ANNIHILATION







THE SOUTHERN REACH TRILOGY



A JUMPCHAIN CYOA

Annihilation
The Southern Reach Trilogy

Annihilation, Authority & Acceptance

It was about 32 years ago that it was first noticed; an invisible skin that separated our world from…something foreign. Something that did not belong to our world.
This anomaly, simply known as 'the border', centred on an old lighthouse on the southern coast. To the naked eye from outside, everything within the border was completely normal, but anything crossing that invisible line vanishes – sensors, drones, signals, cables, test animals, including the unsuspecting first responders.

The public was sold the lie of a chemical spill while the Coast Guard and Army Engineers established a cordon, and the newly formed Southern Reach agency frantically searched for answers. It was two years before an opening in the border was discovered; a glowing rectangle of light, and by then, Southern Reach knew for certain the border was expanding; growing in fits and starts, but never showing the slightest heed to any attempts to stop it.

The first expedition to enter found an absolutely pristine wilderness, containing the remains of the towns and the lighthouse that had existed in place before the border appeared. They brought back observations that no artificial contaminants could be found, not one trace of microplastics or elevated CO_2 or polychlorinated biphenyls: a hint that the entire region not only was isolated from the rest of the world's ongoing ecological catastrophes, but had undergone some kind of purging of mankind's traces.

Infuriatingly no answers to Area X's nature or origins could be determined, a trend that would continue for the next thirty years. Was it caused by something out of this world? A foothold for an alien invasion? A religious rapture? An intersection of cosmic branes? A portal to a parallel universe?

Southern Reach's efforts to find out just what Area X represented intensified, but more pressing issues forced funding away, causing institutional decay to set in. With each year that passed, more outlandish experiments and theories percolated through the science division, and all that could be done was send in more expeditions, each one no more conclusive than the first. But Area X remained aloof.

The eleventh expedition returned, but instead of emerging from the border, each member was found at their home many miles from Area X. There was no hint as to how they had crossed back through the border or the layers of guarded perimeter Southern Reach had installed around it. None of them could remember how they had returned, and one by one they all died of cancer.

You will begin this jump just before the twelfth expedition is due to enter Area X, searching for answers like the previous ones. The roster includes five women: A psychologist serving as the team leader, a surveyor, a linguist, an anthropologist, and a biologist whose husband was on the eleventh expedition.

Your allocated budget is **1000 Choice Points**.

STARTING CONDITIONS

Your gender remains the same as the previous jump or swap it now for no cost, and your age is 3d8+20.
Your starting location is at the Southern Reach's primary facility, not far from the first of several layers of heavily guarded and monitored perimeters that separate Area X from the prying eyes of inquisitive journalists and conspiracy bloggers.

DURATION

Your stay in this world, if you do not enter Area X itself, will last for 10 years.
If you enter Area X, each year that passes counts as two years towards this duration.
However, time inside Area X occasionally chooses not to align with the time that passes outside of it, sometimes to the extent of years passing inside while only weeks pass for those who remain outside.

BACKGROUNDS

Expedition

You are a volunteer for the next expedition into Area X. Your superiors in Southern Reach tell you this will be the twelfth expedition sent into the Shimmer. You have spent weeks undergoing the best survival training and preparation for your mission that they can provide, including hypnotic preparation to avoid disorientation that comes from passing through the Shimmer and listening to the reports from previous expeditions.
You can join the twelfth expedition as an additional member, or be a Drop In without a pre-established identity.

Research

You are employed by Southern Reach as a researcher for at least a couple of years, although that's a rather poorly-defined description. You might be a physicist or an ecologist, an experienced astronomer or an epidemiology graduate Southern Reach hooked right out of college. You work surrounded by the impending doom of a comprehension-defying threat, but seldom are given the funding and freedom to make any progress.

Central

Central is the power behind Southern Reach. Although this lurking giant of the military and intelligence sector *technically* doesn't control Southern Reach's operations, it does appoint its Director and approves funding and manpower. If you're in an executive position within Southern Reach, you've been around Central long enough to know how the game is played.

BACKGROUND PERKS

Perks are discounted 50% to the listed background; 100cp perks become Free.

Role – 100cp, One Free to Matching Background

Each member of the Southern Reach is selected for having a particular set of skills suited to their occupation.

- ⊗ **Expedition** members, whose task is to cross the border and explore the wilderness of Area X, have occupations either that are useful in analysing and recording Area X's environment in the field, or for keeping the team functioning. Potential occupations include surveyor, biologist or archaeologist, or perhaps a more socially-oriented team role like medic or psychologist.
- ⊗ **Researchers** possess experience in one or more scientific disciplines, although many are experts in the more fringe applications of their field. Laboratory researchers tend to have a more clinical and theoretical perspective on Area X, and they hold roles like theoretical physicist, molecular engineer, neuroscientist, geneticist, mathematician, or similar.
- ⊗ **Central** administrators tend to come from heavily security-vetted occupations from within the government homeland security sector, with previous job titles like Intelligence Analyst, Major (Ret.), Executive Director, Case Officer, and the like.

Regardless of which specific role you choose, you have 10 years of training and on-the-job experience for it, either in your background or gaining equivalent knowledge and expertise if Drop In. Additional purchases are available to pad out your resume.

