

# What Dust Remains

CAN YOU LEAVE A LASTING LEGACY  
WITHOUT SACRIFICING ALL THAT MATTERS?

# 1. Overview

*What Dust Remains* is a game about balancing ambition and success with the reality of truly painful sacrifices. Through extensive narrative prompts, players live out the life of one pioneer, who goes through several life stages—from young, hopeful adulthood, to desperate, final moments.

This is not a happy story. For one, the pioneer dies. This is known. This is unavoidable. *What Dust Remains* is a story about many small failures that threaten to overshadow whatever hope remains. Happy endings are rare—and almost impossible.

Play *What Dust Remains* if you wish to engage in collaborative storytelling about sacrifices in the context of legacy-building.

## 1.1. Number of Players

This game is recommended for 2-3 players, although solo play is also possible. *What Dust Remains* can be played without a Game Master or Emcee; however, it is recommended that there be at least one experienced player in the group.

## 1.2. Length of Play

2-3 hours.

## 1.3. Game Requirements

All you need are: 4 six-sided dice (hereafter referred to as 'dice'), a deck of cards with jokers removed, and writing implements.

## 2. Goal

The goal of the game is to build as much levels of **legacy** as possible, while preserving **facets** such as **principles**. However, ultimately, your goal is to create a satisfying narrative.

## 3. Setup

Worldbuilding is a necessary first step, as *What Dust Remains* can be set in any context or milieu. The possibilities are endless.

You must establish facts around the pioneer and the world they live in. To help you out, here are some guiding questions that you can answer as a group:

### 3. Setup (continued)

- **What world is the pioneer immersed in?**

*For example: a post-apocalyptic dystopia, a modern Southeast Asian city, a freezing outpost in the Arctic region*

- **What are the main issues that plague this world?**

*For example: a seemingly-incurable disease, disconnected citizens, fearsome terrors of the night*

- **Who is the pioneer, what is their name, and what is their role?**

*For example: scientist working on finding the cure, metropolitan office worker with little free time, security worker who keeps the night threats at bay*

Write down your answers on a piece of paper and place it in the middle of the play area.

Next, players must craft a **legacy**. The **legacy** is the impact that the pioneer wishes to make in the world that you've built. It should be an achievement that they will devote their entire life to. It keeps them awake at night,

## SAMPLE GAMEPLAY

Mila decides to play a solo game. She gathers all the materials she would need: paper, writing implement, dice, and cards. She dedicates a quiet time and two hours to her activity.

She starts by sketching out details of the pioneer's world. She decides to set it in a magical forest in Southeast Asia, where fantastic creatures such as *tikbalang* and *kapre* and *manananggal* live. There are two primary issues that plague their world: first, are the mad, frenzied creatures that attack their home town at night. Second, is the encroaching advent of humans and the modernity that they bring. She decides that the pioneer will be a *tikbalang* named Armin, who acts as a scout so that they can keep the terrible night creatures at bay.

### 3. Setup (continued)

makes them wonder whether they've truly done anything meaningful for the world. It must be lofty, ambitious, aspirational.

To create a **legacy**, players must take one turn thinking and sharing one thing that they think the pioneer always wanted to do ever since childhood. Each player must say, coming from the point of view of the pioneer, "When I was a kid, I've always wanted to be ..."

Once all players have shared their response, decide as a group how an adult pioneer can integrate all of these childhood desires into one overarching wish in life. **Legacy** can be as broad as "die beloved by all their friends and peers" or as specific as, "head into the Amazon forest to single-handedly save capybaras from dying out".

## SAMPLE GAMEPLAY

Continuing her *tikbalang* story, Mila thinks up of an appropriate legacy that stems from Armin's childhood desire.

She comes up with the following phrase: "Ever since he was a child, Armin wanted to be friends with humans." Thinking up of the corresponding legacy, she is inspired, and writes down, "Wants to unite magical creatures and humans in a fight against the night creatures."

