

OTHER PEOPLE

Golden Cobra entry by Raph D'Amico

THE PITCH

The aliens have won. Humanity will be eaten; the planet, obliterated. But the aliens love keepsakes. They've picked your small town to simulate for all eternity as a memento of their conquest. But the simulation keeps collapsing, and the aliens have no interest in an unstable keepsake! They've selected a group of you as representatives to suggest some fixes, but if you can't all agree on which parameters of the simulation to change to make it work, they'll just consume you and move on. *So many worlds to conquer!*

A game for 6-12 players featuring class warfare, interpersonal conflict, questioning your simulated future self to save humanity, mask play, and being eaten by aliens.

A SHORT MESSAGE FROM YOUR CONQUERORS

Congratulations—you've been chosen to enter the Collection as the last remnants of humanity! You will live on along with 12,341 members of your small town. (You thought it would be all of humanity? Don't be ridiculous—we have 61,752 other exhibits to maintain, you know!)

We solved the basics of ecosystem simulation eons ago, but we've noticed that human society seems to have some deep instability baked in—inequality, rivalries, grudges, jealousy, an odd mis-distribution of resources between what you call “haves” and “have-nots”. We're looking for a more ‘low maintenance’ thing, if you get us—sorry—we'd hate it if you kept collapsing.

*To solve this, we've picked you, a statistically representative sample of this chosen town, a **jury** to work through these issues and make some changes to the simulation before your minds are uploaded and bodies seasoned, mashed, and gobbled up. Yum!*

We understand that some of you rather like the status quo, others not so much. Well—we hope you can agree on the parameters because that'll be your life... for eternity!

You have 2 hours. Toodle pip!

REQUIREMENTS

- 6-12 players
- 3-ish hours including setup
- Paper for players to create characters
- A white, nondescript mask for the Probe Hologram
- A room that can comfortably fit all the players. A circle of chairs with a space in the middle for performing the Simulation Probe is ideal.

GAME OVERVIEW

Key ideas are:

- Deliberation as in a jury (e.g. the movie “12 Angry Men”)
- Freeform debate, discussion, alliance building.
- Revealing secrets through inspecting the simulation
- Self destructive human nature
- Unreliable aliens

The game proceeds in 5 phases:

1 · Character creation

- Randomly split the players into two groups, the status-quo **Beneficiaries** and the **Betrayed**. If the group is an odd number, there should be one more betrayed.
- Each player fleshes out their Role, Secret, Grudge, and Worst-case.
- Do a quick round of intros, but only reveal your Role and basic story

2 · Forming the jury, and the initial vote

- The jury is brought together and the message from the conquerors is read out.
- Players choose a foreman from amongst themselves, who will be responsible for organizing the vote, keeping an eye on the time, and making the final speech to humanity
- Take an initial vote to check if the jury is happy with the current simulation (they won't be)

3 · Deliberation & Probing

- The players now have 2 hours to deliberate and attempt to agree on changes to the simulation that will make everyone happy. Of course, this will not be quite so easy...
- **Probing the Simulation:** To aid the jury, the aliens made a rough initial simulation of the status quo. During deliberation, each player will have **one** chance to spin up the simulation and ask their future self what it's like, acted out by their **Grudge**.

4 · The final vote & speech

- At the end of deliberation, the humans will be forced to return with their verdict. They must have unanimous agreement. The foreman announces the outcome
- **Successful consensus:** the foreman summarizes the changes that the jury have agreed to the simulation. This may be done as an inspirational speech
- **Failure to get to consensus:** the foreman summarizes the irreconcilable differences and must apologize to humanity. A eulogy for the town may be appropriate.

5 · Epilogues

- **Successful outcome:** we now hear from all the characters about their life in the simulation. If there was a bad compromise, make this poetically gnarly.
- **Unsuccessful outcome:** the players each add a detail to what ended up happening—the story of how humanity ultimately failed to get its act together and the aliens decided it was just too much trouble to add them to the Collection.

Suggested safety techniques: **The door is always open; Cut and Brake; OK-check in**

CHARACTER CREATION

It's a small town and you all know each other. If you are the right age, you all went to high-school together, now your kids go to that same school. The institutions of this town are tight, and interrelated. Everyone knows what's going on, and rumors travelled fast.

