Plot Outline (WIP)

A Crystal Heart campaign is intended to last ten to twenty sessions, from Novice to late Heroic (an Advance every session or two). We encourage playing using a serialized structure which gives an emphasis on fast, furious fun.

The following is the suggested structure for a typical Crystal Heart campaign, listed here so that the players know what to expect. Game Master, if you depart from this structure, let your players know in advance!

Think of the campaign as an animated series in three seasons:

Season one (“Crystal Hunters”)

During the first few sessions the Agents travel along their route, playing through mostly self-contained episodes in which they discover shards or Crystals. In between, they’re Chasing Leads (see page 80).

This stage of the campaign is episodic, meaning that each adventure is its own story. An adventure starts like an episode in a television series, with the Agents already at the scene, sometimes even in medias res. All less-exciting background activities should either be waived, played in ways that make them fun (see Chasing Leads), or abstracted (such as with Requisition or the Ammo and Supplies rules).

Episode 1: Surgical Strike

The agent team is most of the way through training and one or more of them have already had their harness implantation surgery. The surgeon (the local Dusk) is needed to implant a crystal into an ally [tie this to future events]; Raafi, the team's mentor, is asked to accompany her and invites the team along as supplemental security, as the ally has enemies who might try to interfere.

The team is standing guard in the hallway outside the surgical suite when they hear a ruckus and Raafi's crystal being used inside. When they go in, they find Dusk poisoned on the floor, one of the surgical nurses knocked out by Raafi's crystal blast, and Raafi himself in the middle of switching Dusk's crystal out for his own, while the patient suffocates on the table: the nurse was an enemy infiltrator, and attacked Dusk as soon as she had the patient's heart out to replace it. With Dusk's crystal, Raafi can keep the patient alive for a time; he sends the team to find an antidote to the poison.

Intermission: New-Minted Agents

The rest of the team get their harnesses, make their requisitions, and receive their marching orders. There's an opportunity to [tie this to future events], perhaps by introducing a relevant character.

Episode 2: Runaway Present

The agents' first stop is Zingama City, where a recently-discovered Crystal is ready for them to pick up from the local authorities. This involves a small ceremony, which goes smoothly until the agents try to actually take the Crystal, at which point it teleports away; a moment later, they hear shouting from outside: the crystal has teleported into someone's pet zapacha, which has teleported out of their arms and is running off through the crowded streets (run as a Chase; SW Core Rulebook pg. 114).

The zapacha is smaller than a cat and hard to see among the crowds, and teleports forward every few seconds, but can be tracked by the flashes of light and shouting of startled pedestrians when it teleports. It eventually leads the agents to its home (or they can talk to its owner and get the address, if they lose track of it), where the family is awed to meet Syn agents and cooperative with their attempts to corner the zapacha and retrieve the crystal.

Intermission: The Mysterious River

The agents head north from Zingama City, circling to the west of The Seat. On their travels they come across a river that's full of what seem to be tiny metallic petals, in all colors of the rainbow and changing color every few seconds - clearly not a natural phenomenon. They follow the river upstream for a few days, seeking the source of the petals; on the evening of the third day, there's a storm, causing the river to flood slightly. In the morning the petals are gone, and another day's travel upriver leads them to a swamp, with no signs of where the petals might have come from. Any locals they ask will confirm that the petals are a regular but random occurrence, happening about once a month, and inform them that the swamp is trackless and dangerous - none of them are willing to help the agents traverse it. With no way to continue their search, the agents turn back.

When they return to their route, a bridge they need to cross has been washed out by the storm; the locals are in the process of rebuilding it, and would welcome help.

