

# BRIEFING GAME 3

Battlestar Galactica has been interpreted culturally as in several ways. During these three games we have chosen to focus on different aspects of the BSG canon. If the first game was mysticism and cylon-human relations, the second was unforgiving military sci-fi. This third game is about politics. BSG has been called "The West Wing", in space. This is what we're going for this week. In this game, we hope that leaders will be held accountable to the people and established democratic processes will face the temptation of developing / devolving into autocracy, ethnic dictatorship, anarchy or being threatened by the possibility of martial law. That being said, rest assured the Celestra holds plenty of metaphysical wonders and harsh space-battles as well.

So Say We All!

## **THE OFFICE RULE:**

The Office Rule means making the leadership of the Celestra accessible and cultivating accountability and delegation. Captain Polos, Major Darlington, Presidential Secretary Halliwell, Vergis Board Almassy and the highest-ranking priest on the ship will all have their "offices" at the beginning of the game, where they have set up a temporary administration assisted by admins, aides and runners. Whomever manages to get into an officially recognized position of power on the ship takes a seat beside them, establishing their own office. One or two security guards watch the office at all times. Each office needs a runner / secretary / assistant. This means the CIC/OPS, the labs etc. are run through delegation of tasks, not directly by the brass.

Dramatically, think about the office as, well - the oval office in the White House. This is where a constant stream of press-conferences, crisis-meetings and hearings are held. Ship-shattering conflicts processes and Huge Plot Choices (as unimportant as they are to individual character arcs) take place here, where the people can see and hold leaders accountable, and not on the CIC where their presence would endanger the ship and the crew are constantly too busy to answer questions.

## **THE OFFICE AND ACCESSIBILITY**

More importantly offices mean the top commanders of the ship are gathered in one easy-to-find place, very close to the coms station and the kitchen. Civilians and crew alike can find their superiors in one place, ask them questions and hand over the opinions of democratically elected committees

for actual implementation as well as individual complaints to leaders. This makes the leaders accountable, accessible and easily findable.

Naturally leaders are expected to join their CIC / boardroom / lab / cargo bay in times of acute crisis and battle (action stations, aka. condition one).

#### **CIC AND ACCESS**

OPS/CIC often needs to be cleared of all non-essential personnel. It is simply impossible to run the ship with civilians or ANYONE not working in silent concentration in the CIC. Please respect this as a necessary part of the ship routine and not a game blocker. Also: NO food on the CIC. Ever. And keep any cups of coffee / water far from consoles.

#### **COMMAND:**

The commander of the ship is the final authority on board. There can be only one commander. Initially the commander is Captain Polos. This will change. No-one refuses an order from the commander unless they are prepared to be relieved of duty. Remember that it can be great fun to carry out an order your character disagrees with, dismissing moral responsibility by telling yourself you're "just following orders".

#### **RIOTS:**

Civilian mobs are not powerless against armed marines. A mob of five may swamp one marine or armed person, but will sustain up to two deaths or injuries if the armed character opens fire. Harmful riots can occur in Ep 3 and 4. Before this the riot breaks up when the armed person points their weapon at the rioters.

Humanoid Cylons and Cylon sympathizers:

In the beginning of the game, no-one except a few Galactica officers and marines who have been on Ragnar Station expects the Cylons to look like us. This is revealed during the game. As seen in the show a humanoid Cylon can muster a burst of speed and strength and disarm / kill / pin down any human. Only revealed Cylons can do this.

#### **KILLING CYLONS AND CYLON SYMPATHIZERS:**

Cylons and outspoken Cylon apologists are exempt from the rules for death in the game and may be killed (we recommend the traditional airlocking) at any point. Why? Because there are many copies and they will be back.

#### **HOLOBANDS:**

This media format can show images directly to the human brain. It's a fancy 3D multiuser environment / game with smell and touch. It feels pretty real. But not quite. That's

all. It is not reliably able to delete memories, upload souls or similar trans-human shenanigans. Effects like that CAN be achieved, but only in the same way hypnosis, entheogenic drugs and psychology can create such effects, not through direct manipulation of the brain. The innermost workings of the mind is as much a mystery to people in the BSG universe as in ours. Anything any revelation or insight experienced in the Holoband carries the same stigma of "induced madness" as visions on acid or ayuasca.

#### **ASSIGNED AREAS:**

To prevent chaotic milling about in the ship as well as making it possible to find each other in the Celestra, each group is assigned an area onboard. Go there when you are not on duty. You may of course try to go wherever you want, but expect to be checked for clearance and stopped when entering CIC / OPS, the officers mess or the Vergis Lab or elsewhere you don't belong. Civilians running around the ship will be told to return to Aft Cargo unless they have a good reason to go somewhere else.

Civilians: Aft Pressurized Cargo Bay. Divide the bay between temples, Ha'La'Tha' and so forth.

