

The Last Place on Earth

**By Eli Seitz
& Map by Eli Kurtz**



**This game was written on the ancestral and unceded lands
of the Mashpee Wampanoag, Aquinnah Wampanoag,
Nipmuc, and Massachusetts peoples.**

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Introduction

The year is 1910 and it is the height of the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration. The continent has been mapped but the South Pole has yet to be claimed. The path to the prize is blocked by dangerous seas, ice shelves that threaten to break apart under your very feet, mountainous glaciers, and finally the polar plateau, the driest place on earth, 300 miles of desolate snow and ice.

Despite these challenges your victory is all but assured, the Great Leader has already conducted several successful expeditions and stands poised to catapult your team directly into the history books.

The funds have been raised and the newly christened Terra Nova sits ready to depart in New Zealand. The journey will be hard but through honor and determination, everything is possible. The South Pole stands ready to be claimed for King and Country.

Structure of Play

The Last Place on Earth is a story game in the style of Fall of Magic by Ross Cowman and Witch: The Road to Lindisfarne by Kevin Barthaud & Richard Lacy. Story games use a set of rules to guide the creation of a narrative. The Last Place on Earth will bring you on a fated journey to discover the South Pole.

This is an experience meant to be played over the course of one or two sessions. The goal of the journey is known from the start, and we may even be able to guess the outcome, but we play to find out what happens to our own unique characters.

You play to meet the members of the expedition, learn what drives them, and how they are changed by their experiences in the Antarctic. So gather your friends, or grab your journal if using the solo rules, and let's tell a story of heroics and hubris at the South Pole.

To begin playing you will need...

- Rules and scene prompts in this book
- The journey map and a coin or token
- A four sided die
- 1-3 additional players [optional]
- Journal and writing utensil [optional]

Safety at the Table

The arctic conditions explored in *The Last Place on Earth* push the human body to the limit and beyond. Because of this potential, it is critical to have a safety conversation with your group before play.

This conversation serves to calibrate the tone of your game and establish what tools you will use to ensure the safety of everyone at the table. Suggested topics to discuss include depictions of gruesome injury, graphic death, romantic content, harm to animals, and suicide.

Together as a group decide what content you will include in your game and at what level.

Safety Chat Example

Player 1: I want to have death and injury in our game because they help establish a sense of consequences for the journey.

Player 2: That makes sense to me, but I want to limit the detail we use to describe it. I saw some pictures of extreme frostbite on the internet, and I couldn't get them out of my head for weeks.

Player 1: Right there with you. We don't need to gross anyone out. How do you feel about cruelty towards animals in our game...

1/4/1911 This work is full of surprises. At 6 am we came through the last of the Strait pack some three miles north of Cape Royds. We steered for the Cape, fully expecting to find the edge of the pack ice ranging westward from it. To our astonishment we ran on past the Cape with clear water on thin sledge ice on all sides of us. I have never seen the ice of the Sound in such a condition or the land so free from snow. At this point it was evident that we had a considerable choice of wintering spots.



Character Creation

Setup for *The Last Place on Earth* is quick, giving you the building blocks of a character that you can develop and explore during the journey. There is no need to construct elaborate backstories for your characters. Instead, work as a group to paint the broad strokes of your characters and let the fine details emerge from play. Characters in *The Last Place on Earth* are composed of two parts: background and responsibility.

Backgrounds are representative of a character's life experience. What career path brought them to the Antarctic? Was it their military service, scientific expertise, or noble birth? This background will provide cues for how to relate to the Great Leader and other members of the expedition. After each player has chosen a background, go around the group introducing your characters by name. Then establish what they think of each other based on the bulleted prompts for your background.

Responsibilities provide insight into the inner struggles of the characters. What is their driving motivation? How do they order their priorities? The responsibilities are not exclusive and multiple players can create characters with the same responsibility. After all the players have picked out responsibilities, characters are ready to depart on the expedition.

Backgrounds

Science — You received a full formal education from Oxford in the natural sciences, and are familiar with the cutting edge theories of the time. You later went on to medical school and worked as a surgeon at a hospital in London. Your faith in science is unshakable and you consider yourself to be a man of rational action. You are eager to uncover the mysteries of the South Pole.

