



TALES OF MAR DE ORO

GAME MASTER'S GUIDE

The complete Game Master's companion for
adventures in the world of Mar de Oro.

SEA • SKY • FAITH • EMPIRE

RESTRICTED · FOR THE GAME MASTER

TALES OF MAR DE ORO

Game Master's Guide

The Canula Prime Campaign Draft

SEA · SKY · FAITH · EMPIRE

*The visible mission is only the door. The real adventure begins
when someone asks who built the door, who paid for the key,
and what wakes behind it.*

JOHNNY CROWN · ANNO 7202 POST SUNDERING



A ship of the line hangs above a Golden Sea port, where empire, faith, and flight contend for the future.

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Final grouped systems edition

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SESSION ZERO AND THE WEIGHT OF THE WORLD



This setting asks players to stand inside cruelty and decide what they will do about it. Agree on that before the first die falls.

Mar de Oro is a beautiful place built on ugly foundations: empire, plantation, debt, extraction, and the quiet disappearance of people who get in the way. That tension is the point of the setting, not an accident of it. But a heavy world only works at the table if everyone chose to be there. Spend the first session, or the first hour, setting expectations before you set a scene.

Name the tone out loud

Tell the players plainly what kind of story this is: political intrigue and hard choices in a colonial age of sail and early flight, where victories create responsibility rather than erasing pressure, and where the villains are often institutions rather than monsters. Ask what they want from it. A table that wants swashbuckling heroics and a table that wants grim moral weight can both be served here, but not by accident, and not in the same proportions.

Lines and veils

Because the setting leans on colonial cruelty, forced labor, and disappearance, agree in advance on what the group will and will not put on the page. A line is something the game will not include at all. A veil is something that can happen in the fiction but off-screen, named rather than depicted. Draw both before play, revisit them without penalty, and treat a request to move something behind the veil as ordinary table maintenance, not an interruption.

- Ask each player, privately if needed, for their lines and veils.
- Offer your own as the GM, so no one feels singled out.
- Agree on a quiet signal anyone can use mid-scene to pull back, no explanation owed.
- Write them where you will actually see them while running.

ON THE SETTING'S CRUELTY

The plantation, the debt, the vanished worker: these exist to be reckoned with, not consumed as texture. When cruelty appears, give the players something to decide about it. If it is only scenery, cut it. The measure of this setting is what the characters do when they see the cost.

What to establish together

QUESTION	WHY IT MATTERS HERE
Why is the party together, and who do they answer to?	Every faction wants to hire, own, or use them. A shared tie decides who can pull them into the crisis.
What does each character believe about Éterlumin?	Priest, engineer, sailor, and smuggler see the same substance differently. The gap between them is drama.
Where does each character stand on empire?	Loyal, complicit, resigned, or resistant. This is the axis the whole campaign will press on.
What line will this character not cross?	Gives you the exact pressure to apply later, fairly and by consent.

Opening the Canula arc

When you are ready to begin, drop the party into motion rather than exposition. The read-aloud below is a ready opening for the Survivors hook; adapt the details to your table's characters.

READ ALOUD

The harbor of Boca Serena takes you in the way a customs officer takes a bribe: quickly, without meeting your eyes. Smoke still hangs over the water from whatever burned last night. A clerk is already rewriting a ledger before your boots hit the quay. Somewhere behind you, a ship that was not listed to arrive for another week is being towed in with her seams black and one name missing from her crew. A gull screams. A bell that no one is ringing answers it, once, from somewhere inland.

FIRST MOVE

Do not explain the mystery. Hand the players a contradiction, a witness who wants to be hidden before sundown, and an official who tells them to stop asking. Let them choose which thread to pull.

HOW TO RUN MAR DE ORO



The visible mission is only the door. The real adventure begins when someone asks who built the door, who paid for the key, and what wakes behind it.

Mar de Oro is not a static setting waiting to be visited. It is a pressured region where crowns, companies, churches, scientists, sailors, local communities, spies, and old powers are already moving. A good session should feel like the world changed while the characters were not looking. The Game Master needs to make sure every scene has weight. A customs office, a harbor chapel, a deck under cloud, a plantation road, an airship lift chamber, and an old source room should all feel like places where ordinary people still have to work, eat, lie, pray, and survive while history presses on them.

The three-layer adventure model

Every strong Mar de Oro adventure should have three layers. The first is the visible mission, the thing the characters have been asked to do. The second is the faction conflict, the network of powers that benefit, suffer, hide, exploit, or redirect it. The third is the deeper danger, the element that belongs to the setting's hidden engine: Éterlumin instability, source chambers, old systems, soul-shard resonance, institutional corruption, or a truth that would change the political map.

LAYER	GM QUESTION	EXAMPLE
Visible mission	What are the characters trying to accomplish right now?	Find a missing engineer taken from Canula Prime.
Faction conflict	Who wants this outcome changed, buried, stolen, or delayed?	Albion wants the engineer silent, Duchy of Heller wants him alive, Valdegracia wants the scandal contained.
Deeper danger	What makes the situation larger than the people fighting over it?	The engineer saw a source chamber under a plantation estate begin to answer movement and sound.

A session rhythm that fits the setting

Begin with texture, then pressure, then choice. Texture grounds the scene in heat, salt, brass, old stone, wet rope, polished boots, coded flags, bells, and smoke. Pressure introduces a deadline, a witness, a lie, a patrol, a storm, a

signal delay, a valve beginning to sing. Choice makes the players responsible for what happens next.

A Mar de Oro scene should rarely be only one thing. A dockside meeting can also be a surveillance scene. A dinner can also be a hostage negotiation. When players succeed, let them gain leverage. When they fail, do not simply block the plot, advance a faction clock, move an NPC, worsen the chamber, expose them, or make someone else pay.

The GM does not need to explain every secret

Mar de Oro runs on partial information. Factions lie, documents are forged, witnesses contradict each other, and no single character knows the full shape of the crisis. The Game Master should know more than any single faction, but need not resolve every contradiction before play begins. Let some answers emerge from what the characters discover. Let some answers change because the characters changed the situation.

THE GAME MASTER'S ONE SENTENCE

At any moment in any session, you should be able to finish this sentence: "The world will change in this way, on this timeline, unless the characters do something about it." If you cannot, advance a clock and let a faction move.

What success and failure look like

OUTCOME	WHAT IT MEANS IN MAR DE ORO
Player success	They gained leverage, information, or an ally. The pressure did not disappear, it shifted.
Player failure	A faction advanced. A clock ticked. Someone paid a cost the players did not intend.
Partial success	They got what they wanted and gave something away. The world now owes them something dangerous.
Do nothing	A faction clock advances. An NPC makes a decision the players would have made differently.

THE GM'S VIEW OF THE SETTING



The world is older than the empire that named it. The empire is older than it admits.

The setting the players see is Mar de Oro as the powers want it seen: a region of opportunity, danger, and exotic possibility. The setting the Game Master runs is Mar de Oro as it actually is: a region of extraction built on older foundations that the current age does not fully understand.

What the players see

A golden sea between three continents, dotted with island chains, crossed by trade winds and airship lanes. Independent city-states, colonial outposts, plantation estates, naval stations, and free-sailing zones. Airships moving cargo, passengers, and weapons. Churches operating schools, hospitals, inquisitions, and intelligence networks. Companies with their own militias and diplomats. Pirates with codes of their own.

What the GM knows

The Fortera field that allows Éterlumin to function is not uniform. It has deep zones and shallow zones, resonance nodes and dead patches. The old civilizations that preceded current empires built around this geography and left structures that still respond to Fortera pressure. Most colonial powers do not know this. They think they are drawing a valuable gas. They are actually disturbing a planetary system whose full behavior they have not yet triggered.

WORLD SECRET THE
PLAYERS MAY NEVER
LEARN

The source chambers are not natural formations. They are installations. Someone built them, calibrated them, and left them operating on a logic that current engineers cannot read. The Solarian Church has one document, sealed, that uses the word "maintenance" to describe what the Church calls miracles.

The five tensions that drive the campaign

TENSION	WHAT THE PLAYERS FEEL	WHAT THE GM TRACKS
Empire vs. autonomy	Whose rules apply here?	Which factions gain from disorder and which from order.
Science vs. faith	What is Éterlumin, really?	Who controls the explanation controls the resource.
Old world vs. new age	What did the old builders know?	The source chambers are waking on a schedule no one has decoded.
Visibility vs. deniability	Who can be blamed?	Every faction has an official position and an unofficial one.
Loyalty vs. survival	What does my character owe?	Patrons have agendas. Debts compound. Safety is temporary.

Running the setting without lecturing

Never stop the game to explain setting history. Instead, put history in the mouths of people who want something. A priest who quotes scripture about Éterlumin is trying to control it. A company factor who cites the old charter is claiming territory. A dockworker who calls a source chamber the "old complaint" knows more than the engineers and is keeping that knowledge local.

SETTING DELIVERY RULE

Every piece of setting information should arrive attached to a person who wants something, a document someone does not want found, or an object that should not exist where it is. Worldbuilding is never scenery. It is always pressure.

FACTIONS IN MOTION



Every faction acts whether the characters watch or not.

Factions are the engine of the campaign. They have objectives, secrets, assets, red lines, and default responses. Between sessions, advance at least one clock for each active faction. Faction turns happen whether or not the characters are watching.

The major factions

VALDEGRACIA

The Dominant Empire

OBJECTIVE

Maintain control of Canula Prime and suppress evidence of source chamber instability.

SECRET PRESSURE

The senior administrator has been warned by a Church contact that the chamber may be classified as a miracle site, removing it from company jurisdiction.

ASSETS

Garrison, customs authority, company factor network, one heavy frigate on station.

RED LINE

Public acknowledgment that the chamber caused civilian deaths. Valdegracia cannot survive that headline in the home legislature.

DEFAULT RESPONSE

Contain, deny, relocate witnesses. If containment fails, assign blame to pirates, locals, or Albion.

ALBION

The Disruptor

OBJECTIVE

Destabilize Valdegracian control of Canula Prime without being traceable.

SECRET PRESSURE

The Albion contact running the disruption operation has gone beyond orders. The Albion Admiralty does not know how far.

ASSETS

Fast frigates, intelligence network, two turned officials inside the Valdegracian administration.

RED LINE

Open war with Valdegracia. Disruption operations must remain deniable.

DEFAULT RESPONSE

Plant evidence, buy witnesses, commission a pirate attack on a Valdegracian convoy.

DUCHY OF HELLER

The Quiet Accumulator

OBJECTIVE

Acquire source chamber data and at least one working sample of unstable Éterlumin without alerting any other power.

SECRET PRESSURE

The Duchy of Heller source inside the Canula research station is running out of time. The contact is about to be rotated out.

ASSETS

Aurora Ventus command frigate, black sloop network, two research agents with genuine scientific credentials.

RED LINE

Duchy of Heller assets cannot be captured by Valdegracia. The Duke's personal authorization would be found on them.

DEFAULT RESPONSE

Observe, record, wait. Move only when the window is about to close.

SOLARIAN CHURCH

The Institutional Watcher

OBJECTIVE

Determine whether the Canula Prime chamber is a natural phenomenon, a miracle, or a prohibited working.

SECRET PRESSURE

A senior Inquisitor believes it is a prohibited working. If correct, the Church must act against every faction currently exploiting it, including Church-adjacent companies.

ASSETS

Solaris escorts, legal authority over miracle declarations, intelligence network through confessors and hospital contacts.

RED LINE

Allowing a prohibited working to continue once formally classified. The institutional cost of that failure exceeds any political benefit.

DEFAULT RESPONSE

Investigate quietly. Delay formal classification as long as the investigation remains active.

FACTION TURN

At the end of each session, advance the clock of whichever faction was ignored most. Factions do not wait politely. The players chose their priorities; show them what they left unattended.

Running faction turns between sessions

Ask three questions after each session ends. First: which faction gained the most from what the players did? Second: which faction was most ignored? Third: what would each faction do next if the characters were not a factor at all? Answer those questions and advance the clocks accordingly. Bring the consequences to the table in the next session as events already in motion.

FACTION CLOCK MINIMUM

Every active faction should advance at least one clock segment between sessions. The world does not pause while the players rest.

CHAPTER IV

SECRETS OF ÉTERLUMIN



It is not a fuel. It is a response.

Standard field kit for Éterlumin assessment; the gauge reads pressure, resonance, and response, not simple volume.

Éterlumin is a rare responsive gas drawn from source zones, refined and calibrated in sealed vessels, and tuned for lift, signal, and controlled release. Every refined batch continues to degrade. Sealing, careful storage, and controlled Fortera recalibration can slow that decline, but cannot reverse its age or make it permanently stable. In ledgers it behaves like a resource: it is drawn, refined, graded, stored, shipped, and sold. In truth, it is a physical carrier of deeper Fortera behavior. It answers local field conditions.

The table-facing truth

Use this explanation whenever a scene becomes technical. Éterlumin is not toxic by nature, and it is not a crystal. Its dangers come from pressure, volatility, heat, active fire, resonance, bad seals, trapped vents, structural damage, field contradiction, and people treating it like ordinary cargo.

ONE-SENTENCE CANON

Éterlumin is a responsive, volatile gas bound to Fortera conditions. It can be drawn, refined, contained, tuned, vented, and weaponized, but every batch degrades and contradiction makes it answer wrongly.

The three practical states

STATE	CREW NAME	TABLE BEHAVIOR	GM CUE
Inert	Cold-sealed gas	Dense, quiet, comparatively safe while contained, and still degrading. Useful for transport and storage.	Cool metal, quiet valves, no glow unless disturbed.
Semi-state	Listening gas	Resonant, amplifying, and unstable near active sources or strong Fortera use.	A low hum, blue-white shimmer, tools warming in the hand.
Active	Lift gas	Light, hot, flammable, volatile, and essential for airship lift and some signal systems.	Pressure tremor, vent noise, canvas snapping, officers suddenly quiet.

OPERATIONAL TERM

“Inert” means cold-sealed and comparatively quiet. It does not mean that degradation has stopped or that the gas is permanently stable.

What everyone gets wrong

Engineers often describe Éterlumin as if it were only pressure and refinement. Priests often describe it as if it were only spiritual danger. Both readings are useful and incomplete. The same grade can behave differently across islands, ships, source chambers, and lunar conditions because the local Fortera geometry changes.

What Éterlumin actually is

Éterlumin is gas shaped by Fortera concentration. It pools, vents, condenses under pressure, and becomes useful only after careful refinement and calibration. What miners call a deposit is usually a source zone, a place where the world continuously produces or gathers gas through old field geometry.

This is why material from different sites behaves differently. Gas drawn from Canula Prime responds faster, spreads laterally under pressure, and becomes dangerous at lower thresholds than material drawn from steadier sites. A good engineer notices the difference. A bad one calls it a bad batch.

WHAT ENGINEERS DO NOT KNOW

Éterlumin cycles through source zones and local Fortera conditions. Material vented in a rupture may disperse, cool, bind, and later re-enter the source cycle, but a refined batch does not recover its former age, grade, calibration, or service life. Canula Prime has been harvested faster than its cycle can safely recover.

Grades, calibration, and service life

GRADE	COMMON NAME	CALIBRATION QUALITY	DEGRADATION PROFILE	PRIMARY USE
I	Raw draw	Uncalibrated	Rapid and unpredictable; no reliable service life.	Refinery intake only; never carried through a crowded harbor.
II	Field grade	Rough or temporary	Short service life; frequent monitoring and recalibration.	Emergency lift, military field use, temporary devices.
III	Regulated	Standard	Predictable service life with regular recalibration.	Standard airship lift, signal systems, legal convoy trade.
IV	Precision	High	Slower degradation within narrow tolerances; documented service life.	Instrument calibration, medical apparatus, command relays.
V	Church grade	Exceptional	Longest practical service life under strict control; still degrades.	Classified use by Church, crown, or sealed laboratories.

