Introduction

This scenario is a step by step gameplay walkthrough using a fresh recruit to the mercenary group for narrative purposes. You should use this scenario in the manner that best suits you. If you're familiar with tabletop roleplaying or skirmish games, a simple readthrough is probably all you need to get a jumpstart on the rules. If you're brand new to tabletop gaming, you may want to set the pieces up on the table and play through step by step to get comfortable with all the actions.

Character Setup

For this scenario you will be using any miniature you feel is appropriate to represent a recruit. If you don't have a miniature, you can use a token of any kind to represent the character instead. The below table represents your character's stats.

	Move	Ath	Pre	Ins	Awa	Kno	BHP	AHP	
Village Recruit	4	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	Sec 3
	Knowledge Skill Security 3 For the purposes of Reserve Dice, this character's Athletics, Precision, and Instinct level are all 2½								

Let's go through each column one by one.

Move is how far your character moves in inches or hexes per turn. In this game, 4 is an average speed for a human in a hurry, and 6 is akin to an all-out sprint.

Ath is your character's Athletic trait. The number here is the number of dice you roll for this character for Close Combat attacks.

Pre is your character's Precision trait. The number here is the number of dice you roll for this character for Ranged Combat attacks.

Ins is your character's Instinct trait. The number here is the number of dice you roll for this character for defense against Ranged and Close Combat attacks.

Awa is your character's Awareness trait. The number here is the number of dice you roll for this character for Awareness checks.

Kno is your character's Knowledge trait. The number here is the number of dice you roll for this character for general Knowledge checks. Knowledge grants characters Knowledge skill points. This character has used their Knowledge skill points in Security and has a knowledge level of 3 in that skill.

The last column contains shorthand information about the character. In this case, Sec 3 stands for Security 3.

Athletics, Precision, and Instinct are the core combat traits and will be used often.

BHP and **AHP** are your character's hit points divided into two sections. AHP is always taken out before BHP when determining damage, unless specified otherwise. When your BHP is zero or lower, your character is knocked unconscious, or worse.

Underneath these columns is a description of the other skills your character has.

The full Character Sheet has all of the same elements presented here, in an expanded format. You can find it at the end of this document. Make sure to compare the numbers here to the character sheet to help familiarize yourself with the more detailed layout.

Board Setup

For many players, setting up the board and terrain is an entertaining and integral part of the experience of solo / coop tabletop gaming. This particular game presents you the option of using either an open table area or a hex grid for movement. If you have no experience with free form miniature combat using measurements to determine movement, then you will probably find hex movement and combat quicker and easier. The drawback is acquiring either a preprinted hex map or creating one at home with your printer and some scissors. If you are using hexes, replace all references to inches (" in short hand) with hexes. For example, if a distance of 6" is referenced, use 6 hexes instead.

Feel free to use either, or to switch on a scenario by scenario basis. The game is enjoyable either way.

Each scenario will have a setup section at the beginning with a map on the right and setup instructions of the left. Start instructions will follow the setup instructions. These describe where objects, figures, and trigger points / areas are placed.

In this scenario, your rookie character is going to start off in a room with a single door. The start section for the scenario will have a narrative section for you to read.