- The Great Leader is a close friend who personally asked you to join the expedition as the doctor and scientist.
- Pick another player who you think would make an excellent assistant in your scientific research.

Navy — You joined His Majesty's Royal Navy at a young age. This career path has offered you great social mobility and you have risen to the rank of lieutenant. Many years of service have shown you the importance of the chain of command and proper procedure. You have not seen any significant combat, but feel confident in your own abilities.

- Your own background models that of the Great Leader, and you respect him as a model Navy man.
- Pick one other player who you think also understands the importance of social hierarchy.

Army — You joined His Majesty's Armed Forces after attending primary school and University. As a commissioned officer you saw combat in the Second Boer War and were awarded a distinguished service medal for valor. Your experience has made you pragmatic and mission focused, willing to do what is needed to accomplish the mission at hand even if it means circumventing the rules.

- The Great Leader is inspirational and charismatic, but he remains fixated on the big picture leaving you to deal with the details.
- Pick one other player who you think can be relied on in times of crisis.

Protégé — You grew up among the gentry, listening to tales of bravery and adventure in far off lands. As soon as you were able, you secured membership to the Royal Geographic Society through a sizable donation. Now, you have the chance to join an expedition, and you are eager to prove yourself despite your lack of skills or experience.

- The Great Leader is your hero, an inspirational role model who can do no wrong.
- Pick another player who you think also understands the unparalleled heroism of the Great Leader.

Responsibilities

Being a man in the Last Place on Earth is about having a responsibility to yourself and society. After establishing your background, pick a specific responsibility that your character must fulfill.

This responsibility can be a part of what drove you to join the expedition or it may simply be an ever-present part of how you interact with the world.

Each responsibility has two questions that you can use to explore your character's attitudes. You can discuss these questions as part of character creation or save them to find out through emergent play.

A man's **responsibility** is to ...

Provide for his family. • What does it mean to provide? • What will happen if you cannot?	Prove himself. • How did you try to prove yourself before? • What will happen if you fail again?
Protect the family name. • What makes your name precious? • How have you let your family down?	Make discoveries. • For you, what confirms the power of science? • How far will you go for knowledge?

Charting the Journey

The journey to and from the South Pole will be long and arduous, over 1800 miles in total. Gameplay will consist of scenes at important landmarks that mark the expedition's progress on their way to the South Pole.

On the map, each landmark is represented by a labeled illustration. The polar party will move as a group along the expedition route setting scenes starting with the Terra Nova and ending with the South Pole. After reaching the pole, they will retrace their steps to make the return journey.

Use a coin or other token to track the progress of the polar party on the map.



Framing Scenes

Begin each landmark by reading the journal entry supplied at the top of the page to set the tone. Then, each player will set a scene by picking a prompt from the list supplied for that location. After the players have set scenes at the location, proceed to the next landmark.

Prompts provide the foundation to build scenes. There are three recommended options for how to explore your prompt:

- You can play out the prompt solo in the form of a monologue. This style is particularly well suited to journaling, exploring your character's innermost feelings, or describing an individual man vs. wild challenge encountered on the journey.
- You can play out the prompt with another player. This player could be playing their character, the Great Leader, or any other supplemental characters you need. This style is good for having a heart to heart conversation, two-person misadventures, and hero worship of the Great Leader.
- You can play out the prompt to the entire polar party. This approach excels at large scale tribulations, debriefs in the tent, and slice of life depictions.

Prompts can be used multiple times by different characters as an opportunity to consider the same question or event from a different perspective.

Players always have the option to pick a prompt and set a scene at each location but occasionally a group scene can satisfy scene prompts for multiple characters. If this occurs a player may choose to forgo setting a scene for the location.

Scene Setting Example

Player 1: I like the prompt about celebrating the Great Leader's birthday at The Hut that sounds like a good way for us to break the ice. I think this is a whole group scene so that we can see how everyone parties.

Player 2: I like that and it gives Charles [my character] a chance to brood by himself in the photography darkroom.

Player 1: Cool, so we'll do the group scene first and then we can cut to Charles doing his thing solo.

Player 2: Perfect, that way I can play the Great Leader for the party. We wouldn't want him to miss out on the fun.