The key division between the players is the haves and the have nots, with the added twist of fraught interpersonal relationships (that of course will be accurately simulated FOR ETERNITY unless you can somehow argue for some changes).

Role; Your name is _____ and you are _____ [profession or role]

Story; The status quo has [benefited/betrayed] you in unfair ways. How?

Grudge; You have a fraught past with _____: in that _____ [describe it]

Worst-case; An eternity would be most insufferable if _____

Example

- You are **Brent**, a **real estate developer**. You've **benefited** from the status quo because you own most of the town even though you suck at your job—it's all inherited. You have a deep seated **grudge** with John, the plumber, because you feel they don't **respect** you. Your worst-case scenario is for people to **laugh at you** for all eternity.
- You are **Rhonda**, a **barista**. You were **betrayed** by the status quo in that the coffee shop you owned was put out of business by the big chain you now work for. You hold a deep **grudge** towards Dave, the Banker because the *bastard* let you go out of business. Your **worst-case** scenario is making those pumpkin-spiced-lattes for Dave *forever*.

Note

- Your Grudge player will play your character during **Inspections**

PROMPTS TO HELP WITH CHARACTER CREATION

Roles: Banker, Teacher, Librarian, Car mechanic, Corner store owner, Gas station attendant, Tech worker, Lawyer, Mayor, Homemaker, Priest, Doctor, Homeless, Barista, Local shop owner, Stripper, Petty thief, Grifter, Police officer, Artist, Game designer, Uber driver

Status quo...

Beneficiary: Wealth, Status, Beauty, Inheritance, Celebrity, Stability, Privilege, Education, Recognition, Connections, Safety net, Nepotism

Betrayed: Gentrification, Systemic inequality, Racism, Sexism, Sickness, Instability, Layoffs, Addiction, Loneliness, Under/Over-qualified, Gig economy

Grudge: Hatred, Mistrust, Cheating, Disrespect, Lying, Betrayal, Misunderstanding, Expectations, Exclusion, Disgust, Envy, Jealousy, Money, Malice, Broken heart, Unrequited love

DELIBERATION RULES

- There will be several time checks by the facilitator (halfway, 30 mins left, 5 mins left)
- The players must choose a foreman from amongst themselves, who will run the vote and make the final speech
- Each player will introduce themselves, and have a chance to make an initial argument (use this to reveal your story)
- Humans may ask procedural questions of the aliens (represented by the facilitator)

INSPECTING THE SIMULATION

All of the players have already been scanned in, and have the ability to run simulations showing how society turns out in each of the scenarios. The simulation interface is a hologram, allowing you to summon a version of yourself from the simulation to describe what it's like in there.

The rules of interacting with the simulation are as follows:

- Each player gets one try
- You are only allowed to ask *questions to your own simulation* questions
- The simulation is fast forwarded several years in the future, to show consequences

For the **Prober**

- To initiate an inspection, say that you want to do it
- Your Grudge puts on the mask, and will play your character
- You get 3 questions, then the simulation is over

For the player playing the **Hologram**

- Start the simulation by putting on the mask (facing away from the rest of the room). You are now a faceless hologram that represents the prober's character
- The Prober will share with you their character sheet. When they ask the questions, it is your job to be inspired by their Story, Grudge and Worst-Case to present the darkest possible version of their future.
- It is absolutely fair game to introduce elements or limitations of the simulation itself that may be troubling to the player.
- **This darkness key—and the source of much of the drama in the game. Be merciless.**

FACILITATOR NOTES: REPRESENTING THE ALIENS

The aliens are irritated by the human and will field questions only tersely, just enough to help the humans get this formality done so they can cook up the planet, have lunch, then move on. They are looking for a simulation that can work well enough and not require too much maintenance on their part, so they've *definitely* no qualms about cutting some corners.

As the facilitator, you will embody the alien functionary responsible for this chore.

ENDING THE GAME

After 2 hours, players may vote. Technically they can choose to vote earlier, but any player has a chance to withhold their consent for the final vote until the 2 hour mark. Once the game ends, follow the instructions in the game overview.