

The Viridians

An epistolary sci-fi larp about obligations, legacy and a concept of “home”.

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The game is loosely inspired by the short story “Zielone włosy” (eng. “The Green Hair”) by Czesław Chruszczewski, published in 1973 in “Rok 10 000” (eng. “The Year 10 000) sci-fi short stories anthology.

Introduction

Many years ago your ancestors landed on this planet. They were scientists and their goal was to perform a thorough survey of its intelligent life forms and civilizations they’ve build. After a brief reconnaissance the group split into two teams. One team adopted the human shape; the other one dipped into oceans as dolphins.

In pursuit of knowledge they paid an ultimate price: they became mortal, without a chance for resurrection and coming back home.

When the time is right, their kids are taught about their heirdom. They are supposed to keep investigating, keep trying to understand this world, collect knowledge and above all - never try to influence a natural course of the planet's history. That is a primary rule.

The laws are harsh and ruthless, so there was also a promise made. It says that one day, in a distant future, their descendants will receive The Signal. It will be the sign that the mission on Earth is completed and they are supposed to be taken home.

The signal came 43 days ago. The time has come to come back.

Game World and Characters

The game is played on planet Earth as it is. The visitors came from the planet Viridia on Feb. 15th, 1927. They call themselves Viridians... At least they used to do, since all of them feel mostly humans.

Back at home, Viridians are immortal. If they don’t die in a fatal accident, they live as long as they please. Eventually most of them decide to end their existence at some point. A sacrifice on the altar of science and discovery is a popular way of doing it.

Their human bodies are well designed, they never get sick. Their hearts simply stop beating when they are about 80 years old.

Viridians are scattered all over the world, living and working as all humans do. They prefer late reproduction and usually become parents when they are in their mid 30’s. Viridians rarely raise their children on their own: they prefer them to be adopted by human families. They don’t contact them until they reach an age of 13.

Viridians on Earth don't know what Viridia looks like. The first generation never said a word about it, not wanting their descendants to make observations by comparison. And not to be longing for the distant world they were probably never supposed to go to.

On the top of it there is one more thing Viridians don't know: what dolphins are up to. It was always a top theme of all gossip, speculations and conspiracy theories among Viridians.

Knowledge Storing

To store observations Viridians use memory smelting technique. They keep their thoughts in mnemosynums: small metal objects like coins, keys, screws or jewelry. Every 10 or 15 years they meditate for about an hour before they go to sleep, sorting their memories. When they are done, they place a mnemosynum under a pillow. They fall into deep sleep that may last up to 12 or even 14 hours. When they wake up, the mnemosynum is filled with the report.

Mnemosynums are being passed from generation to generation when Viridians feel their time is coming. The content of the mnemosynum may be retrieved the way it was smelted. One needs to put it under the pillow before going to sleep. The memories will come in the form of the dreams.

The Fourth Generation

All players are the fourth generation of Viridians. To be honest: they are not best at their mission. They rarely smelt memories, rather avoid the contact with their viridian relatives and live regular human lives. The devotion to the mission evaporated a bit in their souls. Still, they follow the rules. They are just not very passionate about it. At least, they weren't until 43 days ago.

Before the Game

- Find a group of people willing to play using good old fashioned letters.
- Share with them this document and confirm if they still are willing to play.
- Collect their mail addresses where the first letters will be sent. Put them in a database and share it among players as an off-game material.
- Establish a backchannel for communication during the game. It should be used only as an emergency if for any reason a gameflow is disrupted or halted. All in-game information should be exchanged via letters.
- Ask players to prepare at least 3 extra characters - their ancestors, one of each generation. Collect all the materials they create.

While creating an ancestor character ask your players to answer following questions:

- What was their name? Occupation? Where did they live (it's common for Viridians to change the place they live a few times)?
- Did they marry a human being or another Viridian? If it's a second option, it would be nice to prepare the character's background for them as well.

- What did they think about Earth, humans and dolphins? What were their thoughts about civilization homo sapiens created?
There were things they did like and the ones they don't. List as many as you come up with. Anything goes, from cinnamon buns to Hungarian love poetry from the XVIII century.
- There were moments they really wanted to interfere. They never did, following blindly the primary rule. Sometimes it was breaking their hearts. List those moments, there must have been plenty.
- Suggest them to prepare mnemosynums of their ancestors. They should be aware of what they contain.

Give your players a hand if they struggle with coming up with ideas. Tip: they can build those characters upon actual relatives and members of their families.

Game Phases

Prologue

Start the game when a natural disaster happens somewhere in the world and plenty of people will be missing.

You, the GM, need to send to each player a goodbye letter from their living ancestors. It says that they will be found on the missing lists after the tragic events. The disaster was orchestrated by Viridians who came to take them home. All living members of the 3rd and 2nd generation disappeared this way. There will be another transport for the 4th generation and the dolphins soon. They ask not to worry, cause digital tracks of communication between their children will be precisely tracked and no one will be left behind.

The ancestors hope the 4th generation won't disappoint them and prepare the full reports in the form of mnemosynums, as they were taught.

The Conspiracy

None of you, representatives of the 4th generation, want to go anywhere. Earth is your home. But Viridians who came to pick you all up seem to have godlike technology. You don't seem to stand a chance in disobeying them. You have a plan, but it's forged purely by desperation.

They Do Listen

You are traced. That's a problem, but you came up with the solution. One of you managed to find all the others and proposed to work together to avoid the fate of your parents. You communicated by traditional letters. Following rules are obeyed:

- The letter is composed of the pages inside and the marks on the envelope. The envelope is crucial to decoding the meaning of what's really written inside. It's strongly suggested to draw, put stickers or cut out photographs from magazines and glue them on it.

- You never send a letter to the same address more than once. In each of your letters leave instructions about where to send the next letter to you. Your favourite cafeteria, local game store or home of your co-worker are perfect for covering your tracks.

We Walked Among You

The whole plan may fail. Humans will never find out about hundreds of aliens living by their side for decades. Write down The Truth: everything, from your true identity, observations you've made through your lifetime, suggestions for change, to the story of the viridian mission on Earth and the fate of your ancestors. Let it be your letter to humankind if everything goes wrong. When you have it ready, send it to the one of you who prepares the envelopes you like best. You can send it in parts, if you like.

The Envoi for the Dolphins

You hope that Viridians won't find you, since you quit all the electronic communication between each other. But, you are still a Viridian, after all. You follow the rules and obligations.

Here is what you have to do.

- Prepare the full report made of all the observations you've made through your lifetime and smelt it in at least two or three mnemosynums.
- When you will be ready, find out which one of you lives in the proximity of the ocean or at a sea. All of you should send your mnemosynums to them.
- Set up the time and day that's convenient for everyone. At the same moment sit in solitude for 15 minutes and think about the dolphins. Send them a telepathic message that says: "We are not safe among humans. Please take care about our mnemosynums".
- The answer should come to the ones having mnemosynums within a few days in the form of a dream. The next day, the ones who received smelted reports must go to the shore and throw all the mnemosynums into the water.

The dolphins, hopefully, will do the rest.

Ending

Play until the next natural disaster of a decent magnitude.

If anyone went missing and it happened in a 200km radius from the place you've been at the moment, you would be taken "home" to Viridia.

Otherwise, you stay on Earth.

Additional Game Rules

- Ask players to send scans or pics of all of the letters and envelopes they send to each other.
- Anyone can drop from the game at any moment. In this case, ask them to send one last letter with their mnemosynums and The Truth.