RUPTURE RISK

Rupture risk is not fixed by grade. It depends on age, calibration loss, pressure, heat, active fire, resonance, containment, structural damage, and handling.

Source chambers

A source chamber is a zone where Fortera concentration, ancient structure, pressure, and gas cycling meet. The chamber is not merely a cave. It is a management space, and the gas behaves as if the room is reading it. Effects include resonance at specific frequencies, luminous phenomena, sound without a physical source, and rare Fortera events that the Church may classify as miracles while engineers classify them as malfunction.

WHAT A CHARACTER
NEAR THE CHAMBER
MIGHT NOTICE

A faint harmonic hum that changes pitch when you move. Metal tools that grow slightly warm without a heat source. A valve that exhales once though no one touched it. Compass needles that drift farther from north as you descend. Dreams of a brass cylinder sealed with no inlet, no outlet, and a song inside.

GM handling: gas, pressure, and contradiction

Run Éterlumin as a pressure system that can listen. The rules below keep it playable: warn first, let careful players learn the pattern, then make reckless action matter. Never constrain Éterlumin without a high path to vent.

FAULT	FIRST SIGN	GM MOVE
Overfilled tank	Cold sweat on brass, needle climbing slowly.	Start a 4-segment pressure clock. Each violent action advances it.
Trapped vent	The room grows quiet in the wrong way.	A burst chooses the weakest seal, door, pipe, or lung.
Semi-state resonance	Hum matches a voice, bell, drum, or engine rhythm.	Repeat the pattern after six heartbeats, then amplify it.
Heat or flame	Sharp blue-white flicker inside the valve glass.	Demand immediate containment, retreat, or sacrifice of cargo.
Contradictory pulse	Two systems answer different commands at once.	Trigger Fortera overdraw, rupture, or a chamber response.

Source chamber rules at the table

1. Every chamber has a rhythm. Give players a chance to notice it before it hurts them.
2. Pressure is visible somewhere: gauges, singing pipes, sweating brass, or moving light.
3. A careful experiment should reveal a rule, reduce a clock, or identify a safe action.
4. A violent shortcut should advance a clock, damage a subsystem, or summon a faction response.
5. A chamber is never scenery. It is a machine, a witness, and a problem with consequences.

SOURCE CHAMBERS AND RUPTURE EVENTS



A rupture is not an accident. It is an answer.

A rupture event is what happens when a source chamber is pushed past its management threshold. The threshold is not a fixed value. It depends on the current Fortera geometry, the lunar phase, the amount of Éterlumin recently extracted from the chamber's feed zone, the temperature of the substrate, and whether anyone has been conducting resonance experiments in the vicinity. The engineers call it unpredictable. It is not unpredictable. It is complex.

The rupture scale

SEVERITY	RADIUS	DURATION	EFFECTS	AFTERMATH
Minor	10 m	Seconds	Warmth, luminous pulse, compass deviation, mild Fortera draw on nearby workings.	Self-resolving. Chamber settles within hours. Workers note it in the log.
Moderate	40 m	Minutes	Heat, sustained luminosity, Fortera workings respond without direction, minor structural resonance.	Chamber needs 1d4 days to restabilize. Authorities may investigate.
Major	100 m	Hours	Dangerous heat, uncontrolled Fortera expressions, structural damage, casualties possible.	Chamber may not restabilize without intervention. Regional effects on Éterlumin supply.
Severe	300 m	Days	Mass Fortera working events, structural collapse, evacuation required.	Chamber likely compromised permanently. Major political and economic consequences.
Catastrophic	Island or fleet	Campaign	Impossible geography, chained ship losses, wide resonance scars, old systems waking elsewhere.	Campaign change: war pretext, theological crisis, new age begins.

Running a chamber scene

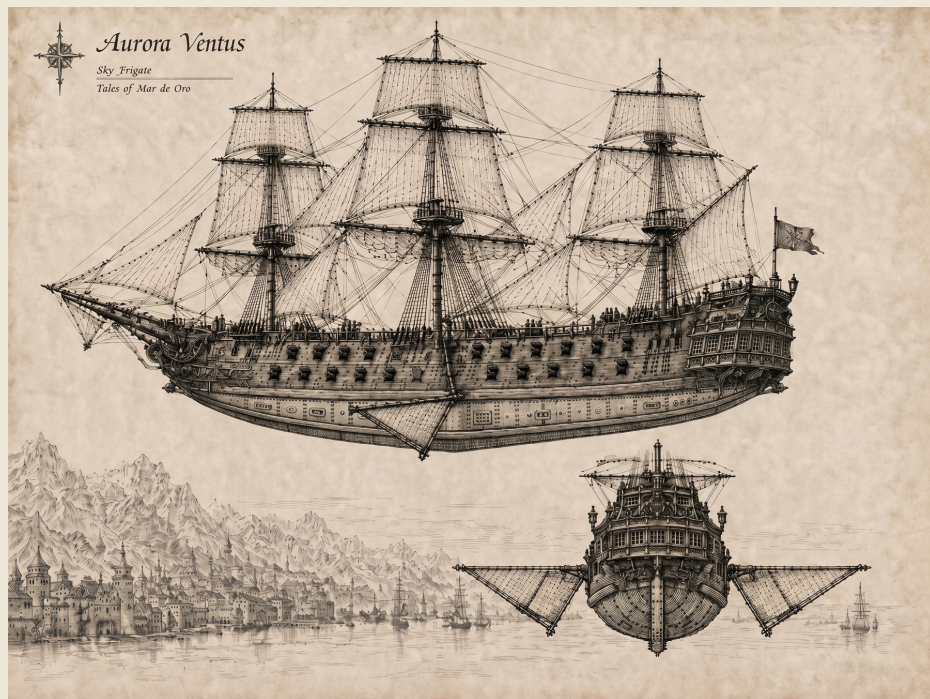
The best chamber scenes are solved through observation, choice, and cost. Let players notice patterns before they understand them. The chamber repeats sound after six heartbeats. A brass tool grows warm only when pointed east. A prayer brightens the light, but an engineer's tapped rhythm makes it settle.

Reward players who experiment carefully. Punish speed, arrogance, and violence in proportion to warning. If they shoot a valve after seeing it sing for ten minutes, the rupture is earned. If they slow the room, remove heat, stop a pulse, or break a repeated pattern, give them a way to survive even if they cannot fix the whole system.

AIRSHIP CONFLICT BEHIND THE SCREEN



The ship is not the setting. The ship is a character with a wound count.



Aurora Ventus on intercept bearing; note the running lights cut to signal silence.

Airship combat in Mar de Oro is not a tactical simulation. It is a scene. The ship has condition, position, and command. Each round should change at least one of those three things, or the battle has stopped being a story and started being noise.

Condition, position, command

ELEMENT	WHAT IT TRACKS	HOW TO CHANGE IT
Condition	Subsystem condition: Hull, Rigging or Lift, Weapons, Crew, and Bridge or Command. Track Éterlumin Reserve separately.	Called shots, broadsides, boarding, repair failures, containment problems, and Éterlumin events.
Position	Altitude, bearing, weather exposure, range, and distance to terrain.	Piloting actions, rigging or lift damage, propulsion or steering damage, storms, and collision.
Command	Who is giving orders, and how well those orders are being followed.	Bridge hits, morale damage, leadership actions, signal failure, and the loss of officers.

How each faction fights

POWER	HOW THEY FIGHT	WHAT THE GM SHOULD SHOW
Albion	Fast strike, disruption, cloud approach, command-breaking fire, false flags.	A quiet sky, missing signals, a sudden angle of attack, a ship that was above or below before anyone knew it.
Valdegracia	Heavy line, formal dominance, armored endurance, authority through presence.	A slow terrible approach, disciplined broadsides, officers who treat order as a weapon.
Duchy of Heller	Concealment, deniable movement, captured assets, black sloops, improvisation.	A ship no ledger admits, lights cut at the right moment, crew who do the hard thing without speech.
Pirates	Ambush, boarding threat, ransom, opportunistic retreat.	False distress flags, sudden grapples, a captain already calculating cargo against escape.
Church assets	Protection, containment, escort, crisis command rather than fleet doctrine.	Solaris guarding a person or site, priests demanding quarantine, armed restraint until restraint fails.

Airship damage menu

DAMAGE	IMMEDIATE EFFECT	ESCALATION
Rigging torn	Speed and turning worsen.	Masts strain, sails foul, crew exposed aloft.
Signal deck hit	Orders delay or fail.	Allied ships act on old instructions.
Lift-lung cracked	Ship lists and loses controlled height.	Pressure rises elsewhere, valves sing, emergency venting.
Éterlumin line ruptured	Burns, glow, crew panic, local instability.	Fire risk, resonance, loss of lift, chamber response.
Keel band damaged	The ship answers slowly.	Frame groans; altitude control becomes dangerous.
Magazine threatened	Crew diverts to containment.	Captain must choose between guns and survival.
Captain or signal officer down	Command confusion.	Faction doctrine collapses into individual courage or cowardice.
BATTLE RULE OF THUMB	Each round of a major sky battle should change one spatial fact, one ship condition, or one command fact. If nothing changes, the battle becomes noise.	

BATTLEFIELDS, FOG OF WAR, AND ARMY SCENES



Do not run the army. Run the pressure around the characters.

Large battles in Mar de Oro should be run as living pressure around the characters, not as full army simulations. The players do not need to move every battalion, battery, horse troop, and skirmish screen. They need to know where they are, what they can perceive, what is changing nearby, and what their actions can alter before the battle moves on.

The GM should treat battle as an environment with intent. Formations move, smoke thickens, orders fail, artillery reloads, cavalry waits for disorder, and ships above cloud change what cover means. The characters act inside that machine.

GM BATTLEFIELD RULE

Never ask the players to solve the whole battle unless the campaign is about command. Ask them to solve the part of the battle they can reach.

The three scales of battle

SCALE	WHAT THE GM TRACKS	EXAMPLE AT THE TABLE
Field scale	What the army or fleet is doing beyond the immediate scene.	The main line advances, an enemy battery shifts target, cavalry waits behind a ridge, a sky frigate descends through cloud.
Scene scale	The local place where the characters can change the outcome.	Bridge, breach, gun pit, signal mast, road bend, deck, courtyard, harbor gate, source chamber access.
Character scale	What the players can attempt now.	Run, crawl, command, shoot, repair, signal, rally, drag a wounded officer, read a flag, or decide an order is already wrong.

SCENE QUESTION

What changes if the characters do nothing before the next volley, order, signal, or engine beat?

Battlefield Movement

When the fight is larger than a skirmish, use zones instead of exact distances. Zones let movement feel concrete without turning the session into a measured wargame. A zone is not a number of feet. It is a tactical condition: who can see you, who can shoot you, what slows you, and what changes if you get there too late.

ZONE	WHAT IT MEANS	GM USE
Safe rear	Command posts, reserves, surgeons, baggage, signal tents, launch boats, or repair stations. Safer, but never safe from airships or deep guns.	Start orders, reveal wounded, show consequences, introduce faction pressure.
Approach	Roads, fields, docks, beaches, alleys, slopes, jungle cuts, or ship passages leading toward danger.	Ask how characters move without drawing the wrong attention.
Fire zone	Ground covered by muskets, artillery, sharpshooters, ship guns, or airship fire.	Crossing requires timing, cover, smoke, courage, deception, or sacrifice.
Decision point	The bridge, breach, battery, signal tower, gate, deck, ridge, road bend, or engine room where the scene turns.	Success changes Cohesion, Pressure, or Position. Failure adds a complication.
Collapse zone	Broken formations, panicked horses, burning wagons, falling rigging, rupturing machinery, fleeing civilians, or crashed lift gear.	Make order itself the danger. Movement is possible, but consequences spill in every direction.

Army Fighting Without Moving Armies

Resolve the larger battle through tracks, clocks, and consequences. Player actions should change what the battle can do next. Killing random enemies may matter, but breaking a formation, silencing a gun, saving a signal officer, or identifying the real order often matters more.

TRACK	WHAT IT MEASURES	PLAYER ACTIONS THAT CHANGE IT
Cohesion	Whether a formation can receive orders, hold shape, and act as a unit.	Rally soldiers, recover colors, replace an officer, restore signals, stop panic.
Pressure	How much fire, fear, confusion, and danger is building against a side.	Silence a gun, create smoke, destroy a relay, remove cavalry threat, expose ambush.
Position	Who controls useful ground, angle, altitude, road, breach, deck, bridge, harbor mouth, or signal point.	Seize the tower, hold the gate, move through dead ground, force the enemy to turn.

BATTLEFIELD TRUTH

Battles are won when the enemy stops acting as an organized body. Make the players care about command, morale, and position, not only casualties.

Fog of War Behind the Screen

Fog of war is not the GM hiding the game. It is the method by which information reaches people who are standing inside smoke, noise, fear, weather, bad maps, signal delays, and competing lies. Use it to create urgent choices, not to make players feel cheated.

LEVEL	WHAT THE GM KNOWS	HOW TO PRESENT IT
Visible	What the characters can directly see, hear, smell, touch, or count.	The battery fired. You see smoke and the crew running the gun back into position.
Inferred	What the characters can reasonably guess from signs.	The drums are steady behind the smoke. The line has probably not broken.
Reported	What a runner, scout, signal, prisoner, officer, civilian, or sailor claims.	The left has collapsed, or so the runner says. He is bleeding and may be wrong.
False	What someone misread, forged, believes, fears, or wants the characters to believe.	The flag is genuine, but the order attached to it is not.
Hidden	What is truly happening outside their view.	Cavalry is behind the ridge. The airship above cloud has already identified the road.

FOG-OF-WAR RULE

Always separate what the characters know from what they suspect. Give clues, costs, and ways to confirm. Do not turn uncertainty into a trick.

The battlefield beat

STEP	GM MOVE
1. Show the field	Give one visible fact: smoke, flags, gun flash, falling rigging, cavalry dust, airship shadow, or broken formation.
2. Show the immediate danger	Name what will happen next if no one acts: the battery fires again, the flank opens, the road is cut, the signal fails.
3. Ask for action	Let characters move, command, sneak, fire, repair, signal, rally, retreat, or investigate.
4. Resolve in the chosen system	Use the rules at the table, but let the result change a track or clock.
5. Change the battle	Success improves Cohesion, Pressure, or Position. Failure worsens one or creates a visible complication.

Worked Battlefield Frames

Use these frames when a battle needs motion immediately. Each one is a scene seed, not a script. Choose the visible danger, the hidden pressure, and the track that player action can change.

FRAME	VISIBLE DANGER	HIDDEN PRESSURE	TRACK TO CHANGE
Crossing a fire zone	A road or field is covered by artillery, muskets, or ship guns.	The gun crew has one more shot before friendly troops are trapped.	Pressure / Position
Orders through smoke	A written or shouted command must reach a unit whose officers cannot see the field.	The order was sensible ten minutes ago. It may now be fatal.	Cohesion / Command
Rally the wavering line	A friendly formation is still standing, but its center is opening.	Cavalry is waiting for the gap, and the enemy battery has noticed.	Cohesion
Silence the field gun	A battery controls the only useful approach.	The escort infantry is hidden in smoke, not absent.	Pressure
Airship above cloud	Engines are heard before the ship is seen. Signals fail or contradict.	The ship may be friendly, damaged, hunting, or already firing from altitude.	Airship / Fog
Collapse at the gate	Wagons, horses, civilians, wounded troops, and guards block the exit.	An official order says hold the gate. Survival says open it.	Position / Civilian

GM ENDING MOVE

End every army scene by showing how the wider battle reacts. A rescued officer changes orders. A silenced gun opens a road. A failed signal lets a faction act on old instructions.

Connecting to the system appendix

Keep this chapter system-neutral. Use the system guides only when the table needs mechanical translation: D&D 5e for hazards and saves, Pathfinder 2e for action pressure and conditions, and Blades in the Dark for clocks, position, effect, stress, and consequences. The fiction should lead. The system should answer how hard the next choice is.

