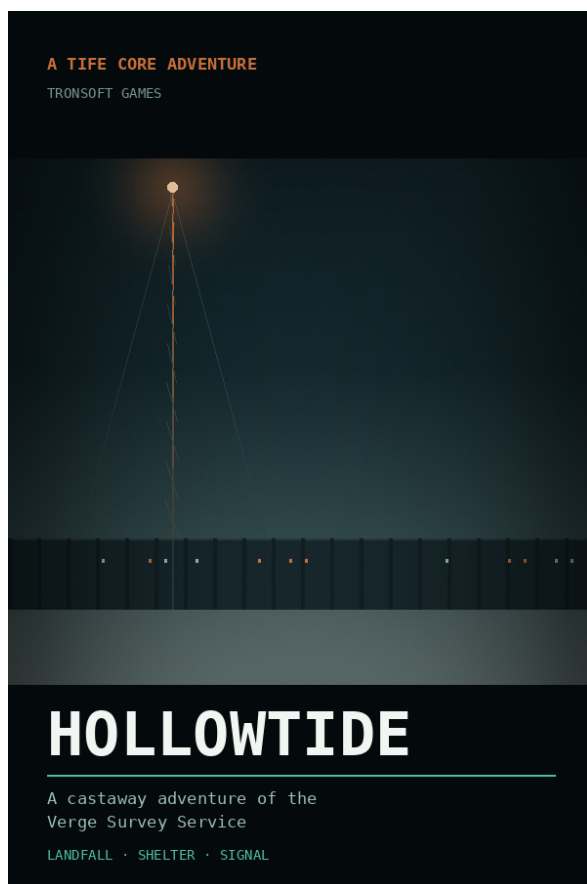




HOLLOWTIDE

A Castaway Adventure of the Verge Survey Service

Player and Developer Manual · Version 1.0.0 · 2026-07-27
Tronsoft Games · Tronsoft Interactive Fiction Engine, Core 2.3.0

1. THE STORY

The survey tender *Casimir Drake* came apart in the upper air over an unlisted world this morning. You are Deck Rating Second Class Wren Ossley, and yours was the only pod that got clear.

Below you stands Hollowtide: a tidal reclamation station the size of a town, put up two centuries ago by the Verge Survey Service to make a sea behave. Four hundred and six people worked here. Something came in on the intake water and emptied the place in four days, and the station has been running ever since for nobody at all — issuing bulletins to an empty atrium, seventy-eight thousand mornings in a row.

Your standing orders are three words long: **landfall**, **shelter**, **signal**, in that order, and your service slate is emphatic that the third must not be attempted before the first two. Getting inside the station is shelter. Getting inside the station is also how you catch what killed everybody who built it. Everything between those two facts is the game.

2. AT A GLANCE

Rooms	20	Rules	71
Regions	5	Rule triggers	18
Objects	57 (20 portable)	Hint ladders	54
Characters	8	Journal entries	18
Tasks	8 required + 1 optional	Exits	43 (10 story-gated)
Achievements	14	Story verbs	8
Maximum score	150	Save key	tronsoft_hollowtide_save

3. HOW TO PLAY

Type commands into the line beneath the terminal, or drive the whole game from the buttons: choosing an action shows you its valid targets, so nothing in Hollowtide requires typing. One command is one turn. Nothing happens while you think.

3.1 Commands

Group	Commands
Movement	NORTH SOUTH EAST WEST UP DOWN IN OUT — or N S E W U D
Actions	LOOK EXAMINE TAKE DROP USE OPEN CLOSE SEARCH READ TALK WAIT
This story	SPLICE PRIME VENT CULTURE CLIMB SWIM LISTEN SIGNAL
Information	INVENTORY JOURNAL QUESTS ACHIEVEMENTS STATS SCORE
System	HINT HELP SAVE RESTORE TRANSCRIPT RESTART
Short forms	X examine · I inventory · L look · Z wait

Looking, checking inventory, reading the logs, asking for a hint, saving and restarting do not consume a turn.

3.2 The story verbs

Verb	Also accepts	Uses	If used in the wrong place
SPLICE	REPAIR, MEND	3	There is nothing here that wants splicing.
PRIME	FILL	2	There is no pump here to prime.
VENT	DRAIN, SLUICE	3	Nothing here vents anything.
CULTURE	SYNTHESISE, SYNTHESIZE, BREW	4	There is no synthesis column here.
CLIMB	SCALE	4	There is nothing here worth climbing.
SWIM	WADE	1	There is nothing here to swim in, which on the whole is a relief.
LISTEN	HEAR	2	You listen. Hollowtide is doing what it always does, which is nothing, quietly.
SIGNAL	BROADCAST, TRANSMIT	2	You have nothing here to signal with. The beacon is on the mast.

