

Welcome to the first episode of the seventh game of Follow the Leader! In this episode we begin a game of The Quiet Year, by Avery Alder. The players in this episode are Sam, Alix, Kales, and Dora. (Direct quotes from the players are highlighted in their colors.)

This is our first game where we revisit a universe we already established in a previous series of episodes. We're revisiting the world of our Sundered Land arc, building up the City of Gulls which was mentioned at the end of those episodes. You don't need to have listened to those episodes to understand this game, as it takes place prior to those events and does not involve any of the characters, but if you'd like to skim the episode summaries to get an idea for what we're going to get into, you can find [part 1 here](#) and [part 2 here](#).

GAME SET-UP (3:00)

The Quiet Year is a mapmaking game, where the players take on two roles-- to "represent the community at a bird's eye level and care about its fate" and to "dispassionately introduce dilemmas as scientists conducting an experiment." We won't be playing individual characters, but will instead all contribute to a collaborative map that is at times crudely and at other times magnificently drawn by all of us in roll20.¹ Each player's turn constitutes a week in a year. On a player's turn, they draw a card which will ask a question about the community or dictate something that happens during that week, which they will answer and sketch onto the map. They can then either start a project, discover something new, or hold a discussion about something that's happened in the community recently.

We begin with a quick summary of the world-- about 150 years ago this world was devastated by a war between magic and machines, and now exists in a very green post-apocalypse state. This game will be the early days of the City of Gulls, a ruined coastal city newly resettled by a small group of people.

Dora reminds us of two facts established at the end of the Sundered Land game-- that it was a coastal city, and the tall stone spires where the large gulls roost. Then, each of us contributes another detail.

- Sam adds some tidal pools surrounded by rocks.
- Alix adds a weird shipwreck on the beach. (Sam: "I like that everything's on the beach and then we've got all this land where like, what's over there? We'll find out!")
- Kales says the sand of the beach is black volcanic sand.
- Dora introduces a forest with very tall trees. (Alix: "For the audience, this essentially looks like a very large mouse cursor.")

With our terrain established, we each get to establish a resource.

- Sam wants one of our resources to be shellfish.

¹ I wish we had more progress shots of the map as it developed, but as it is we only have one from the end of the two recording sessions we did. They'll likely be posted to the Twitter.

- Alix decides on ore (“Not super exciting but, don’t want to overthink it.”)
- Kales wants a resource to be power, as in energy, as in powering things.
- Dora thinks one of our resources should be seagulls (Kales: “These. Shitheads.”)

We choose one of our resources to be in abundance, and the others are in scarcity. A discussion occurs over how big the seagulls are, and we decide that many of them are bear-sized, and there’s some that are the size of a blue whale that we find the feathers from-- “We’ve never seen it, and we hope we never do.” We decide to have an abundance of shellfish, so we can have science projects later.

SPRING (19:35)

We have a lot of fun trying to figure out how the roll20 cards work for the duration of this game.

FIRST WEEK (20:25)

The card drawn offers a choice between establishing distinct family units or establishing groups with high social status. Sam decides to tell us about distinct family units, that communal raising of children and communal living are common here. He draws some run-down houses that people have decided to settle in.

For his first action, Sam starts a project to clean up the run-down houses. When you start a project, you say how long it will take, and every turn thereafter you count down until the project completes. Sam says it’s a five week project to fix the houses, so in five turns the project will complete and Sam will tell us how it went.

SECOND WEEK (22:00)

The card drawn offers a choice between a disquieting legend about the area or alarming weather patterns coming through and destroying something. Alix tells us the story of two young lovers who once lived here, but one of them was carried off and killed by the seagulls. Her partner spent the rest of her life pining and mourning for her lost love.

Alix also decides to start a project to explore the shipwrecks on the beach, which will be a four week project.

THIRD WEEK (23:15)

The card offers an option between establishing children or talking about how old the eldest members of the community are. “I love the implication that the children have a role besides being a kid.” Kales tells us that there are children and their role is to make this city, which will one day be theirs, their home.

Kales starts a project to find more ore, by just digging. Or something. This will also be a four week project.

FOURTH WEEK (24:50)

The card tells us that either a young boy has been digging in the ground and found something, or an old man has confessed to past crimes and atrocities. Dora decides on the former-- a young boy was digging and found crystals that seem to glow, even when you chip pieces off of them and carry them away. The community now has an abundance of light.

Dora also wants to discover another new thing, which is that we see in the ocean signs of a much larger crab. Kales: "Yeahhhhh!!! Big crab!!! Oh, he's so mad I love him!"

FIFTH WEEK (26:50)

The card tells us that a charismatic young girl either convinces many people to help her with a scheme or tries to tempt many people into sinful action. Sam tells us this girl is going to try and climb the spires to kill some of the very large gulls, which will take her about two weeks.