The outside box that forms the scenario map is the boundary of the play space. Shown in red here. It may or may not be defined by walls. Whether there are walls or not is solely determined by whether the boundary is also part of a room. There is no difference in gameplay in either case. In this example, the dashed red lines show the part of the boundary that does not have a wall associated with it. The solid red line of the boundary does, as it shares a wall with a defined room. The inclusion of walls at the boundary is an aesthetic issue, as no gameplay will take place past the boundaries dealing with those walls.
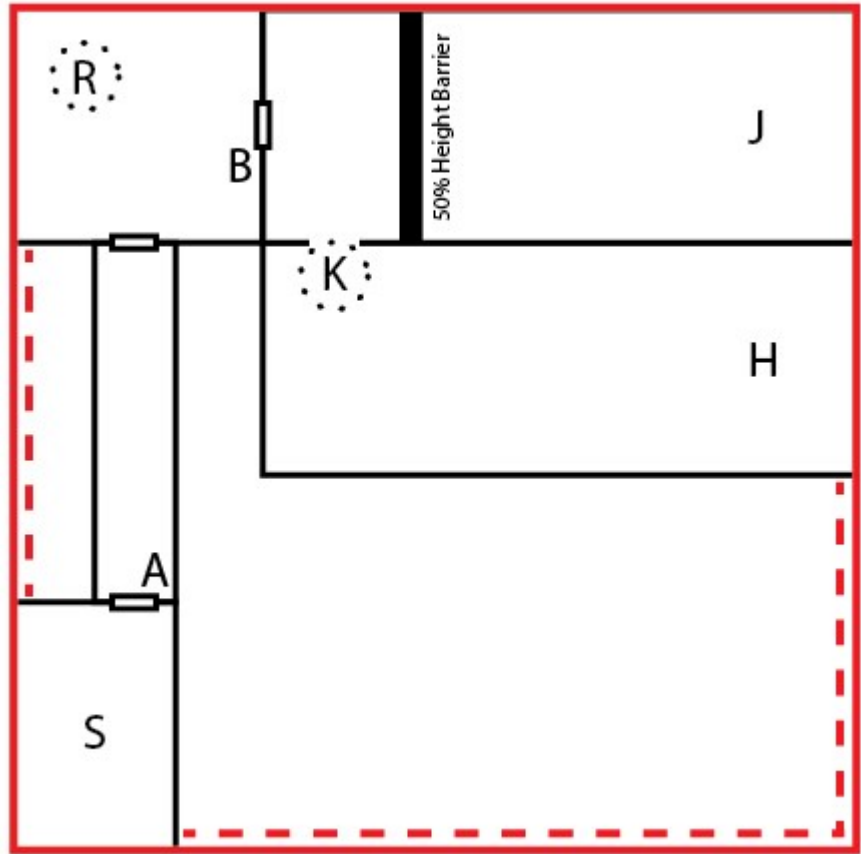
The small rectangles at points A, B, and other locations are doors.

By default, all doors in scenario start closed unless marked otherwise. Open doors will either be described as such in the setup text or with a different symbol on the map. Locked doors will be described as such in the setup text, generally with options on how to open them.

The dashed circles labeled as R and K are trigger or action areas. When a character enters this area, they will cause something to happen or provide a prompt for you to follow. This can be reading a section of narrative text, revealing an event card, adding enemies to the board, or any other of a number of actions.

The wider black line between points K and J is a barrier that is roughly 50% of the height of your character. This is equivalent to partial cover.

The gap in the wall at K can be modeled as an open door, or just an open passage into the next room.

Turn by Turn Walkthrough

Welcome to your first turn! Turns are carried out in 6 phases, not all of which are used in each scenario. Let's go through each one.

The **Time Progression Phase** is when you advance the game timer. In certain scenarios, an event may be triggered by the timer.

The **Event Phase** is when events are initiated. Some scenarios have event cards, and those would be revealed during this phase.

The **Squad Leader Phase** is when your primary character, generally your Squad Leader, takes their turn. The Communications skill Group Activate allows your Squad Leader to activate a certain number of allies now, instead of in the Ally Phase.

The **Opposition Phase** is when your enemies move according to their AI, or as otherwise directed by the scenario.

The **Neutrals Phase** only happens if neutral characters are present. They move according to their AI, or as otherwise directed by the scenario.

The **Ally Phase** is when any characters that have not activated yet (ie, during the Squad Leader Phase) take their turn.

In this scenario, there is only one player character: your rookie. In the first turn, set the turn timer to 1, and read the first set of text in section 1. Since this is the first turn and your character has the special bonus of having Athletics, Precision, and Instinct of 2½ for the purposes of Reserve Dice, your character will roll to see what the value of the Reserve Dice are. Roll a d10. Place this die aside. This is your Athletics Reserve Die. Normally, during the course of a scenario, when your character misses a roll, you can pull points from the Reserve Die and add it to a die that you rolled. Now roll a second d10. Place this die aside. This is your Precision Reserve Die. Roll a third d10. Place this die aside as well. This is your Instinct Reserve Die.

