

BY JOHN & PHILIPPA HUGHES

XENOMORPH



WAYNE
GOULD
SECURITY ADVISOR
RSV SHACKLETON

PHENOMENON 2012

Wayne Gould

Station Security Advisor RSV Shackleton

There is no reciprocity in love. Harmony is not the human condition. The gods are not on our side. The universe is cold and vast and deadly. Individuals mean nothing. Hierarchy is survival. The strong prosper. The Company always wins. Try not to get fucked over.

In the Company, being a low level security operative often means looking the other way, not asking questions. Knowing too much can be a dangerous proposition, even on, especially on, a remote deep space research station like Shackleton. You do exactly what you're told, and if things go wrong, you're careful to doctor the reports.

That's something you understand to your core. That's something that **Steve 'Ripper' Pearson** didn't comprehend. And Pearson is dead.

Religions and philosophies and governments have all failed us and withered away. The few that remain are empty shells. All that remains are the Corporations.

On Earth the nation states have been fatally weakened by the anarchists and their rights agendas. Out here the Companies hold sway. Corporations are their own law. And theirs is a hidden law, a dirty law. A total law.

As station security, sometimes you are called to be a calming voice, a restorer of peace—the friendly neighbourhood cop. But sometimes you're nothing more than a mid-level brownshirt, a leader of thugs, a dealer in terror. Your job is to apply *discrete policy correctives*. To keep the corporate's noses out of their own shit. To maintain *plausible deniability*.

So Steve Pearson had a tragic airlock accident. And you have to live with yourself.

As a security professional, Pearson should have known better. He started poking around in high level security files he had no right to view—god knows why, probably checking out his new mystery girlfriend. Pearson thought he knew the system, that he could cover his tracks, but on Shackleton, in present circumstances, there is always somebody or something watching. MOTHER flagged him as a potential subversive – which can mean anything from someone with a minor workplace grudge to a share rights activist to an anti-Company terrorist or Weyland-Yutani plant.



Gould: The great one laid low by a character flaw.

Male, Anglo-Australian, late forties. *He's not a hero. He's not a villain. He's just sooo fucking tired of everything.*

Keywords: Regret, Guilt, Obedience, Teacher, Fixer.

Strength: Gould is a teacher and mentor. He teaches through action.

Flaw: Outer apathy, inner despair. Freezes under pressure.

Anger: His own failures. The many compromises made to keep his position in the Company. The death of Pearson.

Passion: None he can admit to, though still committed to his estranged children, and his dreams of retirement on earth.

Fear: Betrayal, Change, The Company.

Phobia: Choking.

Days till end of mission rotation: 127.

Company Voting Shares: 4.

Expected mission bonus: Fourteen million New Yen.

TWITCH FACTOR: 60%

The cold war with Weyland-Yutani is running close to hot. The station is in lockdown. MOTHER is getting twitchy.

We were told to haul Pearson in. Then it went apeshit.

Ripper was a Drop Bear - we go way back, to when we both were EVA welders building the station. And he was terrified - really off the wall - which was odd because he knew the drill as well as any of us. It would be painless: Pysch would pump him full of drugs and MOTHER would run a series of interrogation routines on him. He'd wake up six hours later with a headache and at worst a fine for exceeding his clearance level.

But not this time.

I was given guard duty outside his interrogation room while the drugs did their work. It was late, I may have dozed. Anyways, I didn't notice the flashing alarm. Steve went into some sort of fit. He went pretty quick - drowned in his own vomit while I was less than five metres away. *Jesus*.

No one ever dies in custody. *Ever*. I called in **Chul-Moo Crowe** and together with a couple of Toorak androids we moved the body to an industrial airlock, put it in a space suit. And so Steve Pearson died in an airlock accident. Its all here, in my report. He and Crowe were checking for contraband, and something went wrong. Tragic, but not so uncommon. Space is unforgiving.

I have seen and done some questionable things in my time with the Company, far worse than this. But it's hit hard, really hard. Steve was a mate, we'd covered each others backs for years. And we both loved the same woman.

Iriaka Conrad was totally devastated; she really lost the plot. She and Pearson hadn't been close for years, but they were still legally married, and they shared quarters. They fell in and out of love pretty quickly, took to fighting, but never divorced. They maintained a strange loyalty. We were all working together - it got messy at times. Especially messy, since I've always carried a torch for Iriaka, and have to hide my true feelings.

Conrad has gone crazy from the grief. Normally, she's my most reliable and level-headed officer, but she's completely lost it on a couple of occasions recently. She picked a fight with Crowe and beat him senseless —no mean feat. To top it, she then threatened to kill him in front of a dozen witnesses. Neither of them will talk about it. Toorak wants her confined to quarters until she can get a full psych evaluation, but we need every hand on deck right now. I've pulled in every favour I can to keep her on duty.

Conrad is asking me questions as well, questions about Pearson's death I can't answer. I feel I've betrayed her, but the truth might well destroy her.

Shackleton is in total security lockdown. Two hundred days ago, we detected the Weyland-Yutani surveillance vessel *Shokaku* close to the station. There was an escalation, missiles were fired. *Shokaku* was destroyed. We've set up a holding facility in the Botanical Bay for the survivors. They're in hypersleep. *They may never wake up.*

And if word gets out on either of these, there's likely to be a *real* war.