3.3 Reading order

Every turn resolves in the same order, which is also the order it prints in: your command is echoed, the action is carried out and its own text printed, the room is described if you moved, and any consequences are reported last. If a consequence is printed, it is a consequence of the command directly above it.

4. THE STATION

Twenty rooms in five regions. The chart in the right-hand panel fills in as you go, marks where you are standing, and carries the fever ladder beneath it.

Region	Rooms	Objects	Characters
I. LANDFALL	Escape Pod 4, The Salt Flat, The Seawall, The Intake Gate	8	0
II. THE CONCOURSE	Reception Hall, The Refectory, Dormitory Spur, The Atrium	7	3
III. THE TIDAL WORKS	The Pump Gallery, The Turbine Floor, Sluice Control, The Flooded Stair	9	1
IV. THE DEEP STACKS	Archive Vestibule, The Record Stacks, The Reactor Annex, The Cold Vault	8	2
V. THE CURE AND THE CALL	The Infirmary, The Culture Lab, Beacon Mast Base, The Mast Platform	8	2

No part of Hollowtide ever closes behind you. Every region stays open from the moment you first reach it until the story ends, and nothing can be permanently missed.

4.1 The people, and the things that behave like people

Name	First found	Lines
Tally	The Refectory	4
the Station Warden	The Atrium	3
Dredge	The Pump Gallery	2
Kettle	The Refectory	1
Sub-Custodian Rell	Archive Vestibule	3
Ossian Vey	The Cold Vault	3
the Chorus	The Culture Lab	2
AUX-2	Beacon Mast Base	2

Talking is worth doing more than once. Several characters have three things to say and will only say the third after the first two, and two of them will not move the story along until they have finished.

5. SCORING

150 points in total: 120 from the 8 required tasks, 10 from the optional task, and 20 from four optional objects.

Task	Kind	Pts	What it asks of you
Make Shelter	Required	15	Standing orders: landfall, then shelter. Get inside the station.
Wake the Custodian	Required	15	Something in this station is still on duty. Wake it.
Restore the Main Bus	Required	15	Nothing in Hollowtide moves without power. Mend the parted feeder — safely.
Vent the North Gallery	Required	15	The way to the old station is under water. Prime, power and vent it.
Read the Record	Required	15	Find out what emptied Hollowtide, and what can be done about it.
Wake the Sleeper	Required	15	Open the cold vault and bring Ossian Vey back from two centuries of frost.

Task	Kind	Pts	What it asks of you
Culture the Febrifuge	Required	15	A named strain, a live specimen, and power. Bring the column all three, and take the draught.
Make a Signal	Required	15	Climb the beacon mast, clip on, and call the Verge.
A Full Charge	Optional	10	Optional. Tally's cell is at four per cent. There is a charge cradle in the annex.

Optional object	Pts	Where it ends up
hydrologist's ring	5	hidden until found
ident token	5	hidden until found
survey ledger	5	hidden until found
brass tally-plate	5	The Reactor Annex

5.1 Measured routes

Route	Score	Moves	Rooms	Tasks	Achievements	Journal
Full completion	150 / 150	96	20	9	14	18
Required only	120 / 150	85	20	8	10	17

Both figures are measured, not estimated: the package's own validator plays both routes on every run and fails the build if either number moves.

5.2 Achievements

Landfall	What the Records Said
Through the Gate	The Sleeper Wakes
Not Alone	A Full Charge
Terms with Kettle	Clean Blood
Order Cancelled	The Verge Answers
Lights On	Salvage Rights
Low Water	Perfect Landfall

6. SALINE FEVER

You catch it on the way in, with the first breath of station atmosphere, and the game tells you so plainly at the time. It is what emptied Hollowtide.

The fever does not run on a turn clock. It advances one stage at four fixed points in the story and at no other time. Exploring, reading, talking, examining, taking hints and getting lost all cost you exactly nothing. This is a deliberate design choice rather than an oversight: the fever exists to give the last third of the story a shape, not to punish you for looking at things.