For the purposes of this scenario only, set each of the Reserve Dice to 5 regardless of your roll.

During each activation, each activated character gets two Actions. For your first turn, you will spend the first Action moving towards the door, which should be 3" away. For your second Action you will open the door. Since there are no other characters on the board, this completes turn 1.

Begin turn 2 by advancing the game timer. The end of the hallway is 6" away. This is too far to move normally, but your character can use Dash as a second Action. This will grant them another 2" of movement, allowing them to reach the door.

Begin turn 3 by advancing the game timer. Spend your first Action opening the door. As noted by the scenario start notes, go to section 2 to read the descriptive text there. When you are done, return here. Use your second Action to Move to the rack at area R.

Begin turn 4 by advancing the game timer. On your first Action this turn, you will be picking up one of the weapons on the Rack. It is a Standard Rifle. The stats for the Standard Rifle can be found in the rulebook, however, using the reference cards is generally the easiest way to keep track of the various

skills, equipment, and weapons available to your character. An example of the reference card for the Standard Rifle is shown below.
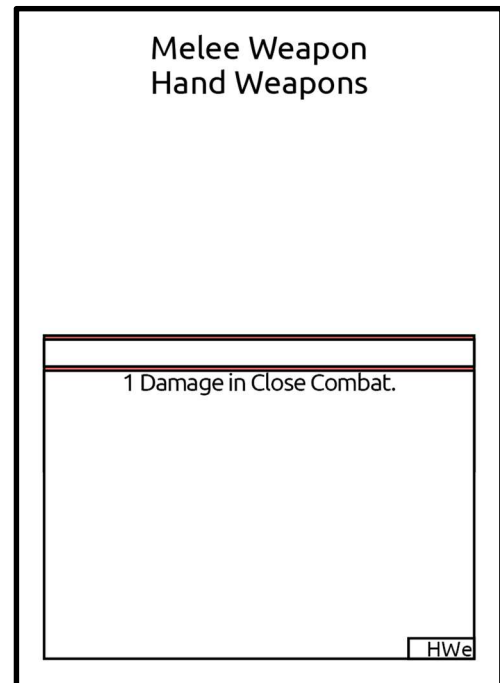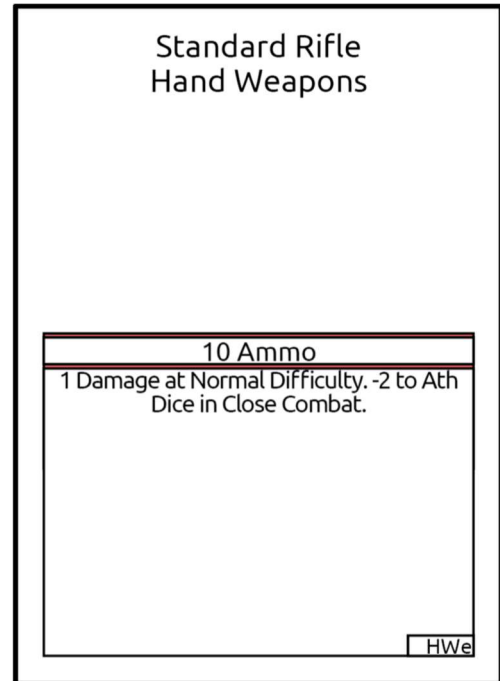
The Reference Cards have a title at the very top. "Standard Rifle", in this case. Directly below that is the type. For this card, it is a hand carried weapon, and so the type is "Hand Weapon". Next is space for an image. After this, on the next line, is a space for the amount of ammo, number of uses, or other information pertinent to the card. The Standard Rifle card has 10 Ammo, which is noted here. The last section is the largest area on the card. It has a full description of the effects and abilities for the card. Like many weapons in the game, the Standard Rifle does 1 Damage. The final area of the card is the bottom right corner, which has an identifier acronym. This is a slightly broader category acronym than the second line at the top of the card. Its consistent location and text size helps with sorting the reference cards quickly.