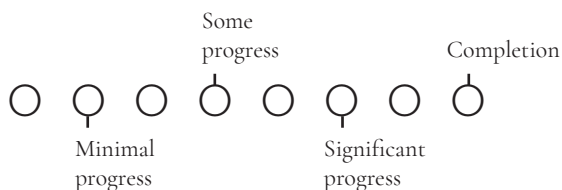
# Legacy

“I stand and look at death’s door.  
But I step forward with gladness,  
having found meaning by...



...I will not die in vain.”

## Levels of Legacy





### 3. Setup (continued)

The opposite page shows a sample **legacy template**. The upper side displays a key phrase that will be instrumental to the epilogue of the game. Write down your **legacy** on the box underneath.

Some sample **legacies** include:

- ...earning self-worth and becoming worthy of my parents' love
- ...enacting my revenge against my lover's murderer
- ...winning the war for spice, and overturning my father's legacy

The lower portion of the template, on the other hand, shows the levels of **legacy** that remain to be completed. Shade a circle when you build a level of **legacy**. When you've shaded eight circles, you've completed that **legacy**.

### 3. Setup (continued)

Afterwards, all players will help determine **facets**.

**Facets** shape the pioneer's capability and personality.

They are the first to be sacrificed in order to pursue better chances of success during the pioneer's lifetime.

There are three types of facets in the game:

- **Resources** are finite assets or tools, whether material or immaterial, that make it easier for the pioneer to adequately respond to life's challenges.

*For example: wealth, a steady source of income, mana*

- **Joys** are finite sources of happiness, whether material or immaterial, that provide emotional fulfilment and satisfaction to the pioneer.

*For example: a lover, a security blanket, a beloved pet*

- **Principles** are core virtues or beliefs that define the pioneer's inner values.

*For example: integrity, patience, diligence*

Players must generate three **facets** for each type, totaling nine in all. You may create your own **facets** based on the world you've built, or you may roll dice to randomly determine it.

If you would like to roll for the **facets**, simply refer to the tables below. For each type of **facet**, players take turns rolling one dice and checking against the results. Ignore duplicates. Once all three **facets** for any given type have been obtained, move on to the next. Write these all down and segregate by **facet** type.

## Resource

1	Inheritance. Someone has bestowed you with a valuable resource that can help in your life. What is it?
2	Your mind. What particular aspect, such as optimism, adaptability, or creativity, are you strong with?
3	A powerful friend. Someone is indebted to you, and always has your back. Who is it?
4	Your physique. How does it manifest? Is it might? Is it reflexes? Decide which boon you possess.
5	Your family name. It commands respect and dignity in many circles. Why?
6	Luck. Somehow, the fortunes smile upon you. How does it manifest?

### 3. Setup (continued)

#### Joy

1	Advocacy. You have a project—different from your legacy—that you drive or support. What is it?
2	A meaningful relationship. You thrive on their trust and respect. Who is it?
3	Esteem. People look up to you. What have you done to earn this?
4	Safety. You are protected from harm, thanks to either safe spaces or because of other safety nets. How are you protected?
5	A support network. You have friends who look out for you. Who are they?
6	A cherished hobby. It gives you joy and contentment. What is it?

#### Principle

1	Choose: humility, or patience. How does this manifest?
2	Choose: honesty, or justice. How does this manifest?
3	Choose: kindness, or charity. How does this manifest?
4	Choose: loyalty, or assertiveness. How does this manifest?
5	Choose: tenacity, or courage. How does this manifest?
6	Choose: dignity, or honor. How does this manifest?

## SAMPLE GAMEPLAY

Mila proceeds to create the 9 facets that Armin holds. She comes up with the following list by rolling against the random tables. She arranges them by type:

### Resources

1. Mind — adaptability
2. Physique — inhuman strength
3. Powerful friend — the favor of the Fairy Queen

### Joys

1. Hobby — listening to music at night
2. Advocacy — boosting the scouting capabilities of the forest
3. Relationship — Mother

### Principles

1. Charity — towards human beings
2. Kindness — towards all forest creatures
3. Dignity — as a *tikbalang*

## 4. Gameplay Overview

*What Dust Remains* charts out the life of the pioneer across four life stages. Each stage has a corresponding life suit:

<b>Life Stage</b>	<b>Suit</b>
Youth	Heart
Transition	Diamond
Maturity	Club
Final Moments	Spade

These life stages are played in order: Hearts suit first, then Diamond, Club, and lastly, Spade.

