

The Quiet Year

a map-drawing game



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Chapter One: Gather

As the facilitator, read this entire book ahead of time. Complete the tasks outlined in this chapter before others arrive at the table.

What This Is

This is a map-drawing game. Together, you play as a community rebuilding after the collapse of civilization. Your decisions will define the values and future of this community, and these decisions will get added to a map which is constantly evolving. This map blends literal cartography with symbols, creating a rich visual record of land and people. Players collaborate to steer the fate of the community, while also introducing problems and tensions along the way.

Supplies

The Quiet Year requires 2-4 players and 3-4 hours. In addition, it requires:

- A blank piece of paper to draw the map
- A few pencils or pens
- A couple index cards
- Six small dice
- 20 Contempt Tokens
- A deck of The Quiet Year cards
- The Turn Summary card (located at the end of this document)

If you don't have a deck of Quiet Year cards, pair a deck of standard playing cards with The Oracle, located at the end of this document or available at: buriedwithoutceremony.com/the-quiet-year

Preparing Your Space

Clear your table or play space of any unnecessary objects. Aim for a minimal environment.

Separate the deck into the four suits, each in its own stack. Place the blank piece of paper in the centre of the table - it will become the map of your area. Around it, array the remaining supplies: pencils and pens, dice, Contempt Tokens, and the Turn Summary card.

Divide an index card into two columns and label them "Abundances" and "Scarcities". Leave another one handy for recording names.

A Fleeting Year

A full-length game of The Quiet Year can take up to 4 hours. If you'd prefer to play a shorter game, try this simple adjustment: before play, remove 5 cards from each suit. Make sure to remove the King of Diamonds (Summer), and make sure to keep the King of Spades (Winter) in the cards you play with.

The Opening Story

Read aloud.

For a long time, we were at war with The Jackals. Now, finally, we've driven them off, and we're left with this: a year of relative peace. One quiet year, with which to build our community up and learn again **how to work together**. Come Winter, the Frost Shepherds will arrive and we might not survive the **encounter**. **This is** when the game will end. But we don't know about that yet. What we know is that **right now, in this moment**, there is an opportunity to build **something**.

Introducing Our Tools

Let's go over our game components.

Point to the blank page. This is our map. Before playing, we'll **establish** some of the landscape. As we play, we'll **update the map** to reflect new discoveries, conflicts, and decisions. **The map** will blend literal cartography with symbols. We won't write words on it, though common symbols are fine.

We'll all take turns drawing on this map. You don't have to **worry** about drawing well; every drawing is good enough.

Point to the Turn Summary card. This card explains how play works from week to week. We'll go over it soon.

Point to the dice. These are project dice. When our community starts a project, we'll place one on the map to note how many weeks it will take to finish. Each week, the dice tick down by one. When a die reaches zero, the project is complete.

Point to the Contempt Tokens. These are Contempt Tokens. They represent simmering tensions in the community.

Point to the deck. This deck of cards represents our quiet year. Each suit is a season. At some point in Winter, we'll draw the King of Spades. That's when the Frost Shepherds will arrive, and the game will immediately end.

Shuffle the Spades (Winter), and place it face down on the table. Shuffle the Clubs (Autumn), and place it on top. Repeat for Diamonds (Summer) and Hearts (Spring).



Chapter Two: Survey

As the facilitator, read the regular text of this chapter aloud to the group, following the instructions written in italics as you go.

Our Role

When we play *The Quiet Year*, we don't control specific characters or act out scenes. Instead, we all act as abstract social forces within the community. At any point, we might be representing a single person or a great many. This is a story about social forces and their impact on the land, rather than being about specific individuals.

At the same time that we're playing as the community, we're also looking for opportunities to introduce new and interesting challenges into the story. It's our job to make sure that there are always difficult decisions to be made and uncertainties to be explored. As we introduce interesting challenges for the community and then figure out how to address them, tensions will emerge that ultimately reveal the character and future of our community.

Sketching Terrain

Before the first week of play, we establish a general landscape for our map. This begins with a brief discussion (taking two minutes at the most) about the general terrain and habitat. This can be as simple as someone saying, "how about a community in a rocky desert?" and everyone else nodding in agreement. Once we agree, each of us introduces one detail about the local terrain and then sketches it onto the map. These sketches should be rough and simple, leaving lots of blank space for additions during play. The community itself should be fairly large on the map, perhaps taking up one third of the sheet. Usually, the community has around 60-80 members.

Decide on the general terrain. Have each person introduce a detail and draw it on the map before proceeding.

Starting Resources

Next, we each name an important resource for the community, something we might have in either Abundance or Scarcity. Don't draw it right away.

Some examples include:

- clean drinking water
- adequate shelter
- fish

Choosing a resource makes it important, if it wasn't already. If you pick 'gasoline' it becomes something our community wants and needs.

Have everyone name a resource before proceeding.