The Thistle – 100cp, Expedition

HP Lovecraft wrote: "We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far." In focusing on a single small detail of your immediate surroundings, such as a flower, neatening the stack of papers on your desk or the clock ticking down seconds on the wall, the looming presence behind the edges of your peripheral vision can be ignored, protecting your mind from awful comprehension and saving it from piecing together awareness that would begin your downward spiral.

Survivalist – 200cp, Expedition

Months of training at Central have filled your mind to spilling with the skills necessary for expedition work. Several different ways to start a fire without matches, dozens of ways to hunt, fish or trap food animals, a handbook of memorized edible plants and fungi, and practiced skill at setting and breaking camp, among many other essential skills like navigation, field medicine. You have more than enough survival training to live indefinitely in any wilderness that has enough water and edible biomass to sustain you.

Lodestone – 400cp, Expedition

Your past doesn't let go easily, and the waves of your mind wash old memories ashore. You can choose for your recollections to play out in your mind, as vividly and intensely as though you were experiencing them all over again, or you can simply take heed of the lesson and put further reminiscing aside.

By either choice, such recollections reinforce your earlier mental state and the lessons you learned from the experience, burning them fresh again into your awareness and reminding you of the person you were and still are.

Other times, the message may be compelled by new situations you've encountered, bringing forth an emotion or an instinct that serves you in the here and now: like the time you took a shortcut through the alleyway on your way home from college and walked into the aftermath of a mugging gone wrong, one man standing over the other with a knife, and you knew you had to *run*.

Transference – 600cp, Expedition

There may come a time when the original stagnates, becoming an evolutionary dead end, but casts a seed into the wind to fall on distant ground which may persist. Life presses onward, and the offshoot takes over as the new way forward.

If a copy of you exists, one close enough in mind and body to pass as you, you may choose to exchange your "you-ness" to the copy at any time. The copy becomes "you" for the purposes of your chain continuation, becoming the new protagonist of your story.

This transfer can occur once per jump automatically, and indeed retroactively, to avoid death or permanent entrapment. Or simply for the "old you" to stay behind, while the "new you" continues onward.

Founding Fixture – 100cp, Researcher

It seems like there's somebody in every workplace who seems to do nothing, produces no work of substance, yet is somehow indispensable and beyond any manager's ability to either fire or whip into shape. That's you. Like a woodworm deep in a tree's trunk, you remain stubbornly embedded in the organisations you burrow into, so long as you're not setting fires and tearing the place apart. It would be easier to throw the log in the fire or resign it to the woodchipper than go to the effort of removing you.

Observer Effect – 200cp, Researcher

The samples brought back from Area X by the expeditions are subject to the most intense scrutiny the Southern Reach can afford, and in every case the analysis results show them to be mundane by every measurable standard and recorded observation. And yet…the overwhelming opinion of everyone who handles them is that their appearance is a lie that conceals their true nature.

This all-pervasive superstition drapes itself over any object or creature that you study and that has anomalous, paranormal or supernatural qualities, presenting you with an undeniable instinct that it is far from ordinary, even when all objective tests and measurements can find nothing wrong and its deception is beyond all other detection.

Contextualizing The Terroir – 400cp, Researcher

Scientific approaches have proven to be insufficient to grasp the nature of the border or the area that lies beyond it, and in examining the irrational, one must be equipped with irreverent tools. You are a throwback to the Science & Séance Brigade: despite the implausibility, you have chosen to equip yourself with superstition and pseudoscience; a false science to examine a false reality. "Prebiotic energy" and "quantum chakras" will provide you with a better understanding of anomalous phenomena than materialistic tools which are easily lied to. Don't expect your research to skip any important steps, but at least this method permits you to grasp hints – or dare I say, revelations – of the principles of phenomena that defy conventional thinking.

Breach – 600cp, Researcher

The Observer Effect neatly states that whatever is studied is changed by the observer; however, you should pay close attention to the opposite reaction: a scientist cannot make observations without themselves being changed by their discoveries.

By conducting studies into their weird and preternatural, collecting parts of it and uncurling its most difficult questions in your mind, you begin to crystalize its nature within your own laboratory.

As your research progresses, the boundaries dividing the source of anomalous phenomena and your place of study will bow and weaken, bringing it metaphysically closer to you.

The final collapse of ordinary reality into the anomalous is a conscious decision for you, usually presaged by a momentous discovery or the final compilation of all knowledge on the anomaly into one place.

If your lab happens to be near the anomaly you are studying, you might draw it to you like a beacon, extending its reach to envelop your place of study. If your place of study is not near the anomalous area, you will instead create a new, smaller hotspot centred on your laboratory, sharing its physics with the anomalous region you have been studying.

Paranoia For Beginners – 100cp, Central

Years of domestic terrorism work for Central have instilled in you a healthy degree of operational paranoia. If anyone's intelligence is poor enough to try and spy on you, you'll quickly discover them. Your habits include checking the cars behind you on the highway for people tailing you, sweeping for bugs and hidden cameras in your office at regular intervals, and memorizing random tiny details so you'd know if your desk or house was searched while you were away. The insignificant signs of intrusion and the sense of being watched feel like something in the corner of your eye that you cannot get out.