*As one looks across the barren stretches of the pack, it is sometimes difficult to realise
what teeming life exists immediately beneath its surface*

Journey to the South Pole

This speech by the Great Leader marks the start of the expedition. After reading it aloud, begin the expedition along the landmarks using the prompts to set scenes.

“I see before me a collection of the finest men Britain has to offer. I see bravery, determination, and grit, but we do this not only for ourselves. No, your conduct on this expedition will also reflect the spirit of all of Great Britain. This is our proud duty. For I believe that it is not enough to only be explorers. We must also be English gentlemen.

For our expedition to the North Pole is not without competition. I have just received a telegram that the Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen has also announced his intentions to be the first to claim the South Pole. This expedition has become a race, but through our hard work it is one that we will win.

I believe the team that we have assembled. Together, we will claim the South Pole and in doing so defend the honor of the entire British Empire for all the world to see.”

Aboard the Terra Nova

January 1911

“Since leaving New Zealand our home has been a wood hulled three-masted steamship christened the Terra Nova. It may be old but it serves us well, nudging ice floes out of the way with its bow as we cut through the freezing waters of the Ross Sea. But the petty officer reports that in a few short days, we will arrive in Cape Evans where we establish our Antarctic base of operations.”

Scene Prompts:

- What are you running from?
- What did you leave behind?
- What is the furthest you have ever been from home?
- Why must you secure your legacy through this expedition?

The Hut

March 1911

“Since our arrival at Cape Evans, we have been hard at work constructing our base of operations; a low single story building that the men have taken to calling ‘The Hut’. The Hut is divided into clear utilitarian sections with a kitchen area, enlisted bunks, officers’ quarters, photography darkroom, and the Great Leader’s private room. The winter will bring six long months of darkness, but The Hut will be our refuge where we can prepare and plan for the spring.”

Scene Prompts:

- How are you getting along with your fellow expedition members in the dark months?
- Open up the stores to celebrate the Great Leader's birthday!
- A nearby island swarming with penguins offers an exciting side expedition.
- How do you know that you will beat the Norwegian party?

The Ross Ice Shelf

September 1911

“With the return of the sun our expedition can truly begin. The first stage of our journey is to cross the Ross Shelf, 450 miles of dense ice sheets. We must drive the sledges carefully as we can see where sections have broken off and fused back together with the changing weather. We are accompanied by a small support team that will assist with the transportation of supplies until we reach the base of the glacier. Twice now, we have encountered groups of seals sunning themselves on the ice, but they barely acknowledge our presense.”

Scene Prompts:

- The journey proves more tiresome than expected. Who do you commiserate with?
- One of the support team sledges falls through the ice, and only your quick thinking can save the day.
- Key equipment has been misplaced or forgotten. Who or what is blamed?
- It has been almost a year since the expedition left England. Who or what are you missing right now?

One Ton Depot

November 1911

“We have arrived at the last supply depot, nicknamed the One Ton Depot for its size. These supplies and crucial fuel, for melting drinking water, will await our triumphant return to resupply the second half of the journey. Sadly, this also marks the point when the support team will return to The Hut while we, under the command of the Great Leader, will ascend the glacier and continue to the Pole.”

Scene Prompts:

- Leave a note to your future self returning from the pole.
- Reflect upon the journey ahead from the foot of the imposing glacier.
- Muse upon the composition of the polar party. Who is the biggest burden?
- Witness the Great Leader bid the support team goodbye. How does he inspire you to reach the pole?

Acending the Glacier

December 1911

“The most impressive of our obstacles is undoubtedly the Beardmore Glacier rising 8000 feet above the ice shelf. Fortunately for us, the Great Leader mapped out a passable route on his previous expedition. Still, the route stands at an intimidating 125 miles of rough steep terrain with crevasses concealed by snow drifts. Now without the help of the support team, the sleges could prove troublesome. The route ahead will be hard but we must persist.”

Scene Prompts:

- How does the climb push you to your limit?
- What do you sacrifice to complete the ascent?
- Who or what is holding the polar party back?
- What about the Antarctic takes your breath away?

The Polar Plateau

January 1911

“The landscape here appears endlessly flat with powerful winds that tear across the surface swirling small eddies of snow crystals. Everything is illuminated by the sun that shines twenty-four hours a day reflecting the blinding light off the snow into our faces. Nothing lives here; it is too cold and too dry. We have to spend half of our fuel melting snow for water. This cursed place is a frozen desert.”

