

QUICK REFERENCE

1. CREATE THE ISOLATION. The game begins by defining your community. Follow these steps:

- **Pick a Backdrop.** Read the description aloud.
- **Generate Aspects.** Answer two Aspect Generation questions and pick your third as a free choice.
- **Answer Community Questions.**
- **Name your Isolation.**

2. CREATE CHARACTERS. To begin, deal three Archetype cards to each player. Each player then should:

- **Pick one of the Archetype Cards.** Read the card and say which Aspects they will be focusing on with their character.
- **Give an Introduction.** Include a name (common and what others call them), a role, and the character's relationship to the Aspect.

3. FLOW OF PLAY

Begin the game by dealing three Age 1 cards from the Language Deck to each player. The structure of each turn is:

MAKE A CONNECTION

Play a card from your hand on one of the Aspects for the current Age. Explain why the Isolation's language for the concept on the card has emerged from that Aspect.

BUILD A WORD

Communally build a word for this new concept based on the connection from the previous phase.

HAVE A CONVERSATION

The player whose turn it is should pick a subset of players at the table to have a conversation prompted by the text at the bottom of the played card. Any player at the table can end the conversation after all participants in the conversation have demonstrated their relationship to the new piece of language.

Action cards may modify this turn structure according to the text on the card. At the end of your turn, draw a card for the next Age, unless you are in Age 3. At any time, a player may discard a card from their hand in order to introduce a **Variant**, a word that is related in some way to another language item already defined. Draw a card for the next Age after defining a Variant.

4. MOVING THROUGH AGES

An Age is completed after each player has a turn. At that point:

- **Read the Transition prompt and the next step of your Pathway.** Both are on the Backdrop.
- **Evolve an Aspect.** Replace the evolved Aspect in the ring for the upcoming age. Move the other Aspects in.
- **Optionally discard a card and redraw from the upcoming age**

5. THE LEGACY

After completing Age 3 and reading the last prompt of your Pathway, it's time to wrap up your story. Deal one Legacy Card to each player. Finish your game by having each player:

- **Narrate an epilogue.** Choose one of the prompts on the Legacy Card and deliver a short narrated epilogue for either your own character or the Isolation as a whole.

THE OUTPOST

Two thousand brave souls, we departed Earth in the year 2045 as part of the first Martian expeditionary outpost. When we first left, we were told there would be more to follow, but in reality there never were. Over the five years that we've been on Mars, communications have broken down, and it has been years since we've heard from Earth. Like it or not, the Red Planet is now home.

We will show these barren, hostile wastes what we're truly made of, and what it means to do more than survive.

ASPECT GENERATION QUESTIONS

- **We Are Chosen.** What brought us all together for the mission?
- **The Red Planet.** What about the planet defines daily life?
- Free Aspect. The choice is yours.

NAMES

Sal Acaba, Grayson Vine, Jane Bellamy, Laika Timmons, Hugo Silva, Edna Bekele, Anett Kennedy, Fatima Shah, Riko Fujita, Hannah Park, Benji Rabbat, Tamar Dijkstra

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

- How did communications break down? Which one of our Aspects played a role in this?
- How do we produce basic necessities of life?
- What type of structures do we live in? Are there places for communal gatherings?
- For whom is life the hardest here?
- What internal threat looms over us?

AGE TRANSITIONS

Choose a Pathway (the *black left column* or the *red right column*) on entering Age 2. Continue down the same Pathway as you progress.

Entering Age 2. An event to foreshadow the end of the Isolation. It finds its way into all conversation and is impossible to ignore.

We find something buried in the red sands far away from the Outpost. It's from Earth, but it clearly wasn't meant for us. An advanced supply drop. This can only mean one thing: a second force is on its way.

As we look through the supply crate, tensions mount. What do we find, and why are we so afraid?

A siren. Something's wrong. A major system is on the fritz. Malfunctions are nothing new, but this wasn't supposed to happen. No matter what. We had a plan.

In theory, there's a backup, but we never thought we would need it. Who fights for drastic action and why are they met with resistance?

Entering Age 3. What was foreshadowed has come to pass. The end of the Isolation is near. There is no escaping it.

Colony ships have entered orbit. They've continued with their advanced supply drops, and some include tools for communication. Anyone among us could have squirreled away a rogue com-link, connecting them back to Earth after our long silence. This leaves many unsettled.

