

74XX COLD SIGNAL

Version: 1.0

Table of contents

THE PREMISE	1
CHARACTERS	2
GEAR	5
DETAILS	6
HOW TO PLAY	8
Situation	10
Opponents	11
Conflict	12
TIES	13
RESONANCE	14
SITES	15
SURVEY OPERATIONS	17
BETWEEN OPERATIONS	21
SOLO PLAY	22
SPARKS	23
License	28

THE PREMISE

The civilizations that preceded you in the Five Galaxies left more than ruins. They left things that still function. A Xalith structure continues to transmit on a frequency no current species has decoded. Celestial Dominion megastructures in Andromeda have sealed interior sections that neither Aquilaria nor Skopalia has successfully entered. Elysian genetic vaults were sealed from the inside — their contents unknown, their quarantine orders issued by an Emperor whose rationale was classified. Precursor sites in Orion's Arm predate every reliable record by a margin instrumentation cannot resolve.

You are survey operatives — contractors, researchers, licensed surveyors, or none of the above — commissioned to enter sites that polities cannot officially access, document what current science cannot account for, and return with something of value to whoever is paying. The clients rarely explain their actual interest. The sites rarely behave the way the briefing suggests. Some team members come back changed. You go in anyway.

CHARACTERS

> Choose your character's specialty.

Surveyor: Site mapping, structural assessment, documentation. Skilled in Investigation (d8), Geology (d8). Take survey equipment and site scanner (bulky).

Xenolinguist: Pre-collapse language decryption, transmission analysis, cultural interpretation. Skilled in Languages (d8), Analysis (d8). Take translation matrix and signal archive.

Engineer: Technology interface, power system analysis, structural stabilization. Skilled in Engineering (d8), Electronics (d8). Take engineering kit (bulky) and structural scanner.

Security: Threat response, automated defense handling, team protection in hostile environments. Skilled in Combat (d8), Stealth (d8). Take pulse rifle (bulky) and tactical scanner.

Medic: Field medicine, biological hazard assessment, Resonance monitoring. Skilled in Medicine (d8), Biology (d8). Take advanced medkit and bio-scanner (bulky).

Navigator: Getting the team through restricted corridors, dead zones, and contested approaches. Skilled in Piloting (d8), Navigation (d8). Take modified survey ship and oddspace charts for restricted zones.

> Choose your character's background.

Independent Contractor: No institutional affiliation — you work for whoever has the access permits or doesn't need them. Start with survey equipment of your choice (¥2 value). Increase 2 skills.

Order of Ascendancy: Their research interest in pre-collapse cognition technology sent you here. What specifically they are looking for has not been disclosed. Start with a Research Mandate TIE (+1) with Order handlers and classified site coordinates. Increase 1 skill.

Skopalian Dissident: You worked in the Union's research tier until your findings were classified before you could publish. Your institutional credentials technically expired. Start with a Restricted Archive Access TIE (+1) and a classified file that could destroy or protect your career. Increase 1 skill.

GCP Licensed Surveyor: Properly registered, properly documented. Authorities know you're here — which means other parties do too. Start with a Survey License TIE (+1) and GCP heritage documentation. Increase 1 skill.

Corporate Contracted: A private interest funded the expedition. Their stated objective and their actual interest in the site are probably not the same. Start with a Corporate Patron TIE (+1) and ¥3 operational budget. Increase 1 skill, but owe a findings report.

Hetsusian Affiliate: A Hetsu clan is your access broker for a specific site. The agreement is valid within their territory. Whether this site falls within their territory is, as with most Confederacy matters, complicated. Start with a Clan Liaison TIE (+1) and passage rights to one site. Increase 1 skill.

> Choose or invent skills (if prompted by background).

Analysis, Athletics, Biology, Combat, Electronics, Engineering,
Geology, Investigation, Languages, Medicine, Navigation, Per-
suasion, Piloting, Signals, Stealth, Survival, Xenology

GEAR

> **Take a survey pack, environmental suit, and ¢2. Most items cost ¢1 each.**

Survey Loadout: Standard issue (pick 3): - Site Scanner (bulky) - Sample Extraction Kit - Translation Probe - Structural Stabilizer (single use, bulky) - Drone Mapper (bulky) - Signal Recorder - Emergency Beacon - Resonance Monitor (tracks Resonance in self and nearby team members)

Armor: Survey Suit (environmental protection, break once for defense), Hardened Survey Suit (¢2, bulky, break up to 3x, vacuum-rated).

