

CGG - Tension Mode Example

[Centaurus Gate](#) is a scifi themed RPG based on a rebuild of WEG's Star Wars D6 game and inspired heavily by Farscape. This is an example of the game play that takes place when the Exec switches the game into Tension Mode.

Tension Mode In A Nutshell

For reference, the nuts and bolts of the rules for Tension Mode are in the Basic Rules, [Here](#).

Tension Mode is a mode of play that is triggered by either the Exec or the players. It is a simple switch on and off deal, you are in Tension Mode or Storytelling at one time, never both. Tension Mode revolved around the concept of Tension, giving it a number value. The source of tension for these periods of play is the desire of the players to avoid a Pitfall for one or more of their explorers. Here are some examples of pitfalls your explorers might meet in the expanse:

- A parasite invades the Executive Officer of the ship, and will leave him paralyzed if left unchecked!
- The ship strikes a subspace strand leaving the power out, the engines down, and life support failing! The crew will perish if left unchecked.
- Talks with an alien ambassador have gone south, and his nation and allies may declare war on the ETF if left unchecked!
- Due to worry and poor crew morale, a low-ranking officer is planning a mutiny. She will take over the ship if left unchecked!

You get the idea. The Pitfall is always something dramatic that makes one or more players go: *Hell no, let's not!* This is the source of the tension, trying to avoid the Pitfall itself. The only important thing at the start of Tension Mode is identifying the Pitfall (or Pitfalls if there are multiple) and making sure all players are clear on what that will mean in the fiction.

Not all players are going to be central to any given Pitfall. In the first case, the medical officer has much more impact over the situation than the rest of the ship's crew. However the rules for Tension Mode allow the other player's explorers to have meaning by a few methods: Idle! action choice, Placement as First player/Prime player, and Giving help to others. We will explore that a bit in the example.

Example Background / Setup

This game has five players, including the Exec:

- Sally is playing the **Exec**.
- Bob is playing **Hannibal**, Captain, a Complex Exiled Visionary and Curious Tactical Genius (roles: Leader/Security).
- Winona is playing **Tam**, Chief of Security, a Quiet Honorable Warrior (role: Security).
- Amy is playing **Quinn**, Chief Engineer, Crazy Inventor and Obsessed Scholar (roles: Engineer/Science).

- Frank is playing **Graph**, alien Medical Officer, Kol'Ten and Driven Xenobiologist (roles: Alien/Medical).

They are all aboard the EOY Memphis, an ETF Corvette quite a way into the expanse when suddenly their I3 'misbehaves'. Other important crew to this example:

- Ship's I3: NOEL.
- ?

Here we go!

The Example

Sally: "After filing back the successful report of the last mission back to Endeavor station, the EOY Memphis speeds across space exploring the so far unknown sector at the very edge of the Spinway. The crew is just doing business as usual. What do you think your explorers are currently doing?"

Frank: "Oh that is easy, Graph is in his medical bay experimenting on horrible human diseases and how they react to tissues from the five allied races."

Bob: "Yea, he would be doing something dangerous like that, remind me why we saved Graph from the Taak'Rhay militant splinter group last mission again?" He sighes.

Frank: "Hey, Graph has done his part. Don't forget the times he has patched your explorers up man!" He smiles.

Bob: "Point taken."

Winona: "Tam is running drills to increase response time against board actions based on previous... failures. Ahem." She looks at Bob.

Bob: "Ok ok. Hannibal is in his cabin writing up a new revised manifesto for once he gets back to the Milky Way that will open everyone's eyes about the weaknesses of relying on I3s so much."

Everyone looks at Amy.

Amy: "I don't know. Oh, Quinn is building a new power source for 4th gen. ISOtech. This can connect to his future endeavor for Obsessed Scholar right? That one is 'A peculiar invention'."

Sally: "Sure Amy, awesome." She makes some notes regarding explorer actions for the future. "Bob, funny thing that Hannibal is writing about I3s, heh. Ok let me frame a scene."

Sally: "The EOV Memphis drops out of FTL without due cause in the wee hours of the morning. A communication channel opens, audio only, in the Captain's cabin. Hannibal looks up from his screen, the first page of his latest manifesto as NOEL speaks."

Sally/**NOEL:** "Captain, it has come to my attention that I can no longer fulfill my duties as overseer aboard the Memphis. Consider this my notice of resignation, effective immediately."