Life stages in *What Dust Remains* consists of 3 rounds. Each round consists of up to 3 turns. Each turn represents a milestone in the pioneer's life. This milestone also reveals a challenge that requires action; success or failure in this challenge will determine if the pioneer will have the opportunity to build up their **legacy**.

## 5. Playing Each Round and Turn

The oldest player starts the very first turn of the first round of the first life stage: Heart. Afterwards, the first turn for subsequent life stages begins with the person to the left of whoever started the previous life stage.

When the life stage starts, cards with the same suit as that life stage are divided into three subdecks:

- Ace to 5
- 6 to 10
- Royals

Each of these subdecks correspond to a turn in the round. During the first turn, the player draws from the first subdeck (ace to 5). During the second turn, the next player draws from the next subdeck (6 to 10). And on the third turn—the last turn for the round—the next player picks from the last subdeck (Royals).

That player must then read out and choose from the available prompts corresponding to the card that they drew, referring to the tables in the next section, **Playing Each Life Stage**.

## 5. Playing Each Round and Turn (continued)

The player will then roll dice to determine success or failure for that challenge. Before that, however, the player should define what success or failure means in the pioneer's context.

The number of dice rolled is dependent on the life stage. For the Heart stage, the number of dice to be rolled is 4; for Diamond it is 3; for Club 2, and for Spade 1.

If any of the dice comes up a 5 or a 6, then the roll is a success. The player must narrate what happens as a result.

Remember that the round consists of three turns only. The second turn, however, can only start if the roll for the first turn is a success. Subsequently, the third turn can only start if the roll for the second turn succeeds.

IF ANY ROLL FAILS, THEN THE ROUND AUTOMATICALLY ENDS. The next player must draw from the first subdeck all over again.

The only way to prevent this is to sacrifice a **facet**. If a **facet** is sacrificed, the pool of dice is rerolled. Success is not a



guarantee.

**Facets** must be sacrificed in order: **resources** must be depleted first before **joys** can be sacrificed; **joys** must be depleted first before **principles** can.

When a **facet** is sacrificed, the player must narrate what happens.

Play continues until either all 8 levels of **legacy** have been built, or if the last round of the Spade life stage concludes.

## 6. Playing Each Life Stage

The following pages detail the introductions, reflections, and prompts corresponding to all the life stages.

### *Youth* **HEART**

When you begin this life stage, read the following words aloud:

*The world shimmers right before you. Everything is possible, and you can be anyone you want. Sure, it*

## SAMPLE GAMEPLAY

Mila draws from the final subdeck for her round.

*You've matured and grown capable in many ways. How have your successes exemplified why you can make great achievements? What do you do to accomplish this? Roll dice to build a level of legacy.*

She decides that Armin is capable of achieving his goals, because he has the support of his community and the opportunity to actually immerse himself in a human community. She rolls three dice, since she's in the Diamond life stage, to determine success or failure. It's a 1, 4, and another 4. Oops.

She looks at her facets and sees what could be done. She's depleted her resources, so only Joys can be sacrificed at this point. She decides on music, Armin's hobby.

She narrates what happens and rerolls her three dice: 2, 4, and 6. Success!

## Youth HEART (continued)

*sounds like it'll be hard work, but you know you can do it. You're you. Special. Unique. Brimming with endless potential.*

Divide Heart cards into 3 subdecks: ace to 5, 6 to 10, then royals. You roll 4 dice during this life stage. Make sure to elaborate what happens to the pioneer, based on whether the dice roll is a success or failure.