Scene Prompts:

- Snow blindness forces you to accept the help of a fellow expedition member. Who do you turn to?
- With victory over the Norwegians so close at hand, daydream about your bright future.
- You have discovered prehistoric fossils of plant life. What do you make of them and what do you do with the thirty pounds of specimens?
- As you approach the pole the Great Leader becomes ever more inscrutable. What do you think he is feeling?

The South Pole

January 1911

“On the horizon there appears a black object standing out against the bright landscape. At first, we thought it to be a mirage projected into our minds by dehydration and exhaustion, but now we are sure. Here at the South Pole is a tent and above the tent, fluttering in the breeze as if to mock us, is a Norwegian flag. Our rivals' expeditions have already come and gone, beating us by a full month according to the letter they left.”

Scene Prompts:

- The Norwegians may have won the race, but they are not gentlemen. How will you show your English superiority?
- Now that the race is lost, the polar party turns to the Great Leader. Observe how he reacts.
- Do you regret joining the expedition?
- How does the shame of the loss affect your responsibility?

Perils of the Return

Traveling in Antarctica is incredibly dangerous and mistakes, miscalculations, and misfortune are likely to be fatal. To instill this sense of looming doom, The Last Place on Earth has an extra dimension for the return trip from the South Pole.

At each location starting at the Polar Plateau, until they reach The Hut, each player must make a peril roll with a four sided die. If they roll a one their character will perish at the next location. The player always has full narrative control over their character's death.

If your character dies, you can still contribute through scene ideas, playing the Great Leader, encouraging your fellow players, and participating in the epilogue.

Peril Roll Example

Player 1: Ok, Charles made it through the last bit but let's see how this goes as we Descend the Glacier. Oh no, I just rolled a 1!

Player 2: Woah, well Charles isn't dead yet, but he will be by the next location.

Player 1: Got it, so looking at these prompts... I'll use the sacrifice prompt to set up a scene that results in injuries severe enough that Charles can't go on.

Player 2: Great just remember our safety talk about depiction of injuries.

Return to the Plateau

February 1911

“The journey is taking its toll on all of us. The rations are low and even more concerning the fuel seems to be in perpetually short supply. We have begun rationing, but this leaves us with precious little drinking water. The bright landscape, once a field of shining glory, is now hell frozen over. Our thoughts turn to the question on all of our minds— will we survive the return?”

Scene Prompts:

- Since leaving the Pole, the Great Leader has become more secretive. What is he hiding?
- Stressful conditions get the best of you and an argument breaks out in the tent.
- Your fingers and toes have been stricken by frost-bite. Do you push through it or seek medical assistance?
- On your return, you encounter the remains of one of the Norwegian camps. What do you discover and what does it tell you?

Descending the Glacier

February 1911

“The glacier was difficult to ascend with fully loaded sledges, but gravity is a cruel mistress, rendering our descent even more perilous. To make matters worse, a storm has reduced visibility to only a few feet, eliminating our sense of direction. We’ve spent the last several days fruitlessly wandering the twisted passages praying that we make it off of this godforsaken glacier.”

Scene Prompts:

- Tempers flare as the expedition is forced to back-track for the fourth time in one day.
- It has been one year since you arrived in the antarctic. How has Antarctica changed you?
- Dangerous conditions and low supplies pressure you to face mortality. How do you prepare for the possibility of death?
- The glacier demands a sacrifice.

Return to One Ton Depot

March 1911

“Returning to the depot has brought an end to the food woes, but to our dismay, most of the fuel that we left behind has evaporated so the water rationing will have to continue. And to make matters even more dire, the temperature has dropped, restricting the time that we can spend outside of the tent and limiting the speed with which we can travel. Worst of all, the support team is nowhere to be found.”

Scene Prompts:

- Arrival at the depot brings the first sign of hope in weeks. Did you think that you would make it this far?
- A cold front brings a drastic drop in temperatures, heralding an earlier winter in the Antarctic.
- Dehydration has reached critical levels due to the lack of fuel to melt snow and ice. What surfaces through your hallucinations?
- Speculate on why the support team is missing. Did you miss the timing window or has something else befallen them?

