

DURANCE

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HERE IS THE WORLD

Far beyond the edge of civilization lies an indifferent planet orbiting a dying K-spectrum star. A hurried initial survey pronounced it habitable. This evidence, plus its great distance from anything of worth or note, made it an ideal candidate for a penal colony.

There would, certain politicians reasoned, be no need for walls. Escape would be impossible. Convicts would, in building their new home, rebuild themselves. They would thrive or they would perish, and either outcome was equally satisfying. And if this furthest outpost of empire was a place where convicts could be safely forgotten, what of their jailers? The sort of men drawn to such an assignment by inclination or circumstance were best forgotten as well.

1500 convicts and 300 officials, civilians, Marines and hangers-on comprised the first colonists. The journey took 250 days.

The survey was wrong.

HOW THE WORLD WORKS

Colonial society is like a ladder. Two ladders, actually, lashed together by miserable circumstance.

The Kings

Perched securely on the top rung are two people—the Governor and the Dimber Damber. One is the nominal apex of Authority and ruler of the colony, and the other is his criminal mirror. These two eat well, and they can kill with a word, but their responsibilities are crushing. The imported plants that do grow are sickly and stunted. Measures to curb food theft—including making it a capital offense—have done nothing. The colony is slowly starving to death.

The Princes

Just below them on the next rung are their functionaries. On the Governor's side are the Magistrate and Captain of Marines; the Dimber Damber's chief lieutenants are The Clicker and Captain Sharp (both titles, not individuals). Regardless of orientation they tend to be paragons of corruption and vice. The regular convicts—Lags, in common parlance—view the various functionaries as a pantheon of demented gods to whom obeisance is due. Disobey a command and the Captain of Marines will arrest you and the Magistrate will sentence you, most likely to death. Fail to respect the Dimber Damber and you will have a short, unpleasant meeting with Captain Sharp. Fail to pay the Dimber Damber what is due and The Clicker will come to collect.

The Agrarians

One rung down from the functionaries are the planters. Farming isolated outstations, they are either free citizens who settled in the colony for perverse reasons of their own, or Ticket-of-Leave men—emancipated Lags who, in turn, employ other convicts known as Croppies to tend their fields. The Ticket of Leave is conditional, and a single word from an Authority functionary will put them back in chains. Planters have the potential to become very rich, and the pull of Authority is powerful indeed. Many long to re-enter its service as magistrates.

The Outlaws

Balancing brazenly on the planter's rung are the colony's celebrated outlaws. Sometimes Lags (and occasionally Marines) chuck it all and become Bolters, running away from the settlement toward a short but eventful life in the wilderness. Those that hang around form ragged gangs that the Marines hunt for sport. To the convicts, these men are princes and heroes.

The Dogsbodies

One more rung down and we find the vast majority of the colony. Lags—convicts sent out for some petty crime not worth mentioning—and Marines, as imprisoned as the Lags they guard. Both were schooled in the worst aspects of human nature across 250 days of transport, and are effectively two sides of the same dirty coin. The chain of stupidity and grief that brought most to this juncture is long and unbroken. They are hard, hungry, grasping people.

The Ladies

Part and parcel with the permanent Marine and Lag under class are the Sables. The ratio of men to women in the colony is ten to one, and the ugly reality is that most female Lags form sexual liaisons with men—Marines, functionaries, and criminal bosses—who can protect them from other men. For the luckiest and cleverest this is a short-term arrangement. For the rest it is a lifetime of servitude and misery. A very few Marines and functionaries have brought wives to the colony. For the women among this rarefied class, flexible morality offers stonishing power.

The Outcasts

And finally there are those not on any rung of the ladder at all. In a world of mischance and misadventure, these outcasts have staked a claim to the farthest, most forlorn parcel. They will never belong, and they are immune to the pressures of the hierarchy. Some are obsessive professionals—doctors, agronomists, clergy—the sort of people who would be drawn to such a place. On the other hand are Croppies, slaves in all but name who work the farms, and Wreckers, political prisoners with zeal but not much else. Wreckers are universally reviled, and with good reason—they destroy entire planets occasionally. Any outcast who survives long enough becomes a Crawler, the most useless of all.

A pair of ladders joined together. One is right and one is, well, *wrong*, but if you are at the top that hardly matters. And the boldest men do hop to and fro, don't they?

PREPARING TO PLAY

Durance is a game for two to five players. There is no Game Master and no fixed ending point. The story of the colony can continue across multiple sessions of play if desired.

Host: Have a blank Colonial Survey and Record printed and ready. Have some pencils and index cards on hand, as well as three six-sided dice. Give a pencil and two index cards to each player, including yourself. Explain that preparation consists of filling out the Colonial Survey and Record as a group, taking turns, and hand the record sheet to the player on your left.

Player to the left of the host: Name the planet and hand the sheet to the player on your left.