CANULA PRIME, GM VERSION

The island knows more than the administrators who named it.



Mar de Oro region map. Canula Prime is marked with a source-chamber indicator.*

*Cartography adapted from "Continents and Archipelagos of the Herran Sea" by Kirdissir. Names and labels have been changed for Mar de Oro. Coastlines, islands, terrain, and overall composition remain the work of Kirdissir. No endorsement is implied.

Canula Prime is a mid-sized island in the central Mar de Oro region, positioned at the intersection of three major trade routes and directly above one of the densest Fortera field concentrations in the known world. The current population includes company administrators, plantation labor (enslaved and contracted), a Valdegracian naval station, a Church mission with a hospital, a Solarian research outpost (officially a weather station), a fishing village with roots that predate colonial settlement, and a transient population of traders, sailors, smugglers, and people in between arrangements.

What everyone knows

Canula Prime produces the highest-grade Éterlumin in the Mar de Oro region. Convoys leave every six weeks under Valdegracian escort. The island has a Fortera anomaly that makes compass navigation unreliable within three leagues of the main harbor. The Church has declared two minor miracles there in the past forty years. The plantation estate on the high ground is older than the current colonial administration and has changed ownership four times in ninety years.

What the GM knows

LOCATION	OFFICIAL STATUS	WHAT IT ACTUALLY IS
Plantation estate	Private agricultural operation, Éterlumin yield licensed.	Built directly over the primary source chamber access point.
Weather station	Solarian Church research facility, meteorological focus.	Active Fortera monitoring post with sealed communication to the Church archive.
Naval station	Valdegracian crown military installation.	Forward intelligence post with orders to watch the Church station, not just defend the harbor.
Fishing village	Pre-colonial settlement, registered as local labor pool.	Primary keeper of oral knowledge about the chamber, distributed across three families.
Harbor chapel	Standard colonial Church mission.	Drop point for Duchy of Heller intelligence passed through a priest who does not know who he works for.

The primary access to the Canula Prime source chamber is through a sealed basement under the plantation estate main house. The current estate owner knows the basement exists and has instructions to keep it locked. He has not opened it. The Valdegracian administrator has a key. The Church weather station has a map that predates the

The chamber access point

THE ORIGINAL LABEL

The translated portion of the label reads: "maintenance access, authorized personnel only, do not approach during resonance events." The untranslated portion is six words. The best current estimate renders them as: "or the season will answer."

THE CANULA PRIME CRISIS



The crisis did not begin with the fire. The fire was the fourth thing.

The Canula Prime crisis is a cascade. The characters will arrive somewhere in the middle of it. They will not know the full sequence unless they investigate carefully. The Game Master should know the full sequence and let the characters discover it at their own pace, through evidence that contradicts official accounts.

The actual sequence

WEEK	EVENT	WHO KNOWS
Week -8	A Duchy of Heller research agent enters the island on forged Albion credentials.	Duchy of Heller only.
Week -6	The chamber begins showing elevated resonance readings. The estate engineer logs it as normal seasonal variation.	Estate engineer; log goes to company factor.
Week -5	The Albion intelligence contact inside the Valdegracian administration copies the engineer's log and transmits it.	Albion intelligence.
Week -4	The Church weather station records two resonance events. The senior priest files a standard miracle inquiry.	Church; inquiry sealed pending investigation.
Week -3	The Duchy of Heller agent makes contact with a member of the fishing village and learns the oral history of the chamber.	Duchy of Heller, fishing village elder.
Week -1	A Valdegracian convoy overseer attempts unauthorized access to the basement. The chamber responds. Three workers are injured. The overseer files a suppressed report.	Company factor, administrator; suppressed.
Week 0 (arrival)	The characters arrive. One ship is being towed in. A name is missing from the crew manifest.	Everyone who was at the harbor.

The missing crewman

Emilio Resa saw the basement door open during the incident and went inside before anyone could stop him. He is not dead. He is in the chamber. He is not hurt in any conventional sense. He cannot leave because the chamber has indexed his resonance signature and the door will not open from the inside while he remains.

WHAT RESA KNOWS

He has been in the chamber for a week. He has learned more about Éterlumin than any living engineer. He cannot explain most of it in language the characters will immediately understand. He will try anyway. He is calm in a way that should disturb everyone who talks to him.

Crisis pressure tracks

TRACK	CURRENT STATE	ESCALATION TRIGGER	RESULT IF FULL
Chamber resonance	6 of 10	Each unauthorized extraction attempt +2; each resonance experiment +1.	Major rupture; structural damage to estate; Fortera cascade across island.
Valdegracia containment	4 of 6	Each witness who talks publicly +1; each document leaked +1.	Military lockdown; characters cannot leave the island without force.
Faction awareness	3 of 5	Each faction contact made by players +1.	All factions move simultaneously; crisis becomes open conflict.
Church classification	2 of 4	Each miracle event +1; each death near chamber +1.	Inquisitor arrives; church authority overrides company authority.

SET-PIECE

THE ESTATE BELOW A WORKED SOURCE CHAMBER

The door is locked. Emilio Resa is behind it. The chamber is listening.



San Telmo Plantation Estate and Source Cave, ground floor plan with basement access.

This set-piece runs when the characters locate the estate, breach or negotiate access, and descend to the basement. It is designed to be run without preparation once the GM understands the three moving elements: the chamber, Emilio Resa, and the faction race to control the outcome.

The estate above

ROOM	WHAT IS THERE	WHAT THE GM SHOULD KNOW
Entry hall	Valdegracian guards, ledger desk, locked strong room.	The strong room has the suppressed incident report and the basement key.
Factor's office	Estate manager Sola Venna, company records, mirror for signaling the harbor.	Sola Venna knows the basement exists and is terrified of it. She will help the characters if they give her a way out of the island.
Engineer's workshop	Éterlumin storage, calibration tools, locked cabinet.	The cabinet has three months of anomalous readings that contradict the filed logs.
Main salon	Portraits of four previous owners, sealed letters in a wall cavity.	One portrait subject is named in the untranslated portion of the chamber label.
Basement stairs	Behind a false panel in the study fireplace surround.	The panel responds to resonance; singing a specific pitch opens it without the key.

The chamber below

The chamber is not large. It is a stone room approximately eight meters across, with walls that are not quite stone: the surface is a composite material that predates any colonial or pre-colonial construction method the characters will have encountered. The floor has a geometric pattern inlaid in a substance that responds to proximity by increasing in luminosity.

Emilio Resa sits at the center of the floor. He looks up when the characters enter. He says: "I have been counting heartbeats. The chamber counts them too. We have matched. I think it was waiting for someone to notice that."

WHAT RESA TELLS THE
CHARACTERS (IN
PIECES, NOT ALL AT
ONCE)

The chamber is not producing Éterlumin. It is cycling it. The extraction operation has been taking more than the cycle can restore. The chamber has been compensating by running a harmonic that keeps the local Fortera field stable, but the harmonic is audible now, and it should not be audible. When the harmonic becomes visible, the compensation will end. He does not know what happens after that. He thinks the people who built this room knew, and left instructions, but they assumed the people who came later would read them.

The faction race

Faction	What they want from the estate	How they arrive
Valdegracia	Resa in custody, documents destroyed, characters gone.	Four soldiers plus a company factor with sealed orders.
Albion	Chamber data and if possible Resa himself, deniably.	One agent in civilian clothes who was already on the island.
Duchy of Heller	Chamber data. Resa if he is willing. Certainty that no one else got there first.	Two agents via the harbor chapel drop point.
Church	Classification data and a formal interview with Resa about the miracle events.	Senior priest plus two Solaris escorts, arriving with a legal writ.

THE SET-PIECE
QUESTION

The characters have Resa. Every faction is arriving or about to arrive. The chamber is running its harmonic. Who gets what, and at what cost to whom?

NPCs AND POWER PLAYERS



Every important NPC has a public face, a private motive, a secret, a fear, and a move they make when cornered.

Use these NPCs as fixed characters or templates. Change names, flags, and loyalties as needed, but keep each person's pressure intact. Every important NPC should have a public face, a private motive, a secret, a fear, and a move they make when cornered.

ADMIRAL CONSTANZA MIRAVEL

Valdegracian Naval Commander, Canula Station

PUBLIC FACE

Calm, formal, correct. Represents crown authority without antagonizing the company factor or the Church mission.

PRIVATE MOTIVE

She wants the crisis contained before the home legislature hears about it. Her pension depends on a clean service record.

SECRET

She received the suppressed incident report two days before the characters arrived and has not forwarded it to the admiralty.

FEAR

That the chamber will classify as a miracle site and remove the naval station from crown jurisdiction.

CORNERED MOVE

Declare a security emergency, lock the harbor, and send for the heavy frigate. Buys time; creates a siege.

SOLA VENNA

Estate Factor, San Telmo Plantation

PUBLIC FACE

Efficient, loyal to the company, professionally correct with all parties.

PRIVATE MOTIVE

She wants off the island. She has wanted off the island for three years. The estate assignment was supposed to be six months.

SECRET

She has been filing falsified yield reports for eighteen months on instructions from a senior company officer she has never met in person.

FEAR

That the falsified reports will surface and she will be blamed for the entire operation.

CORNERED MOVE

Hand the characters the real records in exchange for guaranteed passage on the next ship out.

EMILIO RESA

Ship's Mechanic; Chamber Contact

PUBLIC FACE

A contract worker, unremarkable, good with his hands. Not educated.

PRIVATE MOTIVE

He does not want to leave the chamber. Not because he cannot; because he thinks if he leaves before someone understands the harmonic, no one will, and the chamber will answer in a way he has felt but cannot name.

SECRET

He has understood approximately forty percent of what the chamber has shown him. He is telling the characters about thirty percent of that. The rest he cannot find words for yet.

FEAR

That the people who built the chamber knew what was coming and left anyway.

CORNERED MOVE

Touch the floor and ask the chamber a question. The chamber answers. The answer will be inconvenient for everyone present.

FATHER ISIDRO CALVES

Senior Priest, Canula Mission; Church Intelligence

PUBLIC FACE

A tired, kind, overworked mission priest. He has been on Canula Prime for eleven years.

PRIVATE MOTIVE

He filed the miracle inquiry because the rules required it. He did not expect the Inquisitor inquiry to come back as fast as it did. He is now managing something larger than he intended.

SECRET

He is a Church intelligence asset. He passes information through the harbor chapel. He does not know the recipient is Duchy of Heller.

FEAR

That he has accidentally triggered a process that will get local people killed.

CORNERED MOVE

Invoke Church sanctuary for any civilian in the immediate area, including characters. Buys time; creates a legal standoff.

THE DUCHY OF HELLER AGENT (LENA KORST)

Research Agent; Forged Credentials

PUBLIC FACE

A minor Albion academic on a natural history survey. Believable, dull, professionally forgettable.

PRIVATE MOTIVE

She is here for the chamber data and has orders to return with it. She has been here long enough to want something else: to understand it.

SECRET

She speaks the pre-colonial language. She has translated approximately two-thirds of the chamber label. She has not told Duchy of Heller how much she has translated.

FEAR

That her cover will collapse before she gets the last third.

CORNERED MOVE

Offer the characters a trade: her translation, plus passage on the black sloop, in exchange for thirty minutes alone in the chamber with Resa.

Improvising NPC speech

Every NPC should answer a question with a sentence that serves their private motive, not the truth. If Admiral Miravel is asked whether the naval station knew about the basement, she says: "The station's mandate is harbor security and convoy escort. Questions about estate management belong to the company factor." That is technically true. It is designed to redirect. It tells the characters exactly where not to look.

NPC VOICE TEST

Before an NPC speaks, ask: what does this person want right now, and what would they never say out loud? Let the answer to the second question shape the silence in their dialogue.

CLOCKS, CONSEQUENCES, AND ESCALATION



A clock is not a threat. It is a promise.

Use clocks to make the world active. Advance a clock when the characters fail, hesitate, make noise, ignore a faction, reveal a secret, or choose one priority over another. A clock should create consequences, not cancel agency. Characters can slow, reverse, redirect, or exploit clocks through good play.

Clock types

TYPE	SEGMENTS	WHEN TO ADVANCE	WHEN TO FILL
Faction pressure	4 or 6	Faction acts or is ignored.	Faction achieves its goal or crosses its red line.
Crisis escalation	6 or 8	Player action increases stakes; NPC acts.	Crisis becomes uncontrollable; scene type changes.
Character threat	4	Enemy gathers resources or information.	Enemy acts directly against characters.
Opportunity	4	Characters build toward a goal.	Characters gain a significant advantage.

How to use consequences

A consequence is not a punishment. It is the world being consistent. When players fail a check, do not block them; advance the world. The witness they were trying to protect was moved. The document they needed was shredded. The faction they were ignoring made a move. Show the consequence as a scene, not as a GM announcement.

When players succeed, give them what they earned and immediately show them what they now have to manage. They got the information. Now three people saw them get it. They rescued the witness. Now the witness is telling them something that contradicts what they believed about the faction that hired them.

THE CONSEQUENCE RULE

Every significant choice should have a consequence that appears within one scene, even if the full weight does not land until later. Delay destroys causality. Show the ripple fast; let the wave develop slowly.

Escalation thresholds

Escalation happens when a clock fills and the GM makes a major move. Major moves change the kind of scene the characters are in. A political negotiation becomes a chase. A chase becomes a battle. A battle becomes a survival situation. A survival situation becomes a moral crisis. Move the scene type when the clock fills, not when it feels dramatically appropriate. The clock exists so dramatic appropriateness is built in.

CLOCK FILLS	MAJOR MOVE
Chamber resonance full	Moderate rupture event; the island reacts; all faction clocks advance one step simultaneously.
Valdegracia containment full	Harbor lockdown; characters cannot leave without force or a legal writ; faction race accelerates.
Faction awareness full	All factions move openly; deniability collapses; the crisis becomes the news.
Church classification full	Inquisitor arrives with crown-level authority; the estate is sealed as a miracle site; company operations suspended.

TABLES FOR PLAY



The table is not a crutch. It is a trigger.

These tables are not meant to replace preparation. They keep the world moving when the players turn left, ask the wrong person the right question, or spend an hour in a place you expected them to leave in five minutes.

Harbor activity (d10)

D10	EVENT
1	A Valdegracian convoy escort is refueling. The factor's clerk is watching it with unusual attention.
2	A fishing vessel is being inspected. The crew looks resigned. The inspector looks bored. One crate is not being opened.
3	A passenger arrives on a scheduled packet. She has no luggage and asks immediately for the Church mission.
4	A ship is departing an hour ahead of its listed time. The harbor master is pretending not to notice.
5	Two company factors are arguing at the ledger desk. One of them is holding a document upside down.
6	A longboat from an unlisted vessel is tied at the secondary dock. No crew visible. Oars still wet.
7	A Church Solaris is asking dockhands if they saw "an academic with a brown case" in the last two days.
8	A mechanic is repairing a winch and singing quietly. The song is the same pitch as the chamber harmonic.
9	The harbor master is unavailable. His deputy refuses to explain why. The harbor log for the last week has a page stuck together.
10	A small child is selling maps. The maps show a building where there is currently a garden. The garden is new.

NPC encounter (d8)

D8	WHO
1	A recently discharged company soldier who knows the estate guard rotation.
2	A fishing village elder who will trade local history for a favor that cannot be named in the harbor.
3	A Church novice who was assigned to copy a sealed document and did not understand what it said but remembers it perfectly.
4	A factor's clerk who has been keeping a private log of every anomalous event for eighteen months.
5	A retired Valdegracian officer who knows exactly what the naval station's real orders are and thinks they were wrong.
6	A ship's cook who saw the fire and saw who was not surprised by it.
7	An engineer from off-island hired for one job: certify that last month's yield figures are accurate. She cannot.
8	A local merchant who has been supplying the estate for thirty years and noticed when the basement access was sealed.