Weapons: Pulse Pistol, Pulse Rifle (bulky), Sonic Cutter (also functions as a tool), Stun Charges (4).

Tools: Engineering Kit (bulky), Advanced Medkit, Bio-Scanner (bulky), Xenotech Interface Module (allows limited interaction with pre-collapse systems — unreliable), Oddspace Anchor (stabilizes a small area against spatial anomalies, single use).

Vehicles: Survey Ship — long-range tanks, sensor suite, specimen storage (¢5). Add no WAN transponder for restricted zone access (¢2 more).

DETAILS

> Invent or roll for personal details.

Survey Callsign 1. Alcyone, 2. Basalt, 3. Cairn, 4. Delta, 5. Echo, 6. Fathom, 7. Grid, 8. Hollow, 9. Index, 10. Junction, 11. Keystone, 12. Ledge, 13. Mast, 14. Node, 15. Offset, 16. Point, 17. Quarry, 18. Relay, 19. Seam, 20. Transit

Reason for the Work 1. Academic — you want to know, publication be damned 2. Financial — restricted site rates are exceptional 3. Obligation — someone is owed, and this clears it 4. Personal — something you found once brought you back 5. Ideological — this knowledge belongs to everyone, not the politics suppressing it 6. Contractual — you didn't read the terms carefully enough

Operative Trait 1. Methodical, 2. Obsessive, 3. Cautious, 4. Reckless, 5. Patient, 6. Analytical, 7. Intuitive, 8. Detached, 9. Haunted, 10. Principled, 11. Adaptable, 12. Convinced — of something the others don't believe yet

Commissioning Client 1. Order of Ascendancy research cell, 2. Technocratic Union (official), 3. Technocratic Union (unofficial — classification circumvented), 4. Avaros academic institution, 5. Dominion of Aquilaria noble house, 6. Commonwealth of Elyros survey division, 7. Void Consortium commercial arm, 8. GCP heritage documentation mandate, 9. Private collector — identity withheld, 10. Terran Compact research bureau, 11. Unknown —

payment confirmed, client unverified, 12. No client — the team acquired coordinates they weren't supposed to have

HOW TO PLAY

Play: Players describe what their characters do. The GM advises when their action is impossible, demands a cost or extra steps, or presents a risk. Players can revise plans before committing so as to change goal/stakes. Only roll to avoid risk.

Rolling: Roll a skill die — d6 by default, higher with a relevant skill, or d4 if hindered by injury or circumstances. If helped by circumstances, roll an extra d6; if helped by an ally, they roll their skill die and share the risk. Take the highest die.

Before rolling, check if any of your TIEs apply to the situation. Add the TIE value to your result if relevant.

1–2 Disaster. Suffer the full risk. GM decides if you succeed at all. If risking death, you die. 3–4 Setback. A lesser consequence or partial success. If risking death, you're injured. 5+ Success. The higher the roll, the better.

If success can't get you what you want, you'll at least get useful info or set up an advantage.

Load: Carry as much as makes sense, but more than one bulky item may hinder you at times.

Advancement: After an operation, each character increases a skill (none→d8→d10→d12) and gains d6 credits (€).

Defense: Say how one of your items breaks to turn a hit into a brief hindrance. Broken gear is useless until repaired.

Harm: Injuries take time and/or medical attention to heal. If killed, make a new character to introduce ASAP. Favor inclusion over realism.

GM: Describe characters in terms of behaviors, risks, and obstacles, not skill dice. The sites are not passive — technology running for tens of thousands of years without maintenance behaves unpredictably. Test for site activity the same way you test for bad luck: roll a die, (1-2) something activates or shifts, (3-4) signs of it. Competing parties always arrive at the wrong moment. Give players real information; let the site's full nature remain unclear until they earn it. Lead the group in setting lines not to cross. Fast-forward, pause, or rewind/redo for pacing and safety. Improvise rulings; revise unsatisfactory ones on a break.

