The Inky Depths

Dearest Mother,

I have now joined up with the Atlantica Guard Company, a branch of Her Majesty's Ocean Service. So far things have treated me well here, with nothing much to report. There have been a few incidents with the squid, but for the most part we've been fine. We ran out of pressure suits, but we had some concentrated Inksac on hand so it didn't become an issue—I had a suit, though, so I didn't have to drink the nasty stuff.

Working down here has been good. I'm stationed by an Olympian station, and they've been letting me take one of the old ones out for a spin for practice, just in case we should ever need an extra pilot. The trainer they have is an old Ulysses model from back before the war began, but it's capable of operating underwater and that's all that matters for a trainer.

You know, for how alien the Cuttle are, they sure are helpful. Despite some of their physical limitations, they're actually some of the more competent members of our force. Captain Jameson is a Cuttle, though I think I've mentioned that in one of my past letters.

Anyway, I need to get going; food around here—well, we have enough, but if you're late all you get are sardines and kelp.

Your Son,

John

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Introduction

The Inky Depths is a game of life and death under the seas of the Atlantic. Set in an alternate past, where steam-powered technology remained dominant up until and even after the first World War and the mysterious Cuttle were discovered living under the oceans' surface, it focuses on the life and death struggles that come with living underneath the water's surface.

Example of Play

Dave, Luke, and Mischa are playing The Inky Depths. Mischa's character is Rell, an Arm Cuttle with a penchant for violence and an eye for danger, while Luke is playing John, a human pilot. Dave's character is Captain Jameson, a Tentacle Cuttle focusing on social skills. Their GM, Jane, has a special surprise planned for them.

The group is examining a ruin when they come under attack from a Soviet operations team. Rell decides to use his combat pool, which is 11, to respond immediately by laying down a barrage of covering fire for the rest of his squad. His weapon, an autopulsor, emits powerful sonic blasts. It also has the Suppression quality, which allows its Effect to be applied as a penalty to others' pools. Jane decides that he's not under any penalty so long as his focus is to simply drive the Communists into cover, rather than try to hit multiple people, so Mischa grabs eight dice and rolls them. Rell's Reflexes of 3 are going to go for his potential Effect results, while he's going to use his Cuttle Weapons of 5 for his potential Success results. Rell's going to roll the full limit of 8 dice. The GM sets the Target Number at 4.

The dice come up reading 5, 4, 2, 6, 1, 4, 3, and 5: a total of five successes. Mischa wishes Rell's potential Effect results were a little larger, and she decides to give the maximum of three successes to the Effect result and apply two successes to the Success result. The team's opponents lose three dice from whatever pool they would roll this round.

Rell still has 3 dice in his combat pool, so Mischa decides to attempt a second attack, deciding on a two-point Success pool and a single Effect pool point in hopes of hitting a Commie. The GM decides that no penalties or additional limits would apply, and Mischa rolls three dice: 5, 2, 3. With only one success, she cannot

allocate dice into both pools for Rell, as would be necessary for even a glancing hit, and passes her turn to Luke.

John decides to run to his Olympian and try to activate it. Unfortunately, his Combat pool is only 6, but so long as he can get two successes on both rolls he's going to be successful. He puts one point into each Success limit, and two points into each Effect limit, well below his attribute and skill limits. The GM doesn't apply any penalties, and sets the TN for both actions at 4. He gets a 4, 5, and 1 for his Running test, allowing him to reach the Olympian and climb into the cockpit; and a 3, 6, and 4 on his Maintenance (Olympian) test to start up the burners. For both rolls he allocates one success into Success, and one success into Effect. The massive machine rumbles to life. This is going to get interesting.

The Game

In order to play The Inky Depths, it's helpful to have an idea about what exactly it is. The Inky Depths is a role-playing game, which basically means that it serves as a set of rules to govern collaborative storytelling. As such you'll need a number of players (three to five recommended), as well as a Game Master whose job is to resolve any conflicts that occur with regards to the rules or what people can narrate as happening.

You'll also need a few materials; either a digital device that can handle character records, or the paper equivalents of those records (see the appendix). Finally, you'll need six-sided dice. Potentially quite a few. You can scrounge them from board games, or buy them from a local hobby shop or online (you can get a whole pound of them for about $20 on Amazon).

Using This Book

Before we begin, there's a few pieces of jargon that I will point out: Game Master (or "GM") is a term for the guy who's in charge of keeping track of the rules, non player characters, and generally making sure to tell people what's going on and whether they succeed or fail. Players are the people who have their own characters made in accordance with rules in this book.

Normally, the dice you should roll in certain events would be written as something like "xdy", where x is the number of dice and y is the number of sides on each roll. Although this game only uses six-sided dice, you may encounter times where you are told to take the result of a d3; this means you should half the result of a d6 roll and round up. You may occasionally encounter a d12 as well; if you have an actual twelve-sided die, you can use it, but if you only have d6, you can simply roll two six-sided dice. Take the result of one die, and add six to it if the result on the other die is 4-6.

Fairly often, you'll hear the term "Target Number". Skill rolls in The Inky Depths use single six-sided dice rolled against the Target Number, or TN, in order to calculate successes, which are then applied

An alternative to a d12 simulation system is just to double the roll result, but if you do so you should do so consistently, since it will change the results of rolls slightly. Do not add two six-sided dice together to mimic a d12; this is not

the same, and is biased toward certain results.

Playing the Game

The Inky Depths uses a set of pools for each character to determine what dice they roll. Dice are rolled simultaneously and then used to determine a result based on the independent outcomes of each individual die. These "potential pools" last for a whole round, and rolls are made using dice pulled out of the pool. Each pool is associated with a certain group of tasks (such as "Combat", "Social", "Intellectual", or "Olympian").

The results of these dice are then compared to a "Target Number" or "TN" (often 4). Results of 6 are re-rolled to increase the value of the original die (that is, if you roll a 6 add another die and then add that result to the original die to get something between 7-12). This process, "exploding", should be skipped if the target number is met already. Each die that comes up above the target number is a "success", and goes either into a Success result pool that determines how well-done an action was, or an Effect result pool, that determines how effective it was. Some actions may require multiple successes in the Success result pool.