For his next action, Sam discovers something new. There is an old, rotting temple to the south of the town. "Tablets suck." It's just a really big temple.

SIXTH WEEK (30:23)

The card offers a choice between establishing where everyone sleeps or establishing the natural predators that roam the area. Alix tells us about the big, scary talking cats, one of which Marius encountered in the future. There are more here than there are in the future. (Sam's cat is being a bit of a bother, and may provide cat foley later in the episode if we ask her very nicely.)

Alix's shipwreck project completes, and they tell us that in the shipwreck we find that the ship came from underwater, sort of like a submarine.

For their action, Alix decides to hold a discussion. Everyone gets to weigh in once about a question or statement that Alix decides is "What should we do about all these lions that ate somebody?"

- Alix: "I think we should welcome the cats as new citizens."
- Kales: "I think we should drive the cats out, they're dangerous."
- Dora: "I think that the cats have very pretty pelts that would look great as rugs in the houses."
- Sam: "A cat ate my grandfather and I want it dead."

Sam realizes that his project also completed, and he tells us that the houses now have roofs that are good. We were also mildly successful at killing the birds, but we lost a few members of the community in the process, so we're not too keen on going back.

SEVENTH WEEK (35:05)

The card offers a choice between the arrival of someone new and an incident between two of the younger members of the community. Kales decides to twist the latter a little and says that two of the younger community members get into a fight with a young cat. Because the cat is small, it didn't kill the kids, but everyone thinks that was really stupid.

Their project is also finished. We found some ore. We also found a huge network of tunnels down there, so Kales starts another project to explore the tunnels, which will be a six-week endeavor.

Sam: "You should draw a new tunnel every week as they explore." Kales is indeed going to do that.

EIGHTH WEEK (37:18)

The card asks what the most beautiful thing in the area is, or what the most hideous thing is. Dora tells us the most beautiful thing in this area is the view of some mountains in the distance, which look really pretty at sunset.

For their action Dora starts a project, to figure out if we can use the crystals for anything other than light.

NINTH WEEK (38:20)

The card offers a choice between a large body of water on the map (which we have already) or a large man-made structure on the map. "Well, why it was abandoned is an easy question." "There was an apocalypse." Sam tells us there's a large, mysterious obelisk, which looks more like the Washington Monument than the spires, but possibly related to them. "That just straight up looks like a penis. I'm gonna refine it a bit and make it look more like a penis."

Sam starts a project to investigate the mysterious religious objects.

TENTH WEEK (40:00)

The card asks what tools we lack or where we are storing our food. Alix tells us we're lacking in weapons, because we haven't got anything to turn our ore into weapons yet. But we're surrounded by really big animals. "Magical mega-fauna are great, y'all."

We also discover something new. Out of the ocean, some mermaids come to take their submarine back. "It turns out the submarine was just a mermaid car."

ELEVENTH WEEK (42:15)

We see an omen of some kind. The card asks if it's good or bad, but Kales says we don't necessarily know if it's good or bad. Some of the smaller gulls have started to fly out to sea. "Who knows if that's a good thing, or a bad thing?" "Certainly not us."

Kales decides to hold another discussion. "Hey! These mermaids, huh?" This is just a declaration.

- Dora: "Well, I think their scales are really pretty, and they would look good on the walls of my house."
- Sam: "Well, I am planning on marrying one of these mermaids, so they'd better stick around I guess, because they're beautiful and I'm planning to kiss one. And be the grandmother of my children. My grandchildren."
- Alix: "I think the mermaids look a lot like the images in the ruined temple and I think they're holy and we should worship them as gods."

Three kinds of people.

Dora: "It only took us 'til almost the end of spring to get to godfucking."

TWELFTH WEEK (45:00)

(For the last two weeks of the season everyone gets very confused about how we're out of cards (thanks, roll20) but we worked it out.)

The card tells us about an old piece of machinery, either broken but perhaps repairable or cursed. Dora tells us about a tank from the long-ago war, so rusted it's difficult to dismantle but the community still wants to cut it up for scrap metal.

For their action Dora starts a project to go to the mountains and see what's up there, which will be a four week project.

THIRTEENTH WEEK (48:50)

The card offers a choice between establishing another community on the map or establishing a unifying belief or practice. Sam tells us that the cats are a community ("They talk, so they're people.") and they are down behind the mountains. "How did we discover they were there?" "One of them told us."

We finished exploring the tunnels. "There's a lot of them." Perhaps they were used for transportation, but we can't figure out how people would have come out the top.

Sam tells us that in the tunnel underneath the light-rocks we find a mysterious well that pours magical water into the surrounding rocks.

Alix: "Okay, now it's summertime."

END EPISODE SUMMARY