Solo Play Rules

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9.1 Solo Game Loop

Solo play follows this iterative structure:

Step 1: Establish the Scene

Where are you? What's happening?

Use the **Location Generator** (Section 9.4) or decide based on your character's goals. Set stakes: "I'm escorting a caravan through the twilight belt when a superstorm warning arrives."

Step 2: Frame Your Intent

What do you want to accomplish?

Be specific: "I want to find shelter before the storm hits" or "I want to investigate the ruins for salvageable tech."

Step 3: Consult the Oracles

Use the Question Oracle if your character isn't directly acting: "Is there shelter nearby?"

Use the Risk Oracle if your character is performing an action with uncertain outcome: "Can I navigate to shelter in time?"

Step 4: Resolve Actions

If the Risk Oracle says you need to make a **check** or **perilous check**, roll skills as normal. Reduce skill ratings after rolling.

Interpret results with complications. Use tables in Section 5 or improvise based on context.

Step 5: Update Resources

Mark stress, reduce skills, track water/food/equipment usage. Duskara is unforgiving.

Step 6: Catch Your Breath

When skills are depleted (all at d4 or close), catch your breath. Reset skills but roll on the **Complication Table** (Section 5) to introduce new threat.

Step 7: Advance the Story

Interpret oracle results narratively. Update your character journal. Introduce new challenges based on complications.

Repeat the loop.

Question Oracle

Use this when your character isn't directly involved, or when you need to disclaim decision-making.

Ask a yes/no question. Imagine the outcome. Roll a die based on the **likelihood:**

- **Very unlikely:** d4
- **Unlikely:** d6
- **Likely:** d8
- **Very likely:** d10
- **Almost certain:** d12

Interpret the result:

- **1-2:** "No, and…" (introduce Duskaran complication)
- **3-4:** "Yes, but…" (success with Duskaran cost)
- **5+:** "Yes, and…" (success with Duskaran benefit)

Duskaran Complications (No, and…)

- Storm worsens, forcing immediate shelter
- Predator detects you
- Water source is contaminated
- Equipment breaks
- Rival faction arrives
- Geothermal vent destabilizes

Duskaran Costs (Yes, but…)

- Find shelter, but it's occupied (bandits, predators)
- Locate water, but it attracts attention
- Reach destination, but faction dispute delays you
- Salvage tech, but it's unstable/dangerous
- Bond with creature, but it's wounded/aggressive

Duskaran Benefits (Yes, and…)

- Find cache with extra supplies

- Befriend helpful NPC or faction agent
- Discover shortcut or safe route
- Learn valuable information
- Recover rare/powerful item

Example Question Oracle Use

Question: "Is there a settlement within a day's travel?"

Context: You're lost in the twilight belt after your caravan was ambushed.

Likelihood: Likely (d8) — settlements are common along routes

Roll: 3 → "Yes, but..."

Interpretation: "You spot Aurora Bastion's windspires on the horizon, but a dust storm is rolling in from the day side. You'll need to navigate through reduced visibility, and the settlement gates may close before you arrive."

Risk Oracle

Use this when your character attempts something challenging with uncertain outcome.

Assess your **level of control** over the situation. When in doubt, use **precarious** (d6).

Roll a die based on control level:

- **Chaotic:** d4 (superstorm, psychic aberration, major predator)
- **Precarious:** d6 (unstable Deep Roads, hostile faction, resource scarcity)
- **Manageable:** d8 (routine caravan travel, minor salvage)
- **Predictable:** d10 (safe settlement activity, familiar tasks)
- **Stable:** d12 (complete control, home base)

Interpret the result:

- **1-2:** Situation is **very risky**. Make a **perilous check**.
- **3-4:** Situation is **risky**. Make a **check**.
- **5+:** Not risky. You simply do it.

Assessing Control Levels

Chaotic (d4):

- Navigating superstorm
- Confronting Weather Wraith
- Fighting wind serpent pack
- Day-side equipment failure during heat spike
- Geothermal eruption in progress

Precarious (d6):

- Negotiating with hostile faction
- Traversing unstable Deep Roads section
- Tracking predator through ruins
- Rationing last water tokens
- Repairing critical equipment under time pressure

Manageable (d8):

- Escorting caravan on clear route
- Routine salvage in explored ruins

- Trading with friendly settlement
- Navigating familiar twilight belt terrain
- Using psychic abilities within limits

Predictable (d10):

- Resupplying in safe settlement
- Repairing equipment with proper tools
- Communicating via comm crystal
- Resting in secure shelter
- Routine weather working

Stable (d12):

- Activities at home base
- No time pressure or threats
- Full resources available
- Complete knowledge of situation

Example Risk Oracle Use

Intent: "I want to navigate through the dust storm to reach Aurora Bastion before the gates close."