Situation

When characters act without risk, the GM rolls a die sized to how settled things are: d4 (chaotic), d6 (precarious), d8 (manageable), d10 (predictable), d12 (stable), to find how the world moves.

- 1–2 Trouble. An adverse fact surfaces, something the characters can see and respond to.
- 3–4 Signs. Trouble shows at the edge; the situation grows less stable, the next die will likely be smaller.
- 5+ Calm. Nothing new; the action lands.

The surfaced fact must be proportionate to what is established, leave something to act on, and follow from prior events, not invented to fill the silence.

Opponents

Characters played by the GM have no skill dice. Define them by their **behavior** (what they want, including when they would rather flee or bargain than fight), the **risks** they present (the 1-2 result for players in conflict with them), and any **obstacles** (visible conditions, armor, numbers, cover, that must be cleared before they can be put down). Signal both before players roll.

Conflict

In a fight, the GM rolls the situation die: d4 if ambushed or scattered, d6 if evenly matched, d8 if holding an advantage, d10 if dominating, d12 if the opposition is broken, to find what the opposition does.

- 1–2 Press. A new risk or obstacle surfaces; the fight grows harder.
- 3–4 Shift. The opposition adapts, repositions, changes tactic; the situation tilts.
- 5+ Opening. An obstacle clears, a gap appears, or the opposition is ready to break.

Roll in lulls, at the start of a fight, or whenever no skill roll applies. For extended conflicts, use Steps: state actions and risks, roll as needed, describe how the situation has changed, repeat. On an Opening with the opposition cornered, they break per their behavior, fleeing, yielding, or bargaining.

TIES

Each operative tracks up to 3 TIEs — key relationships with a role label (Client, Rival Team, Institutional Handler), a numeric value (-2 to +2), and a trait tag (e.g., Forthcoming, Withholding, Competitive). TIE value adds to or subtracts from any roll where that relationship is directly in play. TIEs shift by ± 1 after significant interactions.

When a TIE would go beyond ± 2 : a +3 Client becomes someone you'd protect even when their interests conflict with the team's; a -3 Rival becomes an active obstruction you cannot operate around.

RESONANCE

Extended exposure to active pre-collapse technology does something to people. The mechanism is not understood. The effect is consistent.

Each operative starts with **Resonance 0**. Gain 1 Resonance when you: - Directly interface with active pre-collapse technology - Witness a phenomenon that current science cannot account for - Suffer a disaster roll inside an active site section

Resonance Effects: - **0:** No effect. - **1:** You notice patterns others don't. +1 to Investigation rolls inside active site areas. - **2:** Intrusive perceptions — symbols, frequencies, geometric sequences — surface between scenes. The GM describes what you experience. It is probably information. Probably. - **3:** Your judgment inside the site is not fully your own. Once per scene, the GM may redirect one of your decisions toward the site's most active areas. You don't notice the redirection. - **4 (Full):** You cannot voluntarily leave the site. The team must physically extract you.

Clearing Resonance: Clear 1 Resonance by spending a full operation cycle away from all sites; by receiving a successful Medicine check from a team member; or by filing a formal report documenting what you experienced — this clears 1 Resonance, but the information is now in someone else's hands and on record.

SITES

Sites have **conditions** the team discovers during entry. The GM sets or rolls these before play and reveals them through what the team encounters.

Site Type (d6): 1. Xalith ruins (Triangulum/Hetsusian Enclave) — active transmission, oddspace anomalies, technology that appears to respond to cognition 2. Celestial Dominion megastucture (Andromeda) — vast scale, sealed interior sections, external monitoring by at least one polity 3. Elysian genetic vault (LMC) — biological technology, quarantine designation, sealed from the inside; contents unknown 4. Precursor site (Orion's Arm) — oldest confirmed ruins, Rim Concord restricted zones, partial Terran Compact translation ongoing 5. Unknown origin — no pre-collapse civilization matches the site's architecture or technology signature 6. Convergent — multiple civilizations' infrastructure has overlapped or been built over each other in this location

