



# INTRODUCTION

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Desolate and decayed, a grisly nightmare of macabre perception.

You awake in the middle of a desolate hellscape filled with biomechanical contraptions: part flesh, part machine. An industrial civilization, now lying in decay and ruin.

A hidden fauna sleeps within the underbelly of the world, wanting nothing more than to be left undisturbed.

All this is knowledge gleaned through your own eyes and is the only guidance you shall receive on your journey through this grotesque labyrinth where all life is either an obstacle to be avoided or a resource to be expended.

The power of speech will do you little good, as nothing left living has any interest or ability to respond.

Where you are is unknown, how you got here is unknown, and what you must do now is also unknown, beyond desperately grasping for even the smallest hope that if you progress far enough, you will find freedom from the pain of life.

The corpses surrounding you are a clear indication of what fate awaits you if you dare to hesitate. You receive 0 Biomass and no abilities or possessions from outside this world, but death will not end your chain.

# DRAWBACKS

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## Innocent Eyes

- Gain 100 Biomass

Squeamishness will do you no favors here. You have a particularly weak stomach, especially to phallic or reproductive imagery. As the civilization that built this complex seemed to revere precisely that type of imagery, you'll rarely go a minute without witnessing something that makes you feel ill.

## Defective

- Gain 100 Biomass

The processes by which creatures are born in this world are varied and rarely safe. The after-effects of your conception have left you with at least two severe deformities that make mobility or manipulation difficult. Perhaps your fingers on one hand are fused together, or your ankle is bent at an unnatural angle.

## I Must Scream

- Gain 100 Biomass

Pain is unavoidable here, often by design, but at least it is usually brief. That is no longer the case. You will always be in some degree of pain, as if needles are piercing your muscles each time you move. You aren't in any actual danger; it seems to be just an unfortunate deformity in your nervous system.

## Someone Else's Eyes

- Gain 100 Biomass

As if things weren't confusing enough. You'll randomly be plagued with flashes of memories that don't seem to belong to you. Flashes of deaths you never experienced, places you've never been to, bodies similar yet different from your own. These will never help you, and you may never realize their significance.

## Cut Content

- Gain 200 Biomass

All things considered, the path to Polis is relatively short, or it would have been. You start much farther from your objective than you would have initially. You'll make your way through at least twice the number and variety of complexes, with their own diverse yet invariably cruel functions. If there's any silver lining, you'll have more clues to help you piece together this world's secrets.

## I Have No Mouth

- Gain 200 Biomass

Your biology did not evolve with long-term survival in mind. Where your mouth and jaw would be is just more flesh, nerves, and even an artery. You will have to worry about starvation if you take too long to vacate this world. If worst comes to worst, you can cut the flesh concealing your vestigial digestive system, but then you'll have to deal with the blood loss and potential infection.

## Born Yesterday

- Gain 200 Biomass

Despite being fully grown physiologically speaking, your current age can be measured in hours, and it shows. I wouldn't call you stupid, or even naive, but you are far too curious for your own good. You'll mess with machines you don't understand, get far too close to beasts who clearly mean you harm, and you'll need to constantly fight temptation to stick your arm into random holes.

## Invasive Species

- Gain 200 Biomass

Most of the living organisms you come across are spawn of the Crater Queen. Their nest spreads to almost every corner of the complex now. Not only will many pathways be blocked by their fleshy nest material, but you'll need to find a weapon fast because you'll have less time to prepare before you need to start keeping an eye out for Crater Creatures hiding around every corner.



## Missed the Party

- Gain 300 Biomass

The exodus of this city's inhabitants was much farther in the past than expected. The entire complex is significantly more decayed. The architecture has become unstable in several places, and many machines that would assist you in progression have long-since broken down. A path to Polis still exists, but it will be much slower, much more convoluted, and much more hazardous.

## The Panacea

- Gain 300 Biomass

A key ingredient of the process of ascendance is Homunculus blood. However, it seems there are no Homunculi to be found. Oddly, your own blood is a suitable substitute. The amount needed will kill you if extracted all at once. Even if you have no interest in ascendance, other living beings, even those who aren't normally hostile, seem to instinctively covet your blood above all else.

## Prey

- Gain 300 Biomass

Evolution isn't always fair or pretty. A strange parasitic being has latched onto you. They will mutilate and restrict your body the longer they stay attached but removing them without complex external tools is almost impossible. Even once you force them off, they won't give up on you until they die or succeed in fusing with you into a perpetually suffering plant-like existence.