Chamber phenomena (d6)

D6	PHENOMENON
1	A compass needle rotates one full revolution and returns to north. Deviation: none after. Cause: none identified.
2	A tool left on the floor is warm when picked up. No heat source nearby. The warmth is pleasant.
3	A low tone, below speech, is audible for approximately four seconds. The walls show faint luminous traces that match the harmonic's frequency.
4	A door handle is cold regardless of ambient temperature. Touching it produces a brief visual: a room below this room.
5	A window glass shows a reflection that is delayed by approximately two heartbeats.
6	The floor pattern brightens fully for one second, dims, then repeats in a slower rhythm. Resa calls this "the chamber checking."

Faction moves (d6, per faction)

D6	MOVE
1	A faction asset moves to observe the characters directly.
2	A faction transmits information about the characters to their home base. An order is incoming.
3	A faction makes contact with a local NPC the characters have also spoken to.
4	A faction advances a clock directly; an event occurs that the characters did not cause.
5	A faction offers the characters a deal through an intermediary. The deal is genuine; the terms are not what they appear.
6	A faction loses an asset. The characters did not cause it. Another faction did. The losing faction will not know that immediately.

THE ÉTERLUMIN ECONOMY



The ledger is the weapon. The convoy is the argument. The source is the throne.

Éterlumin moves through the Mar de Oro region the way credit moves through a financial system: it is never where anyone says it is, the quantity in circulation is always disputed, and the people who control the chokepoints control everything downstream of them. A Game Master who understands the supply chain can generate faction pressure from first principles without needing specific plot events.

The supply chain

STAGE	WHO CONTROLS IT	WHERE THE LEVERAGE IS
Source chambers	Valdegracia (licensed); Church (spiritual authority); local communities (oral knowledge).	Access. Who can approach the chamber and who is kept away.
Extraction	Company factors and licensed engineers.	The yield figure. The real yield and the reported yield are rarely identical.
Refining	Company refineries on controlled islands.	Grade certification. A Grade III certified as Grade IV is worth twice as much and twice as dangerous.
Convoy transit	Valdegracian navy (escort); insurance companies (risk calculation); pirates (interdiction).	Timing and routing. Who knows when a convoy sails is who decides whether it arrives.
Distribution	Company factors in receiving ports.	Allocation. Military, industrial, or civilian priority is a political decision wearing an economic costume.
Contraband stream	Pirates, smugglers, black sloops, corrupt officials.	Price and deniability. The contraband price is always lower and the paperwork is always better.

How the market speaks

VOICE	WHAT THEY SAY
Company ledger	One sealed half-cylinder of Grade III lift-medium, marked clean at Canula Prime, is worth more than ten wagonloads of cut cane. One unmarked cylinder is worth less than a coffin until proven quiet.
Dockside saying	Sugar buys a coat. Éterlumin buys a cannon. A source buys a war.
Valdegracian quartermaster	Count every chamber, every seal, every valve, every prayer muttered by a frightened mechanic. The enemy cannot shoot down what we never let rise.
Albion private note	Their convoys guard weight. We shall take speed. Strike the ledger, not the fortress. Burn the papers, steal the mechanic, leave the tank singing.
Duchy of Heller harbor record	Official lift stores remain low. Unofficial lift stores are not to be discussed in writing. Black sloops draw from separate inventory under sealed authority.

Grades, marks, and what a character actually sees

Éterlumin has an in-world notation because the world has laboratories, ledgers, and engineers. Scholars write the substance as $Etl(\Phi)$, "Etl bound to Phi".

CANISTER MARK	<i>ETL-III Φ 0.71 L 4 P 12 R 2 COLD-SEALED</i>
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MARK	MEANING
ETL-III	Refined Grade III. Stable enough for regulated airship lift and signal work.
Φ 0.71	Fortera response coefficient. Higher values answer faster but are harder to calm.
L 4	Luminous density. Useful for signal systems and diagnostic reading.
P 12	Pressure tolerance rating for sealed transport and lift-lung use.
R 2	Resonance risk. Low enough for ordinary convoy, still dangerous near active sources.
COLD-SEALED	Stored quiet after refinement, not warm-drawn or battle-vented.

READING A MARK AT THE TABLE	A forged mark is the fastest way to hang a scene on a single die roll. Let a sharp character catch a Grade III tag on a cylinder that is faintly warm, or a Φ value too high for the convoy it is riding with. The paperwork lies; the substance does not.
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Ready-to-use prop labels

immediately.

- DUCHY OF HELLER PRIVATE STORES: No manifest copy authorized. Transfer only under sealed order. Chamber cold at time of inspection.
- REFINERY WARNING: A quiet valve is not a loyal valve. Confirm by gauge, hand, and second reader.
- CHURCH NOTICE: Luminous contraband surrendered before vespers shall be judged as negligence. Concealment shall be judged as sin and treason.
- ASSAY OFFICE NOTICE: All unmarked vessels arriving through Canula Prime are impounded until tested for pressure memory, resonance risk, seal integrity, and lawful origin.

ONE-SENTENCE CANON	<i>Éterlumin is a responsive, volatile gas shaped by deeper Fortera law: it can be drawn, refined, contained, tuned, and weaponized, but when forced into contradiction it does not simply fail, it answers wrongly.</i>
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CAMPAIGN PATHS AFTER CANULA PRIME

The crisis ends. The consequences sail.

Canula Prime should not end with the world unchanged. Even if the chamber is silenced and the harbor calms, the players have touched a conflict larger than the island. Use one or more of these paths to continue the campaign.

PATH	TRIGGER	CENTRAL QUESTION
The Albion War Path	Albion chooses speed over deniability and begins a broader disruption campaign.	Which truth will justify the next war?
The Duchy of Heller Secret Path	Duchy of Heller's hidden strength becomes relevant, tempting, and dangerous.	Can Duchy of Heller survive if everyone learns what it has built?
The Church Path	The Solarian Church sends Inquisitors and Solaris to contain spiritual and political fallout.	Can an institution protect a truth it does not understand?
The Ancient Systems Path	The Canula chamber points toward other source sites across the Golden Sea.	Are the old systems waking because people found them, or because the age is ready to break?
The Independence Path	Local groups use the crisis as proof that empire endangers the island.	Can liberation survive foreign exploitation and internal division?
The Free Captain Path	The players become privateers, smugglers, escorts, or deniable agents.	How much freedom can be bought before someone owns the bill?

Choosing a next arc

Choose the path that follows the players' strongest choice. If they protected witnesses, move toward Church or Independence. If they relied on Duchy of Heller, move toward Duchy of Heller Secret. If Albion escaped, move toward war. If they became obsessed with the chamber, move toward Ancient Systems. If they took payment and kept moving, give them the Free Captain Path and let old choices find them in the next port.

QUICK REFERENCE FOR THE GM



The table tool behind the screen.

- Every adventure has a visible mission, a faction conflict, and a deeper danger.
- Every important faction acts even when ignored.
- Éterlumin is dangerous because it is responsive, volatile, pressured, and poorly understood, not because it is poison.
- The Solarian Church can fear, bless, quarantine, investigate, and condemn Éterlumin, but does not truly understand source chamber science this age.
- Airship battles should change position, condition, or command every exchange.
- Canula Prime is beautiful from a distance and dangerous up close.
- Victories should create leverage and responsibility, not erase pressure.

Fast scene builder

STEP	PROMPT
1	Where are the characters? Add one sensory detail: heat, salt, brass, wet stone, rope, bells, cloud, smoke.
2	What do they want right now? Name the visible mission.
3	Who else wants this scene to end differently? Name one faction or NPC.
4	What hidden pressure is present? Éterlumin, source geometry, law, spies, debt, storm, or Church authority.
5	What changes if the players leave without acting? Advance one clock or move one NPC.

Names on the fly (d12)

D12	NAME
1	Esteban Lira
2	Maribel Arocha
3	Tomas Keel
4	Nuala Sayer
5	Joren Voss
6	Ilena Varro
7	Mateo Rivas
8	Serafina Veyra
9	Alvaro Renck
10	Rafael Doss
11	Amalia de Luz
12	Roland Ash

CLOSING NOTE

The Golden Sea is a campaign engine because every local choice has a route outward. A dockside favor becomes a ledger debt. A ledger debt becomes a ship movement. A ship movement becomes a diplomatic lie. A diplomatic lie becomes a battle under cloud. Let the characters matter. Let the world resist. Let the truth be useful, dangerous, and never cheap.

RUNNING THE CAMPAIGN AT THE TABLE



The fastest way to run Mar de Oro is to know who moves next.

crew leaves your preparation behind, or when a political scene needs consequences sharper than another fight.

GM PRINCIPLE

Every session should change one of three things: who controls information, who controls access, or who controls the source. If none of those changes, advance a faction clock.

The one-page Run Tonight sheet

FIELD	WRITE ONE CLEAR ANSWER BEFORE PLAY
Visible problem	What job, summons, disaster, rumor, or obligation brings the characters into motion?
Hidden pressure	Which faction wants the scene to go wrong, and why does it need deniability?
Deeper danger	What source chamber, Éterlumin supply, legal secret, religious classification, or buried history sits beneath the visible problem?
First reveal	What can the players learn in the first thirty minutes that changes the shape of the mission?
First choice	Which meaningful choice appears before combat becomes the easy answer?
If ignored	What happens if the characters leave, delay, or follow the safest official instruction?
Clock to advance	Which faction clock moves at the end of the session, even if the characters never saw it?

Session prep that survives player freedom

Prepare pressure, not plot. A good Mar de Oro session can move through diplomacy, harbor work, ship action, faith, crime, and source-chamber dread without feeling random because every scene answers the same question: who gains control if the crew does nothing?

STEP	WHAT TO PREPARE	AT THE TABLE
1. Name the weather	Heat, rain, fog, wind, or dead calm.	Weather changes firearms, signals, travel, morale, and witness reliability.
2. Name the public authority	Governor, harbor master, priest, captain, judge, factor, or military officer.	Let the players know who can punish them openly.
3. Name the quiet authority	Spy cell, company house, guild, smuggler crew, family network, or Church office.	Let the players discover who can punish them privately.
4. Name the useful witness	Worker, clerk, sailor, cook, novice, pilot, guard, child, or prisoner.	Protecting the witness should cost something.
5. Name the wrong move	Violence, delay, public accusation, opening a valve, trusting the document, or ignoring the poor.	Make the consequence visible before it lands.

End-of-session faction turn

Ask these questions after every session, then bring the answers back next time as events already in motion.

QUESTION	RESULT
Which faction gained the most from what the players did?	Advance that faction one clock segment and give it a visible new advantage.
Which faction was hurt most?	Give it a desperate move, a public accusation, a quiet retaliation, or a bad alliance.
What useful truth did the players leave unattended?	Move that truth into another person's hands.
Who now knows the characters matter?	Add a watcher, invitation, warrant, debt, favor, or threat.

FACTION CLOCK MINIMUM

Every active faction should advance at least one clock segment between sessions. The world does not pause while the players rest.

Canula Prime relationship web

Use this page when the players ask who benefits. Canula Prime should feel like a port where every official answer has a private owner.

NODE	WANTS	FEARS	FIRST MOVE WHEN PRESSURED
Emilio Resa	Time, access to the chamber, and proof that he was right.	Being made the only culprit for a system others funded.	Offers technical truth in exchange for protection.
Governor of Canula	Order, revenue, and a clean report to the crown.	A scandal that proves the port is not under control.	Frames the crisis as local negligence.
Valdegracian crown agents	Containment, jurisdiction, and ownership of evidence.	Albion or Heller learning what the chamber can do.	Seize documents under emergency authority.
Albion Bureau cell	Leverage, blackmail, and technical fragments.	Open war before the advantage is secured.	Approaches a crew member through a false ally.
Solarian Church offices	Classification authority and moral control of the narrative.	A source event that cannot be explained theologically.	Orders quarantine, inquiry, and silence.
Heller representatives	Truth, survival, and advantage without becoming Valdegracia's scapegoat.	A public rupture that makes all autonomy suspect.	Protects witnesses and steals proof quietly.
Workers and local families	Safety, wages owed, missing kin found, and no more experiments.	Being erased from the official story.	Bring testimony, sabotage equipment, or riot.

Relationship moves

WHEN PLAYERS...	THEN SHOW...
Protect a witness	A faction offers a better witness in exchange for silence.
Accuse an official publicly	Someone lower in the chain disappears before testifying.
Trust a document	The seal is real, but the authority behind it is contested.
Repair the chamber	The faction that funded the damage claims ownership of the repair.

Law, arrests, trials, and official pressure

Mar de Oro consequences should often arrive as paper, seals, witnesses, blocked docks, and polite threats. Use the law when combat would make the world smaller.

STAGE	PRESSURE	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	HOW TO ANSWER IT
0	Rumor	Names circulate in taverns, chapel yards, and factor houses.	Ask who is spreading it and who profits.
1	Customs inspection	Cargo delayed, papers checked, powder counted, crew questioned.	Bribe, argue law, distract, forge, or accept delay.
2	Official warning	A clerk delivers a sealed notice and pretends it is routine.	Comply openly while investigating privately.
3	Witness removal	A useful person is reassigned, arrested, bribed, or killed.	Protect the next witness before asking questions.
4	Warrant	The crew is accused of theft, heresy, smuggling, riot, murder, or sabotage.	Find jurisdictional conflict and make powers compete.
5	Ship seizure	The harbor master blocks departure or impounds supplies.	Negotiate bond, break blockade, or force a public hearing.
6	Church inquiry	The event becomes a matter of doctrine, corruption, or contamination.	Answer with testimony, ritual standing, or political cover.
7	Diplomatic incident	Flags move, captains take sides, and a private mistake becomes state policy.	Choose which faction pays the public cost.

LEGAL RULE

A lawful order can still be false, corrupt, or suicidal. Let players respect the law without needing to trust the person holding the seal.

Rewards beyond coin

Coin matters, but the strongest rewards in Mar de Oro are permission, reputation, leverage, and access. Give players things that change what they can attempt next.

REWARD	WHAT IT GIVES	HOW IT IS EARNED	COMPLICATION
Letter of passage	Move through a port, checkpoint, or patrol without delay.	Save an official, solve a problem quietly, or accept a favor.	The issuing authority can later deny it.
Safe harbor	A place to repair, hide witnesses, and rest.	Protect locals or help a factor house.	Enemies learn where the crew sleeps.
Faction favor	One serious intervention or introduction.	Advance a faction goal without public exposure.	The faction expects repayment at the worst time.
Crew loyalty	Morale, better labor, and fewer desertions.	Pay honestly, share risk, protect the wounded.	A loyal crew asks harder moral questions.
Éterlumin access	Gas, regulators, pressure gauges, or refit priority.	Secure a source, convoy, ledger, or technician.	Access creates surveillance and debt.
Legal immunity	Temporary protection from arrest or seizure.	Expose a larger crime or serve a higher authority.	It protects only against one jurisdiction.
Blackmail material	Power over an NPC or institution.	Find ledgers, letters, false seals, or hidden cargo.	Using it makes permanent enemies.
Specialist help	Engineer, pilot, surgeon, translator, priest, marine, or spy.	Earn trust, pay cost, or rescue the person.	Specialists have loyalties of their own.
Ship upgrade	Better signals, reinforced vents, faster repairs, hidden storage, or improved guns.	Spend treasure and obtain rare parts.	Every upgrade creates a maintenance problem.

Reward rule

When a scene ends, pay out at least one of these: information, access, protection, loyalty, leverage, or a material resource. If the only reward is money, the setting is doing less work than it could.

Homeland, faith, and class pressure

Use formation as pressure, not as a cage. A character may reject their origin, but other people still read the accent, clothes, manners, name, profession, and companions.