Assessment: Precarious (d6) — dust storm reduces visibility, but you know the general direction.

Roll: 4 → "Risky. Make a check."

Check: You roll your **Navigate** skill (currently d8). Result: 5 → Success!

Interpretation: "You push through the dust storm, wind compass guiding you. As the settlement walls loom through the haze, you hear the warning bells—gates closing in minutes. You sprint the last hundred meters and slip through just as the heavy doors grind shut."

Consequence: Reduce Navigate skill to d6. You're exhausted—mark 1 stress.

Solo-Specific Tables

These tables help generate content when you need inspiration.

Mission Generator (d12)

1. **Locate Water Source:** Find hidden aquifer, repair cistern, or negotiate access to controlled reservoir.
2. **Deliver Supplies:** Escort caravan, protect cargo, navigate hostile territory or weather.
3. **Investigate Ruins:** Explore Deep Roads, day-side salvage site, or alien structure. Recover artifacts.
4. **Mediate Dispute:** Resolve inter-settlement conflict, faction rivalry, or resource allocation disagreement.
5. **Track Predator:** Hunt dangerous creature threatening settlement or caravan routes.
6. **Recover Lost Caravan:** Search for missing traders. Determine if they were lost to weather, predators, or bandits.
7. **Repair Critical Infrastructure:** Fix geothermal vent, wind turbine, or water purification system under time pressure.
8. **Escort Dignitary:** Protect important person (Water Judge, Weatherworker, Archivist) through dangerous territory.
9. **Contain Psychic Aberration:** Investigate Weather Wraith, bonding backlash, or other psychic phenomena. Contain or eliminate threat.
10. **Establish Outpost:** Scout location, secure resources, defend against threats to create new settlement.
11. **Retrieve Ancient Tech:** Infiltrate restricted area, negotiate with faction, or brave environmental hazard to recover valuable Earth artifact.
12. **Survive Catastrophe:** React to superstorm, geothermal eruption, auroral disruption, or other disaster. Protect others if possible.

Location Generator (d12)

1. **Twilight Belt Settlement** (Aetherion, Khal-Rim, Aurora Bastion, or create new)
2. **Deep Roads Section** (ancient tunnels, geothermal chambers, resonance nodes)
3. **Day-Side Outpost** (mining operation, salvage site, thermal research station)
4. **Night-Side Cave** (Lumina Caverns, ice harvesting grounds, fungal farms)
5. **Geothermal Vent** (natural hotspot, settlement heat source, alien structure)
6. **Abandoned Settlement** (ghost town, ruins, recent evacuation)
7. **Caravan Route** (trade road, open twilight belt, superstorm path)
8. **Ancient Ruins** (Earth technology cache, alien structure, Deep Roads entrance)

9. **Wind Farm** (energy generation facility, turbine forest, maintenance towers)
10. **Ice Fields** (night-side glacier, harvesting camp, frozen tundra)
11. **Storm Observation Post** (Weatherworker station, auroral observatory, signal relay)
12. **Hidden Cache** (secret water reserve, smuggler's stash, forgotten supply depot)

NPC Encounters (d12)

Roll for **attitude** separately: 1-4 = hostile, 5-8 = neutral, 9-12 = friendly.

1. **Caravan Trader** (hauling goods, offering information or trade)
2. **Daywalker** (day-side specialist, scarred and intense)
3. **Weatherworker** (psychic ritualist, concerned with storms)
4. **Water Judge** (resource arbiter, wielding significant authority)
5. **Deepkin Scout** (cave-dweller, speaks via resonance or translator)
6. **Beastwalker** (bonded with wind serpent or thermal lizard)
7. **Bandit** (desperate or opportunistic raider)
8. **Archivist** (lore keeper, seeking artifacts or knowledge)
9. **Settlement Refugee** (fleeing disaster, superstorm, or conflict)
10. **Rival Explorer** (competing for same goal or resources)
11. **Faction Agent** (guild representative, enforcer, or diplomat)
12. **Psychic Seeker** (individual experiencing awakening, needs guidance)

Environmental Events (d8)

1. **Superstorm Approaches** (wind increases, pressure drops, hours until impact)
2. **Auroral Disruption** (electromagnetic interference, psychic feedback)
3. **Thermal Inversion** (temperature gradient reverses, causes chaos)
4. **Dust Storm** (day-side winds carry abrasive particles into twilight belt)
5. **Geothermal Tremor** (ground shakes, heat spikes, risk of eruption)
6. **Wind Shift** (predictable patterns change, navigation unreliable)
7. **Bioluminescent Bloom** (glowcap spores fill air, hallucinogenic effects)
8. **Silent Zone** (wind stops inexplicably, precedes catastrophic storm)

Solo Campaign Frameworks

Choose one framework or blend elements to create your own.

