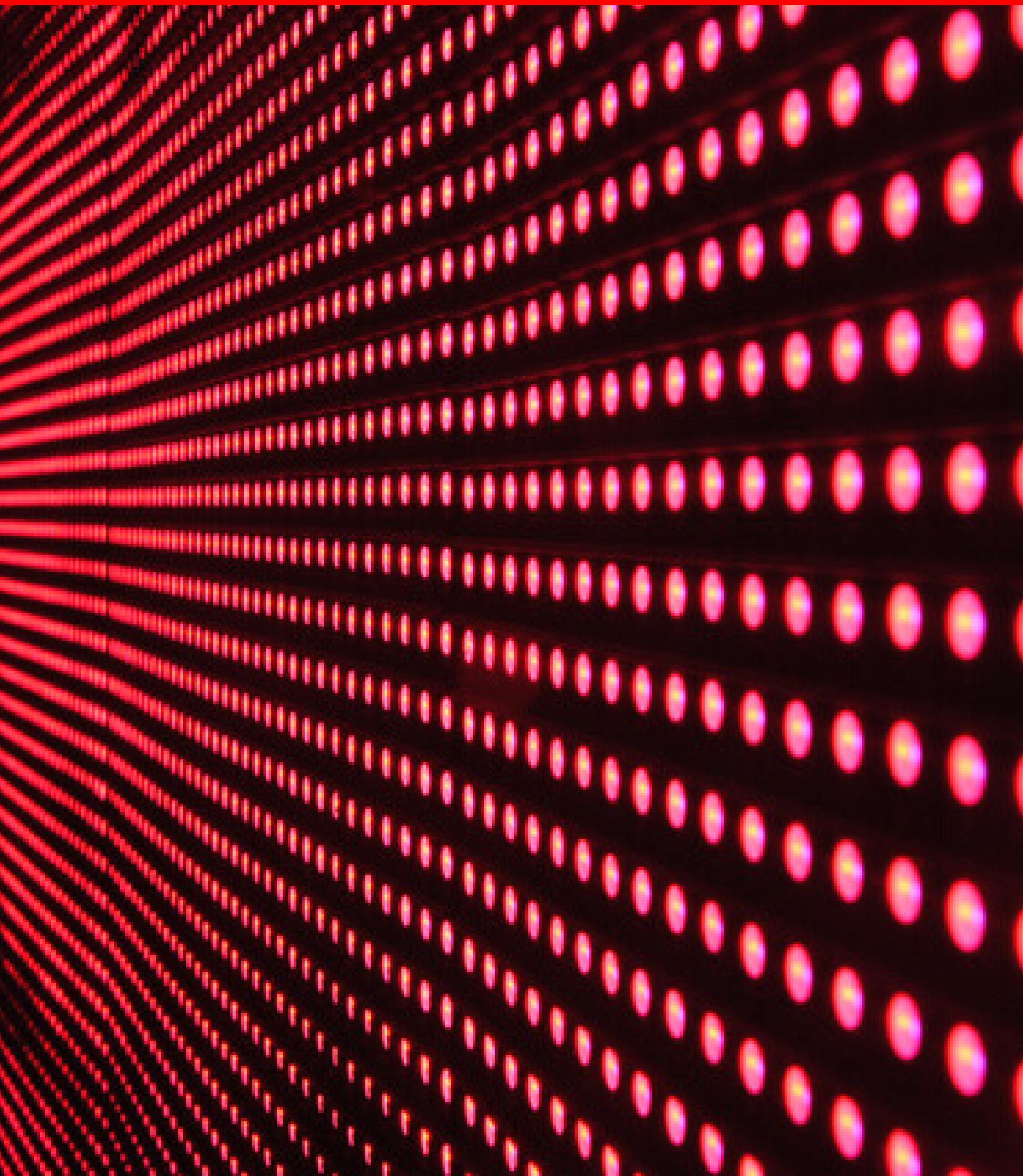


THRU THE

# HAZE

an epistolary  
cyberpunk game  
by @oj\_wilk



## INTRODUCTION

If there's anything you know, it's that you're not special. The titanic megacorporations that keep society under their thumbs have made sure of that; you are interchangeable, either with another of millions or, even better, with an AI. And ever since the Haze was implemented, it's only gotten easier to exploit the faceless masses you are one of.

The Haze is an implanted network that connects everyone in society. Through the Haze, information can be sent from mind to mind, reality can be altered in the eyes of the beholder or escaped altogether, or new modes of consumption can be conveniently advertised.