Site Condition (d6): 1. Dormant — minimal active systems; something is still running that the briefing didn't mention 2. Partially Active — intermittent power, automated systems responding to presence 3. Active — significant systems operational; the site is aware something has entered 4. Transmitting — broadcasting on a frequency that cannot be blocked without disabling the team's equipment 5. Structurally Unstable — the

environment is actively deteriorating; time pressure is physical
6. Contested — another party is already inside, or arrives during the operation

Interior Access (d6): 1. Surface only — interior sealed or collapsed 2. Entry level — first layer accessible; deeper sections sealed 3. Multiple levels — significant access, sealed core 4. Core accessible — the most active sections can be reached 5. Unrestricted — full access; something is permitting entry that shouldn't be 6. Restricted but breachable — access requires bypassing active countermeasures

SURVEY OPERATIONS

Roll d6 for operation assignment. Spend ¢1 to request a different type.

1-2 Documentation survey — map, record, and return without disturbing active systems 3-4 Retrieval — extract a specific artifact, data core, or biological sample 5-6 Choose between two sites with different clients and incompatible access windows

Operation Generator: Roll d20 for each entry.

Client/Employer

1. Order of Ascendancy research cell
2. Technocratic Union — official survey license
3. Technocratic Union — unofficial, classification circumvented
4. Avaros academic institution
5. Dominion of Aquilaria noble house (artifact acquisition)
6. Commonwealth of Elyros survey division
7. Void Consortium commercial arm
8. GCP heritage documentation mandate
9. Private collector — identity withheld
10. Terran Compact research bureau
11. Hetsusian Enclave clan (third-party access brokering)
12. No client — coordinates the team wasn't supposed to have

Objective

1. Document site architecture and produce a registered survey record
2. Retrieve a specific artifact without triggering site response systems
3. Extract a data core before a competing party reaches it
4. Translate an active transmission and determine its destination
5. Assess site stability before it becomes permanently inaccessible
6. Interface with active technology and document its current function
7. Recover biological material from a sealed environment
8. Verify whether a previous team made it out — and what they found
9. Plant a monitoring device without the site registering its presence
10. Prevent a competing party from extracting something they shouldn't have
11. Determine the origin of a transmission that matches no known civilization
12. Find what Survey Expedition SY-7 was approaching when its transmissions were classified

Site (d12)

1. Xalith ruin in Hetsusian Enclave — clan access, Skopalian patrols on the perimeter
2. Celestial Dominion outer structure — Aquilarian exclusion perimeter, external monitoring active
3. Celestial Dominion interior section — sealed, requires breach of existing security
4. Elysian vault site — under Imperial quarantine, multiple access claims on file

5. Precursor belt system — Rim Concord restricted zone, Zynthari monitoring suspected
6. Dead zone site — no WAN, oddspace-only approach, no external communication during operation
7. Derelict station built over a pre-collapse foundation — unclear what is ship and what is ruin
8. Site in contested border region — two polities claim jurisdiction, neither currently enforcing
9. Site under GCP heritage designation — officially protected, access illegal, enforcement inconsistent
10. Newly discovered site — no survey data exists; the briefing is inference from a signal
11. Site previously accessed by another team — their survey is incomplete, and they didn't all come back
12. Xalith Rift adjacent — oddspace anomalies affect navigation and electronics throughout the operation

Complication

1. The site's condition is significantly more active than the briefing indicated
2. A competing team is already inside, or arrives during the operation
3. The client's stated objective conceals a secondary retrieval the team wasn't briefed on
4. A team member begins accumulating Resonance faster than expected
5. Access to the target area requires interfacing with active systems — no passive route exists
6. Polity patrol presence has increased since the approach window was confirmed
7. The site is transmitting something the team's equipment begins responding to

8. Extracting the target physically will trigger a site response; documentation only avoids it
9. A previous team's equipment is still inside — and still active
10. The site's geometry doesn't match any survey approach data; the briefing map is wrong
11. Something inside the site has moved since the last recorded survey
12. What the team was sent to find is not what the site contains — the client knew this

BETWEEN OPERATIONS

Each operative picks one downtime action:

- **Study:** Increase a skill or review recovered site data
- **Recover:** Heal injuries, repair gear, or clear 1 Resonance through rest
- **Consult:** Create a new TIE with a specialist or institution, or shift an existing TIE by ± 1
- **Report:** File findings formally — clear 1 Resonance, but the information is now on record

SOLO PLAY

In a solo game, use these steps to guide your scenes:

1. **Set Expectations:** Consider what your operative knows about the site going in, and what the site’s condition suggests about what you’ll find.
2. **Test Uncertainty:** When the site’s response or another party’s action is unclear, ask the oracle a closed question.
3. **Interpret the Outcome:** If it matches expectations, proceed. If not, let the unexpected result shift the scene.