Characters with a higher pool declare actions first (ties go simultaneously). The number of actions a character can take in a "round" is limited by plausibility and the size of their potential pool. Each action has a limit to the number of potential Success and/or Effect results; there will be more on this later, but as a general rule any action made using gear will have a limit applied based on the quality of the items used, and all actions will be further limited by the skills and attributes of a character. Each round, a character may declare any of several actions. Once they have declared these actions, they select **their smallest appropriate pool** which the skills they are using draw from, and allocate dice accordingly.

Normally, the appropriate skills and attributes to use will be specified before a roll is made by a GM, but there are a few rolls that are covered throughout the course of the book; when I refer to them I write them as "attribute/skill", then specify any other requirements.

Characters have a collection of skills and attributes which contribute to their potential pools. These potential pools are always calculated by taking the rating of the highest attribute of the two appropriate attributes for the pool and the two highest skills from the pool's skill list, then adding them all together into a sum of the three values.

The Olympian Pool, for instance, governs a character's ability to use Olympians, giant war machines that turned the tide of WWI, saving countless lives but also managing to damage or destroy almost every major factory, manufacturing center, and city in continental Europe. John has a Tech Level of 4, Reflexes of 3, Gunnery of 4, Piloting of 3, Brawling of 3, and Maintenance of 2. His final Olympian pool would be 11; 4 from his Tech Level attribute, 4 from his Gunnery, and 3 from his Piloting (Olympian) skill.

Most rolls in The Inky Depths function on a success/effectiveness scale. Whenever a character rolls dice for a purpose, they choose whether they will use their most relevant attribute (which can be outside the pool being drawn from for the round's actions) and most relevant skill. Rolls are still limited by two factors: the attribute and skill being applied. This may further be reduced by gear, circumstance, or weapon limits.

Limits are an upper cap on either Success or Effect results. Characters may only roll dice if they have a maximum limit for their actions.

John takes his Olympian for a spin, pushing the Ulysses to its limit as he bounds a sandbank. His Olympian Pool is 11, but he cannot roll all his dice; the Ulysses has a Maneuver limit of 4/4, and John has Reflexes of 3 and Piloting (Olympian) of 3. This means that no matter what, he can only allocate three dice each to his Success results or his Effect results. John decides to roll four dice, for a potential of 3 Success results, and 1 Effect result (he doesn't want to have his Olympian fall down, but he won't need more than one Effect result to do so).

Setting

The Inky Depths focuses on Atlantica, an underwater empire of the Cuttle, and the humans that spend their time there. It is a realm besieged by both natural and unnatural threats, and is constantly being interfered with by Communists aligned with the Soviet Union.

A History

In 1914, the first World War was ended by the introduction of Olympians, war machines from twenty to forty feet tall that fielded weapons and armor unrivaled by any battlefield element. Europe, however, lay in ruins after the smoke had cleared. Germany, forced to pay reparations to the Allied powers, collapsed into a collection of city-states and anarchic regions, and much of Eastern Europe was decimated until the nascent Soviet Union rolled in and claimed it.

In 1915, during underwater combat operations, Olympians off the coast of France came under assault by a giant squid. The units were entirely destroyed in what would be the first, but not the last, misunderstanding between Atlantica and the Allied powers, but explorers began to redouble their efforts in searching the seas for life, and found the underseas empire of Atlantica.

Atlantica

The region that spans the Atlantic Ocean, Mediterranian Sea, and Indian Ocean belongs to an empire of Cuttle known collectively as Atlantica. Allied with the United States, Great Britain, and France, it stands opposed to the Soviet Union in the Pacific, which is aligned with Russia and its confederates.

Atlantica consists primarily of sapient cephalopods similar in scale and intelligence to humans known collectively as Cuttle; the Arm-Cuttle and Tentacle-Cuttle, which resemble cuttlefish and octopi respectively, are particularly well-

known. Rarer are the Archii and Shellbearers.

Atlantican technology focuses on light, sound, and electricity in a way that humans' cannot, and is highly prized. Powering their technology had always been an issue, but with the introduction of massive steam furnaces Atlantican society has advanced leaps and bounds above the rate of humanity's technology; while they were considered primitive when they were first encountered, their technology is second to none.

Tentacle-Cuttle, resembling octopi, were the first contact between humans and Atlantica, since some can survive for short periods of time out of water. Although it was difficult at first for communication to occur, the invention of the Hydrotranslator by Alexander Graham Bell, which provided a way for the Cuttle to use their ability to change their skin patterns to communicate with humans just as they used it to communicate with other Cuttle.

Shortly after, the Cuttle gave humanity the first of several technological advances in the form of Inksac, a mysterious substance that, while toxic, allows humans to survive in the intense pressure of the ocean floor. While people using Inksac were still limited by their oxygen supply, they would not suffer decompression sickness, and humans began building underwater colonies to facilitate further trade and communication with the Cuttle.

When the breadth and power of Atlantica became clear to the explorers, the major Allied nations signed first a peace accord and then a treaty with the empire, forming the first society that existed of both humans and non-humans and reached from the surface to the ocean floor. The Soviet Union was quick to follow suit, uniting or conquering various smaller factions and forming the Soviet Union in the Pacific. A cold war has begun, with neither side willing to fully commit to military action, but conflict is inevitable.

Cuttle

Cuttle culture is highly traditional. Although there is no division between gender in the roles that Cuttle are allowed to fulfill, there are four castes: laborers, warriors, thinkers, and priests. While it is possible for extraordinary individuals to move from the caste they are born into to another this is something that is exceedingly rare, though it has become more frequent since contact with humanity and as Cuttle society has changed.

Each caste has a number of subcastes, though unlike castes individuals can typically move between subcastes by demonstrating appropriate aptitudes and expressing an interest in a transfer. The main exception to this are the priestly castes; once a priest has devoted themselves to a certain deity they are not typically allowed to move to a subcaste that does not venerate that deity.

The deities of the Cuttle resemble Archii, giant squid-like beings capable of bending the universe to their whims and desires. Humans are forbidden from knowing much about these deities, though most of the Cuttle have an unflinching devotion to either a patron deity or the entire Cuttle pantheon. A handful of Cuttle have adopted Christianity as a result of persistent missionary efforts, but those who have tend to be outcasts.

