

GENERATION SHIP

A *Dialect* backdrop by Nat Knight

You'd think interstellar travel would be glamorous: warp speed, subspace anomalies, pointy-eared aliens, laser fights. For us, it's a thousand people in a tin can struggling to stay clean and fed. Our gravity comes from counter-rotating habitats, and our only outside contact is the occasional radio transmission from Earth with an ever-growing light-time delay.

Between CO₂ removal, growing food, processing waste, managing the power plant, and maintaining the ship's systems, the crew is always busy, and that's before dealing with the fact that everyone knows literally everyone and the only way to escape is to throw yourself into the void.

ASPECT GENERATION QUESTIONS

- **The Mission.** Why are we out here? Where are you going?
- **The Ship.** What is the vessel that sustains and imprisons you like?
- **Free Aspect.** The choice is yours.

COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

- How many generations have passed since the ship left Earth? How many generations will it be until you arrive?
- How are the attitude and morale of the ship's inhabitants?
- Who is in charge? Why do we follow their orders?
- What do folks do when they're not performing vital duties?
- What is the ship's name? Has it changed since you left?

NAMES

Oliver, Braun, Samson, Gurpreet, Michelle, Indira, Louisa, Jill, Pierre-Jules, Erin, Hiroshi, Celia, Vladimir, Emmy, Jeremiah, Nicolaus, Maria

Ship names: *Chrysalis, Nibiru, Perspicacious, Tianxia, Lotus, Immaculate*

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.

You don't want to talk about it, but the numbers are concerning: the ship seems to be losing mass, and out here that's the air we breathe, the water we drink, or something worse.

Initial investigations don't find anything. What comforting lie do we tell ourselves about the glitch?

Your destination was carefully scrutinized by Earth's biggest brains and telescopes, but could they have missed something? It seems like there's a transmission coming from the wrong direction. It's barely a whisper, and you can't spare the hours to study it properly. What do we think it is?

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

It's confirmed: the ship is losing mass, and for every leak we stop two more appear. We're dipping into reserves meant for future generations, quickly running out of material and will.

We've got months, maybe even years before essential systems are compromised, but there are decades left in your journey. How do we break the news to the crew?

The light-time delay is brutal and they don't seem to be receiving, but there are definitely signals coming from your destination, and they seem to be human: weather reports, navigation aids, even music.

You were supposed to be alone out here, the first to arrive, but there will be people there when you make planetfall. How does the crew react?

Entering the Legacy. The last moments or the aftermath.

The air is thin and dry and cold. The once-lush hydroponic bays are reduced to dust. Systems are failing.

It won't be long now.

Do you go gently into the void, systems failing one by one, or do you go out with a bang?

The ship comes out of nowhere, sleek and gleaming. It turns out warp drive *is* real, you just left before it was invented. They're here to rescue you. Suddenly, you can go anywhere and do anything you want to.

Are you relieved? Elated? Enraged?