With just the first wave they would outnumber us massively, and who knows how many are still on their way. How do we each prepare for their arrival?

We should have trusted our fears. It failed, and things are at a boil. We hold out hope, perhaps a rescue from Earth or a desperate attempt at repair will pull us from the brink.

One by one though, we're coming to a gut wrenching discovery. The days of the Outpost are numbered. Who lashes out and pushes furiously against fate?

Entering the Legacy. The last moments or the aftermath.

That wave was just the beginning. They flooded our home. Wave after wave, thousands upon thousands. They've seized the Outpost for their own purposes and some newcomers don't even know there ever was a first expedition.

As our home is transformed into something we no longer recognize, how do we leave our mark?

Collapse happened slowly but without mercy. Mars was our home, but in the end we were not strong enough to fight against fate's cruel hand.

In the last moments of The Outpost we leave something behind for whoever finds this empty shell. What do they find? Who remembers us?

THE COMPOUND

We've seen what's to become of the world, and we're not interested in being a part of it any longer. Two hundred strong in number, we decided to make 1982 the year that we found ourselves a new home. We built our compound at a breakneck pace. Until recently, we still had to venture to the outside world from time to time for necessary supplies. How we dreaded those departures and longed to be back among our own again.

Mercifully, those days are now behind us and for 20 years we have known true solitude. We have walls, we have barracks, and we produce enough food that we will never have to set foot in the outside world again.

ASPECT GENERATION QUESTIONS

- **The Wayward Flock.** What about who we are made the Compound a necessity?
- **More than Walls.** What special property about the Compound keeps us secure?
- **Free Aspect.** The choice is yours.

NAMES

Ida, Alexei, Florida, Clover, Esther, Teymur, Thoreau, Virgil, Sprigett, Joad, Song, Lars, Uriah

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

- Where did we come from? How did we come to know one another?
- What does the Compound look like physically? Why is maintaining it so difficult?
- Where do members of the Compound spend private time? Are there communal spaces?
- For whom is life the hardest in the Compound, and why?
- Who wields power here? How do they maintain it?

AGE TRANSITIONS

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We had no choice. The Compound would have collapsed without their help. We let an outsider in. We thought we could control it, but they have the ear of someone important. Why have some suggested we should bring in more?

The outside world has changed. It was dangerous before, but it looks to be far worse now. We smell ash in the air and hear planes overhead at night. There are whispers that war is brewing. How do we pull further into our Isolation?

Entering Age 3. What was foreshadowed has come to pass. The end of the Isolation is near. There is no escaping it.

A schism is formed. A group insists on letting more outsiders in. Some take this as the ultimate betrayal.

How do they fight against this movement and why are they doomed to fail?

The fight has come to us. When the smoke and rubble were cleared, the final count was ten. An explosion shook the Compound in the cool of the day, taking ten innocent lives in its wake. Our walls are now breached. Most rally and try to repair, but there are whispers that some are considering the unthinkable. Leaving. Who tries to stop them?

Entering the Legacy. The last moments or the aftermath.

Side by side we stand. The Compound was supposed to keep us apart from the outsiders, but here we are, together. The doors are open and people move freely between the Isolation and the world beyond the walls. Outsiders are now commonplace and bringing stark change. How do we remember our time alone?

All we wanted was a home of our own. But the strikes didn't stop. We kept the Compound operational for as long as we could, but eventually the loss was too much. We had chosen this solitude and they took that from us. Maybe one day, someone will find our tattered home. Will it mean anything to them?

SING THE EARTH ELECTRIC

Harumph. If I were to abandon a planet, which I would never do, by the way, I'd at least want to hear from it once in awhile. Maybe send a message or two. Or flowers. Gosh it's been forever since I've seen one of those.

No use kidding myself though. We haven't detected a shred of organic life on Earth for at least a hundred years. The humans left, but they needed something done in their wake. They repurposed a crew of auto-vacs, roto-harvesters, really anything that could fit an AI module and lend a siliconoid limb. A scarcely compatible band of machines manufactured from all corners of the world and brought together to accomplish this one task.

At any rate, this ball of dirt is ours now and without the humans we've had more time to interface with one another. The experience has been, let's say, illuminating.

ASPECT GENERATION QUESTIONS

- **Our Job.** What task did the humans program us to accomplish on Earth without them?
- **A Long Shadow.** In what way have we started showing shades of humanity?
- **Free Aspect.** The choice is yours.