A	It's a perfect opportunity to start a new activity, project or initiative. What do you kickstart?	A legacy activity, project, or initiative has been handed off to you. How do you improve upon its progress?
2	You've decided to undertake new education to understand the world better. What did you learn, and why do you focus on it?	You've decided to undergo training to upskill one of your talents. What skill do you hone, and why is it necessary?
3	You've started a new career. What is your new role and why are you uniquely qualified for it?	You've been promoted in your career. How did your role evolve, and why is it more challenging?

## Youth

# HEART (continued)

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| 4 | You've fallen in love for the first time. Who did you fall in love with, and how do you pursue them as a romantic interest? | You've somehow obtained a protégé, a student willing to learn your wisdom. Who are they, and what do you teach them? |
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| 5 | You've met a group of new friends. What do you have in common, and why does their approval matter to you? | You've been thrust into the role of leadership in a community. Why were you chosen and why is this role hard-won? |
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| 6 | Somehow, one of your core assumptions about your past success has been wrong all along. What takes you by surprise and why does it make you feel vulnerable? | Somehow, one of your core projections for the future turns out to be incorrect. What had you predicted and why does this error significantly affect your trajectory? |
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| 7 | Because of your success, demand has only piled up. What are you expected to perform even more and why do you feel pressured? | Despite your success, momentum has stalled completely. Why have energies waned, and what do you do to jumpstart it again? |
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8	Somebody new arrives and takes the limelight off of you. How do you feel about this change and why does it threaten to consume you?	Somebody important leaves an activity, project or initiative. How does it affect your progress and why does it threaten to destabilize it?
9	Your success would not have been possible without the help of your friends. How have they supported you and what steps do you take to strengthen the relationship?	Your friends have been, at best, useless to your success. At worst, detrimental. How have they dragged you down and what steps do you take to cut them out?
10	Things become a bit out of control. Why are you taken aback and what scares you?	Things feel a little too stifled and controlled. What restrictions have suddenly come down and why does it hinder your actions?
Royals	How are you hopeful about the future, and why have your successes uniquely positioned you to achieve your true potential? What do you start doing to accomplish it?	

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## *Youth* **HEART (continued)**

When all rounds for this life stage ends, *reflect* by answering the following questions:

- How have I changed and grown?
- How did the world around me react to my actions?
- How has this life stage strengthened my resolve to achieve my rightful legacy?

At this point, you will also have the opportunity to either: reorder **facets** OR alter **facets**. You cannot reorder or alter facets that have already been sacrificed.

## *Transition* **DIAMOND**

When you begin this life stage, read the following words aloud:

*Your life has finally begun in full earnest. You're not yet quite sure how to get to where you want, but you know how to walk the path. You have the tools, the wit, the skill*

*to get there. You'll do just fine. You're still young, after all.*

Divide Diamond cards into 3 subdecks: ace to 5, 6 to 10, then royals. You roll 3 dice during this life stage. Make sure to elaborate what happens to the pioneer, based on whether the dice roll is a success or failure.

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A	Someone or some group steps up to you demanding to be heard. Who are they and why do they have issue with you?	Your actions have inadvertently caused someone or some group to be silenced. How do you realize this and do you take steps to change the situation?
2	A dearly beloved friend, colleague, partner, or family member dies. Who died and why does it affect you?	A dearly beloved friend, colleague, or family member, chooses to disown you. Who are they and why did they do it?
3	You're offered two choices: to stay here and grow your skills and opportunities, or to explore new lands and new possibilities. Why was this offer made and what choice do you make?	You're confronted with two desires: to stay with your career and thrive among its ranks, or to pursue other opportunities outside of your comfort zone. How did this dilemma arise and what choice do you make?