Bureaucratic Immune Response – 200cp, Central

Your place within an organisation is defended by a suffocating bureaucratic response that drags down and suppresses the activities of your rivals and enemies within the organisation. Reports your detractors request never arrive; their meetings will get re-booked at the last minute constantly; generally speaking, you're in control of how the organisation reacts to their work and their requests to change things. They'll still be able to do their job, but beyond that even the most basic of maintenance tickets will leave them with a leaky ceiling for months on end if you feel like making their life miserable.

Best And Brightest – 400cp, Central

Your work at Central has cultivated a well-organised mind; like all the best intelligence analysts, you love nothing more than to immerse yourself in an ocean of information, letting your mind categorize and organise it.

From soulless data logs and official reports, to receipts from the pizza place they frequent, the scribbled notes on napkins and half-legible signatures in their chequebook, you've developed the ability to quickly take apart vast piles of the incidental detritus of life to paint a coherent picture of your subject, the world they operate in, the niche they inhabit within greater organisations and plans, and glimpse their thoughts and motivations.

A House In Order – 600cp, Central

When you are surrounded by strangers delving into strange business, you may in desperation clutch for any tool to guarantee trust. You have found ways to set aside the doubt that free-willed subordinates instil, and produce a subliminal tether that brings order – or at least, a type of order. Central's fiercest secrets are yours to implement; a form of psychological conditioning that restructures their mental state and can be used to install post-hypnotic triggers into their subconscious minds.

Unlike sideshow hypnotists, your methods work whether the subject is willing or unwilling. It takes about a day to condition a subject properly, and the first command is usually "forget everything that happened in the last day".

Hypnotic suggestion can be used to control how and what the subject thinks, to compel moods or obedience, to control their recollection and falsify their senses to the point of seeing a calm illusion instead of a maddening reality. This tool is not only useable on others, but can be installed in your own mind through autohypnosis, allowing you to 'trigger' your own mental state and coil your own thoughts back into your mind when they break adrift on the seas of delirium.

As a side effect, your knowledge of these mental conditioning methods also allows you to recognise similar forms of mind control and to break its hold on someone or fight against it being used against you.

GENERAL PERKS

Falling Out of Orbit – 100cp

It's not easy to stand up for yourself against the people you love and who you know love you back, but a deer tick or a leech surely loves its host, too. You will not have any lack of courage or resolve to break the social bonds that hurt you, even if the act of breaking those ties is anguish itself.

Porcupine – 100cp

Being introverted, abrasive, and antisocial makes making friends hard, but despite the bristles and thorny nature of your personality, it's not impossible to forge connections to other people no matter how many spikes you bear. Conversely, as you become exposed to the prickly nature of another person's personality, you can feel your way around their barbs and find a way to connect to them, too. It may take time, patience and a bit of mutual social manoeuvring, but if you make the effort to reach out you'll eventually find a friendly hand reaching back.

Last Casualty – 200cp

If Southern Reach should ask you to set aside your name, you are one of the few who take this measure in stride. Your sense of identity doesn't require the foundations of an external reference; it does not depend on anyone else's label or categorization, nor does it collapse if the connections you've made to other people disintegrate.

Your mind and iself-identity are more self-confident and resilient against the forces that might cause you to question yourself; in particular, during the process of change. You might become lost with no way to get back, but you need not fear ever losing sight of yourself.

The Thick Of It – 400cp
You are precisely the sort of person who believes in keeping their friends close, but their enemies closer, because that's where you can keep a wary eye on them the best. The closer you are to the source of an upcoming catastrophe, the clearer you can tell that disaster is on its way, and how much time you might have before escape becomes futile.
Whether it's a nascent existential threat, a tsunami, or a domestic terrorist attack, being right there in the build-up makes you more likely to survive it when it finally arrives.