Ammo can be tracked in several different ways. The two easiest methods are to use tokens, or to use a spare die. To use tokens, place ten small objects on the Standard Rifle. Remove one for each Attack you make with this weapon. You can also use a d10 by placing it with the 10 face up on the card. For each Attack you make, reduce the Ammo count by 1 by either rotating the die or removing a token.

For your second Action in turn 4, pick up a combat dagger. The combat dagger is a Melee Weapon and you will use the basic Melee Weapon reference card. Only a few of the Melee Weapons are defined in the game. You can call them whatever you like in order to fit your character's build. The standard Melee Weapon has a very basic description and function. It does 1 Damage in Close Combat.

Your character now has two weapons. The Standard Rifle is a two-handed weapon (commonly referred to as 2H) and the combat dagger is a one handed weapon (1H). Your character may carry a 1H weapon in each of the two hand slots, or a 2H and a 1H weapon in each of the two hand slots. They cannot hold a 2H weapon in both of the hand slots. Since the 2H weapon requires both hands to use, your character must spend an Action to switch between the Standard Rifle and the Melee Weapon when needed. The easiest way to keep track of this is to use a two-sided token, such as a coin. Use tails to represent the Standard Rifle and Ranged Combat and heads to represent the Melee Weapon and Close Combat. You can place a coin with tails facing up now to represent the Standard Rifle being active.

Begin turn 5 by advancing the game timer. Move your character to door B for your first Action. The door is sticky and requires you to roll a skill check to open it. This particular skill check cannot be failed by design and is here to help you get used to rolling skill checks. Skill checks can reference your character's Knowledge Skill such as this one, or a Trait, such as Athletics. They both work the same. For this specific check, roll the number of d10 dice equal to your Security level. This is 5 dice. If you roll at or above the skill check value of 1 (as noted in the scenario Start section), you will succeed in opening the door.

Your character should now be standing at the open door at B. Following the instructions in the scenario Start section, you should go to section 3 of the narrative and read the text there.

Begin turn 6 by advancing the game timer. Your goal is to get a shot onto the target in the corner. Your first thought may be to begin immediately firing. However, doing so would put the barrier in your firing line, and grant the other figure a bonus for having partial cover. You want to avoid that, so your first Action should be to move your character up against the barrier, but stay on the left side. Since your character is 1" or less away from the barrier, you can ignore the penalty for partial cover against the target, while your character will receive the benefit of the barrier's cover modifier.

For your second Action, let's take our first shot against the target. The target is of average human size, so the difficulty to hit it is 6. This means that any rolls of 6 or more will be considered a success. When rolling multiple d10s in combat, every die that rolls a 1 cancels out a single success.

For example, if a character rolled a 10, 3, and 1 to hit another character, the 1 would cancel out the 10, leaving only a 3. If the difficulty to hit is 6 then this example attack would miss.

In this case, your character has a Precision of 1. You will roll a single d10 die to hit the target. If you roll a 6 or above, the target is hit. If you do not, take points out of your Precision Reserve Dice and add it to your roll until you reach 6. Note that if you use all of your available Precision Reserve, simply discard the dice.

The Standard Rifle does 1 Damage. Since you hit the target, it takes 1 Damage. The target has 1 AHP and no BHP. The 1 Damage removes 1 AHP, and the target is destroyed.

Since the target is destroyed, following the rules of the start section of the scenario, go to section 4 of the narrative and read the text there.

Begin turn 7 by advancing the game timer. Let's move your character over to point K with your first Action. Since this is the first time a character has reached point K, follow the instructions in the scenario Start section and go to section 5 of the narrative and read the text there.