Humans in Atlantica

Humanity tends to find a way to make do in any place, and Atlantica is no exception; settlers live in massive structures constructed from stainless steel. Despite this, the pressures and corrosion from saltwater make it almost impossible to maintain a colony without constantly replacing modules, which means that most of the underwater colonies are built from prefabricated parts.

Some of the newer manmade structures exploit titanium or tungsten alloys to be even more resistant to both pressure and corrosion, but these are exorbitantly expensive and are still limited to proof of concept.

The Cuttle, surprisingly, have been able to provide humans with more comfortable dwellings than even the best human minds; manipulated coral and shell edifices with airtight linings allow a greater degree of comfort and durability than manmade constructs, but these buildings are remarkably slow to build and are typically reserved for military outposts and diplomatic stations, or used in conjunction with steel, tungsten, or titanium expansions.

Olympians

Olympians are giant war machines built during the first World War as a ground superiority unit. While they are often slow and lumbering, they are technological marvels created by some of the greatest minds of the early 20th and late 19th centuries.

After the Great War, Olympians were re-purposed for underwater exploration, construction, and operations. While human weapons tend to function poorly underwater (with the exception of torpedoes), Olympians outfitted with propellers find that they can gain a significant speed and mobility increase underwater; the largest, the Typhon model, can actually achieve speeds of more than forty miles per hour underwater, based on jet technology borrowed from the Cuttle.

Most Olympians require special service and maintenance when run underwater, but their utility in both transport and utility far exceeds the costs of operation. Submarines are used in place of Olympians for long-distance or large-scale transport, however.

Characters

Characters in The Inky Depths have four main pools: Combat, Social, Intellectual, and Olympian. Each character then has more details: five attributes (Brains, Charm, Physicality, Reflexes, and Tech Level) and four skills linked to each pool.

Each character's pools are built from the sum of their highest attribute rating associated with that pool, and the ratings of their two best skills associated with that pool.

Race

Players may only create characters that are humans, Arm-Cuttle, or Tentacle-Cuttle.

For the sake of play, all characters are identical; humans and Cuttle are on a level playing field. For fluff purposes, however, Cuttle tend to have higher Reflexes and Tech Level, while humans have more Charm and Physicality. Both humans and human-scale Cuttle have middling Brains attributes, though some of the larger Cuttle have extraordinary intelligence.

There are times when there are meaningful differences between humans and Cuttle; a human requires either a pressure suit or a dose of Inksac and an oxygen source to survive in deep waters, and Cuttle require saltwater (freshwater works, but only as a stopgap) or they will die without air.

Combat

The Combat pool is built from a character's Reflexes and Physicality.

Combat skills are divided into the type of weapon being used; the four Combat Skills are Human Weapons, Cuttle Weapons, Close Combat, and Athletics.

Social

The Social pool is built from a character's Brains and Charm.

Social skills are pretty much interchangeable between humans and Cuttle if the language barrier can be broken. They are Leadership, Deception, Negotiation, and Persuasion.

Intellectual

The Intellectual pool is built from a character's Brain and Tech Level.

Intellectual skills cover a variety of tasks related to technology, and include Repair, Medicine, Demolitions, and Knowledge.

Olympian

The Olympian pool is built from a character's Reflexes and Tech Level.

The Olympian skills are Gunnery, Piloting, Brawling, and Maintenance.

Other Ratings

In addition to the pools, characters have three other ratings that they should keep track of. Resistance is a direct reduction from incoming damage, Health is a character's ability to resist damage, and Valor is a rating of a character's courage.

A character's Resistance is equal to a character's Physicality times 2, plus any modifiers from their gear; Resistance is typically both with and without Armor applied (so it would be written as 4/8).

A character's Health is a pool whose rating cannot exceed twenty points past their Physicality plus their Reflexes. Health starts at its maximum possible value when characters begin play, unless the GM says otherwise.

A character's Valor is a pool with a starting value of 3 that may change over the course of play. At any point, Valor may be spent to add or remove a success from any non-damage roll, or to add or remove a die from a damage roll. Valor is

applied **after** dice are rolled, so you can know the results to make sure you're benefiting from using it. The GM may give a character more Valor. It can also be purchased with experience, but only to a maximum value of 5.

Olympians

Olympians have their own Armor and Health ratings, though they do not have full attributes. Each model has specified maximum Armor and Health ratings; an Olympian's Armor replaces its Resistance Value. Otherwise, characters use their skills and attributes normally when within an Olympian. Unless otherwise noted characters cannot use their own weapons while piloting or riding in an Olympian.

When a character is piloting an Olympian, damage is taken first to the Olympian's Health rating (see Death and Taxes). Any effects are applied to the Olympian, unless they explicitly state that they impact the pilot instead.

Character Creation

Characters in The Inky Depths are created from a pool of 12 attribute points and 30 skill points. They may allocate these around their skills and attributes in any combination. Attributes and skills start at a rating of 1, and this rating is increased by 1 for each point spent. Attribute and skill ratings may not increase beyond 5 in character creation. Characters may also select items with a combined Cost of 20 to begin play with; if they choose to start the game with an Olympian its cost is discounted by 10 points.

Advancing Characters

After a character is created, they will grow over the course of play, gaining Experience. Experience is used to buy Valor or increase a skill or attribute's rating.

A point of Valor always costs 2 Experience, regardless of the character's

current Valor value, though it may not be increased past a rating of 5 this way.

Increasing a skill rating using Experience costs a number of Experience points equal to the desired skill rating, and must be done in sequence (you can't buy Rating 3 Demolitions if you only have Rating 1 Demolitions, you must buy Rating 2 Demolitions first).

Increasing an attribute rating using Experience costs a number of Experience points equal to three times the desired skill rating, but otherwise functions like increasing a skill's rating.

Death and Taxes

When a character takes damage that exceeds their current Health, they die, unless they take a Tax. A Tax is a temporary effect that keeps them from being able to use a pool entirely, so it is very severe. A character may only take one Tax at a time, and healing a Tax requires an Effect 3 Brains/Medicine roll. Health still recovers normally while a character is under a Tax, but if the character takes more damage they will die.

If a character cannot take a Tax, and receives a hit that would remove all their health, they are dead, kaput, and pushing up daisies or growing coral (depending on where they died).