## Sloppy Seconds

- Gain 300 Biomass

Shortly before you awoke, another being embarked on the same path you will follow, destroying it in the process. You'll need to work around every path they collapse, every unique tool or resource they claim, and every door they lock behind them. You can take comfort in the fact that they will experience some unspeakable fate mere moments before claiming your prize for themselves.

## Karma

- Gain 300 or 600 Biomass

The only outcome you can expect from foolishness of this caliber is a swift and unceremonious death. You are a pacifist, an incomprehensible notion in this world. For the base price, you can make exceptions for the sake of self-defense. For double the reward, you refuse to harm any living being for absolutely any reason, and even accidentally taking a life will devastate you emotionally.

## Devolved

- Gain 400 Biomass

Like the bestial Crater Creatures, your intelligence is reduced to that of a mere beast. You retain just enough personality to keep track of and pursue personal goals, but your ability to plan ahead and solve problems through any method other than violence has completely atrophied. I hope you have the physical endurance to survive this hyper-aggressive lifestyle.

## Rooted

- Gain 400 Biomass

In all likelihood, the path to ascendance shall be forever out of your reach. You have deformed to such an extent that you are completely immobile and fused to a specific location within the complex. The only trade-off is that you are far more durable than before. You can be worn down over time, but nothing less than heavy machinery will be able to severely injure you in one go.

## Scorned

- Gain 1000 Biomass

Ignore my previous statements. You will retain all your items and abilities from past jumps. Death will now end your chain. The path to ascension requires pain, pleasure, endurance, and vulnerability. As such, you will be barred from The Trial, and attempting to ascend by any means is guaranteed to result in failure.

# ORIGINS

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Gender is irrelevant, age can be measured in hours, if not minutes. Choose both freely. Any origin can be taken as a "Drop-In" with no memories.

## Moldman

- Gain 100 Biomass

The flesh of your kind is molded into hard shells to "package" them for easy transport. The purpose of your species is to be used as raw materials. The fall of civilization was ever so slightly more a blessing than a curse for your kind. You've miraculously been freed from your shell without any debilitating deformities, though your movements will be quite clumsy for the first few minutes after birth.

## Crater Creature

- Gain 100 Biomass

Your species is able to thrive in this world by subverting the lengthy process of evolution. Spawned from unstable DNA sequences expelled by the Crater Queen. Whether the DNA forms a functional organism like you is a matter of luck. Your physiology is notably alien to the common humanoid body plan. Oddly, other Crater Creatures can't seem to recognize you as one of their own.

## Humanoid

- Costs no Biomass

It would be a stretch to call you "human". Aside from your proportions, your appearance is no less alien than the other peculiar life forms stalking this ruined labyrinth. It's a good thing most of this world's technology was designed with this body plan in mind. This implies the ancient civilization had similar proportions, but whether they were the exact same "species" as you is unknown.

## Parasite

- Costs 100 Biomass

On your own, you have a large yet lightweight body that can crawl along ceilings and through tight passages. Your instincts compel you to attach yourself to another humanoid organism. This relationship starts off symbiotic, with your tail serving as a mounting point for much of this world's weaponry. As you stay attached, you will instinctively begin to claw at your hosts' flesh. Finally, you will begin to merge with them into a single plant-like organism. Luckily, you retain enough reason to resist your instincts and avoid entering the final stages. You may receive an additional discount in the Equipment section on a weapon of your choice, which will already start incorporated into your tail.

## Homunculus

- Costs 100 Biomass

The results of Polis' experiments to create a new food source. Your stout species are born within jars which you gradually grow to perfectly fill. The brilliance of the Homunculi in matters of engineering is unmatched, allowing them to repurpose corpses and various scraps into destructive weapons or powerful cyborgs to pilot like vehicles. You receive one such Cyborg from the Equipment section for free. Otherwise you wouldn't have much hope of traversing this ruined world. Of particular note about your species is that the entirety of your body is made up of hallucinogenic material that plays a vital role in the process of ascendance. All Homunculi possess an inborn talent for engineering, and you are no exception.



# MOLDMEN PERKS

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## Baby Steps

- Costs 100 Biomass, or no cost for Moldmen

The world won't always wait for you to get your bearings. Your muscle memory instantly adapts to the current state and shape of your body. Whether that means adapting to walking in a body with far more limbs than your last, or instantly adapting to using your other hand after your dominant hand is injured.

