

# WHEN THE MESSAGE BEGAN

## YOU LIVE IN THE DARK.

No one knows why the lights of the world went out. Why the sun suddenly flared up, scorched the Earth in a split-second incandescent flash, then faded. Why it became a dull orange-red color, cool and distant, and only just warming the planet. Only just holding back an eternal, icy night.

No one knows why power stopped. Why the cities went black when the sun faded. If it was the solar flare that did it, or if electricity had simply fallen to whatever had dimmed the sun. No one knows why it all went away.

But it did.

At least, it did for you. For everyone around you for as far as anyone knew. As far as anyone had traveled, and still been able to return.

Maybe there were people out there with power. Maybe there were cities, or even whole countries that hadn't suddenly lost electricity and everything that went with it. That managed the decay of the sun with artificial lights to burn back the night. That hadn't suddenly become dependant on fire. Maybe. But none of that matters because if they do exist, they haven't made contact.

You live in the dark.

It's been 50 years since the Flare. Your community can take care of itself now. Maybe it pulled itself out of the ashes and ruin that came in the wake of everything changing. Or maybe it was built on top of the rubble of older cities, older communities, that turned and ate themselves when the sun rose different. Either way, life will out, and people will find a way to survive.

You and everyone around you make do. You live as best you can under the red sun, scrape out the best lives you can manage. Struggle along and try to find comfort in each other, and in knowing you're still alive, somehow. That your little community protects and shelters the lives of the people belonging to it.

But you are alone.

A 2-PLAYER ROLE PLAYING GAME OF DIGITAL EXCHANGES  
BY  
LEE ALDER KETCHAM SEGUINTE

Travel is difficult. Even moving between communities is hard in the short, red-tinted days, and long, frozen nights.

Raiders, scavengers, feral animals and people have found their own ways to survive without a community. Most people who leave never come back. People who arrive, if they manage to find their way to you still able to speak, have no news to share except tales of the wildness between the places people have made habitable again.

So you live on an island in the sea of a dark country, knowing only the people of your community, and the stories of the few travellers who brave the blackness. Your world is only as large as the walls of the community.

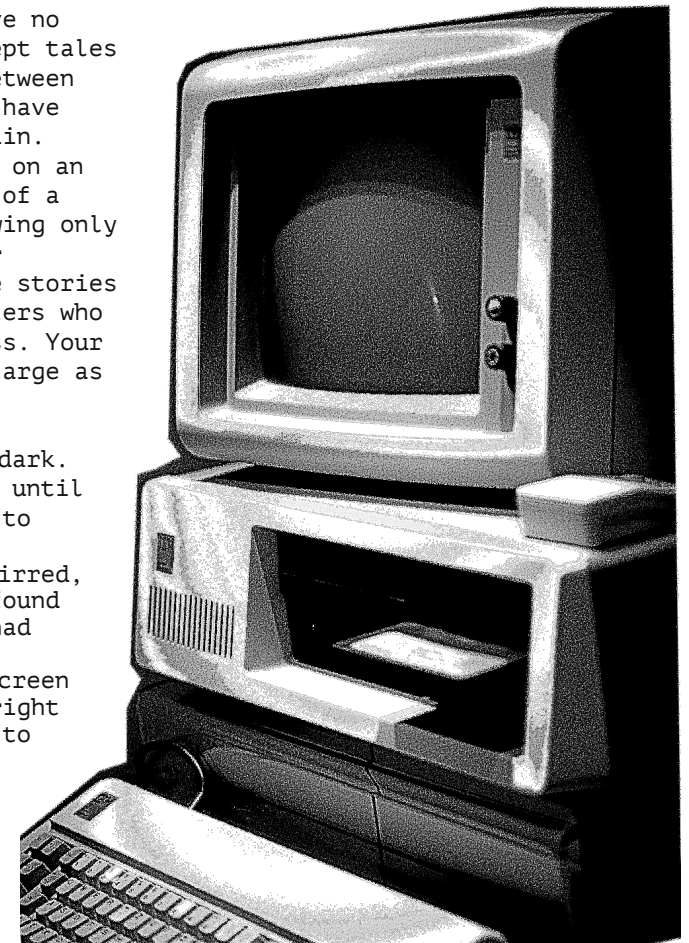
You in the dark.

Or you did, until the computer came to life.

Until it whirred, and clicked, and found power where none had been.