The rules function somewhat differently for Olympians; an Olympian that loses all its Health is disabled. A second hit on a disabled Olympian that pierces its armor will cause it to be destroyed; if this happens underwater nothing happens, but above water it will cause a coal fire, potentially incinerating a pilot who has stayed in a disabled Olympian (or not had time to leave).

If a pilot is in an Olympian that has been disabled or destroyed and is hit again, the damage is subtracted from their Health, but the Olympian's Armor is used to protect them from harm.

Gear

Surviving in Atlantica requires a fair deal of supplies for humans, and Cuttle use a variety of things in their daily life. In addition, a wide variety of tools and supplies are made for use in both underwater and air-filled environments.

Unless otherwise noted, gear is available for both Cuttle and humans, and functions fine both underwater and in air-filled environments.

Getting gear underwater is a question of cost, but that cost is not usually measured in currency; an item's Cost rating reflects the difficulty of acquiring it legally without having to take it from someone else. Some of these things may be heavily subsidized (like Inkblot or pressure suits), while others are not.

Diving Gear

One thing that everyone going very deep underwater needs is the ability to resist pressure; it is up to the GM and the players to determine whether humans are wearing pressure suits, or Inkblot.

Pressure suits for humans are available cheaply, since humans have been moving to the ocean in ever increasing numbers. They have a Cost of 0, since they are plentiful, and protect from all Pressure hazards, but they are uncomfortable and must be filled with oxygen; using them below a depth of 500 feet results in a temporary penalty of 1 point to a character's Reflex attribute. Their maximum depth is 2000 feet.

Inkblot is a nasty, toxic substance, but it also confers a great deal of pressure protection to its user. Doses last for days or weeks, depending on the variety, and it is still necessary to bring an oxygen supply. However, the various strains of Inkblot reduce either Physicality, Brains, or Reflexes by 1 when in use, and do not protect against extreme pressure. Inkblot is effective to a maximum depth of 1000 feet. Cuttle do not benefit or suffer from the effects of Inkblot.

Cuttle also may desire or require pressure suits, which function identically to human ones, except for having a Cost of 1. These pressure suits also contain water that the Cuttle can use to breathe, allowing them to operate in air-filled environments.

Penalties from Inkblot or pressure suits stack, should someone be using both at once.

Kits and Supplies

Gear is required for a number of tests, such as Medicine and Repair or Maintenance. This represents both the kits that are required and supplies. Each character can carry one kit.

A medic's kit contains enough supplies to use the Medicine skill six times before it needs to be refilled, as well as some diagnostic tools. The kit has a Cost of 1, and the supplies have a Cost of 0; the supplies must be carried in a kit or otherwise stored, and cannot be carried except in a kit.

A repair kit can be used for any Repair or Maintenance tests, and contains a few tools for the job. Using a repair kit on a Maintenance test requires an additional Success result in order to be successful. Repair kits have a Cost of 1.

An Olympian maintenance kit can be used for Maintenance tests without incurring a penalty, and otherwise function identically to repair kits. Maintenance kits have a Cost of 2.

An explosives kit is used to both prepare and disarm bombs, and is used for Demolitions skill rolls. They have a Cost of 1.

Repair and Maintenance supplies have a Cost of half the thing that they are being applied to.

Demolitions supplies are only necessary when making bombs, and have a cost equal to half the desired bomb's Rating.

Weapons

One of the pressing needs for humans living under the seas is a way to protect themselves; less physically adept than the Cuttle in underwater self defense, humans were at an additional disadvantage because projectile weapons, such as firearms, perform poorly in water.

The Cuttle, however, have been designing weapons based around light, sound, and electricity for centuries, and humans were quick to adopt these weapons and adapt them to their use.

Cuttle and human weapons function differently and require a different skillset, but are generally interchangeable between the two races.

Weapons have four universal properties: Damage Die type, Range, Type, and Cost, and some weapons have special qualities. If a weapon's Range rating has two values, the first is for above-water use, and the second is for underwater use.

Swords are standard melee weapons.

The pulsorstick, while like a sword, integrates a sonic unit that not only adds to its punch but allows it to be functional against Olympians.

Revolvers are a reliable form of pistol favored by humans.

Shotguns are weapons that fire either slugs or multiple small projectiles, favored for shot's tendency to perform better than large rounds underwater (and not pierce habitat hulls).

Lasers are a Cuttle weapon that can send a searing beam of light toward an opponent.

Shocklances are a Cuttle weapon that fires a self-propelled projectile that emits a cloud of electricity on impact.

Machine guns fire many bullets very quickly; while they have limited functionality underwater even with special ammunition, their suppression and large

bullet size is intimidating.

Autopulsors are a rapid-fire sonic weapon used by the Cuttle as an alternative to the terrestrial rifle.

Blasters are a Cuttle anti-Olympian weapon built to counter the Soviet Union's weapons advances.

Plasers are a new human weapon built with Cuttle technology; integrating a pulsor core and a laser core combined into a single unit, it superheats the air or liquid in its barrel and then sends it shooting out at great speed, potentially causing the things it hits to continue burning or melting even underwater.

Weapon	Damage Die	Range	Type	Cost	Qualities
Sword	D6	Melee	Close	2	
Pulsorstick	D12	Melee	Close	7	Sonic, AP (3)
Revolver	D6	CQC/Melee	Human	3	
Shotgun	D3	Engagement/CQC	Human	4	Brutal (4)
Laser	D6	Engagement	Cuttle	7	Beam, Suppression
Shocklance	D3	Marksman	Cuttle	11	Shock (5)
MG	D12	Engagement/CQC	Human	11	Suppression
Autopulsor	D6	CQC/Engagement	Cuttle	11	Sonic, Suppression
Blaster	D12	CQC	Cuttle	16	Sonic, Brutal (3), AP (6)
Plaser	D6	Engagement	Human	9	Fire (3), Brutal (2)

Weapon Qualities

Brutal weapons confer a number free Effect results on a successful hit equal to their Brutal quality rating.

Armor Piercing (AP) weapons penetrate armor, ignoring a number of points of Armor (but not Resistance).

The Sonic effect causes both an Olympian and its pilot to take damage on a

successful attack, though it cannot be used outside CQB range outside of water.

The Beam effect prevents a weapon from penetrating an Olympian and damaging the pilot inside, but it allows weapons to ignore the effects of pulsor armor.