Next three players in turn: Choose one of the survey assessments to be wrong. Cross out the nice version and pass the sheet to the player on your left. The third player to choose a bad assessment should cross out the unused negative options, so only six facts—three positive and three negative—are visible.

Everyone: Take a moment to describe the planet. What is it like?

Next player: Name the colony and hand the sheet to the player on your left.

Next three players in turn: Choose one of the colonial status reports to be wrong. Cross out the nice version and pass the sheet to the player on your left. The third player to choose a bad status should cross out the unused negative options, so only six facts—three positive and three negative—are visible.

Everyone: Take a moment to describe the colony. What is it like? How has the nature of the planet changed it?

Next player: Write down the name of a Colonial Notable, both on the Colonial Survey and Record and on an index card. If you are creating a convict, also write down their crime on the index card (nothing dramatic or heinous. Perhaps they cheated on their taxes or stole industrial batteries). If you are creating someone who is free (A planter, Marine or official), write down their reason for being in the colony. Why are they here when a reasonable person would not be?

Next players in turn: Continue rotating the Colonial Survey and Record, with each player writing down the name of a Colonial Notable, as well as their crime or rationale. When everyone has written down one name, each player will, in turn, write down a second name on the opposite side and in a different position on the ladder from their first. Thus you cannot name the Governor and a Marine (both authority), or the Governor and the Dimber Damber (same position on ladder) as your characters.

Host: Fill in names on the Colonial Survey and Record (but not index cards) for any blank spots on the Colonial Notables list. In a four-player game there will be two.

Everyone: Hand one of your two index cards, respectively, to the players on your right and left.

For each of the characters you in turn receive from them, write down the one thing they have sworn they will never do as long as they draw breath. This should be a very serious thing, and it should be something you are very interested in seeing them do. “I swear that I will never take a life” is excellent. “I will never abandon my wife” is, also. When you’ve finished, give the cards back to their original authors.

Everyone: At this point you have a complete Colonial Survey and Record. Each player has two characters, and each character has a solemn and unbreakable oath that was authored by another player. Take a moment to discuss the relationships implicit among the colonial Notables you’ve created.

PLAYING DURANCE

As a player, your principal objective is to see how things turn out. Don't be too invested in your character's success. *Their* principal objective is to move up the ladder into positions of security and power within the colony. Those already eating well will naturally want to preserve the status quo. Outcasts may have ambition, but they may also operate outside the established power structure toward their own ends.

Starting with the host, each player in turn directs a scene.

Director: Shine the spotlight on some interesting area of the colony. You can use the event list for inspiration if you like. You should be curious about what is going to happen, and have a question that you can ask out loud. "I wonder if the Governor has the stones to put the Dimber Damber on trial?" is a fantastic question. It isn't up to you to answer it, so be bold and aggressive in crafting your questions. You can establish facts in your questions, but don't contradict existing ones. It's good form to ask questions about characters other than your own, but this rule is not absolute. When in doubt, ask questions about character's oaths.

Everyone except the Director: Build a scene that can answer the question posed by the Director. Scenes are explicitly about the Colony Notables. Although there are many people in the colony, only introduce new ones if it is absolutely necessary. Put your heads together, create a scene, and set the stage for the director. Let everyone know which characters are present and which might enter at their player's discretion. Assign minor roles as necessary and play out the scene. Scenes with only one character—or none at all—are fine. These become monologues or third-person descriptive scenes and are encouraged. They are a great way of revealing new information.

Director: Sit back and enjoy the scene. You can, of course, participate as either of his characters if necessary.

Everyone: The course of a scene may make the question's answer obvious, but this won't always be the case. If at some point you are uncertain about how the question will be answered, go immediately to the dice.

Uncertainty

When the outcome of a situation is obvious or necessary, either fictionally or thematically, it is usually best to trust your instincts and go with it. But ultimately you should go to the dice when an answer is uncertain and the scene needs guidance and resolution.

The three dice should be in the middle of the table on the Colonial Survey and Record, each in its own box corresponding to *Servility*, *Terror*, and *Desperation*—the trifecta of life in a penal colony. When it is time to roll:

The player of the highest ranking character involved: Choose one of the three dice to lock. If two characters are tied in rank, the Authority character's player chooses a die to lock. A locked die is not rolled in the resolution of that particular situation and its value does not change. Lock dice tactically to help ensure an outcome you want.

Director: Roll the two non-locked dice to determine how the scene will ultimately resolve.

If *Servility* is greater than *Savagery*, the scene may be resolved through dominance and obedience.

If *Savagery* is greater than *Desperation*, the scene may be resolved through violence and barbarism.

If *Desperation* is greater than *Servility*, the scene may be resolved through theft and rebellion.