NAMES

Higgins, Polly, Flörbot, IONI, Deep.li, Bái Xiàng 88, Spinn-4R, Instaleph, 244-L, Arpafax, JESS_1, Veterok & Ugolyok

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

- What does Earth look like now? How did it become uninhabitable?
- How many of us are there? Where are we geographically located?
- What are some routines we must do together on a regular basis?
- If a unit malfunctions, what happens?
- Which units always seem to be working the hardest?

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A new arrival. We found it stranded and alone in a crater, must have fallen from the sky. It's not organic, but it doesn't look man-made either. We've only managed crude interfacing, but it sounds like they have strong intentions for Earth. Why are they a fundamental risk to our mission?

The refueling shipments from the humans haven't come in years. Energy supplies are running low. Without another shipment, our days are numbered. This must be what it means to "worry". How do the different units respond to this odd new feeling?

Entering Age 3. What was foreshadowed has come to pass. The end of the Isolation is near. There is no escaping it.

More of them. They fell from the sky one by one before they outnumbered us. Interfacing is still clunky, but it's unquestionable at this point. Our missions are fundamentally incompatible and now they are making it impossible for us to satisfy our programming. What drastic action must we undertake?

Energy critical mode has been engaged for everyone whose programming allows it. Some units are on the brink of shutting down. Hope, however irrational, still burns for some. What do they do to keep that flame alight?

Entering the Legacy. The last moments or the aftermath.

Our programmed mission is now obsolete. Do we fight on without end, or do our routines for self-preservation take over? Some consider the unthinkable. Do we join them and abandon our defining task? Can we?

Any unit that has the option has entered hibernatory stasis. One day, maybe humanity will come back and retrieve our memory chips. Whatever happens, we've had this time. And it was ours.

THIEVES' CANT

At night, this town belongs to scoundrels like us. The shimmer of steel in the shadows, a muffled strike in the dark, the cold clatter of coin.

The real challenge is hiding in plain sight. Everything that's worth anything in this town passes through the docks, and that is where we call home. We labor low throughout the day while gathering rumors, information, contacts, anything that will help us plan our next job.

The most important tools for the dozen members of our crew are not our weapons but our language. We speak in code, disguised as pleasantries and idle chatter as we move among our targets. The year is 1834 and flesh and blood is thankful for whatever work it can find in the shadow of coal and steel. Our words and weapons are how we care for our own.

ASPECT GENERATION QUESTIONS

- **The Job.** What shadowy job is our bread and butter?
- **Eyes on Us.** What crowded entertainment house provides relief and temporary cover when we need it?
- **Free Aspect.** The choice is yours.

For Common Names, pick a name appropriate for the location you decide on. Here is a list of example codenames that only some call you.

NAMES

Moresby, Adelaide, Tromsø, Boston, Dakar, Mombasa, Hanoi, Halifax, Magadan, Juneau, Davao, Frisco, Nuuk, Skyros

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

- What city's docks do we call home? What industry keeps its gears spinning?
- A powerful rival gang operates with impunity. Which principle that we hold sacred do they violate at every turn?
- What is our white whale? That one job that'll solve all our troubles, and that we're always looking for an opening on?
- What is the lowest our gang has stooped to? Why can't we move on?
- How do we find new members for our crew? How do they earn our trust?

AGE TRANSITIONS

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Continue down the same Pathway as you progress.

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A note, found slipped into one of our pockets. An invitation to a job with our rival gang. It's a big one and this may be our only shot. Many think we should take it. How do they convince the rest?

We've pulled this exact job dozens of times. That's what did it; we got lazy. The whole thing went to shit. We came back broken and battered. Either someone's talking or they found something on the scene, but one way or another the heat is on us. How do we try to protect ourselves?

Entering Age 3. What was foreshadowed has come to pass. The end of the Isolation is near. There is no escaping it.

It was a success. We got a second note telling us that we now have the honor of being a part of their gang. It is not a choice. How do some of us fight against this demand?

A crackdown. They knew we were coming. Someone must have taugth them our words. Several of us are rotting in jail, and a hunt through every gutter of the city is ongoing for the rest of us. How do they keep tracking us down?

Entering the Legacy. The last moments or the aftermath.

Some of us put aside our principles, while others fought to the last. One thing is for certain: only one gang runs the docks now. Do we teach them our cant, or let it die?

Locked up, dead, or scattered—our days in this town are over. Is there any trace of us left?