Flashbacks, which will play out like when watching Ocean's 11/12/13 or Leverage - a problem arises, and then you see their ingenious solution *afterwards* as a flashback. This will mostly be done only when both the GM and players agree on it - sometimes planning a caper in detail is a fun and integral part of the story. If the caper will be done with Flashbacks, all details of recon, planning and setup will be left vague – it will simply be announced that the players have scouted the facility and made a plan. All PCs start out in a Vague state, unfixed in the story. The GM presents the basic layout and outer perimeter. One or several PCs (or a drone or similar) then enter the facility and become Fixed – this action, its time and place, is now a fixed part of the story and no longer Vague. As obstacles are encountered, the PCs there can try to overcome it, or call a Flashback by spending 1 Moxie point. A random PC who is still Vague (in the present or past) is selected (including the one who called the Flashback - his past starts out Vague). This PC can then come up with a solution to overcoming the obstacle and will roll an appropriate skill – the action becomes a Fixed part of the story. If this succeeds, the obstacle is overcome, and the character is awarded 1 Moxie. If the character obviously breaks continuity by trying to change Fixed parts of the story, 1 Moxie is lost (and the GM might rule that the action is impossible). If the test fails, further complications that need to be solved might arise (by further action or another Flashback call).

Example: PC 1 sneaks into the compound and encounters a patrolling guard. Not having any way to handle this without prior planning, he calls for a Flashback and spends 1 Moxie. The player that gets the Flashback can choose how to overcome the obstacle. He could:

- Have snuck in to be in position to provide a distraction and roll Infiltration.
- Have bribed the guard earlier with Persuasion.
- Spoof an alarm to get the guard to move to a different location, rolling Infosec.
- Be alongside the infiltrating PC and roll Intimidation to threaten the guard with a gun.

Along with respecting continuity, players should consider the feasibility of their suggestion (which will result in a modifier to the roll) and the consequences of failure. Combat actions should typically be resolved as a single Skill roll rather than blow-for-blow.

The GM can apply negative modifiers to players applying the same solution repeatedly.

### **Cumbersome Weapons Ratings**

Weapons with a CWR applies this as a modifier to Initiative rolls, unless the weapon is properly braced (lying prone, weapon resting on a low wall or window frame, etc.). In confined spaces, like melee combat, firing from inside a small vehicle, or leaning out of a window, the GM can choose to apply the CWRx10 as a modifier to the attack.

SMG and smaller: 0 CWR

Automatic rifle sized: -2 CWR

Sniper rifle/machine gun sized and larger: -4 CWR

Combined arms: the lower CWR added at half value, minimum -1.

Extended magazine and suppressors: additional -1 CWR.

### **Armor**

Maximum 1 armor-increasing mod.

Maximum 1 "stacks without penalty" armor (implant armor still stacks without penalty of course).

And of course like everything else it has to make sense (not much fits in a smart skin for example, before it starts looking like something else).

### **Weapons**

Laser pulsers have AP -2 and do 2d10+2 DV.

Pistols and Shard Pistols can't fire in FA mode.

### **Hiding/feigning emotions for synthmorphs and with emotional dampers and endocrine control**

These bonuses only apply fully when masking/feigning emotions is the primary part of the deception – in other cases they will only apply partially or not at all.

For synthmorphs, and other morphs with emotional dampers turned on, in situations where strong emoting is needed, an equal negative modifier can apply.

### **Implants**

So far, the standard rules are used, but if implant use becomes unreasonable, some form of progressive cost for more implants might be added.

### **VR/simulspace**

There is no VR/simulspace acceleration (except the standard x3 acceleration for infomorphs, and whatever speed other morphs can handle).

Psychosurgery times are for digital minds operating at x3 speed (so working on standard speed biological minds takes three times as long), but changed so:

1 week becomes 1 day

1 day becomes 1 hour

1 hour becomes 10 minutes

### **Knowledge skills to support social skills**

If the PC's knowledge skills can support a social skill test, the player shortly recite the ways the skills helps him and roll - each skill value that he rolls lower than results in a +10 to the social skill roll, to a maximum of +30. If for example Networking in a university science department, a player with Academics: Astrophysics could announce that he used a recent publishing on gamma burst observations as an icebreaker. Interest: Partying and Interest: Drug use could apply for Persuasion on scum barge bar. Interest: Fine Cuisine and Art: Rhetoric could help Protocol tests at a socialite dinner.