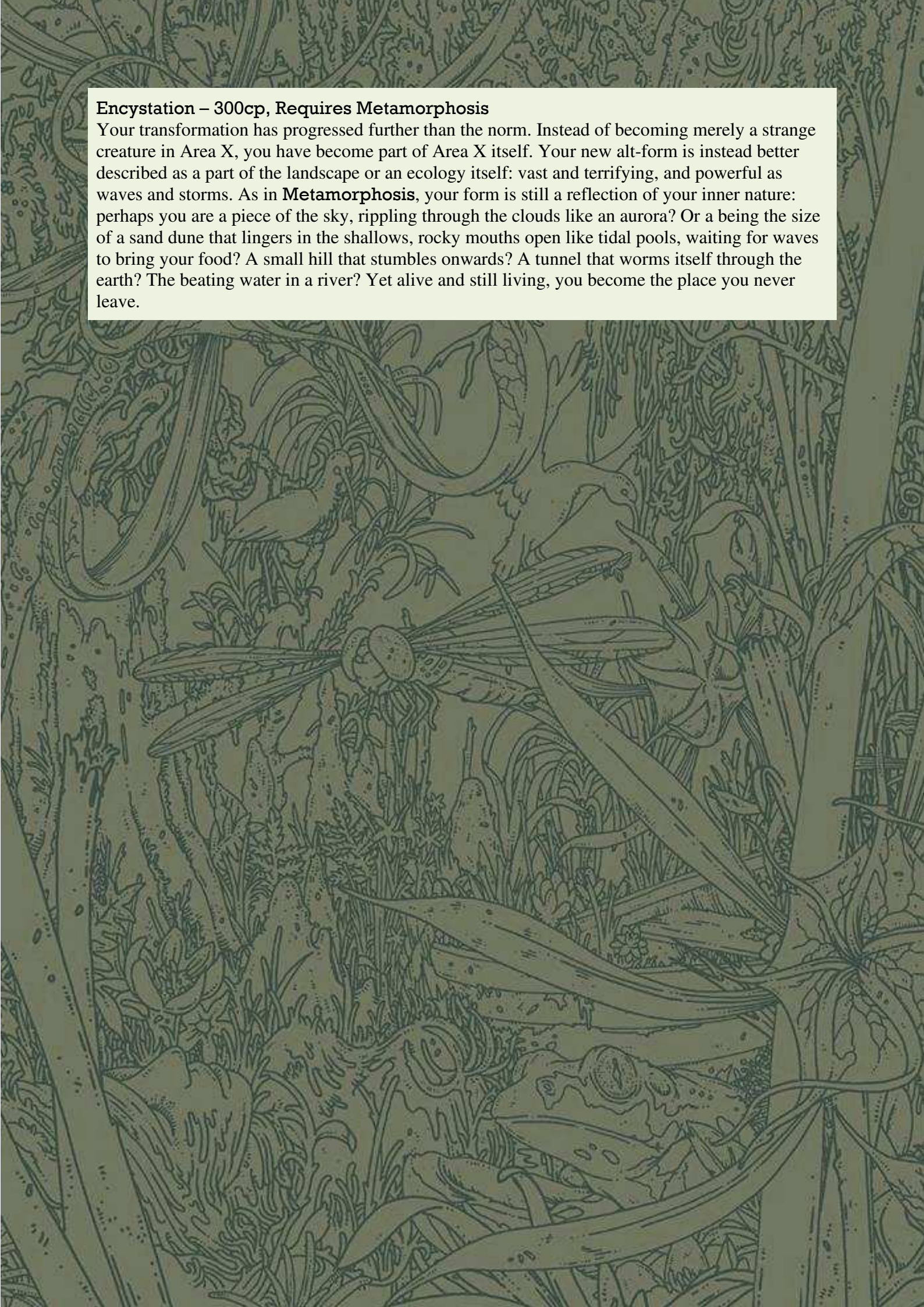
Where Lies The Strangling Fruit – 600cp
It seems, despite Southern Reach's best efforts, that Area X's nature has escaped its containment – although you should question whether it was ever contained at all. You have been infected by its metamorphosing nature, and it grips you with sensation and awe.
In taking this perk, you control the degree to which the Brightness inhabits you, halting or pausing its influence over you without resorting to cruder measures.

By allowing just a sliver of Brightness to grow in you, it removes external influences on your mind, making hypnotic commands and other mental influences ineffective on you, and helps you see things as they really are, instead of the polite fictions your mind prefers to see. Not stripping away enough to drive you mad with revelation, but just enough to lift the wool from your eyes and notice the walls are breathing. Under dim lighting conditions and from certain angles, your eyes may glimmer.

If you allow the connection to metastasize further, your mind engages a kind of proprioception with your surroundings. The world is clearer and sharper as it's never been, because it is a part of you and you are a part of it. You can count every leaf on the trees around you, feeling the wind pass through the reeds like tickles over your skin, taste the richness of the soil under your boots, and hear ants marching in their tunnels. Other beings who share infection with Area X or other otherworldly influences see you as emitting a glow.

Should you become injured, the Brightness washes though you once you are in a safe enough location, channelling its growth and change into regeneration and rejuvenation, so that a bullet wound might be well on the way to recovery within a day. Such hasty repairs are, unfortunately, an exhaustive affair that you may spend in hours of delirium and feverish dreams that your body burns its reserves to fuel.

Metamorphosis – 100cp
Area X has already made its mark on you, and you on it. Your form is no longer human, or entirely human, now being something like a cryptid animal or an unusual growth of vegetation. This new outward form reflects a way in which you interact with the world, and is based on a real animal or plant, possibly fused with a humanoid form or features, with a minor paranormal trait. One who destroys and steals may have the form of a carnivore that steals voices. One who wishes to be surrounded by life and bask in the sun may become a humanoid formation of flowers. One who drowns in their problems may become a dolphin with sorrowful eyes. One who searches may become a kite surfing the thermals.
This form becomes an Alt-form in future jumps, and the change has granted you the instincts to live on in this form.
You must choose whether you begin with this form and your starting location for this jump is set to within Area X, or whether you will take on this new form after entering Area X.