The animalus is heading right towards you! With your second Action, you can try taking a shot at it, but it has 2 BHP, so you are not going to be able to down it before it gets to you. Instead of firing, let's get ready for the inevitable and switch weapons from the rifle to the Melee Weapon your character is carrying. This will take up your second Action. When you switch, remember to flip your coin (or other tracker) from tails to heads (ranged to close combat) to indicate that you are now ready for Close Combat and cannot use your ranged weapon until you spend another turn to switch weapons back to the Standard Rifle.

Now that there is another character in active gameplay, let's review phases again. The Squad Leader Phase is the default phase for your main character to act. Most Squad Leaders have a Communication

Skill that grants them the ability to move a certain number of their Allies with them. This is optional, and there may be an advantage to activating your Allies later in the turn, depending on the circumstances. You have no Allies in this scenario, however. After the Squad Leader Phase is the Opposition Phase, and this is when your enemies perform their Actions. This is currently the phase we are in, so it is the animalus's turn.

Move the animalus from the corner to engagement with your character. Note that the animalus should be positioned such that it can reach your character's current location within a single Move action. Once the animalus is within 1" of your character, it is engaged in Close Combat with your character.

The animalus's second Action will be to attack your character. The animalus has an Athletics level of 1, and so rolls 1 d10 die to Attack. It is attacking your character, which is of Average size and has 1 Instinct. This means that your character will add 1 d6 die to the roll because of their Instinct. In total, you will roll 1 d10 and 1 d6. The animalus needs to roll a 6 or higher on the d10 to hit your character, but if a 1 is rolled on the d6, it will cancel out the highest result.

Let's do some examples to see what could happen here.

If the animalus's d10 rolls a 6 and your character rolls a 3 on the d6, then the animalus does 1 Damage to your character.

If the animalus's d10 rolls a 5 and your character rolls a 3 on the d6, then the animalus misses your character.

If the animalus's d10 rolls a 5 and your character rolls a 6 on the d6, then the animalus misses your character.

If the animalus's d10 rolls a 6 and your character rolls a 1 on the d6, then the 1 cancels out the animalus's roll and the attack misses your character.

You also have a Reserve Dice for Instinct available to you. If you'd like, you can use it to modify your Instinct roll down to a 1 by trading out points from the Reserve Dice.

If the animalus hits your character, you are now down to 1 BHP. The next hit will down your character. Since your Squad Leader took BHP damage, you may use this to recharge either one of your rerolls or a single point of one your Reserve Dice. Since the animalus has taken their second Action, their turn is over and the Opposition Phase ends.

There are no Allies or neutrals, so turn 7 is over.

Begin turn 8 by advancing the game timer. There are no events, so skip the Event Phase and go straight to the Squad Leader phase. Since you already switched to Close Combat and your character's Melee Weapon, you can move straight to attacking as your first Action. The animalus is a small target, as noted on the right most column in the Reference table for the scenario. The effect of this is that it is harder to hit than a human sized target. Instead of rolling of 6 or above, you must roll a 7 or above to hit the animalus in combat.

Roll a d10 for your Athletics roll and two d6 for the animalus's Instinct dice.

If the animalus did not roll a 1 on either of the d6 dice, and you did not roll a 7 or above on the d10, remember that you can use the Athletics reserve dice to modify your roll upwards. If the animalus did roll a 1, you will not be able to hit it on this attack.

If you hit the animalus, you do 1 Damage, leaving the animalus with 1 damage remaining. If you miss, or fail to hurt the animalus, you do 0 Damage, and the animalus still has 2 BHP.

For your second Action, attack the animalus again as above. If the animalus is still alive after both of your Actions, then it will begin its phase. It will attack you for both of its Actions. Continue alternating turns until one of the two characters is defeated.

If your character defeats the animalus, go to section 6 to read the narrative, and if you are defeated by the animalus, go to section 7 to read the narrative there.

Dark Metal – Mercenaries in the Deep – A Day in the Life of a Rookie

Scenario 1

Setup:

A 14" x 14" area.