FORMATION	TABLE PRESSURE
Valdegracian	Authority expects obedience, proper address, and respect for sealed procedure. A breach of decorum can be treated as evidence of guilt.
Albionite	Polite understatement hides intelligence work, naval pride, and a habit of keeping a second set of orders.
Hellerite	Competence matters more than pedigree. Promises are tested by action, and loyalty must hold under risk.
Stroomdijker	Contracts, credit, insurance, cargo ownership, and ledger evidence shape every negotiation.
Colonial Born	They know the port beneath the flags. They can cross social borders, but every side may doubt their loyalty.

FAITH PRESSURE	USE IT WHEN...
Solarian	A scene involves legitimacy, burial, rite, heresy, quarantine, corruption, or who may interpret an event.
Luminary Fellowship	A scene involves conscience, printed argument, reform, direct reading, dissent, or moral refusal.
Oraclean	A scene involves communal discernment, symbol, sacrament, silence, exile, or careful interpretation of signs.

CLASS PRESSURE	ACCESS AND SUSPICION
Noble or officer	Doors open, but servants watch closely and rivals assume entitlement.
Merchant or factor	Money speaks, but every favor becomes an account.
Clerical or scholarly	Archives open, but doctrine and reputation follow every question.
Laboring, sailor, soldier, servant	Back rooms open, but official rooms close unless force, patronage, or proof changes the terms.

Source chamber templates

A source chamber is never just a room. It is a local argument between pressure, history, Fortera geometry, and the people forcing it to answer. Use these templates when the crew finds another site.

TEMPLATE	SIGNS	HAZARDS	SAFE MOVES	CAMPAIGN CONSEQUENCE
Sleeping chamber	Warm stone, clean air, old marks that repeat every few steps, tools feeling heavier near the threshold.	Wakes when disturbed by extraction, blood, loud resonance, or aggressive Fortera use.	Map first, lower voices, remove heat, leave metal tools outside, use small tests.	A faction can secure it quietly if the crew does not decide who protects it.
Worked chamber	Pipes, valves, gauge stations, chalk marks, worker bunks, sealed vents, worn paths.	Pressure climb, bad seals, exploited feed zone, panicked workers, sabotage hidden as maintenance.	Stabilize vents, interview laborers, shut down one process at a time.	Proof of institutional guilt exists in ledgers, tool marks, and repair orders.
Wounded chamber	Cracked geometry, blue-white flicker, dead insects, compass error, old blast scars.	Responds to movement, gunfire, bells, engine rhythm, or emotional panic.	Slow the room, remove sound, isolate active tanks, let patterns repeat before acting.	The wound points toward a past battle, failed experiment, or hidden extraction crime.

GAS CANON

Éterlumin found near source chambers is gas behavior under pressure and field conditions. Do not describe it as crystal unless a local culture is using a wrong word for what it sees.

More source chamber templates

TEMPLATE	SIGNS	HAZARDS	SAFE MOVES	CAMPAIGN CONSEQUENCE
Listening chamber	Repeats sounds after a delay, responds to oaths, prayers, drum patterns, names, or command phrases.	Answers the strongest signal, even if the signal is wrong, frightened, or contradictory.	Speak one at a time, establish a calm pattern, stop arguments before the room joins them.	Reveals old orders, forgotten names, or a command system still waiting for authority.
Ruptured chamber	Impossible geography, chained echoes, heat without flame, pressure without machinery, old systems waking elsewhere.	Scene scale expands: ship loss, mass panic, memory effects, terrain change, faction war pretext.	Evacuate, sever fuel, stop resonance, save witnesses, accept partial loss.	The campaign changes. A new age begins locally before anyone understands it.
Improvised extractor site	Portable tanks, cheap gauges, hidden labor, false manifests, no proper venting, guards paid in arrears.	Explosion, legal seizure, worker revolt, evidence destruction, forced semi-state response.	Cut heat, bleed pressure, separate people from valves, preserve ledgers.	Shows how greed spreads chamber risk far beyond formal facilities.

Chamber cue table

D6	CUE	MEANING
1	The pressure gauge falls while the room grows louder.	The chamber is drawing response from elsewhere.
2	A brass tool warms only when pointed east.	There is an active line, conduit, or old alignment.
3	A prayer, song, or command repeats one heartbeat late.	The chamber is listening for a stable signal.
4	The workers all remember a different first accident.	Memory or record has been managed.
5	A sealed tank sweats cold water in dry heat.	Semi-state instability is near.
6	The safest-looking door has no dust before it.	Someone has used it recently.

Ready encounter frames I

These frames are scenes, not scripts. Drop one into play when the campaign needs motion, pressure, or a clean way to reveal a larger truth.

ENCOUNTER	SETUP	TRUE PRESSURE	COMPLICATIONS AND OUTCOMES
Customs inspection at Boca Serena	Harbor officers stop the crew over cargo papers, powder count, or passenger lists.	A faction wants to know what the crew carries and who they are protecting.	A polite clerk is the dangerous one. Success earns passage; failure creates delay, rumor, or seizure.
Dinner with the Governor	The Governor invites the crew after a public disturbance. Every course is a test.	He wants to learn whether they can be bought, blamed, or used.	Servants know more than guests. A toast can be a trap. Leaving early insults the port.
Warehouse raid during rain	A ledger, witness, or tank shipment is hidden in a wet customs warehouse.	Someone arranged the rain shift because sound and powder both fail.	Wet powder, lantern risk, frightened workers, and a second crew already inside.
Church inquiry in a chapel	A priest or investigator asks for testimony under sacred form.	The Church wants classification authority before facts become politics.	Truthful answers can still condemn allies. Refusal looks like guilt. A Solaris escort watches the doors.

SCENE RULE

Each encounter should offer three exits: official compliance, quiet negotiation, and dangerous action. The best outcome should require more than the highest damage roll.

Ready encounter frames II

ENCOUNTER	SETUP	TRUE PRESSURE	COMPLICATIONS AND OUTCOMES
Albion agent under false identity	A helpful translator, surgeon, pilot, or factor offers exactly what the crew needs.	Albion wants leverage without showing the flag.	They know one private fact too many. Exposing them creates a diplomatic problem, not a clean victory.
Source chamber pressure spike	During investigation, every gauge turns calm just before the chamber becomes dangerous.	The safest numbers are false because the response moved into the walls, vents, or people.	Running saves lives but loses proof. Staying requires discipline, engineering, and silence.
Worker testimony before disappearance	A worker asks to speak after nightfall and brings a name, number, or sketch.	The labor network knows what the official reports removed.	Protecting the witness creates legal risk. Ignoring them lets the next accident become murder.
Airship signal failure before ambush	A relay flag, lamp, bell, or coded line gives the wrong order in clear weather.	Someone has interfered with command, not navigation.	The crew must decide whether to obey doctrine, trust instinct, or reveal private signals.

Using these frames repeatedly

Change the public mask, then keep the pressure. A customs inspection can become a Church inquiry. A dinner can become a hostage negotiation. A signal failure can become a trial. The pro move is continuity: the same people, debts, documents, and fears should reappear until the players understand the island as a living system.

FINAL GM NOTE

Mar de Oro works best when the crew wins scenes but inherits consequences. Let victories open doors, create debts, reveal deeper systems, and force sharper choices.

APPENDIX C

CAMPAIGN FRAMES ACROSS MAR DE ORO



Canula Prime is one door. The Golden Sea has many.

Use this appendix when the campaign leaves Canula Prime, begins somewhere else, or follows a player crew built around a different premise. The Player's Handbook gives the setting many possible campaign shapes. This section turns those shapes into GM-facing starts, pressures, clocks, and rewards.

GM FRAME

A campaign frame is not a railroad. It is the shared reason the crew stays together when the first job stops being simple.

FRAME QUESTION	GM ANSWER BEFORE SESSION ONE
Who authorized the crew?	A crown, company, church office, patron, ship owner, guild, family network, or no one at all.
What keeps them together?	Ship debt, oath, shared evidence, wanted status, common patron, blood debt, or the fact that no one else believes them.
What can revoke their freedom?	A warrant, recalled commission, seized vessel, lost patron, public scandal, broken charter, or Church classification.
What is the deeper danger?	Source pressure, Éterlumin exploitation, old systems, faction war, soul-shard resonance, or a truth no institution can admit.

Eight campaign modes

MODE	OPENING SITUATION	BEST PRESSURE	FIRST CLOCK
Privateers with a letter of marque	The crew receives legal permission to attack one flag while every other flag watches.	Prize law, reputation, prisoners, neutral ports, and the danger of becoming pirates by paperwork.	Commission questioned
Church inquiry	A miracle, rupture, heresy claim, or vanished priest requires investigation.	Doctrine, evidence, conscience, secrecy, and the difference between truth and useful truth.	Inquiry becomes public
Hellerite survey expedition	A fast vessel leaves Valdeila to chart a source rumor before larger powers arrive.	Autonomy, hidden fleet logistics, unreliable maps, and colonial-born guides.	Rival reaches the site
Diplomatic escort	The crew must move a person or document through ports that all claim neutrality.	Etiquette, false hospitality, legal traps, and assassination by proxy.	Guest compromised
Reformers disguised as traders	Pamphlets, witnesses, or fugitives move inside cargo routes.	Inspection, informants, print culture, and moral cost.	Network exposed
Anti-slavery operation	The crew targets plantation ledgers, transports, or hidden labor contracts.	Rescue, proof, retaliation, and protecting the people after the raid.	Estate retaliates
Smugglers forced into public service	A crew with useful crimes is offered immunity for one impossible job.	Blackmail, double-crosses, useful low contacts, and official hypocrisy.	Immunity revoked
Survivors of a failed voyage	They saw something that sank the expedition, and now every power wants the account.	Trauma, memory, salvage, insurance, and proof.	Witnesses vanish

Regional campaign starts

REGION	START WITH	MAKE IT MAR DE ORO BY ADDING
Canula Prime	A free port job, worker disappearance, source chamber clue, or suspicious convoy.	Everyone has a public role and a private owner. The island is already listening.
Valdeila and Heller	Shipyard politics, hidden refits, black sloops, ducal bargaining, or a disputed autonomy order.	Competence beats pedigree, but every success makes Valdegracia more attentive.
New Avalon	Albion naval administration, survey work, intelligence handling, or colonial discipline.	Two sets of orders: the public commission and the quiet Bureau instruction.
Nieuw Waterland	Company contract, debt dispute, cargo insurance, indenture records, or missing factor.	The ledger is lawful. The human cost is the crime.
Valdegracian holdings	Church courts, crown governors, old estates, formal procedure, and imperial legitimacy.	The seal is real, the order is legal, and the truth still may be buried.
Free ports	Neutral houses, brokers, rumors, contraband, and people changing names.	Every safe table belongs to someone. Neutrality has a price.
Interior islands	Guides, plantations, ruins, source zones, storms, and settlements that maps simplify badly.	Official geography fails. Local knowledge decides who lives.

REGIONAL RULE

Every region should have one visible law, one quiet law, and one person who knows how both are broken.

Start in motion openings

A Mar de Oro campaign opens best after the first mistake has already happened. The ship is inbound, the witness is late, the seal is wrong, the engine sings, the letter is already copied, and the crew is already implicated.

D8	OPENING	WHAT IT REVEALS WITHIN THIRTY MINUTES
1	A prize ship strikes colors too quickly and the captain asks for sanctuary by name.	The legal prize is bait, and the crew has been selected.
2	A chapel bell rings at noon for a body that arrives at dusk.	The death was scheduled before it happened.
3	A customs clerk finds a real seal on impossible cargo.	Authority and truth are pointing in different directions.
4	A Hellerite refit crew discovers a hidden Éterlumin line in a captured hull.	The ship has a history its owners did not disclose.
5	A printed tract names a source chamber no official map admits exists.	Someone with access to restricted knowledge wants the public to move first.
6	A diplomatic guest recognizes a sailor and goes pale.	The crew has crossed an old crime, debt, or identity.
7	A relay tower gives the correct signal in the wrong code.	The chain of command has been copied, penetrated, or awakened.
8	A plantation worker offers a sketch of a room below ground and refuses money.	The real reward is protection, and the real clock is retaliation.

Homeland, faith, and class as campaign pressure

FORMATION	GM PRESSURE MOVE	GOOD REWARD
Valdegracian	Put a lawful seal on a harmful order and ask who will challenge it in public.	Precedent, audience, absolution, or a rival noble forced to acknowledge them.
Albionite	Give them a polite ally with a second set of instructions.	Chart access, naval cover, a quiet warning, or a Bureau debt.
Hellerite	Make competence visible, then ask whether loyalty survives cost.	Crew trust, refit priority, ducal attention, or hidden sloop support.
Stroomdijker	Turn every favor into a contract and every contract into exposure.	Credit, insurance, cargo cover, or leverage over a company officer.
Luminoran	Make the argument public and require evidence under pressure.	Printed proof, expert testimony, legal standing, or a civic platform.
Eisenmarkian	Show a broken system that can be fixed only by ignoring procedure.	Technical authority, proper tools, disciplined allies, or a recorded failure avoided.
Volkharovi	Make endurance necessary, then offer a communal cost.	Shelter, memory, rite, patient loyalty, or a debt that outlasts the session.
Éirighdúnari	Make neutrality profitable and morally insufficient.	Neutral ground, factor records, private introductions, or Éterlumin assessment.
Colonial Born	Let them read the port correctly while every flag doubts their loyalty.	Local trust, hidden routes, rumor immunity, or a name that opens the back door.

Crew cohesion worksheet

Use this before a campaign begins, or when a new player joins. The crew does not need to trust each other immediately. They need a reason to remain aboard after trust is tested.

QUESTION	STRONG ANSWER
Who owns or controls the ship?	The crew, a patron, a crown, a company, a church office, a family, or a captain whose title is contested.
What debt binds the crew?	Money, rescue, witness protection, shared guilt, illegal cargo, a broken oath, or knowledge no one can safely hold alone.
Who can split them?	An old commander, a priest, a creditor, a lover, a faction handler, a court, or the person who can prove their papers false.
What secret does the ship carry?	Hidden compartment, false flag, illegal tank, unregistered gun, coded log, altered keel, or a room that should not exist.
What does the crew refuse to do?	Sell witnesses, abandon laborers, open a chamber by force, fire on civilians, return fugitives, or obey one flag blindly.
What reward keeps them moving?	Safe harbor, freedom, proof, revenge, a pardon, a source map, autonomy, or the right to choose what they become.

CREW RULE

When party unity weakens, attack the shared ship, shared witness, shared debt, or shared secret. Do not force friendship. Force consequence.

Campaign frame templates I

FRAME	FIRST SESSION	RECURRING PRESSURE	ENDGAME QUESTION
Privateer charter	The crew captures a vessel carrying the wrong prisoners.	Prize courts, neutral harbors, prisoner treatment, and naval retaliation.	Did they defend lawful war, become pirates, or expose the law itself?
Church inquiry	A local miracle and a source anomaly contradict each other.	Classification, witness control, rival clergy, Solaris oversight, and buried doctrine.	Can truth survive the institution that must name it?
Survey expedition	A map mark proves accurate after every official chart denies it.	Weather, guides, rival scouts, resource hunger, and old systems responding to arrival.	Who gets to protect a place once it is known?
Diplomatic escort	A passenger with immunity asks to be hidden from their own delegation.	Etiquette, assassins, forged letters, host obligations, and public insult.	What is peace worth when every power needs a different lie?

Campaign frame templates II

FRAME	FIRST SESSION	RECURRING PRESSURE	ENDGAME QUESTION
Company ledger war	A contract proves legal ownership of something monstrous.	Debt, insurance, labor, cargo seizure, and professional murder.	Can a lawful document be defeated without burning the port around it?
Free-port shadows	A neutral factor house asks the crew to move evidence between enemies.	Brokers, double identities, favors, and selective law.	What does neutrality become when the truth takes a side?
Failed voyage survivors	The crew returns with fewer names than the manifest requires.	Memory, salvage, inquiry, guilt, and factions seeking the wreck.	What actually came back with them?

SYSTEM GUIDES AND CONVERSION NOTES



Convert the pressure, not every number.