The Suppression quality allows a weapon to be used to reduce the pool used by other combatants in combat. For more detail, see Suppression.

Shock adds damage to a weapon by causing a high-voltage discharge that triggers a Shock hazard equal to the weapon's Shock rating.

Fire adds damage to a weapon by causing a fire hazard; the rating of the weapon's Fire quality is equal to the rating of the Fire hazard.

Armor

The majority of armor used in underwater combats consists of little more than attachments for pressure suits that add armored plates or special features; the pressure suits used by the Allies have a standardized format, but only one set of attachments can be added at a given time.

That said, there are also standalone suits of armor meant to protect the wearer from harm without requiring the bulk of a pressure suit, which are favored by the Cuttle.

When armor is purchased, it must be designated as being made for humans or Cuttle; the conversion between standalone armor and armor meant for pressure suits is usually a matter of adjusting some straps, and while it is time consuming it can be completed in ordinary downtime without any difficulty.

In any case, wearing armor inflicts a -1 penalty to Reflexes that does not stack with the penalties for wearing a pressure suit below a depth of 500 feet.

Light plates are used anywhere that a pressure suit may be subject to a sudden impact, and are worn by workers, explorers, and some soldiers. Heavy plates provide superior armor, and are hardened against very light attacks. Another

"armor" attachment is the waterjet rig, which allows for faster movement.

The most advanced piece of water, pulsor armor, features some armor plates and is augmented with a Cuttle-designed pulsor unit that deflects incoming projectiles.

All armor has an Armor Rating and a Cost, and some armors have special qualities. Worn armor is added to a character's Resistance.

Name	Armor Rating	Cost	Qualities
Light Plate Armor	2	1	
Heavy Plate Armor	4	3	
Waterjet Rig	1	6	Propulsion
Pulsor Armor	3	8	Pulsor

Armor Qualities

Armor with the Propulsion quality allows the user to move between any large node on the battlefield when making a move action; this still uses the Athletics skill.

The Pulsor quality on an armor increases the required Successes on a ranged attack. Incoming attacks that do not meet this higher threshold automatically miss.

Olympians

A handful of Olympians have been acquired for use underwater; they tend to be smaller or more purpose-designed than Olympians that were used in the Great War, but still have a massive potential.

Olympians have a Health rating, an Armor rating, a number of embedded Weapons, a Cost, and Qualities.

Olympian	Health	Armor	Weapons	Cost	Qualities

Ulysses	100	5	MG, MG, Sword	18	
Cetus	60	9	Blaster	25	
Partisan	60	10	Shocklance, Pulsorstick	22	Open Air, Passenger, Conductive
Typhon	120	15	Plaser, Shotgun, Pulsorstick	36	Jet

Olympian Qualities

Open Air Olympians sacrifice protection for their pilots and passengers, making them subject to blasts, suppression, and aimed shots, but they allow passengers to fire out.

Olympians with the Passenger quality may carry as many passengers as their Passenger rating.

Jet Olympians may take advantage of their design to move to any node on the battlefield in a single move action.

Conductive Olympians lack the normal protection against Shock weapons that most Olympians provide, and all their inhabitants take Shock damage from incoming attacks (similarly to how Shock nodes work in combat).

Combat

Combat in The Inky Depths is based on flexibility and scaleability; it focuses on "nodes", areas in which combat takes place, and uses the same Success/Effect mechanic as the rest of the game.

Two Scales, One Battlefield

Infantry and Olympians are not directly comparable, so it is important to consider the differences between them. Infantry form "melee nodes", and move between "small nodes". Olympians are giant war machines, but their strength comes from versatility, not durability. Olympians are treated as "small nodes", and move between "medium nodes". Battlefields are considered a "large node".

Ranges measure the distance between nodes; melee range covers attacks from one melee node to an adjacent melee node, CQC range covers attacks from one small node into a node in an adjacent small node. Engagement range is considered to be attacks from a medium node into another medium node, and Marksman range covers attacks from a large node to another large node. All ranges include the node that a character is currently in; someone can make a CQC attack against someone sharing a cell (a small node) with them, for instance.

It takes a 1/1 Reflexes/Maintenance Olympian action to enter a stationary Olympian or to pull a dead pilot out of a (stationary) Olympian. If the Olympian is moving, or if the pilot is alive, this may require more Successes or Effects.

Node Mapping

In lieu of a tactical grid, combat in The Inky Depths takes place across nodes, which loosely correspond to physical space. These look like maps of bubbles that get decreasingly small.

See the following for an example:

Large Node (Battlefield)
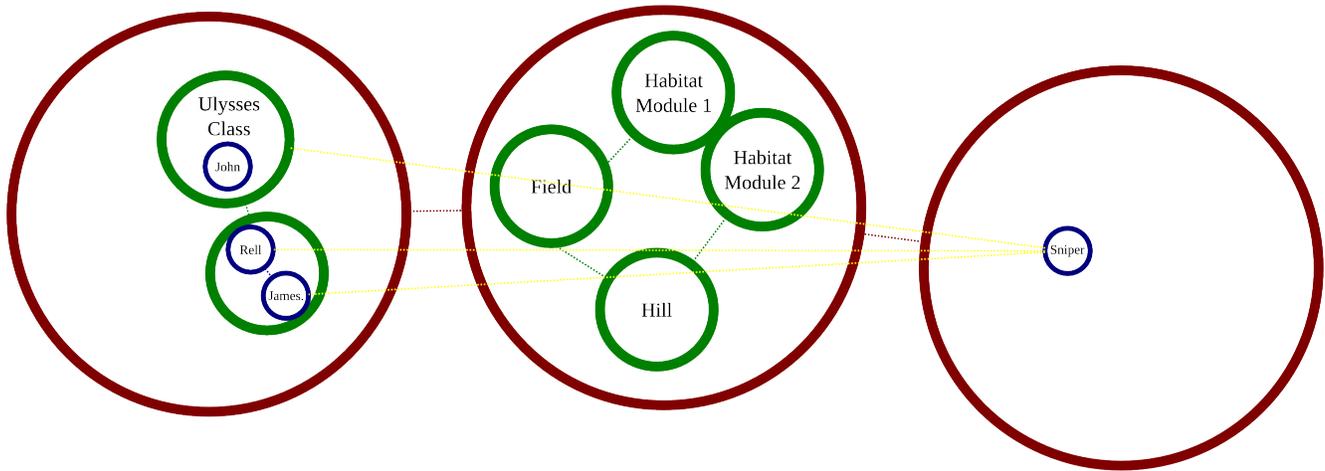
Blue circles are melee nodes, blue lines are Melee ranges. Green circles are small nodes, green lines are CQB ranges. Red circles are medium nodes, red lines are Engagement ranges. The yellow square is a large node, the yellow lines are Marksman ranges.