This scenario consists of a series of rooms. You can use anything handy to mark the edges of the walls, including rulers, tape, small wooden blocks, or any other household item. The small rectangles at points A, B, and other locations are doors.

Besides your rookie character, you will need 1 figure to represent a dog-like creature or another type of animal, and 1 figure to represent another human rookie character (or proxies).

Start:

Follow through the turn by turn walkthrough for direct guidance in this scenario. When the turn by turn walkthrough directs you to, turn to section 1 to read the narrative there.

When you enter the room containing R and B, go to section 2.

The door at B is sticky. To open it, roll a Security check vs 1.
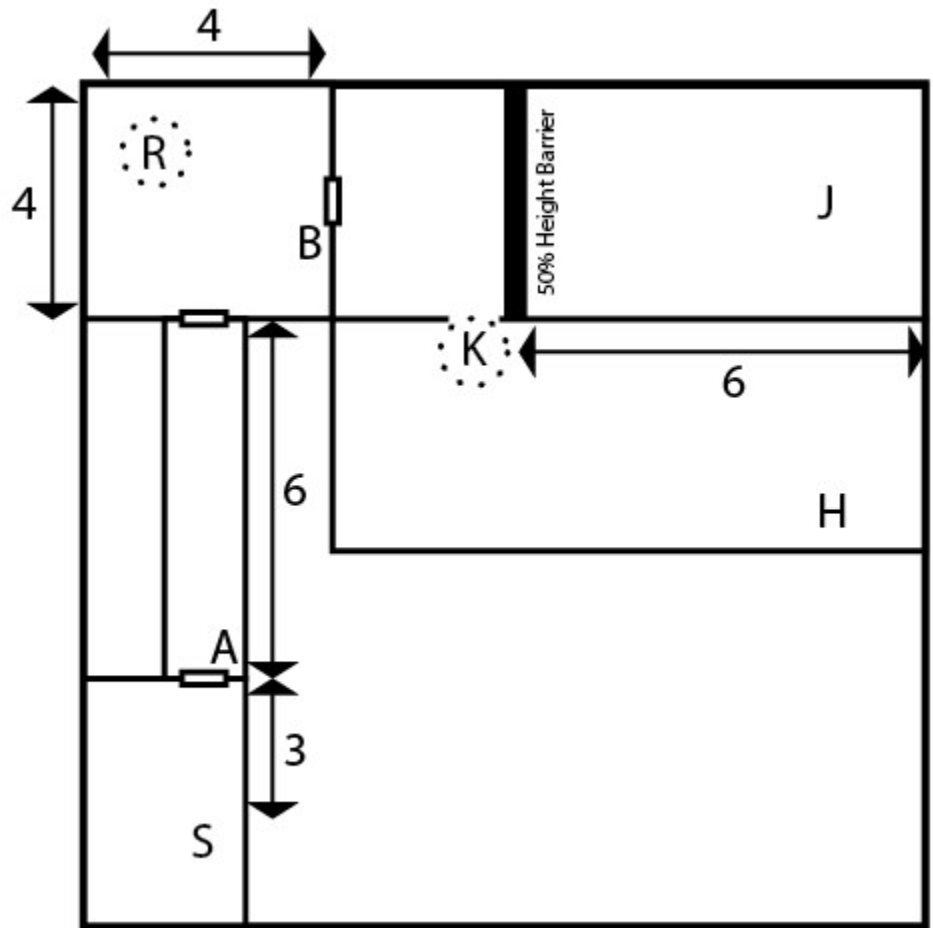
When you open the door at B, place your additional human rookie character on point J. Then go to section 3 and read the narrative there.

When the Rookie Target at point J is destroyed, go to section 4 and read the narrative there.

The first time a character reaches point K, go to section 5.

If your character defeats the animalus, go to section 6.

If your character is defeated by the animalus, go to section 7.