Celestra Crew in general: Aft mess / bunks

Engineers in general: Reactor control room

Galactica Crew: Fore mess

Vergis: Vergis tower

Brass / F.A.R: Aft officers mess

Anyone, at any time, but primarily off shift crew: Fore mess (gambling den)

We use assigned areas because it's more fun to know where people are and because civilians / engineers / crew in a group are a power-factor and more fun to play than when they are spread out thin throughout the ship.

#### **SHIFTS**

The game has more than four times the number of crewmen needed to run the ship. This is intentional. There will be an initial shift-schedule for the Celestra Crew. Modify this as needed, depending on weather Galactica chooses to run the entire show or share duties with the Celestra. But DO USE a shift structure where everyone gets  $\frac{3}{4}$  free time and  $\frac{1}{4}$  at consoles. And never assign someone alone to a console. Always aides. Always runners.

#### **HOLDING CELLS AND PUNISHMENT:**

A good punishment is holding someone in the reactor / engine room for extended periods of time. This will give rads and eventually kill the offender. Plus it's a cool location with active play. You can put stripes / cuffs around someone's

ankles when he/she is in the engine room to prevent escape. It's impossible to climb through the hatches with legs tied.

In real life emergencies, captors are responsible for freeing captives so they can leave the reactor.

Cylons, psychopaths and other extremely dangerous POW's are held manacled in the Aft ammo storage beneath the Aft Pressurized Cargo Bay. They will likely be GM characters or players who enjoy rough play so go for it.

Another time-honored naval punishment is flogging and removal from duty. Flogging is carried out simply by marines beating up the offender. Badly. It may be seen as barbaric in these modern days, but after the fall of man, humans quickly return to the bad old ways, allowing us to ask weather they really deserve to survive.

Removal from duty is simple and effective. You are blocked from access to the CIC and all consoles while the punishment is in effect. Removal of dogtags, rank insignia and a black cloth around the arm can be used to mark a person as suspended from duty. Make a big deal out of it.

A very Tauron punishment is social death from her individual clan. A Tauron that suffers this punishment from his clan will be ignored by all members of that clan for a set number of days / hours. It's a pretty rough punishment in this game, but remember there are plenty of other clans to hang out with.

#### **CLAN MARKINGS**

We have discovered that clan markings on the fingers are very seldom seen in play, because hands are often busy doing work, are washed after bathroom breaks, are covered by mourning gloves or moving. Please reproduce the tattoos in the face, on cheekbones, as well as on the hands. Just try not to rub your face just there and tell each other when clan symbols are too smeared to be recognized. Also; please refer to your clan in seech as often as possible.

#### **FACTION GOALS:**

Monitor Celestra is a completely free game from a plot standpoint. Literally anything can happen and you can take the ship anywhere at any time. Your individual character can strive for whatever goals you wish and you are not at all bound by any of these options. We give them for clarity and to inspire you to create goals for yourself, to get the ball rolling and to be very clear about the fact that this is a game where you decide the ending. That being said a few hours into the game, the immediate goals of the factions could possibly look something like this:

- Galactica Crew: Find some way to return to the fleet. Fight the Cylons every chance they get.
- Celestra Crew: Find some place to settle or an alternative to following Adama's fleet. Fight the Cylons every chance they get, unless odds are bad.
- Vergis: Maintain ownership of the Celestra. Find an old Vergis research station in the former Far Colonies. Avoid fighting the Cylons. Complete their research.
- Secular Civilians: Make sure democracy and basic economics still applies on board. This means having an ACTIVE voice in the running of the ship through committees and elected representatives overseeing the Commander and being able to remove staff for misconduct by popular vote. Maintain status quo. Hold elections to appoint civilian oversight and leadership of the Celestra and make sure Tauron gets representation in the Quorum of 12. Find a safe harbor from the Cylons, avoid fighting them at all costs.
- Holy Civilians: Return to the fleet to find Earth, home of the 13th tribe of Kobol. Or return to the fleet to make Adama answer for his heretical use of the sacred scrolls. Find guidance in the scrolls, visions and omens.
- Other: More possible outcomes will be available. In general; the more the ship jumps and explores, the more outcomes will be available.

#### **SACRIFICE AND CONSENSUS:**

Be aware that there is no way clear to "win" Monitor Celestra that we know of. There can be no survival without sacrifice and someone will most likely have to pay a price in blood for others to live. Trying to save everyone may well doom the entire ship. Space is cold and unforgiving, and naturalistic Sci-Fi means there are no hero-contracts or natural laws that bend to western morality on the Celestra.

#### **REGISTERING CIVILIANS AND JOINING THE CREW:**

Both the government representatives, the Galactica crew, Caprican workbosses and the original Celestra crew have a vested interest in bringing civilians into the running of the ship. They should take lists of names, try to figure out what you are good at, have you join a console for training and give you a shift or two to work. They may be too busy to do it well, but the opportunity is there.