On a *tie*, the outcome is interrupted by some important event—use the tied number to determine which event table to use, and the third number to determine which specific item. On a three-die tie, a transport arrives. In any case, consult the event list.

It is possible that more than one option will present itself. In this case, the Director decides which path to follow.

Everyone: Finish the scene, guided by the flavor imparted by the dice. The player to the left of the Director is the new Director, who should ask a new question and see what happens.

Not-So-Gentle Transitions

A character that breaks their oath immediately enters a personal crisis and descends one or more rungs on the ladder. This may be purely social—a Governor who is no longer respected but remains the titular head of the colony, for example—or it may be more direct—a Captain of Marines who is relieved of command and becomes a regular Marine, for example. Characters may ascend or descend the ladder based on the outcome of scenes, in reaction to the established fiction. They may also switch from right to wrong or, more infrequently, from wrong to right. An oath-breaker should swear a new one at the earliest opportunity.

It is entirely acceptable to kill any Colonial Notable as part of a scene, or even, with their player's approval, as the background for a question. If you find yourself down a character, create a new index card for a named but un-authored Notable on the Colonial Survey and Record. If there are none, create a new one on a rung you have not yet had a character occupy. Ask another player to author an oath for your new character.

COLONIAL EVENT LIST

Tied Ones

- 1 A scheduled transport arrives badly damaged, with new convicts but no supplies.
- 2 Two rival factions of Lags go to war.
- 3 The Dimber Damber persuades his Marine toadies to steal supplies.
- 4 Croppie field hands discover something ancient and terrible.
- 5 Half the colonial surplus in grain disappears.
- 6 Someone important is murdered - or simply vanishes.

Tied Twos

- 1 A bunch of Wreckers congregate in contravention of policy.
- 2 A scheduled transport fails to arrive.
- 3 A Bolter gang becomes increasingly daring in its raids, and its leader becomes a folk hero.
- 4 A group of Marines organize a lucrative and illegal sideline.
- 5 A Sable pleads for help from Authority to free herself from a horrific pimp.
- 6 A Lag offers to sell Authority a secret they have been unable to ferret out.

Tied Threes

- 1 A Croppie complains to Authority about his treatment on a remote farm.
- 2 The colony's first child is born.
- 3 A scheduled transport arrives carrying an unknown plague and many sick convicts and crew.
- 4 A Ticket-of-Leave Man is brought to trial, his farm and his freedom on the line.
- 5 The Captain of Marines cracks down on some illegal but beneficial gardens.
- 6 A punishment detail is formed to clear a road to an outstation.

Tied Fours

- 1 A high-profile trial begins - or ends.
- 2 A Planter loses everything in a game of chance.
- 3 A group of Marines plan a coup d'état.
- 4 A transport arrives overflowing with fresh goods, vital equipment - and guns.
- 5 Theft of food increases, and an unexpected food thief is caught.
- 6 Encrypted orders arrive for the Governor. They are dangerous, impossible, and mandatory.

Tied Fives

- 1 The Dimber Damber's favorite lieutenant is given an unconditional pardon.
- 2 A work party of Lags decides to bolt - after settling an old score.
- 3 The Governor declares a holiday.
- 4 A Marine's husband is selling himself, blackmailed and in debt.
- 5 A trading vessel visits, injecting priceless luxury goods into the colonial economy.
- 6 A charismatic Lag preaches sedition to an eager audience.

Tied Sixes

- 1 A Planter refuses to continue "tithing" to the Dimber Damber.
- 2 A wedding ceremony is planned, carried out, and disrupted.
- 3 A food thief is summarily executed.
- 4 The first Outcast starves to death.
- 5 Someone in a position of power goes irrevocably mad.
- 6 A well-placed gang plots to hijack a newly-arrived transport.

COLONIAL SURVEY & RECORD

PLANET

Cross out all but one

Twynn's World | KKV Nazino | New Kolyma | Vorkuta 58 | Amur-6 | Jorca Ten

COLONY

Cross out all but one

Platt 9 | Glough | Corrective Colony #14 | Port Jobe | Freetown | Iku Pya

SURVEY

Cross out three from first column and opposite three from second

Atmosphere is good	Atmosphere is bad
Climate is hospitable	Climate is brutal
Native life is benign	Native life is dangerous
Geography is favorable	Geography is hellish
Water is plentiful	Water is scarce
No native intelligence	Natives, watching and waiting

REPORT

Cross out three from first column and opposite three from second

Well planned small town	Filthy temporary shelters
Prosperous farms	Scattered, dying farms
Convict industries	Abandoned schemes
Rationing, work details	Hoarding, lethargy
Order and civility	Chaos and barbarism
Benevolent management	Institutionalized terror

COLONIAL NOTABLES

Each player names two on different rungs and different sides, and adds oaths for two other player's characters. Host fills in empty names.

Governor of the colony **His Excellency**

Name	I will never...

