



Annals of Autumn **and Spring**

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This is a game submitted to the Iron Game Chef 2006 open contest.

Ingredients:

This game is completely playable in 4 sessions of two hours each.

It uses the ingredients from the first package: **Ancient**, **Committee**, and **Emotion**.

Blurb:

The world is about to plunge into darkness, and humanity shall be scattered amongst the ruins. Are all things lost? The four Ancient Season Spirits meet and share tales of heroic deeds and personal feelings in order to decide what part of humanity shall survive to the next Age of Man.

Note about Gender:

The Ancient Season Spirits regard themselves as either male or female, as the players wish. The roles the players portray, however, should always have the opposite gender to its Season, and it is suggested the gender of the Hero would be the gender of the player.

In the text, we would address all Seasons as female, and all Heroes as male.



Introduction

Annals of Autumn and Spring is a roleplaying game of collaborative story-telling and emotional frankness. The players play the part of four Ancient Season Spirits, who meet in Dreamtime to reveal what they love about mankind, and what they think should be preserved about it. In order to convince the three other Seasons, each Season in her turn tells an Heroic Tale, that best exemplifies how that attribute of mankind helps other people and is vital for mankind's essence and value. While that Season tells the tale, the other three players portray different roles: the Hero, his aid and mentor, the Heartwood, and his unfortunate companion, the Thorn.

During the game, the players are rewarded by points for incorporating different elements into the weaving story. At the last session, the Season with the most points would be able to sway her sisters and convince them that her theme should be planted in the frozen ground for a better world.

Unlike many games, this game doesn't have a permanent game-master: all players may contribute equally and freely to the development of the setting and their characters' surroundings, and to some extent, the story.

Setting up

The game is meant for exactly four players. Each player is encouraged to read this game before playing. The players should each print one copy of the Season sheet for personal use, and bring something to write with. In addition, you should bring two 12-sided dice, and a timer or a clock. None of the players should wear wristwatches or have pocket-watches, and should not be in view of a clock or watch.

The timer always begins with Winter, who then turns it over to the Storyteller of that session; the timer always returns to Winter when the tale ends.

Winter should make sure each session starts and ends within two hours.

For your convenience, you are encouraged to print a "cycles reference page", to better remember who portrays which role at any given session.

During play

Winter always opens and closes the game session. During the session, all conversation between the players should be done in-character as the Seasons. During the Heroic Tale, the player playing the Storyteller can speak as the Storyteller, describing scenes, or as different minor characters appearing in the story. The other three players may only speak in-character as the other Seasons, describing scenes by "remembering" parts of the story, or in-character as their roles, talking to other characters in the tale.



The Ancient Spirits of the Four Seasons

The setting for this game is either Earth, or a planet similar enough to it that it has four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. The biosphere of that world, the sum of all life on its surface, in its air and in the depths of its seas and oceans, developed its own peculiar kind of consciousness. At first, it was barely aware of itself or its surroundings. However, it grew and developed over time. During its development, over millions of years, this mass consciousness both became self-aware, and split into four different, but deeply connected, beings. Since they are attuned to life and its cycles, which are affected by day and night, growth and death, these beings took the stylings of the four seasons, eventually starting to view themselves as the personifications, or representations, of these seasons. Who knows? Perhaps they are right. Certainly there is no other conscious being on the face of the planet who can contradict them.

Since these Season Spirits are actually the sum of billions of organisms, they cannot exist on the same plane of existence as the rest of the planet, but once removed, in a sort of Dreamtime, where spatial and temporal constraints are weaker and allow them to manifest, think, converse, and act. Time in this once-removed plane of existence doesn't flow the same as in the world they inhabit: sometimes it flows much quicker, and thus allowing these massive beings to converse with each other. It is because of this different in time perception that they are unable to interact with regular animals or intelligent life on their planet, like humans – during normal time they are unable to think, let alone form a sentence. But they are still able to absorb information and events, and while in Dreamtime, can bring up this information and consider it. So their world is composed of each other and events occurring, despite their immense power, beyond their ability to affect.

While connected, these ancient Season Spirits are also vastly different in temper and opinion. However, since they are literally life on this planet, conflict between them would spell a disaster of catastrophic proportions to all life. Because of that, they formalized all contact between them, and only meet for specific purposes, and with strict protocol. Like gods, the seniority of one is eternal, and that goes to Winter, who forever sits at the head of their meeting.