In the example above, John is in his Ulysses Class Olympian, which is considered a small node, while Rell and Captain Jameson are in their own separate small node (with no special qualities). If they proceeded to the right, they would enter another medium node, with four small nodes that Rell and Jameson could enter (the Ulysses class would still be its own small node). They could not immediately enter the furthest medium node, however, as they are not in an adjacent node. Since the small nodes in the other node do not have a necessary course of passage, however, it is not necessary for Rell and Captain Jameson to make more than two moves to continue into that medium node and then into the medium node that contains the sniper (who is not in a simulated small node because he does not need to be). John is within CQC range of both Rell and Jameson, within Engagement range of Habitat Module 1, and within Marksman range of the sniper, but the Ulysses does not have any weapons capable of firing at that range.

Moving between adjacent small or medium nodes is free unless characters want to attempt another action. If they want to take another action while moving, they must make a Physicality/Athletics Combat roll as well as a roll for the action that

they intend to do. Some nodes may not be directly accessible from adjacent nodes of the same type, however.

Special Nodes

Some nodes have their own properties; this is a short list of properties that may be applied:

Shock nodes have a constant Shock hazard effect with a rating equal to their Shock rating.

Fire nodes have a constant Fire hazard effect with a rating equal to their Fire rating.

Conductive nodes apply any incoming Shock weapon damage or Shock Hazard damage equally to all their inhabitants.

Sealed nodes have a rating equal to their Armor; if an attack manages to damage the node it loses the sealed quality. Sealed nodes typically have air or are pressure resistant, and otherwise protect their content from the properties of the larger node they are in. They also prohibit firing into or out of the node (though they may be the target of shock weapons if they are also conductive. A bomb with a rating of one tenth of a node's Sealed rating placed in contact with or inside the node will cause it to lose pressure.

Cover nodes allow the user to take cover; if they only one action in their most recent turn a character in a cover node requires an additional number of Successes to hit equal the node's cover Rating. A bomb of a rating equal to a node's Cover rating will remove the cover, as will an attack that does twenty times the Cover rating in damage.

Example: In the diagram above, Habitat Module 1 and Habitat Module 2 have the Sealed (20) quality, and the GM rules that they are filled with air rather than water, allowing humans to live comfortably inside without Inksac or a pressure suit. If the module were destroyed, unprotected humans would become asphyxiated,

while any unprotected Cuttle inside would be able to breathe again.

If the GM were to rule that the Hill had the Cover 1 quality, Rell and Jameson could remain there to fire back against the sniper at Engagement range, without being as vulnerable to attack.

Attacks

Attacks in The Inky Depths require both Successes and Effect results to be productive. Each Effect result translates into a roll of a die equal to the Damage Die size, while each Success result determines how accurate the attack was (some attacks require additional Success results to succeed). Characters can attack with each weapon that they have, but unless they have the Suppression quality they can only be used once per turn.

John, piloting his Ulysses, is going to fire his MG at Rell, because he cheated at cards last night. The MG's underwater range is CQC, so John rolls a Reflexes/Gunnery check, using 7 dice out of the 11 in his Olympian pool. He can get 3 Successes and 4 Effects, and he rolls five success results. He allocates one to Successes, and four to Effects. Mischa shoots Luke a death-glare as he pulls out the d12's he'll need to roll for damage. To add insult to injury, Luke declares that he'll be rolling a second attack with the Ulysses' other MG, though with a merciful 4 dice.

Attacks are typically focused on the largest node that a target consists of; a small node for a person, or a large node for an Olympian. By further focusing a character's fire, they can attack individuals in an open air Olympian, or weapons carried by a person. To do so, they must apply two more success results to their attack's Success pool, though they gain a free Effect result. Cuttle weapons break when they receive any direct attack, kits break if they receive 5 damage, human weapons break if they receive 10 damage, and Melee weapons break if they receive 15 damage. Targeting the weak spots of a pressure suit is an option for the

particularly sadistic, though they are hardened and require 25 damage to break. Broken items can be repaired for half their Cost, but this involves sourcing materials (except for pressure suits, which come with backup components).

It is possible to target Olympian weapons this way as well, though weapons of passengers inside an Olympian are protected from attack.

Suppression

Suppression is a special form of attack that does not focus on dealing damage, but rather on preventing opponents from acting effectively. When a Suppression attack is declared, a number of Success results equal to the Cover rating of the node the opponents are in (regardless of whether they are taking cover) is necessary for success. Each success result applied to Effect will reduce the effective pool for characters in that node by one die. This cannot reduce their pools below a minimum of three dice, and only the greatest suppression effect applies.

Outside Combat

Besides combat, The Inky Depths includes rules for a few utility skills that are deemed to be most interesting for potential characters. These focus on activities that fall outside combat and may have some role in a combat campaign; entirely non-combat skills and skills relating to exclusively terrestrial activities are omitted.

Using Intellectual Skills

Medicine

The Medicine skill is used to treat wounds. Active treatment of a character only ever requires a single Success, unless the action is rushed (GM's discretion), and is a Brains/Medicine roll. Each result allocated to Effect will restore d6 points of damage to a character.

Active healing may only be attempted on a character once, but Passive healing exists to fill the gap. Characters normally regain two Health per day until they are returned to maximum health, but a trained doctor may speed up this process, allocating an additional points of Health equal to the sum of his Tech Level and Medicine skill between any number of patients. The caveat to this is that the doctor must spend at least eight waking hours tending to the injured.

Gear Repair and Olympian Maintenance

Gear repair and Olympian maintenance are both particularly important concerns under the sea. The Maintenance skill is used to ensure that Olympians are in fighting shape, and is used to restore their Health, while the Repair skill returns broken gear to working shape.