1. Lone Wanderer

Concept: You're a solo explorer, trader, or exile surviving across settlements. Build reputation, gather resources, and carve out a place in the world.

Structure:

- Session = one mission or journey
- Track reputation with factions (5-point scale: hostile to allied)
- Build resource stockpile over time
- Long-term goal: establish home base, gain faction membership, or achieve legendary status

Key Mechanics:

- Use Mission Generator for each session
- Track water tokens, equipment, and faction standing
- Introduce recurring NPCs (allies, rivals, contacts)
- Catch your breath = arrive at new settlement or find shelter

2. Settlement Caretaker

Concept: You manage a small outpost (20-50 inhabitants). Deal with resource shortages, external threats, and internal disputes.

Structure:

- Session = one crisis (water shortage, superstorm, diplomatic incident)
- Track settlement resources: Water (1-10), Power (1-10), Provisions (1-10)
- Track population morale (1-10)
- Long-term goal: achieve stability (all resources 7+) or relocate

Key Mechanics:

- Use Complication Tables to generate crises

- Each session, roll d6: 1-2 = resource depletes 1 point, 3-4 = stays same, 5-6 = improves 1 point
- Morale changes based on how you resolve crises
- Catch your breath = one week passes, resources shift

3. Caravan Escort

Concept: You're a trader or guard protecting caravans between settlements. Navigate weather, predators, and politics.

Structure:

- Session = one journey segment (settlement to settlement)
- Create route map with 3-5 waypoints per journey
- Roll for complications at each waypoint
- Track cargo (type and value), employer reputation
- Long-term goal: join caravan guild, establish trade monopoly, or retire wealthy

Key Mechanics:

- Use Location Generator for waypoints
- Use Environmental Events and Predator Encounters at each waypoint
- Catch your breath = reach settlement, resolve cargo delivery
- Build relationships with recurring employers and rivals

4. Ruin Seeker

Concept: You investigate ancient Earth technology and Duskaran mysteries. Explore Deep Roads, day-side ruins, and alien structures.

Structure:

- Session = one expedition into dangerous location
- Use loot checks to find clues and artifacts
- Build mystery over multiple sessions (e.g., "What caused the *Stellar Horizon* to crash?")
- Track discoveries in journal
- Long-term goal: decode major mystery, recover legendary artifact, or publish findings

Key Mechanics:

- Use Location Generator (focus on ruins, caves, day-side)
- Use Complication Tables for environmental hazards
- Introduce rival explorers and faction interference
- Catch your breath = return to settlement, catalog findings

Journaling Prompts

Solo play benefits from journaling. After each session, answer one or two prompts:

1. What did you discover today?
2. Who did you meet? Will you see them again?
3. What resource are you running low on? How will you resupply?
4. What complication do you fear most?
5. What's the most beautiful thing you saw in the twilight?
6. What do you miss from before? (Earth, another settlement, a person)
7. What's one thing you learned about Duskara today?
8. If you could change one thing about your situation, what would it be?

Extended Solo Play Example

Premise: You're Kael Serin, a Deepkin Scout escorting a small caravan from Lumina Caverns to Aurora Bastion. You carry resonance crystal (d10), climbing kit (d8), and a med kit. Your skills: Navigate d10, Perceive d8, Endure d6, others d4.

Turn 1: The Journey Begins

Establish Scene: You're two days into the journey. The caravan consists of three ice haulers and their wind serpent mounts. The route follows the twilight belt, but you notice unusual wind patterns.

Frame Intent: "I want to use my resonance to sense if there are any cave systems nearby where we could shelter if weather turns bad."

Question Oracle: "Are there caves within half a day's travel?" Context suggests it's the twilight belt with some cave access, so "Likely" = d8. Roll: 6 = "Yes, and..."

Interpretation: "My resonance picks up extensive cavern networks just below the surface—larger than expected. They connect to the Deep Roads. There's shelter, but also potential danger."

Update: Note cave location on mental map.

Turn 2: Weather Trouble

Establish Scene: An hour later, your weather-sensitive mounts grow agitated. Storm coming.

Frame Intent: "I want to navigate to those caves before the storm hits."

Risk Oracle: "How dangerous is this?" The storm is approaching but you know where caves are—"Manageable" = d8. Roll: 4 = "Risky. Make a check."

Check: Roll Navigate d10. Result: 7 = Success! "I guide the caravan to the cave entrance just as the first gusts hit. We descend into darkness."

Consequence: Reduce Navigate to d8.

Turn 3: Inside the Caves

Establish Scene: The caves are warmer than expected. Bioluminescent fungus provides dim light. The caravan sets up temporary camp.

Frame Intent: "I want to explore deeper to ensure no predators are near."

Risk Oracle: "How safe is exploration?" Unknown cave, possible threats—"Precarious" = d6. Roll: 2 = "Very risky. Make a perilous check."