Kath Argent formed a special operations team, and they've spent the last six months organising robot sweeps to clear away debris evidence from the *Shokaku*. Paranoia and rumour are sweeping the station, and the crew are going crazy from the pressure. External communications are being heavily censored.

Someone—code name SPRAYPAINT— has infiltrated the station's information networks to generate false breakdown alarms, and has set viroids to flood our personal texts with anarchist propaganda messages. Its pretty harmless, but its public, and it's sent the suits on Toorak totally apeshit.

<<FEAR NO MORE>>

<<YOU ARE NOT THE COMPANY>>

<<UNCHAIN YOUR MIND>>

<<PEOPLE BEFORE PROFIT>>

<<A SHARE FOR ALL>>

<<DATA FREES - FREE DATA>>

<<ONE LIFE>>

If station systems have been compromised, what else might happen? I'm just hoping that SPRAYPAINT is someone letting off steam, rather than a professional terror cell. If they can really break security, then it's over for us all.

To top it all off, a week ago **Kath Argent** took a boarding team and disappeared off-station. No word since.

I'm left sitting on my fat arse trying to keep the lid on everything. Dave Pearson is dead and my core crew are at each other's throats.

Fuck this.

Steve is dead. He wasn't the only thing that died in that room on that day. And the dead are always with us.

I'm not angry. I'm not grieving. I'm just too fucking tired to care.



Wayne Gould is an older man nearing the end of his fourth five-year rotation aboard Shackleton. He is the acting head of station internal security.

Gould believes the Company always wins.

Gould's internal world is a cocktail of self-pity and fear, tinged with self-interest. Increasingly burdened by what he has done under Company orders, he is given to increasing indecision, and can freeze up with stress at crucial moments.

He knows he is too old for active duty: this rotation will be his last. Gould has a fat retirement bonus awaiting as payment for his complicity and obedience and silence. Until then, he increasingly seeks refuge in drugs and alcohol, supplied by Crowe.

Life seems a continual disappointment, devoid of meaning. Long divorced, Gould's children are growing up greenside, and he is a stranger to them.

To most of those who deal with him, Gould seems laid back and uncaring; efficient, professional, yet uninvolved and effectively amoral. His friends see a different man, one whose bright spark of humanity has been buried under layers of apathy and despair. Gould is a natural teacher in the broadest sense, and has the ability to truly inspire those who seek his guidance.

Gould's closest companions are his fellow Drop Bears. He is intensely loyal to Crowe, and this loyalty is reciprocal. Gould usually overlooks Crowe's propensity to bullying and his drug dealing activities. Crowe for his part follows Gould's orders unconditionally.

Gould has long harboured a secret love for Iriaka Conrad. Their relationship has long been complicated by Conrad's tumultuous marriage with Pearson. Gould's feelings are overlaid by a strong and trusting friendship, though he cannot deny the continuing sexual tension.



Metagame

Xenomorph is a character- and emotion-driven game.

Your fellow players are also your audience. Do you want them to love your character, to love-to-hate them, or perhaps to be drawn in and then surprised by a sudden revelation?

Try to reveal more depth about your character as you go along, and try to externalise, to bring into the game through action and dialogue the challenges, dead-ends, decisions and transformations that you face.

One of the wonderful things about the movie **Aliens** is that every combat scene revealed something new about characters and relationships. Spectacle served both character and story. We're trying to do the same — the stress of game action is a mechanism for character and relationship transformation.

Physical roleplaying is important. We especially encourage use of hands in an expressive way—Drop Bear gimme-fives, discrete touch, signals, emotional gesticulations, etc.

Mission Crew

Iriaka Conrad: Shackleton security officer, a Drop Bear. Your closest friend. While usually an excellent operative, Conrad has gone off the rails following her husband's death, and has publicly threatened to kill Crowe.

Chul-Moo Crowe: Shackleton security officer, a Drop Bear and a friend. Crowe is straight-forward and unsubtle to the point of bullying. He is not to be trusted with complex machinery. He's a dealer, and sometimes drugged out himself. Crowe needs to be kept on a leash.

Cai Gentle: Shackleton shuttle pilot and cargo handler/courier. Well-liked, a good corporate citizen. Cai is a ward of Margaret Baron (below). Because of this, Cai's security files are sealed at your level, and are accessible only to Executive.

Uki Pynne: A research biologist and systems professional. Tiny guy, big attitude: a bad case of over-compensation. His security file is clean though: Pearson assessed and cleared him just a few months ago.

Others

Katherine Argent: Formal head of Shackleton security, Kath has been assigned to a special projects for the last six months, operating out of Toorak. She is currently on an assignment off-station.

Margaret Baron: A member of the station Executive, head of Special Projects, your boss. Though she seldom ventures beyond Toorak level, Margaret is in charge of all security related operations on Shackleton.

Steven 'Ripper' Pearson: A station security officer, Drop Bear, and close friend. Pearson was suspected of anti-corporate activity: he died under interrogation under your watch. The cover story is that he was killed in an airlock accident.

MOTHER (MU/TH/UR cb7500): Shackleton Station's artificial intelligence, memory and communications agent.