Reference:

	Rep	Move	Ath	Pre	Ins	Awa	BHP	AHP	
Rookie Target	1	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	Average
	Raises its weapon into firing position anytime it registers a biological heat signature.								
Bio Animalus	1	6	1	0	2	0	2	0	Ven 1, Small
	Approaches the nearest opposing figure in Line of Sight and attacks. Will Dash if not in range of a target for its 2nd Action. If no figures are in Line of Sight, it moves 4" in a random direction. Prefers to work in pairs and will stick with its companion until its death.								

1

You wake up to yelling over an unseen speaker that is obviously connected to your room.

"Let's go recruit, time for your weapons checkout!"

You fumble around a bit looking for a clock or something to tell you what time it is. Nothing's where it should be. It takes you a little while to remember why as the mental cloud begins to dissolve and your recollection of last night improves.

"Join the mercenaries and see the stars", they had said. Or something like that. You didn't really care at the time. Fact is, you only knew a few things about them. They had been hired to do a job for your farm collective dealing with the nearby far larger corporate sponsored illegal blockade of your farm's thoroughfare. That they swooped in from space and dealt with it in a manner of hours. And that they were looking for recruits.

That last one was the important one. That one came with a free ticket out of an end of the line farming job and into the great black. And a credit bonus for signing up.

Probably wasn't all that wise to spend almost all of it on a final goodbye celebration involving copious amounts of local liquid.

"MOVE IT RECRUIT!"

"Alright already!" You stumble walk towards the door, for once happy that you fell asleep wearing all of your clothes.

Return to the Turn by Turn Walkthrough to continue.

2

The door slides smoothly open to reveal a small armory. There's a few well worn racks in here, but only one that has anything on it. That one has a rifle and a long menacing looking dagger. Both look well used with various scratches and dings being their only real distinguishing feature. The smells of metal and grease wafts past your nose as some unseen fan circulates the air. There are a few other doors leading into the room. All are identical and the same dull bluish grey as the walls except for one. It has a red light shining down on it.

"Keep moving recruit. Grab the weapons and head on through the red door."

You mumble a bit under your breath as you head towards the weaponary.

3

The door finally opens, and before you lies a small shooting range. There's a short wall dividing the room, and at the other end, a human looking figure with a rifle that looks very similar to yours. The voice from above booms through the room.

"Shoot the target. Hit the target and you pass."

As soon as the voice stops, the figure at the end of the room begins to slowly raise their rifle in your direction.

4

The target spins around a hidden pole as you nail it with your first round. As it twists in circles, its sparse clothing flings out a bit and you can see that it's tattered and full of holes.

Apparently you're not the only one who volunteered.

"Good shot. Go ahead and move on to the next room."

You lower your rifle, almost as surprised as the target was.

5

You pass through the entrance into the next room where you are greeted by a loud metallic sounding "snick snick" and rattle. In the corner is an animalus, a bio or cyber engineered animal designed for security. It's lunging against a chain attached to something on the wall. As you raise your rifle, the chain lets off a loud popping noise, followed by the zing of metal skipping off a hard surface.

Somehow the animalus has broken free. Or maybe it was meant to.

6

You grunt loudly through clenched teeth as you thrust your dagger towards the animalus. It turns out to be the final time as you feel the thick resistance of its body pushing back against your arm. The animalus spasms beneath you as it falls. It continues to thrash weakly in your direction until finally it lays still.

The voice over the speaker returns. "Not bad. Report back to your room for further instructions. Good job rookie, and welcome to Captain Craggler's Craven Corps."

7

The animalus is relentless, and you are already wounded from its vicious attacks. It leaps at you again. Aiming for your neck this time. You dodge to the right as it closes in while you bring your dagger up from left upwards in an ascending strike. Except you miss wildly, and the next thing you feel is slick wetness and the sharp pull of serrations deep into your skin. You scream, but all that comes out is a gurgle as you collapse to the floor.

The voice over the speaker returns. "Well, that's the second one today. Sergeant Overton. Cleanup in the animal bay.