For closed questions, roll a die based on likelihood:

Likelihood	Die
Very Unlikely	1d4
Unlikely	1d6
Uncertain	1d8
Likely	1d10
Very Likely	1d12

- **1–2 No, and...:** What you expected doesn’t happen, and things get worse.
- **3–4 Yes, but...:** What you expected happens, but with a complication.
- **5+ Yes, and...:** What you expected happens, plus something useful.

SPARKS

Use these tables to spark operation ideas. Combine an Action with a Theme.

ACTION

d20	Action
1	Survey
2	Retrieve
3	Translate
4	Interface
5	Document
6	Breach
7	Extract
8	Stabilize
9	Decipher
10	Contain
11	Locate
12	Transmit
13	Analyze
14	Protect
15	Sabotage
16	Escape

d20	Action
17	Follow
18	Witness
19	Recover
20	Remain

THEME

d20	Theme
1	Signal
2	Collapse
3	Archive
4	Threshold
5	Silence
6	Memory
7	Access
8	Geometry
9	Quarantine
10	Legacy
11	Resonance
12	Sequence
13	Origin
14	Vault
15	Frequency
16	Depth
17	Extinction
18	Contact
19	Record

d20	Theme
20	Return

NPC PROMPTS

d20	Prompt
1	A competing team offers to share access in exchange for a share of findings.
2	Your client goes silent after the approach window opens.
3	A team member's Resonance reading doesn't match what they're reporting.
4	The site's transmission changes frequency the moment your team enters.
5	A polity patrol arrives — but holds position outside rather than intervening.
6	Someone has been here recently. The equipment they left is still running.
7	Your Hetsusian access broker contacts you mid-operation to renegotiate terms.
8	An Order of Ascendancy researcher is already inside — and won't say who sent them.
9	The client updates the objective while you're inside. The new objective is deeper in.
10	A team member begins describing the transmission's content before translation is complete.
11	The previous team's final log ends with a description of something moving.
12	A Skopalian classification officer contacts your ship — politely, with questions.

d20

Prompt

- 13 Your access broker's territorial claim over this site is being disputed by another clan.
- 14 A team member finds personal items in the site that they don't remember bringing.
- 15 The site's automated systems appear to be waiting for something specific.
- 16 A rival team's extraction went wrong. They need help out, and they have something.
- 17 The GCP contacts your ship about a heritage protection complaint filed today.
- 18 Something inside the site matches a description in a document that should be classified.
- 19 A team member at high Resonance insists the site is not dangerous — and may be right.
- 20 The site's transmission resolves into something that looks like a coordinate set.

SITE PHENOMENA

Roll d12 when the GM tests for site activity.

d12

Phenomenon

- 1 A sealed section opens without any team input
- 2 Equipment readings become inconsistent with physical observation
- 3 A transmission begins — directed, not broadcast
- 4 Structural geometry shifts; a previously mapped route no longer connects
- 5 Power draw increases in the section the team just entered
- 6 One team member perceives something the others don't

d12**Phenomenon**

-
- 7 An automated system activates and performs a function no one expected
 - 8 The site's external transmission changes in response to team activity
 - 9 Something that was inactive when the team entered is no longer inactive
 - 10 A section shows evidence of recent activity — not the team's
 - 11 Environmental conditions in a sealed area suggest continuous habitation
 - 12 The site produces a response that appears directed at a specific team member

License

© 2026 Roberto Bisceglie

This work is released under the Creative Commons Attribution
Share-Alike 4.0 International license

This work is based on 24XX rules CC BY Jason Tocci.