Seasons and their World

This game is played at a time when humanity is facing an inevitable darkness. The darkness can take many forms: an ice age that ruins rich and magical civilizations, the fall of the Roman empire or the Galactic Empire in Asimov's Foundation series, Lovecraftian horrors invading the world like in the setting of Earthdawn, or a nuclear holocaust. Whatever the players choose, the fall of darkness is both all encompassing and inevitable, and the Seasons know this. They cannot prevent this fall, but it is their wish to cushion the blow, because of the special place humanity holds on the face of the planet.

It is in their power to take into Dreamtime a seed of humanity, a collection of dreams, impulses and symbols, where it would slumber until such time when humanity is ready to



immerge back to the light. In this way, instead of having to reinvent all aspects of civilization and culture anew, there would exist a sort of racial memory, hidden safe in Dreamtime, in order to prevent thousands of years of darkness and barbarianism that would have otherwise followed.

Before beginning play, players should decide which of them plays which of the seasons. When they sit, Winter should start the First Meeting with the appropriate ceremonial address. This first session and meeting would set the tone for the next four sessions, until the Seasons decide which spark of humanity they should keep.

The Season Sheet

Each player should have a Season sheet printed out. The Season sheet is divided into two sections: the Season section, and the Tale section. When starting the first session, write down which season you're playing. The Love section you would fill during your first session (and Agenda as well, if you're playing Summer). During each session you would fill either the Agenda, the Hero, the Heartwood or the Thorn section. These would be explained further down the line.

Formality

As mentioned above, the relationship between the Season spirits is highly formalized. There are strict rules governing their meetings and conversations, and these should be adhered to at all times.

- Winter is conducting the meetings. Since she is the eldest, Winter opens and closes each meeting.
- Whenever Winter finishes speaking, her sisters may respond, first Spring, Summer second, and Autumn last.
- Whenever Winter asks a question, she addresses Spring first, then Summer, and last, Autumn.
- While a Season is talking, no other Season may talk.
- While talking to a brother or sister, you would honor them by looking at them.
- While a Season is talking to you, you would honor her by looking her straight in the eyes.
- All words a Season says are true; all Seasons have perfect recollection, but not all recollections are perfect: a Season's description is never false, but she may have omitted some important details.
- All decisions would be by agreements; all agreements shall be unanimous.



Meetings and their Form

During the course of the game, there are four meetings of the Ancient Season Spirits. All meetings share certain attributes. The beginning of the first meeting and the end of the last are not like the others. In every meeting, Winter would open and close the meeting.

In every meeting, after Winter finishes, one of the Seasons would tell an Heroic Tale, which would be explained in the next episode. The arrangement of the telling is preordained: first Summer, then Autumn, third is Winter, and last is Spring. This order doesn't change. That Season, for the duration of the meeting, is the Storyteller.

After the tale is told, Winter closes the meeting.

First Meeting

Winter opens by describing the world of the Seasons. This should be done in broad strokes, just to set the tone and the conventions of the world: is it like ours, what kind of technology does it have, what kind of climate, and so on. After Winter speaks, each Season may further describe more details about the world, if they so wish, according to the rule of Formality.

Then Winter describes the darkness that threatens that world, and again her sisters may add to her memories.

Finally she asks each Season in turn why she came to the meeting. They must all answer the same, explaining their desire to protect mankind. For example, they could all say: *The Sun departs to the land of youth, through the gates of Death. We will plant the sacred seed, the seed of new reaped grain, the seed of flash, hidden in the Earth, the marvelous seed of the stars.*

Finally Winter invites Summer to tell them why she loves humanity. The player should make sure this section doesn't last longer than 20 minutes.

Love and Reason

All the Season Spirits love mankind. They feel a special bond to mankind, more than just the joined fate that all living creatures share on their planet. However, their love is very different from one another. They each love different things about mankind, and for different reasons.

The first thing each Storyteller contributes is why she loves mankind. The reason is something wonderful that mankind has or does: the ability to create art, to build beautiful things, the ability to sing or dance, the ability to make love, compassion towards all living things, the potential for destruction, inquiring minds, philosophical spark, and so on and so forth. This thing the Storyteller wishes to preserve for the next Age of Man. The Storyteller should accompany this revelation with a short anecdote or description of



event, without too many embellishments, giving an example of this wonderful trait. If possible, the story should be from the life experience of the player – but it should fit the setting as Winter and the others described it during the first session. That means it should be generalized or broadened. This revelation is the first **Investment** of the Storyteller. That is further explained in the next chapter.

Agenda

Notice that opposite your Love is your Agenda. Agenda is the thing your Season believes mankind had to do or has to know in order to achieve that wonderful trait she loves so much. You don't have to write your Agenda now. You can fill it at any time during the session when you're the Storyteller, up until the end of your Heroic Tale.