#### **CIVILIAN SOCIETY**

"The Cylon War is long over, yet we must not forget the reasons why so many sacrificed so much in the cause of freedom. The cost of wearing the uniform can be high, but...

Sometimes it's too high. You know, when we fought the Cylons, we did it to save ourselves from extinction. But we never answered the question: why? Why are we as a people worth saving? We still commit murder, because of greed, spite, jealousy, and we still visit all of our sins upon our children. We refuse to accept the responsibility for anything that we've done. Like we did with the Cylons. We decided to play god, create life. When that life turned against us, we comforted ourselves in the knowledge that it really wasn't our fault, not really. You cannot play god, then wash your hands of the things that you've created. Sooner or later, the day comes when you can't hide from the things that you've done anymore."

- Commander William Adama

Both Tauron and Caprica are democracies. The Twelve Colonies of Kobol is a union of democratic planets united after the Cylon War. The principles of human rights, representation, separation of military and civilian power, rule of law and due process are things almost all colonials are very proud of. The exceptions are extremists and criminals.

The Colonial Fleet serves the office of the President, who is also Supreme Commander of the armed forces. This means the Roslyn representatives (Halliwell and Lerner) actually outrank Major Darlington. Captain Polos is a commercial Captain and is not a part of the government hierarchy, nor is Vergis, unless the ship and the mega-corporation is nationalized through an executive order from the supreme colonial court or the President. To take power from the representatives of the Roslyn administration the military must declare martial law - and that is a HUGE step that most civilians will NOT enjoy the least.

None of the democratic processes have been suspended just because 99.9% of humanity have been wiped out and the rule of law still applies. This means legal tribunals can be called by the people (request them from Halliwell in her court) and can hold anyone, including Major Darlington and Captain Polos accountable. Use your democratic rights and take your civic responsibility seriously.

Democracy is not the same thing as consensus or anarchy. Nor is it ethnically based tribalism. It can be harsh on minorities. It can condone genocide. But it cannot bypass due process and the voice of the people. It is a functional way to run society, even in times of crises. Try it. Create committees. Select representatives to the Office. Try a suspected Cylon in court and deliver capital punishment. Pass a bill to register all Ha'La'Tha' and put them in the reactor room. It will involve everyone on board in decisions instead

of making the military leaders autocrats. Without these rights, are you really human? Do you really deserve survival?

### **PRESIDENTIAL GUARDS**

Galactica / Vergis should assign one or two marines to guard the Roslyn representatives at all times, publically showing their support for democratic process. If the reps are not guarded, it means the military or Vergis is up to something.

### **VOTING**

Voting is perhaps best done by assistants representing the different candidates / options running through the sip with a clipboard, asking everyone they see for their ID numbers and noting them down if they support their candidate / option, ensuring anonymity of the vote. This means campaigning is done by the same people who collect the votes. An independent census-committee in the Office counts the votes. Voting should be announced through a public announcement before the aides start running, and it is the responsibility of Comms to spread the word on a vote throughout the ship. Please note that votes are usually done to appoint committees and representatives who then make the decisions and are held accountable for these decisions. Only the most ship-shattering decisions motivate a general vote. It may happen once or twice during the game. No more. Use due process and representation. Not the same thing as direct democracy.

### **REQUESTING PHANTOM ACTIVITY:**

To request contact with a phantom, stand beside them and cover your face in your hands for a moment, like you are in concentration or overwhelmed by sadness. If the phantom touches your hand when you stand like this, they have the time and your scene begins. Please be aware that phantoms are very, very busy and are very unlikely to have the time for a scene with you. But it's worth a shot. Also: talk to phantoms between episodes to communicate ideas. This is actually the very best way to go about this, since it gives you a chance to prepare the interaction together. Also: prayer is always an invitation, if not a request to have phantom play.

Interpreting phantom play:

“Wake up and smell the psychosis”

- Six to G. Baltar

It's important to remember that interaction with phantoms does not have to be interpreted as reality. In fact it is most often more effective and interesting to interpret projections as purely personal experiences, memories or the effect of psychological trauma. Also; confessing to seeing people in red sounds like a pretty effective way of being airlocked for being a Cylon or having been brainwashed by

Cylons. Remember that Baltar does never reveal his conversations with six and that everyone interprets him as being an insane genius rather than a Cylon spy. When playing insanity-like behaviour, be sure not to overdo it. Clawing the walls and whispering about the voice of space is a psychotic episode and a crisis-point, not a mode of behaviour. Please go for naturalistic, nasty and toned down reactions rather than cartoon madness.