## Misery Loves Company

- Costs 200 Biomass, or 100 Biomass for Moldmen

Your survival is never a guarantee in this world, so it pays to be as lucky as you are. If 19 out of 20 people will try to kill you, you're almost guaranteed to run into that 20th person first. Situations that seem to demand your death always have some way of allowing you to survive, if your allies are willing to look for it.

## Non-Degradable Product

- Costs 300 Biomass, or 150 Biomass for Moldmen

So this is how you survived so long? As long as you do not move, and are not moved by an external force, you require no food, air, water, and are generally immune to the ravages of time, though you aren't invincible. You gain the ability to enter a state of hibernation that persists until disturbed by an outside force.

## Sculptor

- Costs 400 Biomass, or 200 Biomass for Moldmen

To think this uncaring world had a sense of humor. You've somehow obtained the knowledge used by the ancient civilization to genetically engineer artificial lifeforms like the Moldmen or Homunculi. You can even experiment to create new species fulfilling different jobs or utilities. These life forms are always born already at full physical and mental maturity for their respective species.

# CRATER CREATURE PERKS

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## Biological Marksman

- Costs 100 Biomass, or no cost for Crater Creatures

A common adaptation of Crater Creatures. Through an orifice of your choice, you are able to expel a stream of acid or some other biological fluid or expulsion of your choice as a long-range projectile. The effective range is about 6 meters, within which you can aim the stream with instinctive accuracy.

## Ecological Niche

- Costs 200 Biomass, or 100 Biomass for Crater Creatures

There are only so many survival strategies to go around, you may choose one for this world. Perhaps you fill the niche of a bird, making you smaller but capable of flight. Maybe the niche of a bull, granting great strength but limited agility. Any adaptation-based abilities will be biased towards the advantages of this niche.

## Perpetual Bloat

- Costs 300 Biomass, or 150 Biomass for Crater Creatures

Much like cancer, your ability to grow in size and strength is limited only by the nutrients available. You can disable this at will, but if indulged for a decade or so, you could be as large and durable as a house, or even choose to prioritize the development of certain complex bodily systems or processes.

## Nesting Instinct

- Costs 400 Biomass, or 200 Biomass for Crater Creatures

It would seem that you have the potential to become a new Crater Queen. You are able to expel up to  $\frac{1}{3}$  of your weight in biomass each day to form into a fleshy nest infesting an area of your choice. Once your nest covers a large enough area, pieces of the biomass will randomly evolve into loyal but simple-minded Crater Creatures to fight off intruders or help expand the nest.

# HUMANOID PERKS

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## Acceptable Tolerances

- Costs 100 Biomass, or no cost for Humanoid

Decisiveness will take you far here. You can intuitively sense when inflicting suffering on yourself or others will help you progress towards your goal. You'll somehow just know that sticking your hand into the machine full of spikes is a good idea, or that you need to bring a dead alien baby to a juicing machine.

## Blessed by Fortune

- Costs 200 Biomass, or 100 Biomass for Humanoids

Some say that only the strong survive, but not even strength can compete with blind luck. You are rarely, if ever, harmed as a result of bad luck or clumsiness. You can survive falling ridiculous distances, mechanical doors only close after you pass through, passages wait until you're through them to collapse, etc.

## Waiting for You

- Costs 300 Biomass, or 150 Biomass for Humanoids

It is the endurance of this world's technology that makes your mission possible. Even after centuries of neglect, machines vital to your goal always somehow remain functional. For any keys, fuel, and other resources (living or otherwise) vital to your progression, there is always miraculously just enough within reach.

## Dream Stealer

- Costs 400 Biomass, or 200 Biomass for Humanoids

Through some odd spiritual property, you can escape death by being reborn once per jump. You will simply crawl out of a wall somewhere within a mile or so of where you died, fully grown and in perfect health. You naturally retain your powers and memories. You can choose whether this triggers for fates adjacent to or worse than death like petrification, ego death, severe mutation, etc.

# PARASITE PERKS

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## Evil Made Necessary

- Costs 100 Biomass, or no cost for Parasite

What better way to keep prey docile than to become the only thing keeping them alive? The longer you remain attached or fused with another being in one way or another, the more damage forcibly removing you will inflict. Before long, your removal will be a death sentence for your prey, and they'll know it.

## Destined Prey

- Costs 200 Biomass, or 100 Biomass for Parasite

You may select a single organism to become your target. You must get close to them to select them as your prey, but once you do you'll always feel a vague instinctive pull in their general direction. You are unable to select a new target until your current one is dead, comatose, or otherwise out of the picture.