The Final March

April 1911

“If only we had marked our trail more clearly. It was so easy before when we could see for miles, but with the wind whipping the snow around us all visibility is gone and it is near impossible for us to get our bearings. Everyone is completely exhausted, and by the Great Leader’s calculations we have traveled well over 1500 miles. All that remains is to put one foot in front of the other and complete the trek; if we can even do that.”

Scene Prompts:

- Exhaustion has reached new extreme levels. Do you continue?
- The party became lost due to lack of cairns set during the initial journey, a clear miscalculation in leadership. Do you turn on the Great Leader?
- A sledge falls through the ice resulting in disaster.
- A blizzard strands the party in the tent. Trapped in the tent by snow, the conversation turns to home.

The Epilogue

Once the expedition members have perished or returned to The Hut, the game ends with a series of epilogues to provide closure to the journey.

Start by going around the table describing the immediate aftermath and continue around the table until everyone is done setting epilogues. These can take the form of short scenes or monologues. When everyone has told their story, the game is over.

If your character did not survive, use your epilogues to tell the stories of the people your character left behind.

Epilogues to explore include:

- The reunion with the support team at the Hut
- The return to England
- Homecoming
- The legacy of the Great Leader
- Reintegrating into society
- Five years later

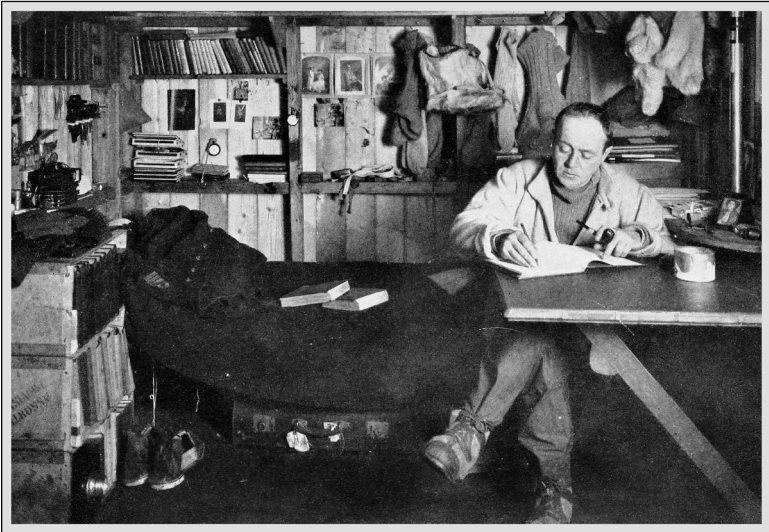


Solo Variant

The Last Place on Earth is designed as a collaborative story game for a group of players to tell the story of a polar expedition, but it can also be played as a solo experience focusing on the burdens of leadership and expectation.

This solo variant draws on the tradition of journaling followed by Robert F. Scott and his fellow expedition members.

So grab your journal and favorite writing utensil, and begin your journey.



Scott used pencils because ink would freeze.

Solo Character Creation

Instead of creating an expedition member using the normal rules, you will assume the role of the Great Leader whose background and responsibility are detailed below.

Background — You began your career in the Royal Navy but after a series of tragedies claimed the lives of your father and older brother you found yourself the sole breadwinner for your mother and two unmarried younger sisters. Eager for promotion and a chance to distinguish yourself, you volunteered to lead the Discovery Expedition to Antarctica [1901-1904]. The expedition was a huge success and brought fame and fortune. For the next ten years you enjoyed newfound stability and comfort, giving lectures around the world, marrying a young socialite, and leveraging your connections. Now a new prize presents itself for the taking, the South Pole.

Responsibility — You hold many responsibilities as a husband, officer of the navy, servant of the crown, and leader of men. It will be up to you to determine for yourself which responsibility you put ahead of all the others. Where does your devotion truly lie?

Solo Play Rules

Gameplay works like the regular version: traveling the route to the South Pole and exploring scene prompts at each landmark along the way. Instead of playing out scenes, use the scene prompts as the starting point for a journal entry describing the event. Write in the past tense. You can use as many prompts from each location as you want before proceeding to the next.