Bob: "Huh, can she do that? Wow, ok, that is all kinds of messed up. What happens to the ship in that case?"

Sally: "Hard to tell right now, but it won't operate as well that is for sure. Several key systems need its management."

Amy: "Guys I need her for Quinn's peculiar invention! No way, let's not let this happen."

Winona: "Having a free-roaming, unemployed I3 aboard sounds like a security nightmare. Tam agrees for sure, let's not."

Frank: "Don't matter to Graph, but he doesn't want to see the mission impeded either. Nothing is going to stop him from his experiments man."

Sally: "Seems pretty clear we need to switch to Tension Mode then. Let me set that up." She thinks for a bit. "Ok guys, 5 Tension Dice, 6 Tension on the track to Pitfall 'NOEL quits.' If that track hits 15 NOEL is done, if it hits 0, she withdraws her resignation."

Bob: "Doesn't this feel vague? I mean, we don't have any clue as to why she is up and quitting. I could use some hints."

Winona: "Agreed."

Sally: "Ok, no problem. She isn't just up and quitting, I'll make the reason obvious and you can go from there. Let me narrate something, I'll involved Frank right away since this clearly isn't going to be Graph's thing." She chuckles.

Frank: "Oh. Great."

Sally: "First Frank, set the scene and tell me what Graph is doing in his medical bay."

Frank: "Graph is in his usually blue and black finely striped flowing robe, only his smooth plain white face mask visible. His eyes gleam as he commands the bay's systems in a deep wavering voice."

Frank/Graph: "Yes, yes. Now test the new virulent Eclipse strain against the human form Taak'Rhay cells from slide 9. Good. Yes, very good."

Sally/**NOEL**: "Lt. Graph, I apologize by my systems are malfunctioning. I must close down med bay interface or risk potential biohazard."

Sally: "The interface hanging in the air before Graph folds onto itself and goes out with a silent flash."

Frank/**Graph**: "NOEL, what? *pause* Can you explain the malfunction."

Sally/**NOEL**: "Negative. Its unknown cascade failure of primary logic functions in core 203, I can't find a cause. However now core 204 is also showing similar signs of damage..."

Frank/**Graph**: "Sounds like an infection to me. Get me Quinn on the line NOEL, quick!"

Amy: "Oh, she has damage. So either she isn't in her right mind or she is just protecting the crew and ship from a horrible failure if she has a breakdown... ouch."

Sally: "Yep, that is the case."

Bob: "Ok, now that is something to go on. Let's get this rolling. Who has Edge Sally?"

Sally: *consults the roles* "The I3 isn't technically part of the ship, so it doesn't trigger the engineer. No alien life, not the alien either. Not a direct security issue, so it falls through to the leader. You and Hannibal have Edge Bob."

Bob: "Cool, ok, so it looks like this is an engineer job at the moment. As the edge player I am going to award Quinn the bonus die, to his Technical die code. I'm going to get things going right off the rip too and make Quinn first player, lets take a chunk out of the issue round one!"

Amy: "Alright, so Quinn will respond to Graph and talk to the captain to get the scoop. Afterwards he will freeze core 204, the still working one, and analyze it for issues with his diagnostic gear."

Sally: "Amy ok, so let me cast that into the rules. That means you'll have Quinn making a Ready! Action, since research is diligence and diligence is Ready! Do you want me to make things worse to earn a bonus die to your roll result?"

Amy: "Things looks ok guys right? Why not?"

Frank: "Yes, I think we are ok with that."

Group seems to agree, at least, no one argues.

Amy: "Sure, make things worse. I'll take the bonus die to the result."

Sally: "I also have to remove a Tension dice, nice. Takes me down to 4 Tension dice, but I up Tension itself to 7. Let's do your diligence roll first."

Frank: "Let's say Graph thinks this is some kind of infection, so he will help Quinn with advice from the medical world."

Sally: "I like it, let's do that."

Amy rolls her dice for Quinn (combined with some from the help she gets from Graph) and gets a total result of 15, earning her 5d from the roll and with the bonus die 6d total.

Sally: "A serious amount of Leverage. I'll say you do indeed discover it is some kind of viral energy, perhaps even a new primitive energy life form. You also find out it thrives on ISOfield energy, and is effectively eating NOEL's peripheral logic cores. This would be analogous to her body, in the energy realm."

Sally: "Ok, I need to narrate how things get worse, but first how about you two narrate something your research."

Conclusions and Notes

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