## Hardy Genetics

- Costs 300 Biomass, or 150 Biomass for Parasite

When exposed to mutagenic forces, you will never mutate in a way that leaves you significantly worse off. Instead of dying from malfunctioning organs, perhaps you'll gain extra eyes, or some natural weapons, or even evolve into a new organism entirely, etc. Results aren't always pretty, but they always work.

## Chimeric

- Costs 400 Biomass, or 200 Biomass for Parasite

You are able to fuse with any organic being or construct. This fusion is only possible after hours of uninterrupted physical contact, but you can choose how the final result manifests. Smaller constructs like organic weapons can be incorporated into your body, but for fusion with larger creatures, you can choose how much, if any, mental or physical autonomy, your victim retains.

# HOMUNCULI PERKS

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## Bloodletting

- Costs 100 Biomass, or no cost for Homunculi

Hard to say how much this actually benefits you. With this, the entirety of your flesh and bodily fluids can act as a potent psychedelic. You're immune for obvious reasons, but with the right setup, you can help someone expand their consciousness and perception of the world, or just give them a really good trip.

## Handing you the Rope

- Costs 200 Biomass, or 100 Biomass for Homunculi

Through a peculiar form of fortune, you'll find that your own enemies have a tendency to personally provide you with the means to escape or fight them. They'll hand you a knife to taunt you, or forget to lock your cell, or just decide that the inside of a cyborg is the perfect spot to execute you from, etc.

## The Apple and the Tree

- Costs 300 Biomass, or 150 Biomass for Homunculi

A quirk of the Homunculi made them all genetically predisposed to engineering brilliance. You'll find your own genius in specific areas can be genetically passed down. Perhaps your daughter will be a genius of warfare from birth, or your grandson an expert of medicine, if you were knowledgeable in both areas.

## Necromantic Scavenger

- Costs 400 Biomass, or 200 Biomass for Homunculi

One doesn't have the luxury of pickiness in a dying world. You can make the most out of any raw materials, organic or otherwise. With nothing but a few corpses and centuries-old garbage, you can construct robotic limbs, vehicles, explosives, firearms, and more. This also allows you to restore the physical functionality of long-dead corpses, though not their consciousness.

# EQUIPMENT

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You receive a single discount on a single item of each tier above 50. Discounts on items worth 100 Biomass are free, while all other discounts are half-off. Discounts do not stack. All weapons share a single modular handle.

## Blood Pod

- Costs no Biomass

This handheld creature can store an unknown red liquid acquired at health stations, which can be injected into your arm to restore some of your health. It also has a handful of orifices that can be used to hold spare ammunition.

## Wrist Key

- Costs no Biomass

A small retractable key has been grafted onto your hand. This can be used to operate many doors and machines. Post-jump you'll be able to remove this at will, and can even import a key or key-shaped item of your choice into it.

## Tool Gun

- Costs no Biomass, or 50 Biomass to receive immediately

Serving as both a weapon and a key. This device can launch a long piston with potentially deadly force. Compared to actual firearms, it is weak and takes a few seconds to recharge, but requires no ammunition. You'll eventually come across this on your journey but can pay extra to receive it immediately.

## Growth Shredder

- Costs 50 Biomass

A device has been mounted in your Warehouse. Through an excruciating process, this can clean your hands of any parasites, infections, growths, etc. in seconds. This is a temporary fix if the infection stretches beyond just your hands. It also won't restore any permanent damage to the muscle or bone.

## Pistol

- Costs 100 Biomass, or no cost with discount

More deadly than the Tool Gun, but still not the strongest weapon you'll find. You can load six bullets at a time, which are more common than other ammo types, but still scarce in its own right. While the Tool Gun might take 3-5 point-blank shots to take down a Crater Creature, it would take 2-3 pistol shots to take down a similar enemy from almost three times the distance.

## Removal Station

- Costs 100 Biomass, or no cost with discount

A complex yet specialized device for removing large parasites from the body. It essentially allows you to view your own back while in control of a powerful yet precise robot claw. This can potentially be repurposed to perform any number of complex surgeries, although it's unfortunately designed specifically so the one on the table is the one controlling the arm, so it's not an ideal arrangement.

## Juicer

- Costs 100 Biomass, or no cost with discount

A device doesn't need to be complex to be useful. This wall-mounted machine has but a single purpose, to squeeze as much liquid out of whatever is placed within. Fruits, vegetables, small humanoids, pretty much anything that has liquid inside. Comes with an assortment of vials for storing the liquid. The crushing chamber is fully cleaned and disinfected by unknown means after an hour.

