

GHOST SQUADRON

BY JAY ILES

*A mashup of Ghost Ship by Jay Iles and Psi*Run by Meguey Baker, Chris Moore and Michael Lingner. To play, you'll need at least 6 six-sided dice.*

Ghost Squadron is a game about death.

First, the death of your body. Your flesh and blood is gone, decaying or reduced to ash. You are a Ghost, created by an experimental brain-scanning procedure, and given life by digital necromancy after the original's death.

Second, the death of your allies and enemies. Your nation is at war, and what better as soldiers than a program that might think like a person but can be duplicated, backed up and spent as the top brass desires. So in bodies of rugged metal you exchange fire across desert landscapes, infiltrate civilian arcologies, and drop from orbit on enemy emplacements.

Finally, there's the death of the self. As you become accustomed to servos and wires instead of muscles and nerves, as your memories fill with artefacts and alterations, what will you become?

THIS GHOST'S WAR

Most of you will play **Ghosts**; digital entities created by brain scans, no longer legally classed as people but retaining all that so-useful intelligence and skills. Go to page 2 to find out how to make your Ghost.

One of you will play **Mission Control (MC)**. It's their job to be the voice of the Program, give you your mission, and keep you informed about how the conflict around you is playing out.

The game falls into two phases: **action stations** (page 3) and **at ease** (page 4).

When you're at **action stations**, you're on a mission; when you're **at ease** you're waiting months or years as you travel from planet to planet, or languish in servers until the program wants to use you again.

Track the Program's **Approval**. It starts at 2. If you succeed at a mission, it goes up by 1; if it fails disastrously, it goes down by 1. If it hits 0, the Program is shut down and your Ghosts are put into hibernation.

GHOST SHEET

NAME:

AVATAR:

MEMORIES

* I remember _____

* I remember _____

* I remember _____

CORRUPTION



PROGRAMS:

MECH

MOBILITY:

STRUCTURE:

INTEGRATION:

DESCRIPTION:

ARMAMENT:

MODULES:

BATTERY 

MAKING YOUR GHOST

MEMORIES

You have three memories. Of all the events you remember from your life, these are the ones with any emotional resonance – the rest are just dry recordings of events. As you draw on them, you'll be more effective, but risk corrupting them.

Think up three memories:

- * One showing your strongest connection in life (e.g. soulmate, mentor, enemy, community). Are they still alive?
- * One explaining why you underwent the brain scan (e.g. research, terminal illness, fame, valuable memories). Is the original version of you still around?
- * One explaining why you agreed to join the Program (e.g. protecting loved ones, avenging a grudge, seeing the world, fear of being archived). Do you regret it?

Make sure each memory includes a [action] you were performing, a person or community to act as a [contact], and a [context] it was taking place in.

PROGRAMS

Your mind is software, and can be modded. You have one program already integrated into your mind: what is it?

- * **Protective Cyberfauna** that counter-attack anyone trying to hack you.
- * **Narcoalgorithms** that let you alter your simulated brain chemistry.
- * **Oracle Codes** to predict an action's outcome or backtrace an event's causes.
- * **Time Dilators** to make decades feel like weeks, and seconds like hours.
- * A **Janus Manifold** to perfectly duplicate other's personality quirks and mannerisms.
- * **Omnisight Drivers** to seamlessly integrate input from hundreds of sensors into your sensorium.

MECH

You're digital, but the program needs you to be physical. That's why they give you mechs - robotic shells holding your Ghost core. Each drone is precisely tailored for their Ghost, as much an extension of their owner as a living person's hand. Each mech has three traits:

- * **Mobility:** How agile and precise it is.
- * **Structure:** How much damage it can take.
- * **Integration:** How human it is – and how brain-melting it is for Ghosts to pilot.

Pick one as Weak, one as Adequate, one as Defining. Describe your mech accordingly.

Also add an Armament, and a Module:

ARMAMENTS

- * Integrated blades.
- * Shoulder-mounted railgun.
- * Burst rifle.
- * Missile rack.
- * Precision laser.
- * Warsat uplink.
- * Sonic burst.

MODULE

- * Rocket Thrusters to let you travel far and fast.
- * Enhanced Sensors to let you sense things humans never could.
- * Access Jacks to let you plug in and hijack any computer system.
- * A Medical Kit advanced enough to treat wounds and patch up mechs.
- * A Micro Drone to scout and explore.
- * A Secondary Core to let another Ghost ride as a passenger.

ACTION STATIONS

A mission starts with the MC describing your **insertion point** and **mission**. Then they ask the Ghosts what they're doing, and things snowball from there.

When you want to do something, assemble a pool of d6s:

- * Your digital mind is fast and perceptive. Start with 1 dice.
- * You're doing something important. Get +1 dice and activate ATTEMPT.
- * The mission is time-limited. Get +1 dice and activate ESCALATION.
- * If you draw on a memory for power, get +1 dice and activate GLITCH.
- * If you throw yourself into danger, get +1 dice and activate RISK.
- * If you use a program, module, or push yourself, get +1 dice and activate DRAIN.