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## *Transition*

### **DIAMOND (continued)**

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4	You take time off your responsibilities to unwind and relax. How do you let the steam off and what new realizations does it give you?	You've been forced to take time off for the time being. What happened and how do you reconcile it with your own inner feelings?
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5	You've conquered a seemingly-impossible task and become popular as a result. What reputation does it give you and how do you feel about the limelight?	You've conquered a seemingly-impossible task...but have made enemies in the process. Who are they, and what infamy do you hold with them?
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6	An unattended aspect of the situation grows and becomes problematic for you. What happened and how does it threaten you?	Your attention to and action on the situation has somehow made things worse. What happened and why are you at fault?
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7	In order to succeed, you had to unlearn an important lesson. What did you unlearn, and why was it needed?	In order to succeed, you had to learn a painful lesson. What did you learn, and why was it needed?
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8	Someone or some group is galvanized to action as a result of your decisions. Who is it, and why is there a threat to your goals and stability?	Someone or some group have turned fanatical in their support for you. Who is it, and how does it affect how others deal with or perceive you?
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9	You've somehow gained responsibility for one or more persons' wellbeing, thanks to past events. Who is under your charge, and why were you made responsible for them?	You've somehow gained responsibility for a priceless artifact or heirloom. What item is it, and why were you made responsible for it?
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10	You are overcome with nostalgia for easier days and easier times. What memory holds you in its grip, and what destructive impulse do you deal with as a result?	You are overcome with impatience for better days and better times. What idea holds you in its grip, and what destructive impulse do you deal with as a result?
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Royals	You've matured and grown capable in many ways. How have your successes exemplified why you can make great achievements? What do you do to accomplish this?
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When all rounds for this life stage ends, *reflect* by answering the following questions:

## *Transition* **DIAMOND (continued)**

- How have I changed and grown?
- How did the world around me react to my actions?
- How has this life stage strengthened my resolve to achieve my rightful legacy?

At this point, you will also have the opportunity to either: reorder **facets** OR alter **facets**. You cannot reorder or alter facets that have already been sacrificed.

## *Maturity* **CLUB**

When you begin this life stage, read the following words aloud:

*You've reached your stride, and you're still confident you can make an impact. Sure, it's taking longer than you anticipated, but there's always a way forward...right? After all, time is running out. Your options are starting to get limited. You're nervous, but you can't stop. You can't fail. It's far too late, now.*

Divide Club cards into 3 subdecks: ace to 5, 6 to 10, then royals. You roll 2 dice during this life stage. Make sure to elaborate what happens to the pioneer, based on whether the dice roll is a success or failure.

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A	Your body has changed in ways you've only just noticed. Your smile is different, too. What caused these transformations and what do you do in response?	Your mind has changed in ways you've only just noticed. Your personality, too. What caused these transformations and what do you do in response?
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2	A shocking turn of events hits you when you least expect it. What happened and how does it fester upon your vulnerabilities?	A long-predicted disaster happens at last. What happens and how have your preparations failed?
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3	One night, your safety and security suddenly become at risk. What happened and how do you react?	One night, your prestige and reputation suddenly become at risk. What happened and how do you react?
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4	You've cultivated many habits in an attempt to cope with life and make things much easier. What is it, and how did you start?	You've developed behavioral quirks and oddities that make you a little...strange. What is it, and why do you have it?
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## *Maturity* **CLUB (continued)**

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| 5 | Relationships fade over time. Who is important to you? Do you attempt to keep close to them or not?  | Obligations become more difficult over time. What responsibility is slipping from you? Do you attempt to pursue it, or let it go?                              |
| 6 | Your physical health is severely affected because of past decisions you've made. What happened to you and how is it affecting your capabilities? | Your social networks are severely affected because of past decisions you've made. What happened to your connections and how is it affecting your capabilities? |
| 7 | To fuel your success, a beloved activity, project or initiative has been put at risk. What is it, and what threatens it?                         | Your actions have inadvertently caused someone to suffer. Who is affected and why did they endure pain?  |
| 8 | Someone you once trusted betrays you. What is their betrayal, and how do you react?  | Someone you once looked up to disdains you. Why do they scorn you, and how do you react?   |
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9	Reaching this stage has caused you many tribulations and just as many heartbreaks. How do you fight off depressive moods?	Reaching this stage has caused you many causes for rage and frustration. How do you keep your destructive actions at bay?
10	Some person or group attempts to sabotage the success you've just built. Who are they, and what are their plans?	The problem turns out to be much bigger than what you expected. Why is it so, and how do you plan on addressing it?
Royals	Your time is soon approaching. You can feel it in your bones. How do you push yourself to make a meaningful impact on the world? What do you do to accomplish this?	