Using these skills has a Cost associated with it equal to half the Cost of the item being repaired, or one tenth of the Health to be restored to an Olympian. Item

repair succeeds with a single Effect and Success, though this may be complicated by a lack of time (which requires more Success results at the GM's discretion), or lack of access to a kit (which requires two more Effect results).

Using Maintenance in place of Repair, or vice versa, is possible, but the skill being used is treated as being two ratings lower.

Brains is used as the dominant attribute when working on human technology other than Olympians, while Tech Level is used when working on Olympians or on Cuttle technology. Some things, like melee weapons, can be repaired with either.

Knowledge

The Knowledge skill is used to determine what characters know about Atlantica and technology. It may be used by characters to ascertain the exact qualities of an area, or the attribute or skill ratings of an NPC.

The Knowledge skill is also applicable to social situations, and can be used to pick up on cues that tell a character's likelihood to respond positively to a certain course of action and their current perception of a character.

Demolitions

Demolitions is used in making and planting bombs. Bombs have their own rating, which determines the damage they do to nodes as well as their utility in doing certain things (like cracking open sealed nodes).

When planted in a node, bombs have certain effects. Within melee range, a bomb does damage equal to twenty times its rating to all characters and Olympians. At CQC range, this damage drops to ten times its rating, and at Engagement range the damage is reduced to five times its rating. Damage from bombs is reduced by ten outside of water.

Creating a bomb requires a number of Effect results equal to its rating, as well as as many Success results as the GM deems necessary. Achieving absolutely no

results on a roll to create a bomb means that an explosion akin to a Rating 1 bomb explosion has occurred. The Cost of bomb components is equal to three times the bomb's rating. A bomb can be treated as adding the Fire effect (whose rating is equal to the bomb's rating) to the node it is detonated in temporarily for an additional Cost equal to twice the bomb's rating, though the effects of this disappear from the node (but not any flaming individuals) at the end of beginning of the turn following the bomb's detonation. For an additional 2 Cost, a bomb can be equipped with a radio detonator, allowing it to be remotely detonated. Making a bomb typically requires a number of hours equal to its rating, though they do not have to be consecutive.

Planting bombs always requires a single Effect result, and typically requires a single Success result unless time is of the essence. Planting a bomb typically takes a matter of seconds, so it would have to be very rushed to take penalties. The person who plants a bomb can have it go off at the beginning of their turn a specified number of turns in the future, or at any time if it has a radio detonator.

Social Interactions

Characters in The Inky Depths may be required to interact with a variety of characters, many of whom have their own interests and concerns. The Social skills are used to determine how well a character can convince people of their point of view.

It is the GM's discretion as to what skills are required for a particular roll to be successful, as well as adjudicating the final required Success and Effect results, though the following sections contain a rough guideline.

Relationships

In order to interact with characters, it's important to consider the following modifiers that are applied based on the relationships between the two characters. The ratings correspond to the number of Successes that are required to have a

character even listen to an individual.

Relationship	Successes Required	Benefit	Successes Required	Penalty	Successes Required
Friends	1	Asking as an authority figure (not official order)	-1	Asking as a subordinate	2
Strangers	2	Past favor	-2	Past betrayal	2
Rivals	3	Particularly polite	-1	Rude	1
Enemies	5	Offering favor in return	-1	Declined to do favor	1
				Character is bothersome	1

Note that enemies locked in battle with a character may not be inclined to cooperate with them no matter how good a character's rolls are.

Characters' relationships are a matter of perception; someone who has done someone a good favor in the past may not receive the benefit for a past favor because that favor shifted the benefactor's perception of them from being a stranger to being a friend, though a future favor would certainly count.

Accomplishing Goals

In order to actually get what a character character wants, they need a certain number of Effect results on their attempt to ask for a favor. The following table contains a relationship between the Effect results required and reasonable returns.

Effect	Results
Cessation of hostilities, a lent Cost 0 item, or a brief chat.	1
A lent Cost 1 or 2 item, watching something for a moment.	2
A lasting friendship, a lent Cost 3 or less item, or a short errand (10-20 minutes). A given Cost 0 or 1 item.	3
A lent Cost 5 or less item, or a lengthy errand (45 minutes-1 hour). A given Cost 2 or less item.	4
A lent Cost 10 or less item, or a major task (4-8 hours). A given Cost 3 or less item.	5
A lent item of any Cost, an extremely difficult task (2-3 days, or risky). A given Cost 6 or less item.	6

Hazards

The world is not a terribly friendly place, and many of the characters in The Inky Depths live in particularly unfriendly places.

Asphyxiation

A constant danger for humans underwater, or Cuttles on land, is asphyxiation. Without oxygen, a character will die in a minute or two of game time; some Cuttle are capable of surviving for much longer in the air, but this is an exception rather than the rule.

A character who is without oxygen can function normally for a minute, but then takes 2 Health damage every fifteen seconds. Half this damage will be healed immediately if the character regains oxygen.

Fire

Coal furnaces and incendiary weapons have a tendency to spread fire all over the place when things go wrong (or right, depending on perspective); a character who comes into contact with Fire must make a Reflexes/Athletics roll to avoid catching fire (the required Effect will be listed by the weapon or determined by the GM), and lose 2 Health. If a character catches fire, they may continue to make Reflexes/Athletics rolls (at the same difficulty as avoiding catching fire in the first place) to extinguish the fire, though pilots must leave their Olympian first. Being on fire causes an additional 3 Health to be lost every fifteen seconds.

Olympians do not catch fire, but do take damage equal to the Fire rating of weapons that attack it.

Being underwater has a tendency to extinguish fire, and reduces the difficulty of avoiding catching fire by 2 required Effects; some things are just so nasty that they will burn underwater, though.

Shock

Electrocution is dangerous to both humans and Cuttle; a weapon or danger source's Shock rating is equal to the amount of Health that those exposed will lose. Shock travels through metal and water, though it dissipates beyond the point of danger in water unless people are in melee range with its source. If a shock effect is applied within a confined metal space, it is dangerous to everyone within CQB range of its source (assuming that the source touches something conductive, and that everything in the area is touching the metal). Olympians do not take Shock damage, and are insulated so that the pilot will not suffer the ill effects unless the Olympian is disabled or destroyed.

Note that the standard pressure suits worn by humans in underwater environments are not resistant to Shock, and neither are Cuttle.