Episode 3: Soaring Woods

The agents leave Zingama, crossing the Perch Mountains into Maseia; the pass they use brings them close to the Soaring Woods, a steep and heavily forested hill known for its bear population and the glowing rocks at its peak. They stop for the night in a clearing at the base of the hill, which is currently in use by a local clan, who've stopped there to allow their young people to perform a rite of passage, retrieving a glowing rock from the Soaring Woods. They've been there for a week and no-one has found a glowing rock yet; even stranger, the some of the animals from the woods (bears, squirrels, rabbits; no carnivores) have been coming down from the hills into the camp and getting into their supplies, showing an alarming understanding of how to get into the clan's food supplies and animal enclosures: the first night the clan was here, the bears let all their capybison out, and while they were able to retrieve most of them, they don't have enough beast-power to move camp with their current herd. (They expect another clan to be by in a few weeks to a month, and hope to be able to talk them into helping in exchange for warning about the bears.)

There's a crystal at the top of the hill: the glowing rocks were the work of a shard, and its mate recently fell from a floating mountain to reforge with it into Memento (CH Setting pg. 199), which is stuck in the branches of a fruit tree; eating the fruit of the tree grants the memories and skills of people possessing the glowing rocks taken from the woods. If the tree is disturbed, a crystal-touched nonthere (CH Setting pg. 195) swarms out to attack anyone nearby.

Intermission: TBD

The agents stop at the Southern Nexus trading post, turn in their crystals and so on, and are asked to check out the Clever Ott plotline; possibly there's some other interesting stuff here, too.

Episode 4: Clever Ott

Ma'aan used to be the teacher for his nomadic clan, giving classes to the children of the clan in between their tents. A few years ago, he noticed that Ott, one of the clan's capybison, often came around to watch. One day, as a joke, he asked the creature to answer a question he was presenting to the class, and was quite surprised when the capybison answered correctly by pawing the ground. Further investigation revealed that Ott can answer all sorts of math and multiple-choice questions, and Ma'aan got permission from his clan leaders to take Ott on the road as an attraction. Syn is interested in Ott, but he doesn't seem to have any other powers and isn't considered dangerous.

A few weeks ago, Free Agent Tokan came through the Syn facility at the Southern Nexus a few weeks ago and stayed there briefly before heading off to find Ma'aan and Ott, who have been in the area recently. He had Scrutinizer (CH Setting pg. 200) slotted and seemed to be having trouble managing his Crystal's disposition, and initially agreed to swap it out, but became impatient and left before the replacement was delivered. The staff at the facility ask the agents to take the replacement crystal to him and make sure he hasn't been causing any trouble.

It's not hard to find Tokan; he's with Ma'aan and Ott, following them around and trying to figure out how Ott is doing it. (He's confident because of Scrutinizer's powers that Ma'aan is not faking Ott's abilities or lying about the beast's lack of Crystal exposure.) Ma'aan, for his part, is content enough to have the agent tagging along; his questioning and inability to come up with another explanation only enhance the show, even if he is rather frustrating to have around the rest of the time. Tokan agrees that he should change his Crystal out, but wants to figure Ott out first.

Ott is actually just an ordinary capybison with a particularly high Notice skill; Ma'aan himself is unintentionally cueing his answers, which can be proven by making Ott answer questions that Ma'aan doesn't know the answer to, or making him answer while he can't see him. Ma'aan will not believe this explanation, but Tokan will, and will agree to replace Scruitinzer when it's discovered. Alternately, if the team takes more than two weeks to solve the puzzle, Tokan decides that Ott should be taken back to the Syn Citadel for examination and demands that the team help him take Ott from Ma'aan.

Season two (“Specialists”)

While they were going through their route, the team discovered hints of some larger plot. Now they become Specialists or Free Agents, and are sent (or decide for themselves) to chase some leads and uncover the bigger conspiracy.

This stage of the campaign might be far more open-ended than the previous one, giving the characters more freedom in deciding how to approach each situation.

Season three (“Grand Finale”)

As the big bad moves closer to achieving their sinister goals, the team uses powerful Crystals to chase them down, going through exotic locations and making far-reaching decisions, all culminating in one final fight. The campaign now ends—time to start a new one!

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