## Stone Key

- Costs 100 Biomass, or no cost with discount

Ordinarily, you'd need to jump through quite a few hoops to get this. This key can be used to open many heavy-duty doors on your journey. This starts off fully upgraded, and as such will allow you to sidestep many puzzles and hazards between you and your goal. It is hard to overstate how much time this will save you here, but it is completely useless post-jump, hence the price.



## Health Station

- Costs 200 Biomass, or 100 Biomass with discount, requires Blood Pod

Within your warehouse is a tall object made to interact with the Blood Pod. When inserted, this will fill the Blood Pod with a red healing liquid that can quickly restore your vitality when injured. Most of these stations in the world only store a finite amount of the liquid, but this one seems to slowly replenish its supply over time, requiring about 5 hours to completely fill an empty tank.

## Cyborg

- Costs 200 Biomass, 100 Biomass with discount, or no cost for Homunculi

A patchwork of machinery and flesh (not that there's much difference between the two here). This body is powerful and easy to control. No matter your size or physiology, the cockpit of the cyborg is always the perfect size for you to slide inside and operate. It doesn't seem to require an external fuel source, but the storage compartment on its back is vulnerable to attack when open.

## Shotgun

- Costs 200 Biomass, or 100 Biomass with discount

A far more heavy-duty weapon than the pistol. This has a far shorter range than the pistol but makes up for it by doing almost twice as much damage within that range. The shotgun can store three bullets at a time, which are relatively scarcer than ammo for the pistol. This is probably the bare minimum you'll need if you want to take on some of the larger Crater Creatures.

## Emission

- Costs 200 Biomass, or 100 Biomass with discount

Around 40 gallons of an unknown white liquid with potent mutagenic properties. This liquid seems to play a vital role in the processing of living flesh into usable raw materials and structures. You'll have to figure out on your own the means to steer the resultant mutations, but even if you just submerge a being in the liquid, the mutations this causes are rarely, if ever, outright debilitating.

## Ammo Station

- Costs 300 Biomass, 150 Biomass with discount, or no cost with guns

A device made for restocking ammo for various weapons found in this world. The ammo will slowly replenish over the course of a few hours. The free version only provides ammo for guns bought in this jump. If you pay for the full machine, it can be fed any other kind of ammo you have access to, in order to train it to “grow” more of that ammo. More powerful ammo takes longer to grow.

## Symbiote

- Costs 300 Biomass, 150 Biomass with discount or Prey

A parasitic organism has attached itself to you, serving as thin organic armor, a little extra storage, and a mounting point for weapons (even inorganic ones). This parasite is quite fond of you, and will detach upon request, though they won't be happy about it. If taken with Prey, their behavior will only adjust post-jump. You receive an additional discount on a weapon of your choice.

## The Doctor

- Costs 300 Biomass, or 150 Biomass with discount

Though resembling a machine, this skeletal six-armed being is perhaps the last of the original inhabitants of Polis. They have undergone ascension, and possess mastery of Polis' surgery techniques, which admittedly skim the line between medicine and torture. Neglecting to disinfect their tools or even anesthetize their patient has a negligible impact on the success of their surgeries.

## Grenade Launcher

- Costs 300 Biomass, or 150 Biomass with discount

An invention of the Homunculi, and easily the most destructive weapon you'll come across. This launches powerful explosives in an arcing trajectory. There are few beings who can survive a direct impact from this. Ammo stations are plentiful within Polis itself, but practically nonexistent anywhere else. Be careful using this in areas that seem liable to collapse from such an explosion.

## Crater Queen

- Costs 400 Biomass, or 200 Biomass with discount

The source of the Crater Creatures and the nest they spawn from. For the sake of transport, they will be no larger than a small dog at the start of a given jump but will gradually grow to their full titanic size once planted in a location. When fully grown they can spawn Crater Creatures by the dozen. Perhaps due to some deep-rooted instinct, the resultant creatures will not be hostile to you.

## Genesis Wall

- Costs 400 Biomass, or 200 Biomass with discount

One of the peculiar forms of reproduction in this world. This massive organic wall will follow you between worlds. Every month or so, a fully grown humanoid will be “born” from the wall. These creatures are intelligent but have an intense instinct to “progress” at all costs, no matter how much they or others need to suffer. Luckily, they seem oddly receptive to goals you assign them.