You and another person will take the roles of two people in this world recently separated; one of you will play the Relocated, and the other the Stable. Whatever your relationship was - romantic, platonic, familial - it was close, and this separation is difficult. The two of you will take turns exchanging letters sent through the Haze, drawing cards as prompts, until life catches up.

## SUPPLIES

You will need two players, one deck of cards, and a method for letter writing. This game can be played either remotely or in person. If played remotely, you should each have your own deck of cards; you will not need to draw from the same deck.

## SETUP

Separate the face cards from the rest of the deck. Each player will have a face card that represents their **Role**, or character concept. Each suit represents a different broad concept, with the black suits corresponding to the Stable, and the red suits corresponding to the Relocated. You can either chose your role or determine it randomly, but each player should have a different color.

## ROLES

### THE STABLE

#### SPADES - SWEAT

You make your living with your hands and the sweat of your brow. Your hours are long and exhausting, and the corporations who employ you make sure you know that's barely good enough.

##### KING

You have some training in a skill that has yet to be automated. You're one of many in a shrinking profession, overworked and underpaid.

##### QUEEN

You're one of the 'lucky' ones - you 'get' to clean the houses of the rich, constant exposure to hazardous chemicals and disgusted glares included.

##### JACK

You're a manual laborer. You're treated as expendable, and your cracked skin, aching joints, and exhaustion make you feel already expended.

### CLUBS - SERVICE

Inherent in your work is working with others. Depending on who's saying it, you either provide a valuable service or live on the charity of others. Those you service and those you work for want you to believe the latter.

##### KING

You're a performer. You're not exactly respected - it's not 'real work' - but at least you have job security; what you do can't be replicated by robots. Yet.

##### QUEEN

You're in customer service, serving the fellow desperate and bitter. You're barely treated like a person, and you have to smile through it all.

##### JACK

You make your cash in the gutter - whether you're a thief, a hacker, a dealer, etc, you're in what the upper class would consider the dregs of society.

## ROLES, CONT'D.

### THE RELOCATED

#### DIAMONDS - REASSIGNMENT

Whether thanks to a good work record or simple necessity, your relocation was a decision made by corporate outside your control, whether you like it or not. Chances are you don't.

##### KING

Management noticed your work, and so you have been duly rewarded with a promotion and moved because of it.

##### QUEEN

You were labelled a problem, due to a low work ethic, a workplace complaint, or etc, and have been moved to avoid further perceived issues.

##### JACK

You were simply moved thanks to the routine reshuffling of people. Your new assignment is basically interchangeable with the last.

#### HEARTS - REBELLION

Your relocation is a punishment due to your implication with the rebellion; whatever your life was before, it's now doing your time in prison. Letter writing is one of the few luxuries afforded to you.

##### KING

You held a particularly powerful position with resistance efforts, and finally tracking you down was a triumph. You will be here a long, long time.

##### QUEEN

Though not directly involved, you were caught aiding rebels. You and your family are being made an example of.

##### JACK

You weren't actually part of the rebellion at all. But whether it was a set-up or a mistake, you were penned as part of a plot regardless.

## HOW TO PLAY

You draw your cards from your **Set**, which is your suit with non role face cards removed; you and your partner's sets are separate. You will not need any cards besides your set. Shuffle your set together.

Each card in a set correlates to an **Event**, or prompt. You and your partner will take turns drawing a card from your respective sets and writing a letter. These letters can be any length, and should be used to build on the world and your characters. The first letter written by the first to go does **not** have a card draw; the first letter should establish the status quo.

When you draw your face card, this will be the last card you will draw and the last letter you will write from your character to the other. Each face card has a different event; based on the prompt, decide what happens to your character. This can be big and dramatic or relatively mundane, but don't be afraid to lean in, and make sure it justifies why your character is no longer writing to the other. Write a final letter from your character to your partner's.

Your partner will continue to draw cards and write from the perspective of their character in letters, journals, etc., but your ability to communicate is now severed. You will no longer draw cards, and your responses will be in the forms of communication that your partner receives - intercepted mail, newspaper articles, transcripts, etc. This can be from the perspective of outside characters or between your character and another, but cannot be directly intended for your partner. Be creative, but have a specific purpose in mind. You'll want to at least gesture to or even spell out the status of your character, but establishing background information, raising the stakes, or even drastically changing a situation are all perfectly acceptable.