Encystation – 300cp, Requires Metamorphosis

Your transformation has progressed further than the norm. Instead of becoming merely a strange creature in Area X, you have become part of Area X itself. Your new alt-form is instead better described as a part of the landscape or an ecology itself: vast and terrifying, and powerful as waves and storms. As in **Metamorphosis**, your form is still a reflection of your inner nature: perhaps you are a piece of the sky, rippling through the clouds like an aurora? Or a being the size of a sand dune that lingers in the shallows, rocky mouths open like tidal pools, waiting for waves to bring your food? A small hill that stumbles onwards? A tunnel that worms itself through the earth? The beating water in a river? Yet alive and still living, you become the place you never leave.

ITEMS

Items are discounted 50% to the listed background; 100cp items become Free.

Role Equipment – 100cp, One Free

The **Role** you selected comes with a small collection of the necessary tools to carry out your work.

- ⊗ **Expedition** members are given a field kit for their purpose. A biologist might have a field microscope and some nets; a surveyor might have a plumbline and optical theodolite; a geologist might have a rock hammer and folding shovel.
- ⊗ **Researchers** receive a set of desktop tools suitable for their field of study. Lab bench and chemistry glassware for chemists, benchtop microscope and slide prep gear for an astrobiologist, reference books on quantum mechanics for physicists.
- ⊗ **Central** administrators receive a piece of espionage or intelligence-gathering equipment. A handful of hidden cameras and microphones, a wiretap device, modern lockpicks, or a shotgun microphone.

Expedition Gear - 100cp, Expedition

All expedition members receive equipment for the field. A backpack, clothes, camping supplies, knife, survival tools, gas mask, water bottles with filters and purification tablets, and condensed food for a few weeks. You can also choose to have one older-model handgun or an assault rifle, either comes with a few magazines of ammunition.
Those who pay closer attention will notice the equipment is completely sanitized of information about its origins: there are no manufacturer's tags, serial numbers, written instructions in any language, brand logos or trademarks. The equipment itself is a couple of decades behind the current development of materials and design, but is completely functional.

Journal – 200cp, Expedition

Every member of an expedition is given a paper journal to record their observations and work in. Like all journals issued to the expedition members, it's virtually impossible to destroy, as it's intended to be able to be recovered by future expeditions in case of disaster.
As you commit your thoughts to the paper, the weight of those experiences lessens partly. It’s no proof against madness or depression, but regularly updating the Journal will permit you to hold onto your humanity much longer than otherwise.
The other thing that affects this journal is that it will eventually end up in the hands of whoever you intend to receive it. There are no guarantees how soon it will get to them, or the circumstances of its arrival, but even if the path it takes is completely outside your control, the messages within will reach them.

Black Box - 400cp, Expedition

To improve the survivability of the Expeditions, members are issued this device: a small black box, designed to be worn on the belt. It has a glass-covered indicator light: if it glows red, it indicates dangerous environmental conditions or a natural disaster will occur within 30 minutes, giving you time to make for a shelter and safety.
It warns of large environmental-scale events only; "regular" dangers such as encountering a large animal or a structurally unsound building will not set it off.

The Place That Feels Like Home - 600cp, Expedition

We are all products of the places which create and shape us, but you've kept hold of this place above all others. You have a location, held in your mind, that you consider home, although it doesn't need to be your house – or even a man-made structure at all. A pond in an abandoned lot serves just as well as the home you raise your family in.

This place calls to you on a subconscious level, drawing you in when you have no other place to be, and preventing you from becoming lost in imaginary spaces or dimensions that do not exist. You might become lost outside of the world and cast into the nothingness between spaces, yet somehow, you'll awaken in this place, returned to the real world without any indicators for how you arrived or how long you were missing.

You may designate this location at the start of each jump.

Sample Isolation Booth - 100cp, Researcher

The funding for such luxuries may be scarce now, but the security of the samples retrieved from Area X is of paramount importance. This containment booth meets and exceeds the highest standards for biohazard storage. It can temperature-control the contents, including freezing the sample, maintains negative air pressure, has a built-in microscope and "hot box" style built-in gloves for handling the sample without opening the containment.

If a crack or breach ever occurs, the pressure sensor will detect it within seconds and incinerate the contents with a thermite charge. It can come pre-installed in your Cosmic Warehouse or any other property you own.

DMP - 200cp, Researcher

The Southern Reach's proprietary Data Management Program. You can install this software on any of your computers. It comes with the full set of typical high-security data management features: managing users with various security access levels and codeword clearances, document viewing and modification logs, backups, network traffic encryption and more.

Because the DMP was created solely for Southern Reach and built to their extremely odd specifications, it's a deliberately bizarre network environment for anyone trying to penetrate the system. Basic tasks like navigating the directory will drive unauthorized users to frustration.

Data kept on the DMP cannot be accessed or read from any terminal the DMP isn't installed on, even if a hacker got their hands on digital copies of the files or ripped a hard drive right out of one of your servers and took it home.

Personal Domain - 400cp, Researcher

Congratulations on your promotion! You've been transferred as the new head of a department in a clandestine government agency; that's either the Southern Reach, or Central in this world.

Oddly enough, this department seems unmoored and adrift from the table of organisation or chain of command: which is to say, the dozens of staff members report to your position, but your position doesn't seem to report to anyone higher. Weird.