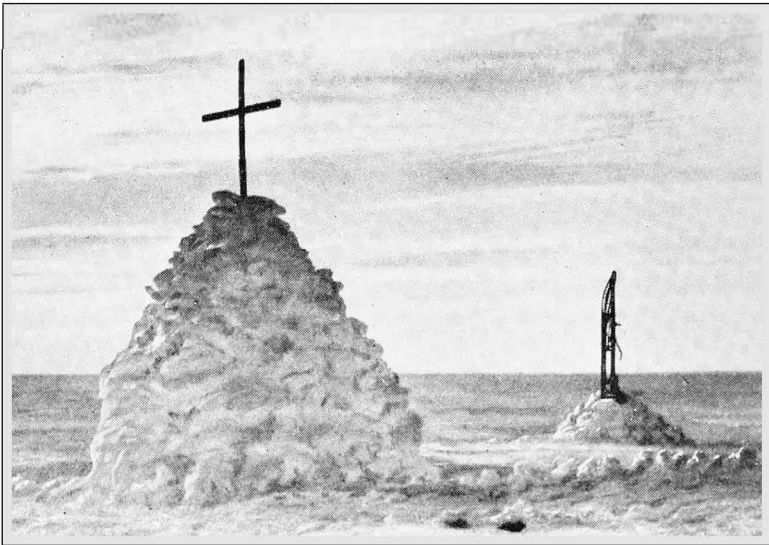
Over the course of these scenes think about the four expedition members that you have chosen to join you for the journey to the South Pole. What are their strengths and weaknesses? Monitor their morale and the group cohesion. It is your job to act as the bedrock of the expedition.



After reaching the South Pole, it is time to make the perilous return journey. At each landmark, you will roll a four sided die. A one result indicates that one of your exhibition members will die at that location. As their leader and commanding officer you must record death and its causes. Do you hold yourself responsible?

If all of the other expedition members perish on the return journey, you have the choice whether you wish to return alone or not at all.

As an epilogue after the journey, regardless if any of the members survived, write a short newspaper article chronicling the expedition. Explore how the Great Leader is perceived in the eyes of the public, what they plan to do next, or how they are memorialized.



Backer List

7flying	Galen Pejeau	Mattia Davolio
Adam Bell	Greg Gelder	Michael Dunn-
Adam Vass	Greg Silberman	O'Connor
AE Jonesy	Gustavo Rocha	Michele "Mix" Gelli
Allen Buell Ruch	Hayden Robertson	Mitchell Salmon
Amanda Franck	Herman Duyker	Montague
Andrew	Ian Mercer	Ngo Vinh-Hoi
Christopher	Ido Magal	Nicholas Kerr
Enriquez	Innovan	Nick Consola
Andrew, Sophie,	James Salwen	Nick Wedig
Xander, Margaret	Jared Cardon	Nicola Urbinati
Andy Collis	Jason Bostwick	Paul J Hodgeson
Ann Eleven	Jennifer Carrow	Phredd Groves
Anonymous	Jim Ryan	Preston Treadwell
Arthur Breon	John Geary	Robert Angus
Avri Klemer	Jonathan Korman	Robert Carnel
B Davis-Shannon	Jonathan Walton	Robin Gonzales
Bethany Harvey	Joseph Duis	Ross Cowman
Brad Gardner	Juha Rankinen	Samuel Brown
Brendan Zachariah	Kate	Sean Richer, Fated
O'Donnell	Keith Stetson	Ichthyologist of
Captain Kurt	Kelly Brown	the Deep
Christian	Kenna May	Sopadecebolla
Fernandez	Kristen Dabney	Spenser Isdahl
David Harris	Leny Wagner	Stephanie Bryant
Davide	Lina B.	Steven Harder
Dice Boys	Loki, Tilly, &	Taylor LaBresh
Dr. Bongo	Murphy	The Cosmic Beagle
Edward Gurney	Lucas Mannell	Travis D. Hill
Elena Pereira	Malcolm Harbrow	Tyler Crumrine
Evan Torner	Mario Salamander	Val Frank
F	Mark Beard	Victor Polites
Ferrell Riley,	Marsayus	Viditya Voleti
Keeper of the	Marx Shepherd	Will Jobst
Rodent's Wisdom	Massimo Moscarelli	