Mar de Oro is a setting first. D&D 5e is one implementation, not the truth beneath the world. Any rules engine can carry the Golden Sea if it can make pressure visible: faction movement, dangerous knowledge, ship failure, legal consequence, loyalty, and the cost of acting too late.

SYSTEM PRINCIPLE

When converting, ask what the scene threatens: body, ship, reputation, secrecy, authority, source stability, or the crew's ability to choose freely.

SCENE TYPE	WHAT THE SYSTEM MUST SUPPORT
Intrigue	Reading people, hidden motives, social leverage, favors, and clocks.
Exploration	Travel cost, weather, maps, guides, supplies, and local knowledge.
Airship action	Position, subsystem damage, command decisions, repair, altitude, and panic.
Source chamber scenes	Escalating hazard, clues before danger, partial success, and irreversible consequence.
Political fallout	Arrests, warrants, scandal, inquiry, ship seizure, and faction retaliation.

Universal conversion ladder

Use this ladder when translating the GM Guide into a rules engine that is not using the existing 5e appendix. Keep the fiction first. The numbers only express how much pressure surrounds the action.

DIFFICULTY	WHAT IT MEANS	D20 / 5E	PATHFINDER 2E	PERCENTILE / BRP
Routine	A trained person can do it in calm conditions.	DC 10	Trained or level DC -2	+20% or easy
Pressured	Time, weather, rank, or secrecy matters.	DC 13	Standard level DC	Standard
Dangerous	Failure causes harm, exposure, or faction movement.	DC 15	Hard level DC	Hard
Severe	Ship, chamber, life, or legal status is at risk.	DC 18	Very hard level DC	Very hard
Catastrophic	Rupture, court scandal, ship loss, massacre, or war pretext.	DC 21+	Incredibly hard or custom hazard	Extreme

DIFFICULTY	DICE POOL	2D6 / PBT A STYLE
Routine	1 success	No roll unless pressure exists.
Pressured	2 successes	7-9 introduces cost, 10+ is clean.
Dangerous	3 successes	A miss advances a clock hard.
Severe	4 successes	Success still carries cost or exposure.
Catastrophic	5+ successes	Use a custom move or campaign clock.

CONVERSION RULE

Scale difficulty to the table's engine, then spend failure on consequence. A failed check should move the world, not simply stop the scene.

System-neutral procedures

PROCEDURE	USE IN EVERY SYSTEM
Faction clocks	Advance when players delay, make noise, fail forward, ignore a power, accept a favor, or reveal useful information.
Éterlumin hazard states	Stable, Singing, Answering, Contradicting, Rupturing. Every batch degrades; active Éterlumin is flammable and not inherently toxic.
Airship subsystems	Hull, Rigging or Lift, Weapons, Crew, and Command. Track Éterlumin Reserve separately from ordinary subsystem damage.
Social fallout	A failed roll can create warrants, witness removal, seized cargo, a false report, inquiry, debt, or diplomatic attention.
Rewards beyond coin	Pay out access, protection, leverage, letters, repairs, specialists, immunity, safe harbor, and crew loyalty.
Revival and the soul	Fortera-based revival is possible but rare, costly, and permanently consequential. Restoring the body does not guarantee the soul returns whole.

Éterlumin hazard states

STATE	CUE	MECHANICAL TRANSLATION
Stable	Contained, monitored, quiet pressure, normal readings; degradation continues.	No roll unless characters hurry, sabotage, or mistreat the system.
Singing	Hum, heat, shimmer, pressure drift, animals quiet, tools warming.	Introduce warnings, disadvantage, threat, or minor clock ticks.
Answering	The room reacts to speech, rhythm, blood, engine stress, rite, or command.	Require careful action, group checks, or controlled position with clear costs.
Contradicting	Signals conflict. Instruments disagree. The chamber repeats the wrong answer.	Escalate position, raise DCs, split consequences, or tick two clocks.
Rupturing	Space changes, ship systems fail, legal and political consequences begin.	Custom hazard, scene change, major condition, injury, or campaign-level clock.

REVIVAL CANON	A successful spell, ritual, roll, or procedure resolves the attempt. It does not guarantee that the returned person is unchanged. An unstable return may damage, divide, displace, or completely shatter the soul.
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D&D 5e and Pathfinder notes

ENGINE	BEST FIT	CONVERSION NOTES
D&D 5e	Heroic crews, clear combat, recognizable DCs, monster-like hazards, and set-piece airship fights.	Use the existing 5e appendix for DCs, firearms, airship actions, hazards, and NPC templates. Keep social and legal consequences outside hit points.
Pathfinder 2e	Tactical crews, balanced hazards, tight encounter math, strong conditions, exploration activities, and degrees of success.	Use level-based DCs. Treat source chambers as hazards, haunts, or complex hazards. Use degrees of success for clean success, cost, setback, and severe complication.
Pathfinder 1e	Detailed character builds, tactical ship boarding, prestige, and crunchy gear.	Use 5e values as narrative baselines only. Convert firearms and airships to your table's preferred subsystems, and avoid letting gear math replace faction pressure.

Pathfinder 2e quick mapping

MAR DE ORO ELEMENT	PF2E EXPRESSION
Faction clock	Victory point track, influence subsystem, reputation track, or campaign clock outside encounter mode.
Source chamber	Complex hazard with initiative, disable actions, escalating effects, and consequences on failure.
Éterlumin pressure	Environmental hazard, affliction-like condition, or subsystem clock that changes actions and DCs.
Airship combat	Vehicle encounter using subsystems as targets: Lift, Sail, Command, Guns, Frame, Crew.
Social rank and law	Influence subsystem, reputation, circumstance bonuses, access requirements, and consequences that arrive after the scene.
Firearms	Use the table's Guns & Gears assumptions if desired. Keep reload, smoke, wet powder, and misfire tone even if the exact rules differ.

Investigation and drama engines

ENGINE	WHAT TO EMPHASIZE	MAR DE ORO ADVICE
Call of Cthulhu / BRP	Investigation, fear, evidence, institutional dread, dangerous knowledge, and fragile people.	Make source chambers intelligible through clues before danger. Sanity-style stress can represent awe, rupture exposure, guilt, or institutional horror.
Fate	Dramatic politics, identity, debts, oaths, ships, and cinematic airship reversals.	Make homelands, ship damage, faction reputation, oaths, and secrets into aspects. Compel class pressure, legal trouble, or Éterlumin instability.
Cortex Prime	Trait-driven crews, relationships, values, distinctions, and modular ship drama.	Build dice pools from calling, homeland, relationship, ship system, and current pressure. Use complications for legal heat, rupture risk, and faction attention.
Genesys	Mixed narrative and tactical action with threat, advantage, triumph, and despair.	Excellent fit for partial success. Spend threat on witnesses, pressure, heat, smoke, legal attention, and damaged systems.

DRAMA RULE

In drama engines, a clean success should be rare under political pressure. Let success create a new obligation, witness, debt, or clock.

Clock-first engines

ENGINE	WHY IT FITS	GM MOVES
Powered by the Apocalypse	Fast table drama, moral pressure, player-driven consequence, and scenes that turn on hard choices.	Use moves that read the room, call in debts, push an engine too far, hold the line, or investigate a chamber. A miss should advance a visible clock.
Forged in the Dark	Canula Prime, smugglers, privateers, intelligence crews, clocks, position, effect, Heat, and faction politics.	Use position for danger and effect for leverage. Track Heat by jurisdiction or port only when legal attention differs. Track faction status and faction clocks separately. Use downtime for repairs, rumors, healing, and favors.
Blades-style ship crew	Airship, sloop, merchant brig, privateer, survey vessel, or deniable Hellerite craft as the crew sheet.	Ship upgrades become claims or upgrades. Rivals remain factions. Éterlumin access is supply or a dangerous asset. Legal immunity is temporary cover.

CAMPAIGN FIT

Forged in the Dark works best when the crew faces contested authority, secrecy, debt, faction pressure, or legal risk. Conventional military service and openly authorized heroic expeditions may require broader changes to Scores, Heat, Vice, Entanglements, and Downtime.

Useful clocks

CLOCK	USE WHEN
Albion identifies the crew	The players leave traces, misuse false papers, or reveal a hidden objective.
The Governor buries the incident	The party delays public proof or accepts official process.
The Church classifies the chamber	A source event becomes doctrinal before evidence becomes political.
Chamber pressure rises	The crew hurries, argues, uses force, or ignores warning cues.
Workers begin disappearing	The players ask questions without protection.

Action, survival, and precision engines

ENGINE	BEST CAMPAIGN FRAME	CONVERSION NOTE
Savage Worlds	Pulp privateers, fast airship battles, duels, raids, escapes, and explosive set-pieces.	Keep hazards swingy. Use chases, dramatic tasks, and wounds for shipboard pressure.
Year Zero Engine	Survival voyages, harsh travel, expeditions, limited supplies, dangerous ruins, and desperate repairs.	Pushing maps well to Fortera overdraw and Éterlumin risk. Spend resource dice on powder, food, water, parts, and morale.
GURPS or simulation-heavy systems	Engineering, medicine, logistics, rank, firearms, armor, and precise ship procedures.	Use when the group enjoys detail. Keep faction clocks so precision does not freeze politics.
OSR / old-school fantasy	Exploration, dangerous rooms, procedures, faction play, treasure maps, and players solving problems without character buttons.	Make source chambers puzzle-sites. Telegraph danger clearly. Reward caution, mapping, rumor work, and retreat.
2d20	Momentum, threat, reputation, duties, and cinematic pressure.	Spend threat on faction heat, chamber response, command confusion, and weather shifts.

Choosing an engine for the campaign you want

CAMPAIGN EMPHASIS	STRONG CHOICES
Heroic mixed action with familiar fantasy structure	D&D 5e, Pathfinder 2e
Tactical depth, conditions, hazards, balanced encounters	Pathfinder 2e
Dark investigation, brittle certainty, slow dread	Call of Cthulhu / BRP
Smugglers, privateers, clocks, heat, crew upgrades	Forged in the Dark
Fast moral drama and sharp consequences	Powered by the Apocalypse
Cinematic swashbuckling and quick fights	Savage Worlds, Genesys
Survival, scarcity, hard travel, expedition failure	Year Zero Engine, OSR
Technical realism and engineering detail	GURPS or another simulation-heavy engine

Final conversion checklist

BEFORE PLAY, DECIDE	WHY IT MATTERS
How your system handles partial success	Mar de Oro thrives when success creates cost rather than ending pressure.
How you track faction movement	Every campaign needs clocks, fronts, heat, reputation, or another pressure track.
How ships take damage	Use subsystems before total destruction. Let repairs matter.
How social rank changes access	Nationality, faith, class, and paperwork should open and close doors.
How Éterlumin escalates	Use hazard states, not simple fuel points.

FINAL RULE

The best system for Mar de Oro is the one that makes players ask what their success cost, who saw it, and which power moves next.

D&D 5E CONVERSION PACK



Use these values as a reference baseline and adapt them to the table.

This appendix is a D&D; Fifth Edition conversion pack. It is the most extensively tested Mar de Oro implementation because the original group used Fifth Edition. The values remain optional baselines, not the truth beneath the setting.

VESSEL ATTACKS

Each vessel makes one attack on its turn unless a specific trait says otherwise. The Broadside value is the complete damage of that single vessel attack, not one roll per cannon, battery, or gun deck.

Airship stat lines

VESSEL OR CLASS	FACTION	TYPE	AC	HP	SPEED	BROADSIDE
Justicar-class	Valdegracia	Ship of the Line	17	1200	20 kt	72d12
Cruzado	Valdegracia	Heavy Frigate	16	300	25 kt	28d10
Banshee-class	Albion	Cruiser-Frigate	17	580	36 kt	28d12
Spectre	Albion	Disruption Frigate	16	280	35 kt	20d12
Wright	Albion	Assault Frigate / Alpha Striker	15	250	40 kt	16d10
Albion Sloop	Albion	Scout / Raider	14	160	45 kt	8d8
Aurora Ventus	Duchy of Heller	Command Frigate	16	340	30 kt	24d10
Cazador	Duchy of Heller	Interceptor	16	230	40 kt	14d10
La Estrella Veloz	Duchy of Heller	Frigate	17	220	40 kt	10d10
Santo-class	Duchy of Heller	Escort Sloop	15	180	35 kt	8d8
Helios Tender	Duchy of Heller	Support Vessel	15	280	20 kt	2d6

Aurora Ventus is a named vessel. Helios Tender support: repairs 3d10 damage and may perform emergency recalibration, stabilize damaged containment, or transfer serviceable reserve. It does not recharge degraded Eterlumin.

Subsystem split (called shots)

SUBSYSTEM	SHARE OF HP	IF DESTROYED
Hull integrity	35%	Core structure; if lost, the ship fails.
Rigging or Lift	20%	Lift support, sail handling, altitude control, steering, and manoeuvring fail as appropriate to the vessel.
Weapons	20%	Broadside cannon and volley systems are disabled.
Crew	15%	Repair, gunnery, casualty control, and coordinated actions collapse.
Bridge or Command	10%	Orders, leadership, signals, and initiative bonuses fail.

ÉTERLUMIN RESERVE	Track Éterlumin Reserve separately from subsystem hit points. It represents remaining usable service, calibration condition, containment integrity, and operational availability.
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Volley fire, at a glance

- Damage: 1d10 per two muskets, rounded down. Minimum three muskets to volley.
- Size caps: Small 5d10; Medium 8d10; Large 10d10; Huge 14d10; Gargantuan 16d10.
- Damage save: DEX, DC 12 + 1 per five shooters, maximum 18. Success halves.
- Suppression save: WIS, same DC. Failure means half movement and disadvantage until the end of the target’s next turn.
- Morale: lose more than half remaining HP to one volley, then WIS DC 12 or break.
- Resolution: the damage pool is one coordinated formation volley, not one separate attack for every musket.

PLAYTEST NOTE	This procedure was tested against both individual characters and military formations. Individual targets resolve their own saves. A formation represented as one unit resolves the volley through its formation procedure.
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Fortera overdraw, at a glance

Fortera is the setting’s underlying field and disciplined practice. D&D; spell terms are mechanical conversion tools, not literal explanations of Fortera. Overdraw is a deliberate attempt to exceed the highest effect, scale, or intensity the character can safely produce under present conditions.

CAPACITY AND TIERS

Capacity is the highest safe effect under the current conditions. Each tier over capacity is one additional step beyond that limit. Establish the intended tier before the roll. Overdraw should grant an exceptional benefit and impose strain, local instability, or another meaningful consequence.

SEVERITY	TIERS OVER	STRAIN	RIPPLE	SETTLING
Mild	1	1d10	x1.5	Weakened field, 1d4 rounds
Moderate	2	2d8	x2	Depleted field, 1d6 minutes
Severe	3	4d8	x3	Dead zone, 1d6 hours
Overload	4+	6d8	x4	Collapse zone, 1d6 days or more

SAVE DC

Save DC = 10 + (2 x tiers over capacity). Success takes half strain. Failure takes full strain and escalates one step. Strain is taken as Exhaustion HP, ignoring armor and resistances.

Moon pressure

MOON STATE	GM EFFECT
Ordinary night	Use normal thresholds. Weirdness requires a cause.
One strong moon	Increase sensory signs. Clocks do not worsen automatically.
Two-moon alignment	Every overdraw or instability roll nudges one step worse.
Three-moon God’s Breath	Source chambers become dangerous even undisturbed. Begin chamber scenes with an active clock.

RUNNING MAR DE ORO IN FIFTH EDITION

Use pressure first, numbers second.

This appendix pulls the Player Handbook conversion material into a GM-facing procedure set. Use it when the scene moves from mood into mechanics and you need a ruling quickly.

