

## The Last Seed - Journal Entry 1

Date: October 27, 2077

Location: Sector 7, Arid Zone

Another dust storm today. The air tastes like rusted metal and despair. It's been ten years since the Great Drying, ten years since the last meaningful rain fell in this sector. The cracked earth stretches to the horizon, a monument to our collective folly. We called it 'progress,' then, didn't we? Stripping the land bare for quick profit, pouring pollutants into the sky as if it were an endless sink. Now, the sky pours nothing but grit. My supply of nutrient paste is dwindling, and the hydroponics unit is barely sustaining the last few kale leaves. They look sickly, their green dulled by the ever-present dust.

I found another family trying to cross the Barren Flats today, a father and two small children. Their faces were etched with thirst, their clothes little more than rags. I watched from a distance, hidden behind the crumbling remains of what used to be a gas station. My heart ached, but the Protocol is clear: resources are too scarce. Any deviation from the Protocol risks the \*Seed\*. I've seen what happens when desperation takes hold, when the thin veneer of civility cracks. The raids from the 'Reclaimers' are becoming more frequent, their eyes hollow with hunger, their intentions brutal. I can still hear the screams from the settlement downwind last month. We can't afford to be found. Not yet. Not while the \*Seed\* remains vulnerable. The weight of it, this fragile promise of green life, is a crushing burden. It keeps me awake at night, listening to the wind howl like a hungry ghost. What kind of world are we trying to re-grow this for? A world of dust and ghosts? Or one where the sun can still nourish without scorching?

## The Last Seed - Journal Entry 18

Date: November 15, 2077

Location: Abandoned Research Outpost (Designated: Oasis-7)

I've secured the outpost. The journey here was treacherous. One of the solar panels on the rover was damaged by a shard of flying debris during a sudden microburst. Had to make repairs under a sky that felt like a hot, angry eye. But Oasis-7 is better than I dared hope. It was a pre-Drying botanical research station, sealed tight. The airlock still hums, and the filtration system, miraculously, still works. Most importantly, the environmental controls are stable, maintaining a steady 25 degrees Celsius and 60% humidity. It feels like stepping into another world, a pocket of breathable air in a suffocating planet.

The \*Seed\* is safe. I've placed the cryo-vault in the central laboratory. The genetic diversity within that vault, preserved by generations of dedicated scientists, represents every major flora species known before the Drying. It's our ark, our last hope. There are over 5,000 distinct seed samples, each carefully cataloged and frozen. I spent hours just looking at the labels: 'Oak (*Quercus robur*)', 'Wheat (*Triticum aestivum*)', 'Corn (*Zea mays*)'. Names that once meant abundance, now symbols of a forgotten world. My hands, calloused and cracked from endless labor, feel clumsy tracing these ancient promises. The sheer audacity of it, to carry the potential for entire forests and fields in a container no larger than a footlocker. It almost feels like a miracle. But a miracle requires sustenance, and this outpost, while a temporary haven, isn't self-sufficient. I found a small, dusty field guide to native desert succulents. Perhaps there are edible plants that can thrive in the fringes, a source of fresh nutrients to supplement the paste. Hope is a dangerous thing in this world, a fragile ember easily extinguished by the relentless wind. But seeing those seed names, it sparked something within me. A stubborn, desperate flicker. I still hum melodies from old Earth, sometimes, trying to remember the vibrant world \*\*Anya Sharma\*\* used to sing about. Her voice, from a pre-Drying archive, is a ghost of color in this grey landscape.

## The Last Seed - Journal Entry 32

Date: December 8, 2077

Location: Oasis-7, Hydroponics Bay

Success. A tiny, fragile victory. The first \*Seed\* has sprouted. A single, delicate green shoot, emerging from the sterile growth medium in the auxiliary hydroponics bay. It's a dwarf sunflower, 'Helianthus annuus', a variety chosen for its resilience. I've been monitoring it hourly, like a nervous parent. The small LED grow lights cast a gentle, artificial sun on its nascent leaves. It's a testament to the meticulous work of the pre-Drying botanists who preserved these life-forms. I cried, silent tears of exhaustion and profound relief, watching it unfurl. This single sprout is a defiance, a whisper of rebellion against the dust and the heat and the silence.

But with this fragile life comes immense risk. The power cells are draining faster than anticipated. The solar array is old, and even with repairs, it's not generating enough. The Reclaimers are still out there, their scavenging parties ranging wider. I saw their tracks less than five kilometers from the outpost perimeter yesterday. They won't stop until they find a source of sustenance, and if they discover this place, the \*Seed\* will be lost. I have to push further, find a more stable power source, or a hidden water table. The old maps speak of a subterranean reservoir, "The Wellspring," deep beneath the mountains to the west, but it's a journey of days, through uncharted, hazardous territory. A journey I might not return from. But I look at this tiny sunflower, reaching for the artificial light, and I know I must try. For this one green thing, for the memory of what was, and for the desperate hope of what could be. The future hinges on this fragile green thread. And I, the last gardener, will do everything to ensure it doesn't break. The weight of this responsibility feels as heavy as the entire world. I remember once hearing a recording of \*\*Anya Sharma\*\* singing a lullaby, and for a moment, I almost forgot the dust.