A bean-counter in accounting still fills in your budget line for equipment, facilities and staff salaries year after year, but there's never any serious demand for reports or results. It's effectively freed from the constraints of oversight and accountability, but your authority over it is unquestionable. If you're not too motivated, it's the ideal place to file your timecard and go home, but someone with ambition could really turn this department around.

A Plant That Cannot Be Killed – 600cp, Researcher

Quite possibly the most dangerous thing to be retrieved from Area X, a small plant of a rather common variety; basically a garden weed, although the Biologist would no doubt object to the term. Further investigation reveals the plant's second-most unusual trait: it cannot be killed by any method, including chopping, burning, deprivation of light and nutrients, harsh language or bad music. It just inexplicably grows back.

More problematic, however, is its flower. Some period of time after entering a jump, the plant will bloom a single, pale, short-lived flower.

The pollen from this flower holds the same contaminating property as the gleam of sharp light that started this whole mess or the spores created by the Crawler, seeding Brightness into a host and, potentially, turning them into the nexus for a new Area X.

Grandpa - 100cp, Central

An old M1911 handgun, just like one your grandfather taught you to shoot with.

If you have the need to dispose of it, maybe thrown into the ocean or left it in someone's hands to make it seem like a suicide, a new handgun will soon make itself available to you. The new weapon won't necessarily be the same type of firearm, but will be sourced from the local world.

Central Processing Paperwork - 200cp, Central

Central Processing is a place people disappear into, a blacksite where those deemed a threat to national security vanish. The only proof of its existence are reports that come back on the intel the prisoners have revealed under interrogation. Nobody knows where it is, or what they do to the people who are sent there to encourage their cooperation and extricate their knowledge, but you can probably guess.

If you have a prisoner - subdued, confined and unable to cause mischief - you can fill out this 'Transfer to Central Processing' form. Leave your prisoner alone in a locked cell, and soon they will have disappeared, permanently.

You will receive reports in the following weeks, months and possibly years on whatever intel or knowledge the prisoner can recall, willingly or not. The frequency and factual content of the reports will vary based on how much your prisoner can recall and how strong their willpower is.

Clean-up Crew - 400cp, Central

A contact saved to your phone or written in your diary or rolodex (seriously, who uses those?). The clean-up crew is a faceless group of about a dozen Central operatives, probably still in training, who can carry out basic tradecraft that doesn't involve face-to-face confrontation.

They can bug someone's home, ransack an office for intel, sanitize the aftermath of a shootout, or follow someone for a week or two and take photos from their car or van.

It's inadvisable to trust them against serious opposition or high-risk work, but they could probably manage to arrest an unarmed civilian and not screw it up.

The Legend - 600cp, Central

One of your elder relatives – big brother, parent, uncle, grandfather - doesn't just work in Intelligence; they're a major player in the intelligence sector, a bona-fide legend with op after op under their belt. While they're content to let you do your own thing, they'll keep an eye out for you, just in case you get into trouble you can't handle.

They know enough people in enough places to get you info from highly classified reports: not the classified material itself, but a summary from someone over a cup of coffee. They'll also run interference on anyone trying to scrape up dirt on you.

If you're truly desperate, you can call on them for the occasional favour; perhaps getting a team of operators reassigned for an op, digging up old satellite images, running searches through the national security databases you don't have clearance for.

If you ever have a mission go wrong, they have enough pull in the Federal agencies and favours owed to them to get a national security fuckup swept under the rug. Instead of your career being over and maybe sent to jail, you might just get a demotion and a desk job, with the opportunity to rise again. This kind of favour only comes around once every ten years or so.

COMPANIONS

Insert – 100cp
Insert up to 8 existing companions. Gains a background and 800cp to spend.

Extract – 100cp
Take a canon character who survives until the end of the jump.

Genesis – 100cp
Create a new companion with a background and 800cp to spend. If you need the inspiration, you may apply an OC companion template from below.

Field Scientist
The sort of person who will spend hours walking down a nature trail because the stop to show you new species of detritovore. They're eager to share their knowledge with you. Too eager. As they explain the particularities of a snail or a bat their words spill out in a gush of information. There are so many things to see.

Bright Spark
In any other industry, they'd probably lead a department of rocket scientists or manage a particle accelerator in Switzerland. You have no idea why someone this brilliant works in Southern Reach, a hole filled with unanswerable questions. Maybe they like the challenge, or maybe they never really cared for answers to begin with.

Capable Assistant
Professional and neat, capable and calm in emergencies. You can leave any task to this aide, and trust they will take care of it with your best interests at heart. They know whose calls you want put straight through and how to make your coffee. Maybe they know too much.

The One Wearing Sunglasses
An ex-Central field operative with plenty of enemies. They've gone private, anyway, but lost none of their counter-terrorism skills. Their skills make them blend into any scene with ease; a downtown bar, a remote fishing village, a trailer park. You wonder if you know who they really are.

Doppelganger - 600cp
A carbon copy of yourself or of one of your existing companions, including your more exotic traits and powers. You can choose to have their memories or personality ever-so-slightly tweaked or adjusted in some way, maybe to forget something that should be left forgotten, but ultimately, they are still an accurate representation of you.

DRAWBACKS

Up to +1000cp worth of drawbacks may be taken.

