

Hypersleep

a role-playing game in two parts for 3-5 players written by Michael Stensen Sollien.

Premise

You take on the roles of the crew aboard the spaceship Omnibus 79 who are just about to wake up from a three year long hypersleep. Travelling by Superluminal speed the ship will take just as long to return to earth - in total a six year long journey. The ship runs on autopilot and is floating in orbit around the planet Vorgon 5 when the game begins. This is a desolate planet in a solar system at the very edge of the universe charted by man. The crew consists of scientists that are well paid by a large research corporation back on earth. They've worked together before but have never travelled this far from home. Their mission is simple: collect earth samples and other minerals from the planet's surface.

The cruel truth about Hypersleep

While you're in hypersleep aging stops to a halt. Time still passes though and family, relatives and friends on earth move on while you sleep. In hypersleep you experience vivid dreams that never seem to stop. At times people have woken up insane from these seemingly never-ending nightmares. It was a risk you were willing to pay for a price that was right.

Preparations

Coffee/tea and enough cups for everyone; a clean floor and a table with chairs. Consider wearing nothing but underwear and plain white T-shirts (that is if everyone's OK with it).

Play some ambient or chill out music on low volume to add to the atmosphere. I personally recommend something by Brian Eno or Boards of Canada, or maybe one of the mellower songs from the Blade Runner soundtrack.

Roles

Name your role and describe in a few sentences who she/he is. One player should take on the role as the pilot because the ship must be flown manually to land on Vorgon 5.

Rules

Part one – The Awakening

- Every player lies down on the floor, heads almost rubbing, in a circle. Imagine that you are lying in separate cryo-chambers and the lids are slowly rising. You're half-asleep.
- This part of the game is divided in rounds going clockwise and let's each player perform inner dialogs to each other. Start with the player that lies nearest the table. For each round the dialogs become more and more comprehensive as you slowly awake from your long slumber. When everyone seems satisfied a player can choose to fully rise and walk over to the table. The other players must soon do the same.
- When a player describes something that affects your role: don't argue. Play along and build upon the other player's ideas.
- Remember that you are disoriented, anxious and very sleepy. Speak slowly and a bit incomprehensibly - almost in whispers.
- Let the first words in your inner dialog be quite cryptic, just including basic emotional reactions and observations. For example: "Confused....Why is it so cold all of a sudden?" or "My back aches!" or "The light....All too bright...I can't see a thing". The roles are slowly regaining their strength – try to act out this as thorough as you're able.

- You should always include a few inner dialogs to describe your feelings towards the other crew members near the end of the awakening part. No player should leave for the table until everyone has described some of their feelings towards at least one of the other roles.

For example: “Meg was in my dream. There she appeared as an angel protecting me from the red devils from my youth. Now I see her lying in the chamber to my right. She’s still an angel though.”

Part two – Coffee

- Now all the players join around the table having a cup of coffee or your preferred beverage. Now the roles can interact verbally. Try to use whatever information that surfaced through part one of the game. The crew is in high spirits but underneath the surface there’s a subtle melancholy nonetheless – a worrying for what the future holds.
- When two players have finished their coffee you should walk over to a nearby window. Imagine you are watching Vorgon 5 either at sunset or sunrise. Majestically pretty but still sinister and brooding. Each player from left to right then perform a last inner dialog to describe the view, thoughts regarding the others, and expectations of the future. These inner dialogs can be a little longer than those in part one. Don’t be afraid to hold your arms around each other as you gaze at the horizon.

Example of closing inner dialogs: “Circling the charcoal coloured planet are three yellow moons. Three moons! That reminds me of how far I’m from home. But is the place I call home still a home when I come back? Seems like nothing but a long sleep to me, the kind I usually have on Saturdays, but I’ve been gone for three whole years. My son is three years older. That must make him seven. He’s in school goddamn it! Even worse... he will be ten when I return. All I wanted was a better future for him. For us. The money will help. I hope he understands...”

And with that the game is over. I hope you enjoyed the trip.