The Telling and Closure

After detailing her Love, the Storytelling Season turns to her sisters, and ceremoniously implores them to lend her their ears, so she may show them why they should preserve the trait she loves. She would convince them by telling them of a shining example of that trait: an Heroic Tale. While the Storyteller tells the story, the other Seasons take the parts of three roles in the tale: the Hero, the Heartwood, and the Thorn, further explained in the next chapter. This, too, is preordained. The following table illustrates which part each Season should play:

Session	Storyteller	Hero/Focal Season	Heart/Aiding Season	Thorn/Opposing Season
1	Summer	Spring	Autumn	Winter
2	Autumn	Winter	Spring	Summer
3	Winter	Autumn	Summer	Spring
4	Spring	Summer	Winter	Autumn

During the Heroic Tale, the different roles and the different Seasons can do different things and have different effect on the game. Notice that if a rule says the Opposing Season may invest, that means the Season whose player portrays the Thorn in this particular tale.

When sitting at the table, the Opposing Season should sit opposing the Storyteller. The Focal Season should sit to the right of the Storyteller, and the Heart to her left.

We will go into further detail in the next chapter, but you should note that though each *player* has a different role in the Tale, all Seasons are equal as far as the telling goes: they are all in the Dreamtime, listening to the story, remembering and contributing parts of it. At any time, without speaking when another speaks of course, a Season may expend on a certain description, cut to a different scene, introduce more minor characters, and so on. The other Seasons have all the authority a traditional game-master has, though they can't roleplay the minor characters.

The Storyteller has the timer during his telling, and should take note not to exceed his limit. He must leave 5 minutes for Winter to speak at the end.



After the tale is told, Winter speaks. She says that time is short, that the Dream might soon be over, and that the Seasons should take care to finish their deliberations soon. Then, if she hasn't already, the Storyteller would describe her Agenda, and explain how the tale demonstrated the importance of the attributes she loves in the next Age of Man. The other three Seasons may, in turn, speak their minds: whether or not the Agenda was exhibited in the tale or not.

Second and Third Meeting

The second and third meetings begin similarly to the first meeting, only the description of the world is not obligatory. The Seasons may add descriptions to the world, if they so choose, after Winter opens the meeting. Winter asks each Season in turn why she came to the meeting, and then asks the Storyteller why she loves humanity (if it's the third meeting, Winter may simply speak; she doesn't ask herself).

Like before, this is considered an Investment, and after that the Seasons tales the Heroic Tale. Like the first meeting, these two meetings end 5 minutes before the two-hour-mark, with Winter's warning that time is short, and the Storyteller's summery.

The Fourth Meeting

The fourth meeting begins like the two before it, but ends differently. The Storyteller, Spring, must leave 20 minutes for Winter this time.

Winter, again, warns that time is almost at an end. She says that they have listened to four stories, to four agendas, and now must choose. Spring then summarizes her story, and each Season by turn may remind the others what her Agenda is and how her tale proved her right.

The decision must be unanimous. If the tales were convincing enough, and the four Ancient Season Spirits can reach a decision before the dream ends (time expires), that they can plant the seed in Winter's frozen bosom and be glad. If not, you must tally the points gained; whomever gained the most points gets to decide on the Agenda. If tied, the Seasons were unable to reach a decision, and humanity plunges into darkness.

The structure of the Heroic Tale doesn't change from session to session, but the identity of players portraying the different of the roles is. You should read the Heroic Tale section for more details.



The Heroic Tale

The main part of each session is the Heroic Tale. One of the Seasons, a different one each session, is telling the other three Seasons a tale that is meant to describe a manifestation of her love for humanity. In the tale a Hero, struggles against threats or difficulties that further emphasize the good in humanity, according to the Storyteller.

The structure of the Heroic Tale within the game is the same all through the four sessions. Winter opens the session, describes the goals of the meeting, and then comes to introduce the Storytelling Season. The tale begins with the Storyteller description of love, which opens the first scene.

Opening Scene

After his description of love, the Storyteller tells her sister she would tell them a story demonstrating that love. The Storyteller then describes when and where in the world the tale takes place. Remember the Seasons are in Dreamtime, remembering stories from all places and periods. The four different tales don't have to be nearby in any way. The Storyteller should introduce the Hero by name, and describe the Call to Quest. This part is important: the Call should both identify the quest, and explain why the Hero is the one required to perform it.