A Major Motion Picture - +0cp

This world takes as much or as little aesthetic inspiration from the movie as you desire, however the plot will still follow the events of the novel trilogy; the course of events of the movie will turn out to be due to an unreliable narrator.

Science & Séance Brigade - +0cp

Instead of starting in around the 2020's, the jump begins in 1988, just ahead of the border's first appearance and the formation of Area X around the lighthouse. Your stay is still 10 years (plus or minus the accelerated stay if you enter Area X), but you'll be there to interact with the locals before it appears, and for the first expedition through the border.

Involuntary - +100cp

Volunteering for an expedition into a region almost nobody returns from isn't something that a sane, healthy, happy and comfortable person does. Your life outside of Southern Reach and Area X has no fulfilling relationships or life goals. Time spent with friends or family feels shallow and fake; hobbies and entertaining diversions are pointless distractions from the march of time. Self-improvement is an unrewarding chore. The only place you can find the answers to your life is behind the Shimmer, beckoning you with a siren glittering.

Desolation Colonizes You - +100cp

Nature struggles to reclaim everything. Locations and structures, including stationary vehicles, that are imported or otherwise brought into the world will fall into disrepair and become overgrown at an accelerated rate. Attempts to maintain them and prevent them from being overgrown are a futile delaying action at best. Spores and seeds carried with you into your home, Cosmic or otherwise, will spread infestations of invasive species, replicating Area X's transitional environments.

Re-enactment - +100cp

Central has an embargo on high-tech items being brought across the border ever since the aftermath of the first expedition. Any kind of advanced technology - meaning, more advanced than Earth, year 1990 technology - will fail to work inside Area X, and outside of it will still be erratic and unreliable.

Nameless - +100cp

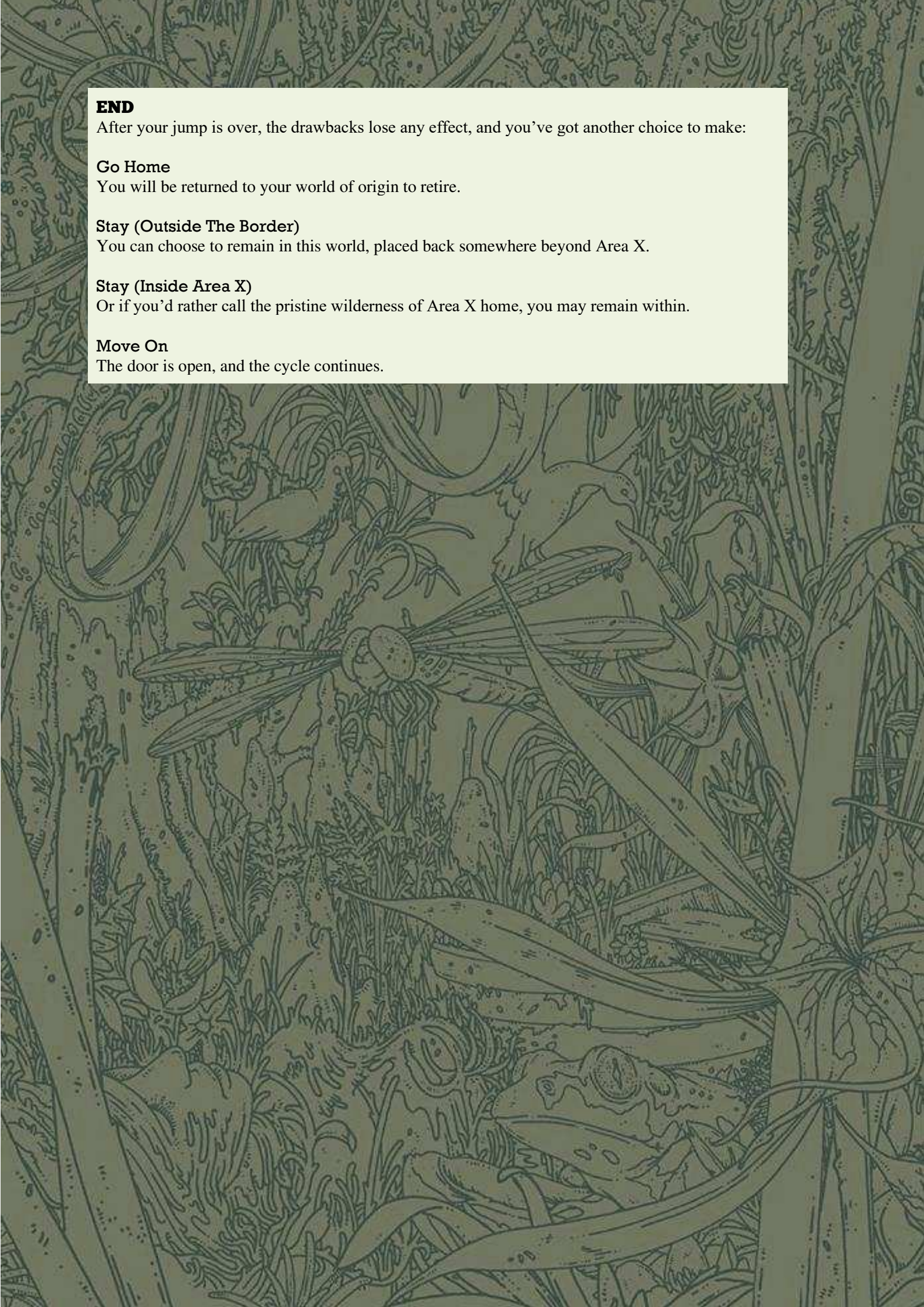
Names are an unwanted burden, tying tragedy to lost team members. Expedition members do not use their names in Area X, using their job title instead. Your name has fallen into disuse, and you struggle to remember it. Ties of personal identity outside of the Southern Reach organisation will begin to rapidly decay; relationships outside of the organisation will begin to fray and fall apart. Likewise will contracts and references to you by name, while any powers you have related to your name atrophy and wither like a plant without water.