Stage	Named	Advances when	Reached on move (full route)
1	Latent	You first enter the station through the intake gate	16
2	Flushed	The main bus comes back up	46
3	Shaking	The cold vault is opened	72
4	Grey	Ossian Vey is woken	76

The fever will not kill you. What it does is gate the ending: the safety interlock at the foot of the beacon mast will not release the ladder cage to anyone whose medical status is non-compliant, and it cannot be talked round, tricked, or waited out. Cure yourself and it becomes compliant in about a second.

7. DYING

There are exactly 4 ways to die in Hollowtide, in three places. Every one of them is described in the room text, and every one is warned about again by a placard or a character before you can reach it.

Where	Doing what	Direction
The Seawall	MOVEMENT	down
The Seawall	SWIM	—
The Turbine Floor	SPLICE	—
The Mast Platform	SIGNAL	—

There is no other way to lose. No time limit, no hunger, no lamp timer, no wandering monster, and no way at all to make the game unwinnable. Restoring a save taken before a death clears the ending and lets you carry straight on.

8. SAVING AND HINTS

Saves live in this browser only, under the single local-storage key `tronsoft_hollowtide_save`. Nothing is transmitted anywhere and no other game's storage is read or written. Use the **SAVE MANAGER** in the footer, or type `SAVE name` and `RESTORE name`.

HINT gives a three-step ladder for wherever you are standing: a nudge, then a specific pointer, then the exact command to type. Ask again for the next step. There are 54 ladders and every room in the station is covered. Hints cost no turns and no points.

9. DEVELOPER NOTES

9.1 Engine purity

Hollowtide runs on TIFE Core 2.3.0 and makes **no core edits**. The eleven engine files — `js/core/*`, `js/game.js` and `css/game.css` — are copied byte-for-byte from the engine package. A SHA-256 digest and byte length for each is recorded in `docs/engine-purity.json`, and `validate.js` re-checks all eleven on every run. Everything the story needs is applied as a prototype patch from `js/interface.js` before the shell builds the engine. The full technical list is in `docs/engine-patches.txt`.

9.2 Rule triggers in use

`action.after` · `game.start` · `inventory.changed` · `item.opened` · `item.searched` · `item.used` · `move.attempt` · `npc.talked` · `room.enter` · `turn.completed` · `verb.climb` · `verb.culture` · `verb.listen` · `verb.prime` · `verb.signal` · `verb.splice` · `verb.swim` · `verb.vent`

Of these, `move.attempt` and the eight `verb.*` triggers are added by the patch layer. `move.attempt` resolves before movement, so a warned-about step can be refused or made fatal without the player first arriving somewhere they should not be.

9.3 Package layout

Path	What it is
<code>index.html</code>	Entry file. Flat root, relative paths, every script deferred.
<code>js/core/*</code> · <code>js/game.js</code> · <code>css/game.css</code>	TIFE Core 2.3.0, byte-identical. Never edited.
<code>games/hollowtide/game.js</code>	The whole story: rooms, objects, characters, tasks, rules, hints.
<code>js/interface.js</code>	Engine patch layer. Conditions, actions, triggers, verbs, save key.
<code>js/map.js</code>	The station chart and fever ladder.
<code>js/sound.js</code>	Five procedural WebAudio region beds. No audio files ship.
<code>css/theme.css</code>	The skin. All visual changes live here.
<code>validate.js</code>	In-package validator. Node built-ins only; run it from the package root.
<code>docs/engine-purity.json</code>	SHA-256 digests for the eleven untouched engine files.
<code>docs/engine-patches.txt</code>	Technical notes on every prototype patch.

9.4 Validation

`node validate.js` from the package root checks package-specification conformance, engine purity, source hygiene (including a scan for repeated keys in object literals, which JavaScript drops silently and which has hidden real rule bugs before now), world integrity, and then plays the game: the full route, the required-only route, every lethal spot, a direction sweep of each lethal room, save and restore, restore-after-death, restart, sixty junk commands followed by a winning run, and a dead-end sweep that resumes the full route from every fourth move and requires it to still win.

It carries no dependencies and imports nothing beyond `fs`, `path`, `crypto` and `vm`, so it runs from an extracted archive exactly as the portal would see it.

10. ORIGINALITY

Hollowtide is an original work. Its title, setting, characters, map, text, puzzles and data were written for this package. No third-party material is reproduced here, no external libraries or fonts are bundled, no recorded audio is included, and the game makes no network requests of any kind. The validator sweeps every shipped text file for borrowed franchise terms as part of its originality check.

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