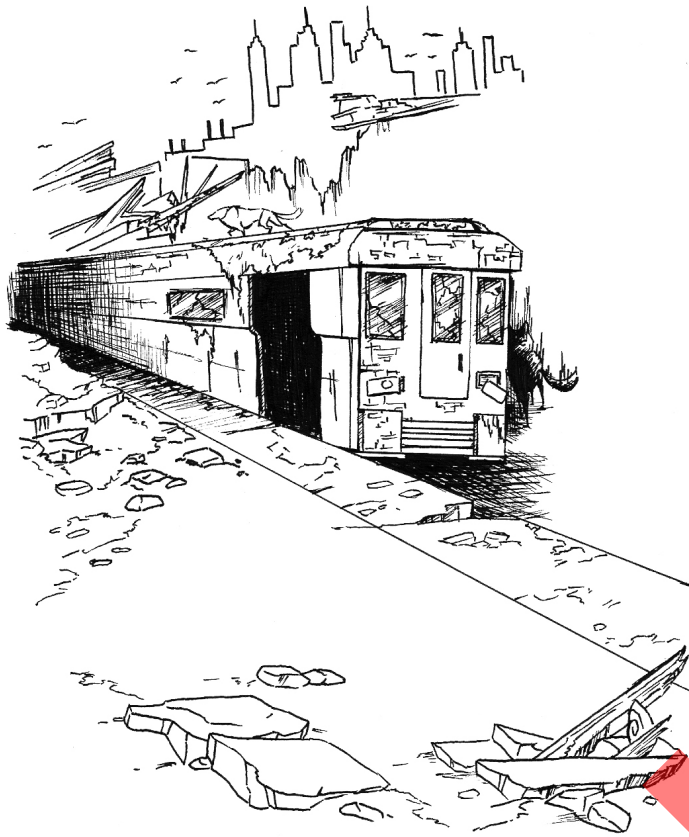
Now we choose one of those resources to be in Abundance. Whoever named that resource draws its abundance on the map. The rest are in Scarcity, and the remaining players figure out how to draw a lack of these resources on the map. Remember, common symbols are fine. We also keep track of our Abundances and Scarcities on an index card.

Choose which resource is in Abundance. Add all of the Abundances and Scarcities to the map and index card before proceeding.

Example Resources

The group is playing in an abandoned mining village nestled in thick woods. They name several resources: running water, transportation, and scrap metal.

They all agree that scrap metal is by far the most interesting Abundance, so it gets drawn on the map. Scarcities of running water and transportation are both drawn in as well.



Chapter Three: Play

Pass the book around the table, letting people take turns reading a section aloud to the group. Once we've finished the chapter, it's time to play.

The Week

Each week in our year is a turn taken by one player, with play moving clockwise around the table. The other players are quiet audience members, unless prompted otherwise. Weeks take an average of 2-3 minutes to complete.

Each week follows these three phases in order:

Play a Card. The active player draws a card, reads the relevant text aloud, and resolves it. Bold text indicates that the card has specific rules.

Adjust the Dice. The active player reduces each project die by 1, and any finished projects are updated.

Take an Action. The active player chooses and takes an action: Discover Something New, Hold a Discussion, or Start a Project.

Play a Card

As there are 52 cards, so there are 52 weeks. We won't necessarily get to play them all - the Frost Shepherds could arrive any time during Winter.

Most cards have two options to choose from, with an "or..." divider in between. Pick the option that you find the most interesting and fitting, and read the text aloud. The card might ask you a question, bring bad news, or create an opportunity. If you drew the card, it's up to you to make all of the decisions.

Many cards have bold text, which indicates specific rules to follow. These don't affect the other phases of the week.

Whenever it makes sense for a situation, add new drawings and symbols to the map to reflect what has changed.

Adjust the Dice

Unless your card specifically told you otherwise (in bold text), the next phase of the week is adjusting the dice. Reduce each project die on the map by 1. If a project reaches zero, the die gets removed and the project is completed. Whoever started the project gets to tell everyone how it turns out, and update the map to reflect its completion. If the project finished early because of a card, instead the active player will tell everyone how it turns out.

If a project die was just put on the board a moment ago, as a result of a card, don't adjust it this week. It's just getting underway.

A completed project is usually successful. This doesn't always mean that the whole community is happy with the results, but it generally goes as planned. An exploration project will always find *something*.

Discover Something New

One of the three action types is Discover Something New. Introduce a new situation. It might be a problem, an opportunity, or a bit of both. Draw that situation onto the map. Drawings should be small and simple: smaller than an inch, finished in under thirty seconds.

Whenever things seem too controlled and easy, we can use this action to introduce new issues and dilemmas. When individual characters get named, we can record those names on an index card.

Hold a Discussion

Another of the three action types is Hold A Discussion. You can choose to open with a question or a statement. Starting from you and going clockwise, each player gets to weigh in once, with a single statement of 1-2 sentences. If you opened with a question, you get to weigh in last. If you opened with a statement, that's it for you.

A discussion never results in a decision being made. Everyone weighs in, and then it's over. This is how conversations work in communities: they are untidy and inconclusive affairs.

It's important to stick to 1-2 sentences. If any of us feel like we have more to say on a topic, we can always hold another discussion about it on another week.

Each discussion is tied to a situation on the map. When the discussion ends, mark the situation with a small dot.

Start a Project

The last of the three action types is Start a Project. You choose a situation and declare what the community will do to resolve it. There is no agreeing or disagreeing - the community simply begins work.

As a group, quickly decide how many weeks the project would take to complete, from 1-6. Remember you are a small community. It isn't easy or quick to build a house or repair a waterwheel. If a project would reasonably take longer than six weeks to complete, it will need to be completed in stages.

Place a project die on the map, with the number showing how many weeks it will take to complete.

Example Situations

- There's a dried-up well at the edge of town.
- Many wolves have been slinking around in the woods at night.
- A self-declared prophet arrives.

Example Discussions

Some possible discussions:

- Should we strike back against the bikers?
- We could use the old school bus as a sleeping area for the children.
- I think we need to stop wasting our energy trying to build fences, and focus on building actual homes!

Example Projects

- We're converting the abandoned mineshaft into a cold food storage.
- We're going to send a search party to the city on the horizon to search for food and survivors.
- We're killing those wolves.
- We will sacrifice a newborn on the night of the full moon, to appease the Windmakers.