Misinformed - +200cp
There are serious factual errors and absences of knowledge about Area X planted in your mind prior or when entering this jump. In most cases, the information is simply unknown - that's why expeditions are sent in, after all. In many other cases, however, information is deliberately withheld, or worse, outright fabricated and falsified to cover up facts they do not want you to know.
The extent of this misinformation extends to any knowledge you have about this world jumping in, and any sources of knowledge or metaknowledge that your perks or powers provide. To understand, you must discover.

Implementation Requires Implantation - +200cp
You have been primed with the post-hypnotic triggers of an Expedition team member, bypassing any previous mental defences against such effects.
Your in-jump superiors and anyone from Central are aware of this, and can and will use the trigger words to enforce compliance with their orders.
This may be as subtle as directing your manner of thinking, or adjusting your emotional state to a more favourable one, or may be as obvious as sudden psychosomatic paralysis and memory suppression. Your superiors or anyone with Central training will use this tool as they feel necessary. The only command you are *not* primed for is self-termination.

A Transitional Deception - +300cp
Area X produces distortions, replications, mirrors of form and function, using these flawed reflections to mask its form like an insect covering its shell in the dead carapaces of its smaller prey. Inside Area X, the landscape will begin to sprout eroded replicas of the places you've called home. Flora and fauna will mutate in ways that remind you of the worlds from your distant memories, potentially becoming much more hazardous than the huge aquatic reptiles and screaming creatures who already call the area home.
Doppelgangers will mirror your most exotic traits; imperfectly, at first, but with passing time becoming more and more convincing recreations.
If you believe these echoes are confined to Area X, trapped behind the border, you are mistaken.

Annihilation +300
Your ego clutches at self-destructive behaviour in order to cope with reality. This behaviour can strike at any time, and in any number of different ways, related to your personality and history. You might destroy your relationships with indiscretions or rejection. You may sabotage your own plans because it drives your excitement or through addiction to gambling on success. You may horde supplies to the detriment of others for fear of losing what you have. You may remind yourself of the joy of living by bringing yourself recklessly close to the cusp of death.
If you also took Implementation Requires Implantation, your implanted commands include one for self-termination.



END

After your jump is over, the drawbacks lose any effect, and you've got another choice to make:

Go Home

You will be returned to your world of origin to retire.

Stay (Outside The Border)

You can choose to remain in this world, placed back somewhere beyond Area X.

Stay (Inside Area X)

Or if you'd rather call the pristine wilderness of Area X home, you may remain within.

Move On

The door is open, and the cycle continues.

NOTES

V0.9
Annihilation, Authority and Acceptance by Jeff VanderMeer
This fan-created Jumpchain CYOA by Myrmidont.
With huge thanks to the people who read the WIPs and provided helpful feedback.

The movie differs greatly to the novels; it's a loose adaptation at best, you shouldn't rely on it to inform you about the novels except for the vaguest premise.

Items of a matching type may be imported for free.
Companions cannot take drawbacks or buy other companions.
You may buy multiple of the same Item; Free items become 50cp on subsequent purchase.

The Brightness
This is the force that produces change in those who are exposed to the spores of the words, the Crawler, the unkillable plant, or other means of contamination.
If you don't enter Area X, it's unlikely you'll be exposed to the spores. Even if you are, it will begin altering you, but can be held back by regularly applying pain to yourself, as the transformative force will spend its efforts on your recovery instead of progressing your transformation. And even then, transformation is not death.

Re-enactment: Completely biological tech gets a pass. For combined organic/technology biotech and magitech, the part relying on technological principles will fail even if the magic and biological parts keep working.

Post-Hypnotic Trigger Commands
The canon commands are known to include:
- Induce acceptance. Making team members agree to things they logically or reasonably rejected moments ago.
- Compel obedience with an order.
- To carry out complex actions or plans on a trigger.
- Reinforcement of a mental state, eg: to calm down a subject.
- Compel the subject toward a particular goal.
- Induce paralysis.
- Induce selective amnesia, causing members to forget memories; minutes to days or weeks of time, blocking out confusing and disorienting (ie: sanity-reducing) effects.
- Cause them to kill themselves in the most immediate and efficient way possible.

Changelog
0.01 WIP
0.8 Feature complete for feedback.
0.9 Added Falling Out of Orbit, Porcupine, Last Casualty and The Thick Of It.

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