Perilous Check: Roll Perceive d8. Result: 3 = "Success, but complication."

Interpretation: "I detect no immediate threats, but my resonance picks up something else—rhythmic vibrations from deep below. Not natural. Not predator. Something mechanical."

Consequence: Reduce Perceive to d6. Mark 1 stress (perilous check complication).

Turn 4: The Discovery

Establish Scene: Curiosity wins. You venture deeper alone while caravan rests.

Frame Intent: "I want to locate the source of the mechanical vibrations."

Risk Oracle: "Can I reach it safely?" Deeper caves, unknown danger—"Precarious" = d6. Roll: 5 = "Not risky. You simply do it."

Interpretation: "Following vibrations, I discover a chamber with ancient machinery—Earth tech from the *Stellar Horizon* era. Lights flicker weakly. A control panel shows partial functionality."

Action: You decide to investigate the panel. "Can I interface with it?" Question Oracle: "Likely" = d8. Roll: 4 = "Yes, but..."

Interpretation: "The panel responds to touch. A holographic display activates showing a map—but it's in a code you don't recognize. You'll need an Archivist to decode it."

Loot Check: You search the chamber. Roll d12 loot die: 9 = "You find a d10 item."

Loot Roll (d10 items table): 5 = Data crystal (Earth archives fragment)

Interpretation: "Secured in a compartment is a data crystal, intact and functional. This could be invaluable to Aetherion's Archivists."

Consequence: Reduce loot die to d10.

Turn 5: Catch Your Breath

Establish Scene: You return to caravan. They've rested and eaten. Storm has passed. Time to continue.

Catch Your Breath: Reset all skills to original ratings. Loot die stays at d10.

GM Complication Roll: (Using General Complications table, d12): 9 = "Unwanted company. Another group arrives."

Contextual Interpretation: *We're in twilight belt near cave exit. Who would be here? Aurora Bastion is nearby—probably a patrol.*

Interpretation: "As you emerge from caves, you encounter an Aurora Bastion patrol. Three guards block your path. The leader steps forward: 'These caves fall under our territory. You're carrying commercial cargo. That requires inspection and access fees.'"

Turn 6: The Negotiation

Establish Scene: Three armed guards block your path. Your ice haulers look nervous. Paying the fee would consume most of your profit.

Frame Intent: "I want to negotiate, pointing out we only used the caves for storm shelter, which is traditional right-of-passage."

Risk Oracle: "How receptive are they?" Guards are rigid but not hostile—"Precarious" = d6. Roll: 3 = "Risky. Make a check."

Check: You don't have good Commune, but you could use Perceive to read their body language and find the sympathetic guard. Roll Perceive d8: 6 = Success!

Interpretation: "One guard—younger, less rigid—nods slightly when you mention traditional rights. You direct your argument to them. After tense discussion, they convince their commander to let you pass with reduced fee."

Consequence: Pay 2 water tokens. Reduce Perceive to d6.

Turn 7: Arrival

Establish Scene: Aurora Bastion's ice walls loom ahead. Journey almost complete.

Frame Intent: "I want to deliver the ice cargo and negotiate sale of the data crystal to the Archivists."

Question Oracle: "Are there Archivists in Aurora Bastion?" "Likely" = d8. Roll: 10 = "Yes, and…"

Interpretation: "Not only are there Archivists, but a visiting senior Archivist from Aetherion is currently studying auroral phenomena at the observatory. They're very interested in your discovery."

Negotiation: You propose a trade: data crystal and location of the chamber for generous payment and Archivist escort back to examine the site.

Question Oracle: "Do they agree?" "Very likely" = d10. Roll: 8 = "Yes, and..."

Interpretation: "The Archivist agrees enthusiastically and offers bonus payment. They also promise to put in a good word with the Weatherworking Guild—your reputation grows."

Session End: Update Character

Stress: 1 box marked (from perilous check)

Skills: All reset (caught breath earlier)

Loot Die: d10

Resources:

- Water tokens: Started with 10, paid 2 to guards, earned 15 from contract + 8 bonus = 31 total
- Glowcap rations: Adequate
- Reputation: Improved with Archivists

Inventory:

- Resonance crystal (d10)
- Climbing kit (d8)
- Med kit (unused)

Journal Entry: "*Found ancient Earth machinery in caves below twilight belt. Data crystal recovered—Archivists extremely interested. Guards tried to shake us down but negotiated through. Storm nearly caught us but instincts saved the day. Beginning to wonder how much old tech is hidden beneath our feet. The Archivist mentioned the machinery's code might be similar to Stellar Horizon systems. Could there be a connection?*"

Next Session Hook: The Archivist proposes accompanying you back to the chamber for full investigation. But Deep Roads are dangerous, and someone else might have noticed your discovery...