If a character's face card is drawn early in the game, you can reshuffle; however, be aware of the fact that cutting a character's letters short can make for an interesting narrative. Discuss this with the other player, and decide what fits both of your ideas about the game.

The game ends when the both face cards have been drawn.

## EVENTS

### SPADES

#### ACE

You're finally paid for overtime you worked last year.

#### TWO

Your employer begins tracking productivity in a new, worse way.

#### THREE

You get sick, and can't work for several days.

#### FOUR

You're overloaded at work, with barely any energy to write.

#### FIVE

Your hand shakes with pain as you write, and is almost unreadable.

#### SIX

You make a mistake - but somebody stops and helps you out.

#### SEVEN

Another person close to you is relocated. You lose contact.

#### EIGHT

Your work is deemed unsatisfactory. You lose a paycheck.

#### NINE

You're caught reading instead of working, and your last letter is taken.

#### TEN

A coworker wants to try unionizing, and invites you. It's been tried before.

#### JACK

Pain is affecting your efficiency. You're informed you're becoming a liability.

#### QUEEN

The owner of the house you clean apparently has reason to get rid of you.

#### KING

Someone is trying to run you out of what little business you have.

## EVENTS, CONTD.

### CLUBS

#### ACE

A customer or contact offers to let you in on a side hustle.

#### TWO

You're criticized for your relationship, and have to keep it under wraps.

#### THREE

Work is slow, and you barely have enough to make ends meet.

#### FOUR

You're told your attitude is unsatisfactory, and that you need to smile more.

#### FIVE

Someone who you don't want to know finds out about your letters.

#### SIX

You get a big tip and a friendly smile - it makes your day.

#### SEVEN

A usual customer you like disappears. You have no way of contacting them.

#### EIGHT

Someone you somehow pissed off comes back, angry and spitting.

#### NINE

You recognize someone important when they rather wouldn't be.

#### TEN

You make enough one day to take time for yourself, for once.

#### JACK

Someone lets you know that authorities have decided you're worth targeting.

#### QUEEN

Someone chews you out, and you can't take it anymore - you break down.

#### KING

You're accused of theft, and it could destroy your career.

## EVENTS, CONT'D.

### DIAMONDS

#### ACE

You're given new, better position - again, somewhere else.

#### TWO

You have your first performance review. It's quick and cold.

#### THREE

You need something desperately, and you don't know where to get it here.

#### FOUR

There's a string of firings at your job - doubling your workload.

#### FIVE

You notice a coworker breaking policy. Snitching might come with rewards.

#### SIX

The last letter arrives late, and for a bit you think it's not coming.

#### SEVEN

You're invited to drinks by a coworker. Your hours don't match up.

#### EIGHT

Your wages are slashed. You're not sure why, but you need money.

#### NINE

You finally know your way around your new sector.

#### TEN

You know your job well; you've become the perfect cog.

#### JACK

You're moved again, farther - this time somewhere the haze doesn't reach.

#### QUEEN

Your performance is still unsatisfactory, and you're gotten rid of.

#### KING

You're promoted - with strings heavily attached.

## EVENTS, CONTD.

### HEARTS

#### ACE

Either for good behavior or illicitly, you get your hands on something.

#### TWO

You have an appeals hearing. They rarely work, but there's a chance.

#### THREE

There's something you can't have here that you want desperately.

#### FOUR

Your 'rehabilitation' now includes excruciating physical labor.

#### FIVE

You need something smuggled in.

#### SIX

Somebody new arrives, and you know them.

#### SEVEN

You mess up, and you end up in solitary confinement for a few days.

#### EIGHT

A new guard has taken a disliking for you in particular.

#### NINE

You need something on the outside checked in on.

#### TEN

Someone claiming to be a rebel contacts you, and wants to help.

#### JACK

You're blamed for another laundry list of crimes you didn't commit.

#### QUEEN

Helping rebels paid off - they claim they can break you out.

#### KING

You realize they're going to try to extract information from you.

## ENDING THE GAME

The player who drew the second face card writes one last letter as their character, similarly based on the event drawn. Each player then gets one letter to describe an epilogue, still purely through writing.

The ending should be whatever feels most appropriate for the characters - but it *should* feel appropriate for the characters. This can have huge implications for the society you've described together, be purely about the fate of your characters, or anything in between - trust in the story you've set up so far.

Also, don't be afraid to discuss what ending you envision with your partner. While surprises can be fun and interesting - and you probably have surprised your partner a few times already - a really satisfying ending is often a collaborative effort, especially if you want to do something that involves their character as well.

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