## The Assembly

- Costs 400 Biomass, or 200 Biomass with discount

You receive one of two structures from this world, with all the tools and resources needed to operate. Either a lab for growing individual Homunculi, or a refinery for mass-producing Moldmen by the dozen. Homunculi are terrifyingly intelligent, in addition to being made entirely of psychedelics, but also quite willful. In contrast, Moldmen are weak, clumsy, simple-minded, but cheap to produce.

## Polis

- Costs 400 Biomass, no discounts, incompatible with Scorned

The whole of Polis will follow you as a property. This includes all the infrastructure and resources to reproduce the ascendance process on others. You can even choose to receive a fully restored Polis, in its full crimson glory. Should you buy this but fail or neglect to complete your own ascendance, the Biomass you spent will be refunded to spend as you please elsewhere in the jump.

# THE TRIAL

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The former inhabitants of this world sought transcendence above all else. No price was too high in order to ascend to the highest state of consciousness. Whether this was the cause of their disappearance is a mystery lost to time. With no guidance beyond your own eyes, you must solve complex puzzles, avoid or slay deadly beasts, and navigate this ruined empire to find your way to Polis and reactivate the machinery to undergo your own ascendance.

Through a combination of surgery, advanced technology, hallucinogens, and simultaneously experiencing extreme pleasure and agony, your consciousness will be separated from your body, before manifesting as a new entity. Akin to a hermit crab, you must seek out a hollow mechanical shell to fill. Luckily, the ancient inhabitants of Polis were kind enough to prepare several such "Shells" to choose from. Once you have chosen a shell to your liking, the fusion process will begin, as your new body molds itself to perfectly fit your Shell.

Through the process, your mind will ascend to the highest state of consciousness, gaining an almost divine, if not outright alien understanding and feeling of oneness with the world around you. This enlightenment will persist even outside of this form. You may also choose whether the identifying third eye of your new ascended body manifests in your other forms.

Even if you should fail to ascend or should ascendance be rendered impossible, simply arriving in this world will leave its mark on your psyche. The boundary between flesh and technology is now nonexistent to you. Any effect that can be produced through biology can be reproduced through technology and vice versa. You can use flesh as raw materials as easily as metal and plastic or create mechanisms that cannot be cleanly categorized into "organic" or "inorganic".

# ENDING CHOICE

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Your abilities from other worlds are restored if they weren't already.

Rigor Mortis

- Go Home -

I understand. This world is not an easy one to leave unscarred. You've had enough of climbing for greater and greater heights, no matter who has to fall to pave your path. You will return home, bringing your chain to a peaceful end.

Putrefaction

- Stay Here -

I can't say I understand your choice, but it is yours to make. You will be spending the remainder of your days in this dead world. Do you hope to somehow revive it? Or maybe you just enjoy the isolation. I hope you won't regret this.

Calcification

- Move On -

You awoke in the depths of this dying world and found your way out. I'd imagine you've had enough of this world. You will be moving forward to your next jump, leaving this world as nothing more than a bad memory.

# NOTES

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Jump by Gene.

If my fluff seems vague, it's because the game is explicitly designed to be ambiguous and open to interpretation. The jump is based heavily on my own interpretation of the setting, feel free to ignore parts of it as needed if you have a different interpretation you'd prefer to stick to.

What lore the game has is found in the art book. Even then, it doesn't provide much explanation of what happened/is happening/will happen and is more just providing general context behind how each stage/enemy/item fit into the setting before the inhabitants of Polis left/died/ascended/whatever.

The line "highest state of consciousness" is a phrase straight out of the artbook, but it's never really explained what that means specifically. Since the process is basically your consciousness exiting your body and assuming physical form, it's reasonable to assume the physical form somewhat reflects your mental state. The adjectives used to describe the nameless beings that inhabit the Shells are psychedelic, primordial, and formless. Not to mention the fact that they develop a literal third eye. You can use that to get a vague idea of what this entails.

Considering how intertwined the mind, body, pain, pleasure, technology, and drugs are in the religion of Polis, that probably would be reflected in what they'd consider the "highest state of consciousness". Assuming it's not so alien that there's no human concept or sensation that could be used as a point of comparison, I'd imagine it's like the effects of shrooms mixed with a perpetual orgasm and Buddhism-style enlightenment, plus a significant intelligence boost. If that doesn't sound as appealing to you as it does to me, feel free to just make up something else entirely. This isn't meant to be a trap option.

Your starting point and the path you'll have to take to reach Polis is completely different from that of the cannon protagonist. It'll be roughly as difficult as the canon path, just with different puzzles and challenges. It's your call whether the Protagonist even exists in this jump, since it won't affect you much either way.