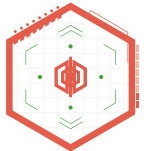
Roll those dice and assign them to all active boxes.

ATTEMPT

Do I achieve my goal?

4,5,6 You succeed! MC says what happens.

1,2,3 You fail. Player says how it went wrong.



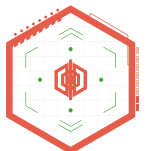
GLITCH

Is the memory glitched?

5,6 It remains intact.

2,3,4 Mark a glitch.

1 Mark enough glitches to get to your next corruption.



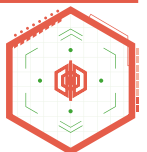
ESCALATION

Are we in control of the situation?

6 You regain control. Player says how they reduce the scene's danger.

4,5 Things stay how they are. MC describes problems on the horizon/offscreen.

1,2,3 Things go bad. MC says how things take a turn for the worse.



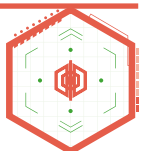
RISK

Does the danger strike?

5,6 You avoid danger. Player describes how.

2,3,4 You mostly avoid it. MC disables a module or deals you cosmetic damage.

1 You're hit. If you were unharmed, you're barely functional. Else, you're out.

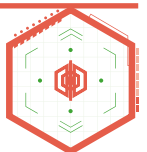


DRAIN

Do you run down your battery?

4,5,6 You're alright.

1,2,3 Lose a point of Charge. If this is your last one, your mech shuts down.



MEMORY GLITCHES

Each memory has a glitch track 16 ticks long. On the 4th, 8th and 12th ticks, the memory is corrupted. When a memory's corrupted, pick one:

- * **Invert the tone:** if you were working with the contact you're now opposing them, and vice versa.
- * **Change the context:** you're doing the same thing with the same people, but somewhere completely different.
- * **Change the subject:** swap the contact for someone you've recently met.
- * **Change the action:** you're using different tools now.

The other players will pitch new memories to you that suit the corruption you chose; you pick one, and rewrite the memory to suit. If you hit the 16th tick the memory's completely corrupted. Erase it.

AT EASE

At the end of each mission, you can forget a memory to replace it with a pristine memory of something that happened on the mission.

If your core wasn't returned to base at the end of the mission, you're restored from backup, but it's imperfect. Glitch a memory enough to corrupt it once, and you can't remember the mission. Also make a new mech, and describe it.

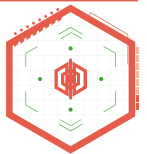
As you're waiting to be redeployed - in a server farm on a base or in a carrier ship travelling between planets - you have a lot of time on your hands. To see if you spend it well, the group puts together a pool of dice.

- * Start with 1 dice per player.
- * The MC will tell you to add 1 dice if the wait is longer than a few days.
- * The MC will tell you to add 1 dice if the wait is longer than a few months.
- * The MC will tell you to add 1 dice if the wait is longer than a few years.
- * The MC will tell you to add 1 dice if the wait is longer than a few decades.

Roll the dice. Go around the table: on your turn, take a dice and assign it to one of the following boxes. As you assign a dice, describe a short vignette of your character carrying out the action and work through its consequences. When all dice are assigned, it's time for the next mission.

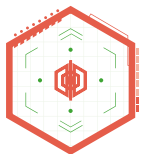
STAY IN TOUCH WITH YOUR CONTACTS.

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 4,5,6 | You bond with them over how your life has changed since your death. Heal 4 glitches from the linked memory. |
| 1,2,3 | They aren't the person you remember. Not anymore. If you wish, discard the memory. You can replace it with another at the end of the next mission. |



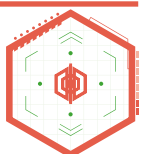
BOND WITH ANOTHER GHOST

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 4,5,6 | You get closer to them. When you act to help them out, roll an extra die. |
| 1,2,3 | The interaction goes sour. One or both of you come away with a grudge or hurt feelings. |



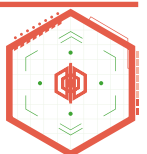
INNOVATE

- | | |
|-------|--|
| 4,5,6 | You build a new program or module. Add it to your loadout. |
| 1,2,3 | As above, but the MC will give your creation a cost or downside. |



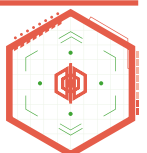
RESEARCH THE CONFLICT

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 4,5,6 | The MC will tell you how the war is going. You may ask a question about the next mission; the MC will answer honestly. |
| 1,2,3 | The MC will tell you how the war is going. Say someone/somewhere important to you, and the MC will say how the war's hurt them. |



TRY TO ESCAPE

- | | |
|---------|---|
| 5,6 | You find an escape route, an ally, or an opportunity. If you have all three, you can leave - and take any other willing Ghost as you do so. |
| 1,2,3,4 | The Program is catching on. Lose 1 Approval. |



After each mission, the MC will roll a dice. If it rolls under the number of missions you've fought, the war is over. They decide if your side won or lost. Pick one to describe your Ghost's fate:

Escaped | Put to use | Experimented on | Lost | Rebelling | Evolved