### **THE TAURON TURN**

Under non-super-stressed circumstances, let people speak their piece. And don't feel the need to speak in every meeting or conversation. Taurons have a tradition of holding their hand to their chest when speaking in public. It's considered rude to interrupt someone who is not Thartos when they are doing this. Rude. Or Caprican.

### **THE TAURON SALUTE**

The Caprican salute everyone knows as a standard american salute. The Tauron equivalent is balled fist with thumb up, touching the heart.

### **CROSSING CULTURAL BOUNDARIES**

Decide one thing about your culture that you hate. Taurons could loathe the prevalence of religious fanaticism, the influence of the corrupt Ha'La'Tha', the constrictive clan-system or the acceptance for vengeance in the culture. Make sure you have at least one contact / affair over cultural boundaries during the game. A Caprican could be religious and confess to a Tauron priest, or fall in love with a strict anti-Caprican. Taurons could fall for a dashing Viper-pilot or respect the Caprican politicians for their humane work.

### **VERGIS NDA**

All Vergis personnel are under a very rough Non-Disclosure-Agreement. This means your character WILL loose his/her job and status if she/he talks about their research in any detail. Out of character, consider this a privileged exception from the rule of "always reveal secrets". And remember that any mention of unethical research will be received...badly in stressed times like this.

### **THE DEATH OF MANKIND**

It's hard to relate to the fact that the twelve colonies have been destroyed and everyone you know is dead. But try to soak your playing in desperation and dare to ask the big questions; "what is worth living for?", "what truly matters now?", "how can we ensure genetic survival?", "what is the point of survival if we loose our human rights, turn on each other and behave like dark-age barbarians?" , "how can I come to terms with everyone I know being dead". Perhaps the anxiety comes in moments of quiet, between attacks and



rebellions. Perhaps it drives you to reckless heroism or self-destruction. Your call. Just don't lose sight of this theme.

#### **RUMORS, RATIONALITY AND TRUTH**

It is very hard to distinguish faith, rumors and here-say from actual truth in a larp. Especially one set in a claustrophobic space filled with traumatized individuals struggling against infiltrating machines that look like humans. But remember that your characters are mostly normal, rational human beings in a bad situation. Belief in living space-gods, disembodied AI, One True God, FTL mysticism and so on is the domain of crazy people. Try to control rumors by talking about them rationally in groups, verifying facts with the brass and Coms or even the crew of Orpheus. And again; please direct madness internally or in a suitably sad and realistic manner. No screaming and wall-climbing space-lunatics please.

#### **LEAVING THE SHIP**

Please be sensitive to Orpheus recommendations when leaving for a mission away from the Celestra. We might have opinions on the composition of the team or the equipment that should be brought along. Missions away from Celestra are mostly verbal meta-scenes or played in a secondary location. Please don't hog these missions. If you get to do one, back away from the rest to allow others to enjoy the opportunity.

There are two Vipers and one non-FTL shuttle in play as well as an FTL capable Raptor. All can be used for missions, but please listen to Orpheus as our GM resources are limited.

There is a jump-capable Raptor docked with the Celestra for most of the game. IF you use this to scout to a system where the Celestra is not located, be prepared for long waits in empty space and possibly game end if you fail to find your way back to Celestra. Standard practice is Orpheus dropping coded coms-drones before jump at meeting coordinates. Talk to Orpheus to drop a coms-drone.

#### **ORPHEUS - IC**

Is a small ocular scanning ship with a crew of five techies from and three flight operators. "Glasseye" is the callsign for main flight-ops, assisted by "Bullseye". "Captain Kive" is the head of ISE and the most technically capable person in either ship. He is assisted by "ISE will occasionally dock and carry out repairs on The Celestra. They have recently (2 days ago) been assigned to aid the Celestra in technical issues and act as flight-control to and from Celestra.

### **ORPHEUS - OOC**

The OOC function of Orpheus is to clear out any misunderstandings about what is going on in space and in the technical systems onboard. It is necessary to clear any away-mission (undocking raptor or shuttle or viper) with Orpheus. In-game the reasoning is that they need to make sure you are clear for launch (no debris, radiation or tech malfunction prevents launch). Off game, we need some time to prepare a meta-scene or physical space to play out the scene. Basically any improvised scene needs to be confirmed with Orpheus to have a systems effect. If shots are fired in the reactor, there will not be a radiological alarm unless the crew calls Orpheus and tells them what's happened. Orpheus is a direct channel to the Game-Masters running the scenario and if you really need to clear something with the GM's out of character, feel free to do so on this line. That being said you can solve most issues by in-game questions, which makes our GM'ing more fun as well.

### **CIVILIANS: BRING BLANKETS AND HUDDLE UP**

Space is cold. Very cold. As a civilian, please bring grey or tan blankets and pillows. Huddle up close and use each other's body heat to stay cozy. And make sure you eat enough. Electric lanterns and heating-fans are also welcome additions to your gear.