Until the screen blinked on, and bright while words began to print themselves across it.

You were alone, until messages began.



**The Receiver** is a member of a functioning community built in the ruins of the post-Flare world.

**The Sender** is a string of words appearing on the screen of a long-dead computer.

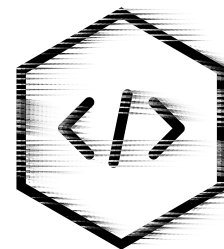
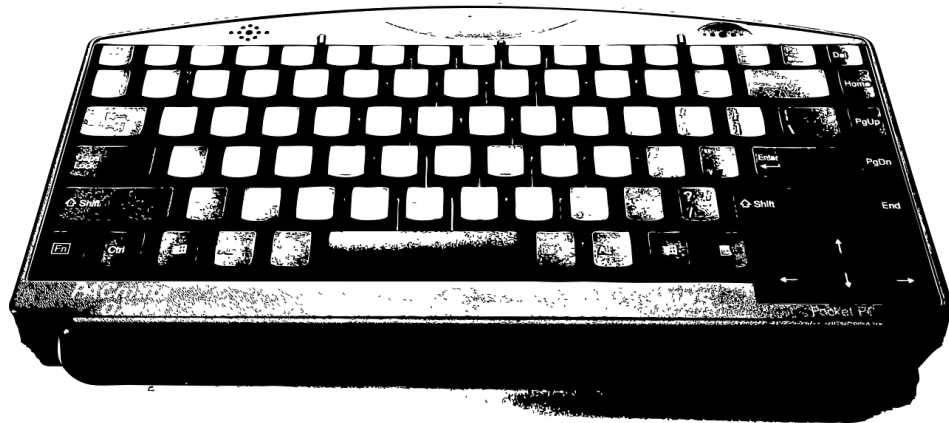
Receiver and Sender, knowing each other only through what they write, communicate in the hopes of learning who exactly the other is, and how they can be used to further their own goals.

You have a year.

A year before your resources run out. Before your community collapses. A year before your mission fails. A year to get what you need from the person at the other end of the computer.

You have a year before everything ends.

But because of the messages, you have a chance.



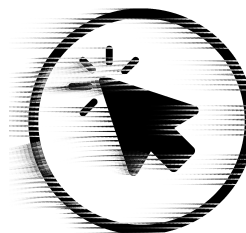
There are 13 exchanges--an initiation of communication, then one message for each month of the year. The Sender always initiates, and the Receiver always ends the game.

The goal, the hope, is that at the end of the year, after 12 messages have been sent and received, the two parties will agree to meet. To find each other in the physical world. That they will have gained the trust to help one another willingly, or the information to force compliance.

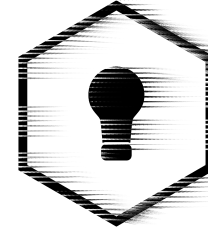
The first message is an introduction. An overture. It is the Sender reaching out, and the Receiver deciding how to reach back.

For each exchange after the first, roll 1D6 and compare to the appropriate table. This is the event that has occurred that month, which should appear in some way in the message.

Regardless of progress or outcome, the Receiver's 13th message is the last. It represents the end of the year, and the loss of the resources necessary to continue the exchange. No matter what is or isn't decided, there can be no exchanges after the 13th.



# IF YOU ARE THE RECEIVER, READ THIS:



## **Your community is surviving, but only just...**

Roll 1D6 to determine your community's situation  
(or choose from the list)

- 1- Food and water are plentiful, but fuel for fires is scarce
- 2- The community has become so large it is difficult to protect
- 3- You are constantly besieged by ferals
- 4- The community is very small and losing people rapidly
- 5- You are being torn apart by violent infighting
- 6- You are running out of food and water

## **But there is a strong bond that holds you together...**

Roll 1D6 to determine what common thread binds your community  
(or choose from the list:)

- 1- You share religious beliefs
- 2- You are all part of the same extended family
- 3- You escaped a dangerous past together
- 4- You are all survivors of a specific disaster
- 5- You were all abandoned by your previous communities
- 6- You all share a physical trait for which others have shunned you

## **Still, the messages are your responsibility...**

Roll 1D6 to identify the reason that you are reading and responding to the messages:  
(or choose from the list)

- 1- The community chose you as its representative
- 2- You are the only one who knows how to use the computer
- 3- You are the community's political/social leader
- 4- You are the community's religious leader
- 5- You are keeping the messages a secret
- 6- You are the only one physically able to get to the computer

Your community is surviving, but only just.