Pressure

Pressure is a major problem for humans living underwater. It is up to the GM to decide approximately what pressures are tolerable to people (it varies in part due to acclimation, though humans cannot enter deep depths without protection), but as a general rule being mildly out of pressure removes 2 Health each turn, and causes 5 Health worth of damage as a result of decompression sickness a few hours after the character returns to appropriate pressure. This rule also proves true for exposure to vacuum.

Being in wildly inappropriate pressure is instantly fatal, as characters' tissue ruptures. If exposure is truly brief, such as may be the case in explosive overblast, they may only lose all their Health and take a Tax (unless, of course, they are already taking a Tax, in which case they die). Inkblot does not protect against this effect, though pressure suits will.

Cuttle are largely immune to the effects of pressure, although there are a few very deep places where even they will require specialized pressure suits; this

typically begins around 1200 feet.

Game Master's Guidelines

The Inky Depths is built to be flexible and also to allow for characters to apply themselves in a variety of useful ways. The core mechanics are designed from the ground up to be friendly to players who are interested both in crashing giant mechs into each other, and for people who are more interested in the social and political intrigue of the 1930's Atlantic Ocean.

Difficulty and Complexity

As a general rule, you have a number of ways to manage how players' actions unfold. Limits are player-transparent; I don't suggest messing around with limits too much on a per-roll basis both because that requires a pause for recalculation of what dice are going to get rolled and because there are better options.

Minimum results are also good. Typically, you'll be looking for minimum Success successes, and increasing this will require characters to be very good at what they do. Keep in mind that the Success/Effect system is designed with combat in mind, and having Success requirements of something like three successes will make rolls very difficult, even for veteran characters.

A final option you have is adjusting the Target Number of a roll. I like the Target Number to be 4, which gives a 50% chance of success on each die, but there's you can set the TN as high as you want because dice explode. Everything past multiples of six is extremely less likely to occur (except for 7/13/19/..., which are freebies if the character **does** get a six on the prior result).

When to Roll

The Inky Depths uses a system that can be clunky and slow, but it offers a great deal of granularity. One of the nice things about this, however, is that it's not necessary to roll for a lot of things throughout the game; only roll for tasks that are not mundane, when time is of the essence, if the desired action requires many Success or Effect results, or if a character's limits are extremely low.

Typically, a character's pool size will be 6-8 dice for any action they are going to attempt, and you can expect 3-4 successes on a TN 4 action. This is usually enough to accomplish a simple task.

There may also be times when you don't want to leave something up to chance;

this should usually be justified by something in the game, but keep in mind that certain things just happen; it's not necessary for the Communist infiltrators to roll a Demolitions check to plant the bomb, for instance, since they will always succeed. Players may frown on this method, but communicating your reasons and criteria for automatic success or failure, and allowing it to benefit them when appropriate, will often assuage any hurt feelings.

Awarding Experience

Players like to progress through the game, and it's typically a good idea to give them Experience as a reward, in addition to new gear and social standing. As a general rule, for each session you should award between 2-6 points based on the speed you want characters to advance, an additional point or two for role-playing throughout the session, and a point or two for each particularly awesome moment. As a caveat, if someone is likely to earn more than twice the normal amount of experience, you should probably give them a Valor point instead.

Valor points are to be awarded strictly at your discretion; giving more leads to a more epic game, with more shenanigans, and giving too few may cause players to horde them.

Going Beyond

Due to The Inky Depths' nature as a 24-hour game (which got extended to a 72-hour game because of life events), it doesn't have a lot of content, and a lot of things in here will probably have to be changed over the course of play.

House-Rules

Obviously, I'm not going to write house-rules for you, since then they would just be variant rules. However, there are a few things that you should keep in mind when making house-rules. First, apply them uniformly, or specify when they occur. If fire is too hardcore, feel free to nerf it, but if you like the concept of Olympian pilots roasting inside their cockpits in seconds, be sure to specify that

Olympian fires work differently than normal fires.

Adding Gear

I have a criteria for gear availability price; it's inspired by wargame methods, but I haven't had time to exhaustively balance test (or really balance test at all, but let's be optimistic). As a general rule, weapons have a damage+range+effect=cost system in place. Olympian weapons cost 2 points less than infantry weapons, but can only be used by Olympians and must have a minimum price of 3. A damage rating of d3 increases cost 1 point, a rating of d6 costs 2, and a rating of d12 costs 4. Melee range costs nothing, CQC range costs 1, Engagement range costs 2, and Marksman range costs 4.

Once this is done, effects are calculated.

The Brutal effect costs a number of points equal to half the damage cost of the weapon, to a minimum of 1 point, and may be applied multiple times. Adding 2d3 damage costs 1 point, as an exception to this rule. A Brutal (3) weapon with d12 costs 6 more than a weapon without that effect.

The Armor Piercing effect costs half its value, rounded down. AP 3 costs 1 point, AP 4 costs 2. It has a minimum cost of 1, so anything under AP 3 is done as a balance concern.

The Sonic effect costs 2 points.

The Beam effect reduces a weapon's cost by 2 points.

Suppression costs 5.

Shock is priced equal to its rating plus 1.

Fire is priced equal to its rating.

Unfortunately, armor is just arbitrarily priced, because of time constraints. One rule of thumb, however, is that the Armor Value cannot exceed 1.5 times the cost of the armor.

Olympians are priced equal to a twentieth of their Health rating plus their Armor rating.

Rule Conflicts

As mentioned, there may be times when the rules conflict. The old adage "specific over general" is appropriate-if a specific effect says something, it overrides the general rule (so a weapon quality can override the fact that weapons normally have their damage reduced by the target's armor). Be consistent, though!

Quick NPC's

The Inky Depths has a simple system, and you'll be narrating tales of adventure, so there's an equally simple way to come up with NPC attributes and skills. Determine a NPC rating based on what you feel the players are equal to (starting characters would have a rating of 3). NPC's will have the full rating in their best attribute and (singular) skill, that rating minus one in all but one of their attributes and in two skill pools (one of which is the one that their best skill belongs to), and scores equal to that rating minus 2 in their weakest attribute and in the other two pools of skills.

For even faster NPC's, just give them a pool of twice the NPC rating of your game, and allow NPC's to allocate their dice as you see fit. Add two dice to any pool in their particular area of expertise.