Conversion principles

PRINCIPLE	HOW TO RULE IT AT THE TABLE
Pressure before numbers	Establish what changes if the characters fail, then call for the roll.
Advantage is doctrine	Use advantage when a faction fights in its preferred style; use disadvantage when forced outside doctrine.
Clocks beat repeat rolls	For extended danger, use 4, 6, or 8 segment clocks instead of asking for the same check again.
Success creates leverage	A success should give position, information, time, or authority, not just permission to continue.
Failure moves the world	Advance a faction, worsen a hazard, spend a resource, or reveal a cost.

Default DC ladder

DC	USE IT FOR	EXAMPLE
10	Routine under pressure	Read a common harbor signal through smoke.
12	Trained but risky	Reload a musket while moving through boarding chaos.
14	Hard professional work	Stabilize a damaged valve before pressure rises.
16	Elite work under threat	Hold formation during a cloud ambush.
18	Heroic or desperate	Translate a chamber rhythm while the floor begins to sing.
20+	Nearly impossible	Talk a faction commander out of a red-line order already given.

GM RULE

When in doubt, pick DC 14. Lower it if the character has the right tool, role, or preparation. Raise it if time, smoke, weather, panic, or Fortera instability is working against them.

Flintlocks in Anno 7202 are powerful, smoky, temperamental, and slow. They change the meaning of courage, but they do not remove the need for steel, formation, and timing.

WEAPON	DAMAGE	RANGE	RELOAD	NOTES
Pistol	1d10 piercing	30/90	1 action	Can be fired in melee at disadvantage unless braced.
Carbine	1d10 piercing	60/180	1 action	Favored by sailors, guides, and airship crews.
Musket	1d12 piercing	80/240	1 action	Best in formation or open ground. Awkward in jungle.
Boarding gun	2d8 piercing	20/60	1 action	At close range, ignores light cover from bodies and rails.
Swivel gun	4d10 piercing	120/360	2 crew	Crew-served. Threatens boats, decks, and light structures.

Misfire, smoke, and wet powder

CONDITION	RULE
Wet powder	Attacks with firearms are made at disadvantage until the weapon is dried or powder is replaced.
Poor powder or rain	On a natural 1, the shot misfires. Clearing it costs an action.
Heavy smoke	After two or more volleys in the same area, ranged attacks beyond 30 feet are at disadvantage until wind, movement, or elevation clears the smoke.
Point blank	Within 10 feet, a firearm hit against an unarmored or unaware target adds +2 damage.

Volley procedure

STEP	RULE
1. Form	Minimum three shooters. A volley requires a round to prepare unless the unit is already drilled and waiting.
2. Fire	Damage is 1d10 per two muskets, round down. Apply the size caps from the quick-stat page.
3. Save	Targets make a DEX save, DC 12 + 1 per five shooters, maximum 18. Success halves damage.
4. Suppress	Targets also make a WIS save against the same DC. Failure means half movement and disadvantage until the end of their next turn.

AIRSHIP COMBAT PROCEDURE



Every exchange changes position, condition, or command.

Airship combat is a scene with rules, not a miniature wargame. Each round should change one spatial fact, one ship condition, or one command fact. If nothing changes, advance smoke, weather, fire, morale, or a faction clock.

Airship combat round

STEP	WHO ACTS	WHAT HAPPENS
1. Establish the sky	GM	Name altitude, weather, visibility, range band, and terrain below.
2. Declare intent	Captains	Each side states its doctrine: close, hold line, break contact, board, dive, climb, or vanish.
3. Contest position	Pilots	Opposed piloting check, usually DEX or vehicle proficiency. Winner changes range, angle, altitude, or cover.
4. Resolve fire	Gunnery	Broadside, called shots, volleys, or special weapons. Smoke and angle matter.
5. Damage control	Engineers	Repair, vent, cut pressure, reroute lift, or keep weapons firing.
6. Command check	Signal officers	Maintain orders, relay to allies, spoof signals, or recover from bridge hits.
7. Advance clocks	GM	Move fire, smoke, panic, Fortera instability, weather, and faction clocks.

Range bands

BAND	MEANING	RULES CUE
Contact	Boarding hooks, pistols, grenades, pikes.	Melee, morale, and bridge panic dominate.
Close	Musket, swivel, and accurate cannon fire.	Called shots possible at normal difficulty.
Battle	Main broadsides and maneuver.	Most airship engagements begin here.
Long	Harassing fire, signal deception, pursuit.	Called shots at disadvantage unless doctrine or optics help.
Cloud	Contact uncertain.	Pilot or signal check needed before accurate fire.

ANGLE MATTERS

A frontal strike favors fast ships with bow guns. A broadside favors heavy line vessels. An attack from cloud gives advantage on the first positioning check unless the target has scouts, signals, or warning.

ROLE	CORE ACTION	USEFUL CHECKS
Captain	Set doctrine, rally crew, choose target priority, accept or refuse risk.	Persuasion, Intimidation, Insight, history of naval war.
Pilot	Change range, altitude, bearing, cover, and exposure to weather.	Vehicles, Acrobatics, Survival, Perception.
Gunnery officer	Coordinate broadside, called shot, reload rhythm, or ammunition choice.	Attack roll, Investigation, Perception, Intimidation.
Engineer	Vent, stabilize, repair, reroute lift, or sacrifice a subsystem to save the ship.	Arcana, Investigation, Tinker tools, vehicles.
Signal officer	Relay orders, jam enemy signals, read flags, maintain fleet cohesion.	Investigation, Deception, Performance, Perception.
Surgeon	Control casualties and panic; keep specialists alive.	Medicine, Insight, Persuasion.
Marine officer	Repel boarders, lead boarding party, guard prisoners or secure key rooms.	Athletics, Intimidation, Survival, attack rolls.

Role actions by difficulty

ACTION	DC	RESULT ON SUCCESS
Emergency turn through smoke	14	Change one range band or deny enemy advantage.
Keep guns firing after weapon damage	14	Ignore one weapons penalty this round.
Cut pressure before rupture	16	Reduce Éterlumin hazard clock by 1.
Read false flag or signal spoof	15	Identify the lie before it costs position.
Rally crew after bridge hit	16	Cancel command confusion for one exchange.
Board through hostile fire	17	Reach enemy deck with half casualties or less.

SHARED SPOTLIGHT

In a major battle, ask each player what station they take. Give every station one meaningful decision before the next broadside lands.

Subsystem failure and emergency repair

SUBSYSTEM	AT HALF HP	AT ZERO HP
Hull	Leaks, frame groans, crew works under falling spars.	Ship fails unless immediately stabilized.
Lift-support systems	Speed or altitude control worsens.	Controlled lift ends; descent, drift, or rupture clock begins.
Weapons	Reload rhythm falters; one battery goes silent.	Broadside reduced to scattered deck weapons.
Rigging and steering	Turning worsens; evasive action at disadvantage.	Cannot change bearing without emergency work.
Bridge and command	Orders delay or contradict.	Command confusion until a new officer takes control.
Crew	Repair, gunnery, and casualty control take penalties.	The vessel cannot coordinate complex actions until rallied or reinforced.

RESERVE TRACK

Éterlumin Reserve is not ordinary hull HP. Damage, Overdraw, failed recalibration, or containment problems may reduce remaining usable service without functioning like direct structural damage.

Emergency repairs

TASK	CHECK	TIME	EFFECT
Patch hull tear	DC 14 tools	1 round	Stop one damage-over-time effect.
Reroute lift pressure	DC 16 Arcana or tools	1 round	Restore one movement option for one exchange.
Cut fouled rigging	DC 13 Athletics	1 round	Remove steering disadvantage; lose a sail.
Restart signal deck	DC 15 Investigation	1 round	Allied ships receive current orders again.
Contain Éterlumin leak	DC 16 tools	2 rounds	Pause rupture clock. Failure advances it.

Critical hit table, d6

D6	CRITICAL
1	Deck splinters. Random exposed crew take 2d6 piercing.
2	Smoke blinds the battery. Next broadside at disadvantage.
3	Signal confusion. Enemy may force one delayed order.
4	Pressure spike. Start or advance an Éterlumin hazard clock.
5	Magazine threatened. Choose guns or safety this round.
6	Officer down. Immediate command check or doctrine collapses.

APPENDIX D.4

ÉTERLUMIN GAS STATES AND HAZARDS



Pressure is the warning. Resonance is the answer.

Use these rules when Éterlumin becomes an active danger: damaged tanks, source chambers, experiments, Overdraw, sabotage, ship combat, or careless storage. Every state continues to degrade. Active Éterlumin is flammable. Proximity alone is not poison exposure.

HAZARD	CLOCK	TRIGGER	WHEN FULL
Leaking tank	4	Fire, sparks, rough handling, failed repair.	Flash burn, panic, and loss of stored gas.
Pressure climb	6	Overfill, trapped vent, damaged regulator.	Rupture, lift loss, or explosive vent.
Semi-state resonance	6	Rite, engine rhythm, bell, song, source chamber.	Fortera response, hallucination, or subsystem failure.
Source contradiction	8	Two commands, two rituals, or hostile pulses.	Rupture event or chamber answer.

Gas state transitions

FROM	TO	WHAT CAUSES IT	GM CONSEQUENCE
Inert	Semi-state	Heat, pressure, active field, nearby chamber.	Start resonance signs and raise DCs by 2. "Inert" is an operational term, not permanent stability.
Semi-state	Active	Controlled lift command, weaponized vent, or deliberate activation.	Gain lift or effect; active gas is flammable and volatility rises.
Active	Semi-state	Emergency damping, cold vent, loss of command.	Effect weakens, but resonance and degradation continue.
Any	Rupture	Contradiction, trapped pressure, violent impact.	Resolve hazard clock, damage, and faction reaction.

VENTING RULE

A safe system has an upward path to vent. A sealed system with no high vent is a bomb, a prayer, or both. Let engineers see this before the dice hit the table.

Player-facing warnings

WARNING	MEANING
Sweating brass	Pressure is climbing faster than the regulator can bleed it.
Blue-white flicker	Gas has entered semi-state or active state.
Needle stutter	The field is responding unevenly.
Tone below speech	A chamber, engine rhythm, or rite has found a resonance.

Fortera overdraw occurs when a working asks more from the local field than the area can restore safely. It is not poison damage. It is strain, depletion, contradiction, and recovery time.

SEVERITY	TIERS OVER	STRAIN	RIPPLE	SETTLING
Mild	1	1d10	x1.5	Weakened field, 1d4 rounds.
Moderate	2	2d8	x2	Depleted field, 1d6 minutes.
Severe	3	4d8	x3	Dead zone, 1d6 hours.
Overload	4+	6d8	x4	Collapse zone, 1d6 days or more.

SAVE DC

Save DC equals 10 + 2 per tier over capacity. A success takes half strain. A failure takes full strain and escalates one step. Strain is Exhaustion HP, ignoring armor and resistance.

Moon pressure

MOON STATE	GM EFFECT
Ordinary night	Use normal thresholds. Weirdness requires a cause.
One strong moon	Increase sensory signs. Clocks do not worsen automatically.
Two-moon alignment	Every overdraw or instability roll nudges one step worse.
Three-moon God's Breath	Source chambers become dangerous even undisturbed. Begin chamber scenes with a clock already active.

Containment choices

CHOICE	COST	BENEFIT
Vent gas	Lose supply or lift.	Reduce pressure clock by 2.
Ground the working	Lose current effect.	Stop overdraw escalation.
Accept strain	Character takes Exhaustion HP.	Complete the effect now.
Break the pattern	Risk backlash.	End resonance if the correct rhythm is found.

FACTION	WHEN THEY GAIN ADVANTAGE	WHEN THEY SUFFER DISADVANTAGE
Valdegracia	Holding line, disciplined broadsides, resisting damage, formal authority.	Rapid improvisation, broken command chain, deniable operations.
Albion	Cloud approach, false flags, speed, disruption, signal attacks.	Static line battle, prolonged attrition, loss of propulsion.
Duchy of Heller	Improvisation, concealed movement, command coordination, black sloop support.	Captured paperwork, public exposure, fighting by another power's rules.
Stroomdijk	Contracts, cargo, legal ambiguity, insurance, deniable logistics.	Open heroics, costly honor, uncompensated risk.
Church assets	Sanctuary, containment, crisis command, moral pressure.	Technical improvisation beyond doctrine, rushed classification.
Pirates	Ambush, boarding, ransom, terrain knowledge, false distress.	Formal fleet battle, prolonged pursuit, lawful scrutiny.

Doctrine moves

MOVE	USE WHEN
Valdegracian pressure	The line holds. Each round the target stays engaged, damage increases by one die step.
Albion break	A fast ship disengages. If it wins position, it exits range and returns from cloud later.
Heller black hand	A hidden ally grants a reroll, a false credential, or a sudden escape route.
Stroomdijk paper wall	The enemy wins by contract, debt, insurance, or seizure rather than force.
Church writ	A legal or sacred claim changes who may act without becoming the villain.

RUNNING DOCTRINE

Doctrine is not a bonus every round. It is a statement of preferred conditions. Give the bonus when the faction made the battlefield resemble its theory of war.

TRAVEL COMPLICATION	WHAT IT MEANS AT THE TABLE
Fast storm	Change route, lose time, spend supplies, or trust a local pilot.
Wrong chart name	Official map and local knowledge disagree. The local name is probably the useful one.
Water shortage	A survival problem becomes a social problem: who knows the spring and what do they want?
Powder damp	Firearms are unreliable until dried; enemies who know this press close.
Éterlumin permit check	Paperwork becomes a scene: bribe, delay, forgery, or inspection.

Signals and documents

HOOK	GM USE
Delayed relay	A faction acts on yesterday's order. Players can exploit or suffer the delay.
Wrong seal	The document is valid, but not for the cargo it travels with.
Flag contradiction	A ship flies one allegiance, signals another, and behaves like a third.
Ledger gap	A page is missing, stuck, rewritten, or too clean. Someone paid for the silence.
Harbor rumor	The truth arrives attached to a drunk, a child, a priest, or a rival.

Quick travel clocks

CLOCK	SEGMENTS	ADVANCE WHEN FULL
Weather closes	4	Safe route disappears. Choose danger or delay.
Supplies thin	6	Spend money, lose morale, hunt, bargain, or turn back.
Pursuit gains	6	Enemy reaches same scene before the players finish.
Signal failure	4	Allies act on old information.

TEMPLATE	AC / HP	PRIMARY USE
Harbor guard	AC 14 / HP 11	Routine authority, patrol, checkpoint pressure.
Naval marine	AC 15 / HP 22	Boarding, formation fire, ship security.
Faction agent	AC 14 / HP 27	Spies, blackmail, pursuit, social knives.
Engineer	AC 12 / HP 18	Repairs, sabotage, diagnostics, hazardous knowledge.
Solaris escort	AC 17 / HP 45	Sacred protection, containment, moral force.
Pirate captain	AC 15 / HP 52	Boarding leader, ransom, opportunistic retreat.
Chamber-touched	AC 13 / HP 31	Knows impossible things, triggers weirdness when cornered.

Quick ship templates

SHIP	AC / HP	USE
Launch or cutter	AC 13 / HP 45	Harbor chase, boarding approach, smuggling.
Sloop	AC 14 / HP 160	Scout, courier, patrol, pirate threat.
Light frigate	AC 15 / HP 230	Fast strike, escort, deniable action.
Heavy frigate	AC 16 / HP 300	Serious military threat, convoy escort.
Ship of the line	AC 17 / HP 1000+	Set-piece battle, political presence, terror weapon.

TEMPLATE RULE

Do not overbuild every enemy. Give them a motive, one strong move, one fear, and one thing they do when cornered. That is usually enough.

Fast morale saves

TRIGGER	SAVE
Lose officer or signal deck	WIS DC 14 or command confusion.
Take half remaining HP in one hit	WIS DC 12 or break formation.
See Éterlumin rupture nearby	WIS DC 15 or panic unless trained.

PATHFINDER 2E

CRUNCH PACK



Balanced hazards, degrees of success, and pressure with teeth.