When all rounds for this life stage ends, *reflect* by answering the following questions:

- How have I changed and grown?
- How did the world around me react to my actions?
- How has this life stage strengthened my resolve to achieve my rightful legacy?

At this point, you will also have the opportunity to either: reorder **facets** OR alter **facets**. You cannot reorder or alter facets that have already been sacrificed.

## *Final Moments* **SPADE**

When you begin this life stage, read the following words aloud:

*It's here at last. You thought you could avoid it, but it comes for everyone. Death. But you've led a fulfilling life, right? Surely you must have made a positive impact. The thought gnaws at you. Time has run out. Where do you stand? What have you achieved?*

Divide Spade cards into 3 subdecks: ace to 5, 6 to 10, then royals. You roll 1 dice during this life stage. Make sure to elaborate what happens to the pioneer, based on whether the dice roll is a success or failure.

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A Important memories begin to fade. What memory do you most fear to lose and how do you cope with that threat?

Tales of your past accomplishments have become distorted. How has perception changed, and how does it threaten you?

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2 A terrible ailment befalls on someone dear to you. What happened, and why is it life-threatening?

A long-predicted disaster happens at last. What happens and how have your preparations failed?

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3	You fear that you no longer remain relevant to the world around you. Why has the world become indifferent, and how do you attempt to regain your relevance?	You return to your origin, your home, in order to seek answers. But nothing is familiar anymore. What changed, and how do you cope with the displacement you experience?
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4	Movement has become difficult. What opportunities are lost to you, and how do you find ways to adjust?	You are replaced in your role by someone much younger...and capable. Who are they, and what do you do to adjust to the situation?
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5	You think about death. Many times, now. What are your thoughts and how does it make you feel? Roll dice to see if these thoughts are healthy musings or if they consume you.	You think about the life you've led, and the many ways it could have changed. What was your biggest regret, and why are you obsessed?
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6-10	The situation escalates, and threatens to bring you stress, regret, and despair. What happened, and how do you vow to stand tall and resist its gloomy call? Roll dice to see if you avoid defeat.	
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Royals	Despite all odds, you can still make an impact. How has your wisdom and maturity enabled you to make a difference? What do you do to accomplish this?	
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## *Final Moments* **SPADE (continued)**

When 3 rounds have passed and this life stage ends, do not reflect. All **facets** are final and can no longer be reordered or altered.

The pioneer is dead.

## **7. Ending the Game**

When the final life stage concludes, or when all eight levels of legacy have been achieved, the game winds down to its end.

Start by tallying how many levels of **legacy** you've been able to build. A **legacy** with eight or more levels means that it has been fully realized. Lesser levels represent only partial progress towards its accomplishment. Memories of the pioneer fade out and are soon scattered to the winds.

Regardless of whether it has been achieved or not, together as one voice, all players must state aloud the **legacy** that



has been written down at the start. Follow the spiel: “I stand and look at death’s door. But I step forward with gladness, having found meaning by \_\_\_\_\_. I will not die in vain.”

Then, take each of the sacrificed **facets**. Taking turns from player to player, state the following out loud: “For all this, I have sacrificed \_\_\_\_\_.”

For each remaining **facet**, declare, as a group: “All that remains is \_\_\_\_\_.”

Then—be silent, for a few moments.

Afterwards, answer the following questions, in sequence, as a group:

- Regardless of whether you’ve achieved your legacy, what could you be grateful for?
- How have your actions benefited future generations, even in tiny ways?
- How have you found meaning in life, despite all that has happened?

Finally, debrief and process what happened. Share your

## 7. Ending the Game (continued)

thoughts on how the game unfolded. Talk about moments that took you by surprise. Or moments that resonated.

ALTERNATELY, keep quiet and simply soak in the experience. Take a deep breath and allow yourself the space to appreciate all your hard work. Thank you for playing.