The Dimber Damber Lord of Lags

Name	I will never...
Number	

Either Colonial Magistrate or Captain of Marines **Functionary**

Name	I will never...

Minion Either Captain Sharp or The Clicker

Name	I will never...
Number	

A planter or free woman **Free Colonist**

Name	I will never...

Ex-Convict Either Ticket-of-Leave man or outlaw Bolter

Name	I will never...
Number	

Primary servant of Authority **Marine**

Name	I will never...

Convict Either Lag or female convict (Sable)

Name	I will never...
Number	

Either scientist, physician, or clergy **Outcast**

Name	I will never...

Pariah Either political prisoner (Wrecker), agricultural slave (Croppie) or broken old timer (Crawler)

Name	I will never...
Number	

MALE NAMES**One**

1 GIDNER
 2 LYMAND
 3 ROGAN
 4 PEREMAN
 5 HUGUST
 6 MARD

Two

1 ED
 2 LEVEY
 3 KENNIEL
 4 HAMIN
 5 TIM
 6 CORNALL

Three

1 DOCTON
 2 HOLACE
 3 WILTON
 4 FRANDON
 5 DALKER
 6 IRVIN

Four

1 ANDERS
 2 DENCIUS
 3 FORDISON
 4 LYNARD
 5 KENCER
 6 KEECHAM

Five

1 RUSTIS
 2 RAYLE
 3 ALBEN
 4 HAMER
 5 OLLIS
 6 MONRAD

Six

1 EVERT
 2 DALVIN
 3 PREW
 4 GILLE
 5 CLARVIS
 6 WILL

FEMALE NAMES**One**

1 OLINIE
 2 LAULINIE
 3 JUDIA
 4 EDIE
 5 VELLA
 6 ALMIE

Two

1 LINNA
 2 LUNICENT
 3 JEMMY
 4 HALIA
 5 CHARA
 6 MAROLA

Three

1 PERCIA
 2 SELA
 3 VIOLA
 4 DRUSANE
 5 OPHIA
 6 PHYLVIA

Four

1 MITTY
 2 DINICA
 3 NANCE
 4 LEORICA
 5 PRUDE
 6 MYRTHA

Five

1 LORA
 2 RHONA
 3 JULINE
 4 FRETA
 5 ROBELA
 6 TINDA

Six

1 MARGARET
 2 VIOLA
 3 LAUDRA
 4 OPHRIA
 5 THERIA
 6 NELMA

SURNAMES**One**

1 CROFFIN
 2 ROBBES
 3 PILL
 4 SAUX
 5 HALEY
 6 FIERBES

Two

1 SHEPETT
 2 GUNMITH
 3 GRISON
 4 WILLS
 5 BRACER
 6 STAKENS

Three

1 HALKES
 2 WRIGHAM
 3 KILCH
 4 BALTON
 5 WAYCOX
 6 ATKIN

Four

1 HATTS
 2 KEECH
 3 MARRE
 4 PILVER
 5 VARFORD
 6 GEAMBE

Five

1 JACKS
 2 FRAHAM
 3 CALTON
 4 GLOUR
 5 LARLEY
 6 FOWDERHOP

Six

1 KIDD
 2 PARDON
 3 COLT
 4 SMICKLEY
 5 OAKES
 6 HAYLOW

EXAMPLE OATHS

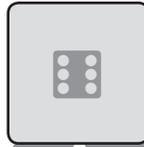
I will *never*...

... murder a man.
 ... abandon my beloved [].
 ... bow to Authority.
 ... betray my uniform.
 ... show the Lags weakness.
 ... take charity from anyone.
 ... allow a Lag to insult me.
 ... tolerate interference.
 ... pay the Dimber Damber.
 ... confess my feelings toward [].

... sink to the level of my tormentors.
 ... allow an innocent to go hungry.
 ... strike a woman.
 ... rat out my mates.
 ... sell my body.
 ... walk away from disrespect.
 ... abandon my farm.
 ... show a weaker man mercy.
 ... see [] proven my better.
 ... take my own life.

DESPERATION

Theft & Rebellion



If Servility is greater than Savagery, the scene may be resolved through dominance and obedience.

If Savagery is greater than Desperation, the scene may be resolved through violence and barbarism.

If Desperation is greater than Servility, the scene may be resolved through theft and rebellion.

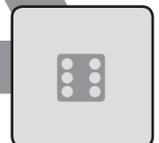
On a tie, the outcome is interrupted by some important event-use the tied number to determine which event table to use, and the third number to determine which specific item. On a three-die tie, a transport arrives. In any case, consult the event list.

If a theme die is higher than the one it points toward, that theme can be used to resolve the uncertainty. Ties = Events. Multiple options = Director chooses.



SAVAGERY

Violence & Barbarism



SERVILITY

Dominance & Obedience