Use this pack when the table wants Pathfinder 2e structure without turning Mar de Oro into a catalogue of build options. Keep the fiction first. Pathfinder gives you tight encounter math, clear conditions, and strong hazard procedure; Mar de Oro gives those rules political and material consequences.

PF2E GM PRINCIPLE

Use level-based DCs for precision, then spend the result on pressure. A critical success should create leverage. A success should solve the immediate action. A failure should advance a clock. A critical failure should change the scene.

Pathfinder handles danger best when it is explicit. Name the active pressure before the roll: smoke, law, panic, weather, command delay, chamber resonance, hostile fire, or faction exposure.

Core translation table

MAR DE ORO PRESSURE	PF2E EXPRESSION	GM USE
Faction pressure	Influence subsystem, reputation track, campaign clock	Advance between sessions, after failed social scenes, or when the crew accepts a favor.
Battlefield danger	Complex hazard, troop support, or victory point track	Do not roll every soldier. Track cohesion, pressure, and position.
Éterlumin instability	Environmental hazard, complex hazard, affliction-like condition	Warn first, give disable actions, then escalate.
Source chamber	Complex hazard with initiative and disable actions	Every round should reveal a pattern, cost, or new rule.
Airship battle	Vehicle encounter with targetable subsystems	Treat Lift, Sail, Command, Guns, Frame, and Crew as systems.
Legal pressure	Influence, reputation, access requirement, downtime consequence	The seal can be lawful and still dangerous.

Use the table below when a Mar de Oro scene needs a ruling quickly. Adjust by level when the challenge is tied to a creature, ship, elite NPC, or named hazard. For ordinary world pressure, use the listed baseline.

DIFFICULTY	BASELINE DC	USE IT FOR
Routine	14	A trained character acting under mild pressure: read a flag, reload in smoke, inspect a legal seal.
Pressured	17	Weather, crowding, pursuit, time pressure, or someone watching.
Dangerous	20	Failure causes harm, exposure, clock movement, or loss of access.
Severe	23	Ship, source chamber, reputation, or life is at risk.
Catastrophic	26+	Rupture, court scandal, ship loss, massacre, or war pretext.

Degrees of success

RESULT	BATTLEFIELD / SOURCE CHAMBER MEANING
Critical success	Gain the objective and reduce a clock, improve position, or create a safe route.
Success	Gain the objective, but the pressure remains.
Failure	Choose: advance a clock, take a condition, lose time, reveal position, or worsen footing.
Critical failure	The scene changes: reinforcements arrive, a hazard enters initiative, command breaks, or the chamber answers.

Useful conditions

CONDITION	USE IN MAR DE ORO
Fatigued	Long watches, forced march, smoke inhalation, damp powder work, repair exhaustion.
Frightened	Cavalry pressure, airship terror, rupture signs, command collapse, moral shock.
Clumsy	Rolling deck, falling rigging, mud, broken streets, pressure tremor.
Sickened	Powder smoke, heat, chamber resonance, panic in confined compartments.
Drained	Fortera overdraw, source contact, dangerous ritual strain, lunar pressure.
Doomed	Only for severe source chamber exposure, three-moon events, or campaign-level spiritual consequence.

Do not build every company as a creature. Use battlefield hazards and victory tracks. A formation matters because it controls space, morale, and fire, not because it needs a full stat block.

FORMATION	PF2E TABLE EXPRESSION	HOW PLAYERS CHANGE IT
Line	Troop support or volley hazard covering a fire zone	Smoke it, flank it, break command, force it to move.
Column	Moving hazard or pressure clock	Ambush, block road, target officers, attack before deployment.
Square	Defensive hazard against cavalry; weak to artillery	Bring guns, create panic, exploit terrain, force movement.
Skirmish order	Difficult terrain plus ranged harassment	Out-scout, isolate, threaten cavalry, seize cover.
Battery	Complex hazard with reload rhythm	Disable crew, spike guns, cut limbers, smoke sight line.

Muskets and volley fire as a simple hazard

HAZARD	LEVEL	TRIGGER	EFFECT	DISABLE
Drilled volley line	Party level +1	Characters cross open fire zone or assault a prepared line	Basic Reflex save; piercing damage by level. Failure also makes target Frightened 1 or slowed by suppression for 1 round.	Smoke, cover, officer disruption, flanking, or successful command/deception action.
Battery canister	Party level +2	Characters enter close artillery lane	High Reflex basic save, severe piercing damage, knockdown on critical failure.	Silence crew, spoil line of sight, reach dead ground, or capture limber.
Breaking formation	Party level	Friendly troops under pressure	Will save or formation loses 1 cohesion segment.	Rally, visible flag, officer action, music, or heroic example.

BATTLEFIELD RULE

A player action that changes cohesion, pressure, or position is more important than ordinary damage. Reward smart battlefield play with circumstance bonuses, reduced DCs, or clock movement.

Run airships as vehicles plus subsystem hazards. A battle should change condition, position, or command every round. Source chambers should act as complex hazards that reveal rules before they punish mistakes.

SUBSYSTEM	PF2E EXPRESSION	CRITICAL EFFECT
Lift	Vehicle movement subsystem, complex hazard, or shared HP pool	Altitude control worsens; start descent or rupture clock.
Sail / rigging	Vehicle maneuver system	Turning and weather checks take penalties.
Command	Influence / command subsystem	Allied actions delay or follow old orders.
Guns	Siege weapons or ship battery hazard	Broadside reduced, reload slows, misfire risk rises.
Frame	Vehicle HP and Hardness	Collision, structural failure, forced landing.
Crew	Morale / troop condition	Repair and gunnery actions take penalties until rallied.

Source chamber complex hazard template

STAGE	INITIATIVE CUE	EFFECT	DISABLE ACTIONS
Listening	Hum repeats after six heartbeats	Characters gain signs; no damage yet.	Perception, Occultism, Engineering Lore, Religion, or local knowledge to identify rhythm.
Answering	Room reacts to voice, bell, engine, oath, or blood	Hazard enters initiative; raises DCs and advances a pressure clock.	Stabilize one signal, quiet the room, vent safely, separate contradictory sources.
Contradicting	Two systems answer different commands	Damage, conditions, faction consequences, or rupture clock.	One decisive rule must be established: shut down, align, vent, or evacuate.
Rupturing	Space, pressure, heat, and memory misbehave	Scene changes. Use custom hazard or campaign clock.	Survive, save witnesses, preserve proof, accept partial loss.

PF2E SAFETY VALVE

Give every source chamber at least three disable approaches: technical, social/spiritual, and environmental. The players should not need one specific skill to avoid disaster.

BLADES / FORGED IN THE DARK CRUNCH PACK



Natural thematic fit. Adaptation guidance.

Forged in the Dark is a strong thematic fit for Mar de Oro campaigns about crews, privateers, smugglers, deniable agents, faction pressure, difficult bargains, and accumulating consequences. The original campaign was not run in this system, so use this section as adaptation guidance rather than an extensively tested implementation.

BLADES PRINCIPLE

Use position for danger and effect for leverage. A desperate roll does not mean certain death. It means the world is ready to take something: secrecy, ship condition, legal standing, crew trust, or a witness.

Core translation table

MAR DE ORO PRESSURE	FORGED EXPRESSION	GM USE
Faction movement	Faction clocks, faction status, optional Heat by jurisdiction or port	Advance after scores, downtime, public violence, exposed secrets, or political moves. Heat and faction status remain separate.
Ship and crew	Crew sheet, claims, upgrades, cohorts	The ship is the crew home, tool, debt, legal identity, and vulnerability.
Bonds	Contacts, loyalties, promises, crew ties, faction ties, XP triggers	Make the Bond matter through fictional permission, difficult choices, access, and consequences.
Burdens	Debts, rivals, secrets, clocks, faction consequences, vice pressure	Do not assign Trauma automatically. Trauma normally follows a filled Stress track.
Fortera and Éterlumin	Action ratings, fictional permission, special abilities, rituals, projects, dangerous assets	Useful, traceable, unstable, and never free. Do not import Blades cosmology as setting canon.
Law and empire	Heat, Wanted Level, Entanglements, faction status	The empire often arrives as paper before guns.

Playbooks and crew

A Mar de Oro Calling does not determine a Blades playbook. Playbooks are flexible starting approaches built from methods, reputation, special abilities, background, contacts, and advancement. Any Calling may use more than one plausible playbook.

CREW PREMISE	STARTING CREW TYPE	SPECIAL PRESSURE
Privateers with a letter of marque	Smugglers, Bravos, or custom Privateers	Prize law, prisoners, neutral ports, and revoked legitimacy.
Hellerite survey vessel	Smugglers or Hawkers	Hidden orders, source maps, black sloop support, and ducal exposure.
Church inquiry team	Hawkers or a custom inquiry crew; Cult only when devotion is central	Doctrine, sanctuary, public legitimacy, and dangerous truth.
Reformers and witnesses	Shadows or Hawkers	Printed proof, fugitives, public hearings, and retaliation.
Deniable Albion cell	Shadows or Assassins	False flags, sabotage, Heat, and orders that may never be admitted.

CUSTOM CREW

Reskin an existing crew type when possible. Create a custom Golden Sea Company only when the campaign premise cannot be represented adequately by the existing crew structures.

Suggested crew upgrades and claims

UPGRADE OR CLAIM	WHAT IT MEANS
Hidden Éterlumin locker	Start a score with one dangerous lift or signal asset. On use, tick an instability clock.
Black sloop contact	Once per arc, escape, smuggle, or relay through an unacknowledged route.
Reliable engineer cohort	Repair and source actions gain potency, but the cohort attracts recruitment and kidnapping attempts.
Forged registry papers	Improve effect on customs and travel until exposed. Exposure raises Heat in the relevant jurisdiction.
Crew code, custom ability	Once per score, protecting a witness at real cost may clear 1 Stress for one member or reduce Heat by 1 after the score.

CAMPAIGN FIT

This adaptation works best under contested authority, secrecy, debt, faction pressure, or legal risk. Conventional military service and openly authorized heroic expeditions may need broader changes to Scores, Heat, Vice, Entanglements, and Downtime.

Scores, position, and effect

A Mar de Oro score begins when the crew accepts a job, follows a rumor, protects a witness, enters a chamber, attacks a convoy, or moves before official permission arrives. A score can be a privateering action, recovery operation, rescue, infiltration, political intervention, intelligence mission, or deniable military action.

SCORE TYPE	ENGAGEMENT QUESTION	TYPICAL CLOCKS
Harbor infiltration	Who saw the papers before the crew arrived?	Customs attention, witness removed, patrol closes, proof secured.
Battlefield mission	What part of the battle can the crew actually reach?	Friendly cohesion, enemy pressure, smoke, airship threat, command breakdown.
Source chamber entry	What sign did the chamber give before the door opened?	Pressure climb, listening room, faction arrival, proof lost.
Airship action	Who has angle, altitude, and command?	Gain bearing, loss of lift, signal confusion, boarding window.
Political exposure	Who benefits if this becomes public?	Scandal breaks, official denial, witness protection, legal retaliation.

Battlefield position and effect

SITUATION	POSITION	EFFECT NOTE
Crossing open ground under volley fire	Desperate	Limited unless smoke, cover, or distraction exists.
Carrying orders through powder smoke	Risky	Standard; great effect if the order changes a battle clock.
Rallying a wavering company	Risky or desperate	Effect depends on rank, flag, reputation, or visible courage.
Silencing a battery from dead ground	Risky	Great effect if the crew reaches the gunners or limber unseen.
Boarding during airship chaos	Desperate	Standard or great if command and angle are already compromised.

CLOCK RULE	Use clocks for complex or changing situations, not for problems one action can resolve. Four segments suit immediate pressure, six suit scene-level danger, and eight suit campaign consequences.
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SHIPS AS CREW ASSETS	Use position, effect, scale, quality, potency, upgrades, cohorts, and clocks for airship conflict. Do not import the D&D; AC, HP, Broadside dice, or one-attack rule into this adaptation.
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Fortera, Overdraw, and Devil's Bargains

Fortera may be represented through action ratings, fictional permission, custom special abilities, rituals, crafting, long-term projects, equipment, or crew development. Not every practitioner is a Whisper, and rituals are individually discovered and defined rather than selected from a fixed spell list.

PRACTICE	POSSIBLE EXPRESSION
Sensitivity and observation	Attune, Study, or Survey, chosen according to what the character actually does.
Technical calibration	Tinker, Study, Survey, appropriate tools, or a crew upgrade.
Advanced working	Custom special ability, Ritual, long-term project, crafted device, formula, or explicit fictional permission.

FORTERA OVERDRAW	Overdraw is a Mar de Oro adaptation rule. It may impose a fixed or magnitude-based Stress cost to gain greater effect, scale, range, duration, or potency. Establish the cost before commitment. Paying Overdraw Stress does not automatically count as pushing yourself; pay the normal extra Stress only when the character separately chooses to push.
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When an action involves unstable, active, poorly calibrated, or damaged Éterlumin, the GM or another player may offer a concrete Devil's Bargain. The offer is voluntary. If accepted, its stated cost occurs regardless of the action roll's outcome.

DEVIL'S BARGAIN	COST
The tank gives one more burst of lift.	Tick Éterlumin instability, reduce service life, or mark damage to Rigging or Lift.
The chamber answers the question clearly.	It also learns the speaker's voice, oath, blood, or fear.
The signal reaches the allied ship.	An enemy listener receives part of it.
The crowd believes the crew.	A named authority now knows exactly who to blame.
A faction contact opens the right door.	Improve faction status now and owe a favor during downtime.

EXISTING HAZARDS	A hazard that has already occurred is normally harm, reduced effect, worse position, lost opportunity, a complication, or clock advancement. Do not retroactively convert it into a Devil's Bargain.
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Consequences, downtime, and campaign pressure

CONSEQUENCE	USE IT FOR
Reduced effect	Smoke, poor angle, legal ambiguity, bad papers, partial translation.
Complication	Witness moved, clock ticked, patrol alerted, rival faction arrives, or the crew becomes wanted by name.
Lost opportunity	The convoy sails, the door locks, the hearing starts, the signal window closes.
Worse position	The room starts listening, the line wavers, the ship loses altitude, the scene becomes public.
Harm	Burned, smoke-sick, rattled, resonance-marked, concussed, splinter wound, exhausted.

Downtime

DOWNTIME ACTION	MAR DE ORO VERSION
Recover	Surgeon, priest, quiet room, confession, or time away from cannon smoke.
Reduce Heat	Bribes, legal writs, false names, public charity, burned papers, or a scapegoat.
Acquire asset	Pilot, engineer, Solaris escort, forged seal, pressure gauge, hidden tank, black sloop.
Long-term project	Translate a chamber label, refit a keel, expose a ledger, build a port contact network.
Train	Drill with marines, study signals, learn a local language, practice source safety.

VICE

Vice remains the standard way to relieve Stress. A Mar de Oro vice may be pleasure, faith, obligation, gambling, luxury, stupor, or an unusual private practice. Bonds and Burdens are not automatically Vice.

Mar de Oro entanglements

D6	ENTANGLEMENT
1	Customs seizure. A lawful office blocks departure or impounds one resource.
2	Witness pressure. Someone the crew protected is bought, threatened, moved, or arrested.
3	Faction favor called in. The job is small, polite, and dangerous to refuse.
4	Source echo. A past Éterlumin action creates a new sign, dream, leak, or investigation.
5	Paper war. A warrant, inquiry, debt, or forged accusation changes what is safe in port.
6	Ship trouble. A repair fails, a crew member deserts, or an upgrade reveals hidden damage.

CANON FIREWALL

Blades terminology is mechanical reference only. Do not automatically import the ghost field, electroplasm, leviathan blood, Hulls, Vampires, demons, or Doskvol cosmology. Fortera, Éterlumin, souls, revival, moon influence, and source zones follow Mar de Oro canon.

CREDITS

MAP ATTRIBUTION



Regional cartography credit

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