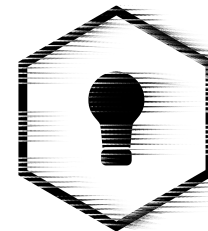
You don't know why the computer turned on. Don't know how it turned on. But you do know that the messages are a chance. A lifeline. Whoever is on the other end has resources you don't. Resources that your community desperately needs. And you want to acquire them. Because whatever knowledge, or technology, or pure luck has allowed the messages to begin, you can use that for your community. To pull yourselves back from the brink. Because with the way things are going, you can't keep going very much longer. You've only got a little while before there's no chance for recovery.

Your community is surviving, and it wants to continue.

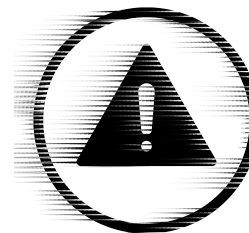
You know the way of things. What it takes to survive in the world. You know that the person on the other end of the computer is far more likely to be mercenary than altruistic. Far more likely to want to claim your resources for their own, than share theirs with you. Which means no matter how badly you want their help, you can't look desperate. Must make your community appear strong. If you look like an easy mark, you'll be overrun. That's just how things are.

So you read the message. Think about what it says.

Then you write your response. Hit send. Wait to see what happens.



# IF YOU ARE THE SENDER, READ THIS:



## **You wake up in the dark...**

Roll 1 D6 to determine your identity  
(or choose from the list)

- 1- you are a consciousness inside a computer
- 2- you have just woken up from cryosleep
- 3- you have come here from the far future
- 4- you are a recently-activated robot or android
- 5- you have emerged for the first time from the bunker in which you were born
- 6- you are a hyper-intelligent child

## **In an unfamiliar place...**

Roll 1D6 to determine your location  
(or choose from the list):

- 1- a scientific laboratory
- 2- An abandoned warehouse
- 3- a bomb shelter-like bunker
- 4- a grounded submarine
- 5- a factory
- 6- a derelict apartment building

## **With the feeling that you are supposed to be doing something...**

Roll 1D6 to determine your mission  
(or choose from the list):

- 1- To study how people are surviving
- 2- To harvest genetic material
- 3- To gain followers for your cause
- 4- To find experimental subjects
- 5- To help people
- 6- To help the world

You wake in the dark, and know this place isn't your home.

You know about the world, about what has happened to it, how it is now, what it has become. But it's not your world, not really. You are here because you have a job to do. The people who sent you, or who created you, or who set your actions in motion have given you all the tools you might need, but you have to find your own way to use them.

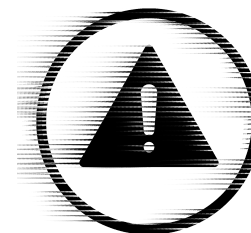
You wake in the dark, and then the computer turns on.

You have knowledge, and equipment, but to complete your mission, you need people. To survive, you need people. The place where you have found yourself is safe. Is absolutely secure. But even your resources will run out. You have a deadline, and the clock's already begun to tick. The computer, whoever is on the other end, is your lifeline.

So you go to it, and you write a message. Hit send.

Then you sit in the dark and wait to see what will happen.

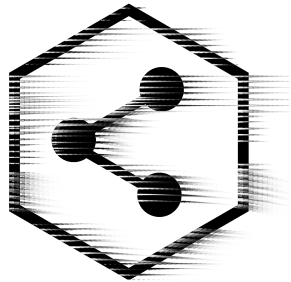
Who will answer.



# EVENTS

## RECEIVER

- 1- A disaster
- 2- A windfall
- 3- A raid
- 4- Someone is lost from the community
- 5- Someone is added to the community
- 6- A surprise



## SENDER

- 1- A disaster
- 2- A windfall
- 3- An unexpected arrival
- 4- An injury
- 5- A gain
- 6- A surprise



You live in the dark, in a place that is not your home, and without help, you will only make it through the year.

But out there in the black sea of the country, somewhere in the frozen nights, and cold days, there is someone who can help. Someone you need.

You live in the dark, but now there is a possibility of light. Now you might, by your will, survive. You might even win.

You live in the dark, but there is a chance for more.

Now that the messages have begun.