For example: *Jordan plays Summer. He decided her love is for humanity's ingenious use of natural resources. Therefore Summer tales the tale of Gann, the first thief, who stole fire from the gods.*

The Focal Season's player written down the name and quest of his Hero, and begins portraying him. The Hero plays opposite the Call, and in this scene, the Hero is reluctant. There is resistance to taking on the quest, either because it is deemed too dangerous or too costly, because the Hero refuses to acknowledge the threat or need, or because he feels he is not the right person for the job, or shouldn't care about it. At this point, the Focal Season adds to the story. Notice that the Focal Season can freely do so, since Seasons can add descriptions, while the Hero can't. The Focal Season remembers how the Hero finally left on his trip: his Heartwood convinced him or made him go.

The Focal Season describes the Heartwood, the character played by the Aiding Season's player. She gives him a name, and an archetype: a dominant or primordial image, instantly understandable. It is used to characterize the Heart. The Archetype also serves as the means for the Heart. Now is the first conflict of the tale: the Heart must convince the Hero to leave on the quest, to take that first and fateful step of the journey. Aside from the first scene, almost every scene in the story would have conflict in it. After this conflict is resolved, the hero takes the first step, and the Aiding Season narrates consequences, describing the Thorn and why he's vital to the success of the quest: the Thorn's description would include name and archetype, just like the Heart, and should include some means the Thorn has. The Opposing Season's Player should write that down in the appropriate place.



Story Scenes

The Heroic Tale is divided into different scenes. There are some important things to remember about these scenes, and like many other things, they too have their own formation. Also, there are some unique scenes in every tale, that have their own structure, while other attributes all scenes share.

All scenes begin with a description, usually by the Storyteller, also in some cases by other Seasons. This description explains who is in the scene and where it takes place, and usually where in the story and why, although that isn't compulsory. As mentioned before, other Seasons may add to this description, but only after the scene was set in place.

After the description, the Hero has an opportunity to give an **Inner Monologue**. The Inner monologue is a short (no more than a minute or two) monologue, detailing what the Hero is thinking and feeling about the quest, his fellow travelers, and/or himself. The monologue takes place inside the Hero's mind, which means the other characters in the tale can't respond, and the Seasons only listen. There is no response when the monologue ends. After an Inner Monologue the Hero may use what he described as **means**. He may write the means on his Season sheet in the appropriate place.

For example: *Gann and his fellow travelers are riding hard through the Haunted Woods. After Jordan describes the hard rains and tight quarters Gann mulls over his past experience with hungry wolves on a hard winter night like this. Adam, Gann's player, adds "Experience with Hungry Wolves" as one of his means.*

After the Hero delivered, or not, the Thorn may **Prick** the Hero. Pricking is done by reminding the Hero of something he said or done in the past, and questioning why he said or did that thing. This is a why for the Thorn to demonstrate negative sides to the Hero, or downsides to the Storyteller's Agenda. The Hero then writes the Prick in the appropriate place. At any time, when not in the middle of a conflict, the Hero may explain the Prick to the Thorn, or justify it in an Inner Monologue. If he does, he can take the Prick as means. The Thorn may Prick up to 3 times each tale.

After the Thorn pricked, or not, the Heart by **Bolster** the hero. Bolstering is done by reminding the Hero of something he said or done in the past. It may be done immediately as a response to Pricking, but not in order to contradict what the Thorn said. The Hero must write the Bolstering in the appropriate place. At any time during a scene, even during conflict, the Hero may embellish on what the Heart provided, and explain how he did what he did, or what he meant or accomplished by saying what he said. He then can take the Bolstering as means. The Heart can Bolster during the opening sequence of each scene, except the first.

Seasons may add descriptions when they deem helpful or required. You should always remember when talking in-character as the Seasons to maintain the rules of Formality. Seasons do not make mistakes; therefore you cannot contradict what another Season



described as present in the scene, or as something that happened. You may add to the scene as you see fit, other events, objects, locations, or minor characters. Adding to what the Hero did or said is the purview of the Thorn and Heart.

Ownership and Conflict

Conflict occurs in the scene each and every time the Hero tries to accomplish something which is a step in the direction of fulfilling his Quest. That means he wants to succeed in a task, acquire an object, make something happen or someone do something, that is in some substantial way relevant to his goal. This usually happens when the Storyteller believes it should happen, but any Season may describe a conflict taking place, and the Hero may try to initiate conflict.

When conflict arises, there is **Jostling for Ownership**. The ownership of a scene is important, and determines what means the Hero uses in order to resolve the conflict and the outcome of the conflict. A scene can only have one owner, but not every scene necessarily has an owner.

First, the Storyteller may **invest** in ownership. If she does, she is the owner of the scene, and determines the means and outcome. If the Storyteller passes, then the Thorn may invest in Ownership. If he too passes, then the Hero may decide to buy Ownership, by Sacrifice or Loss. If the Hero passes as well, the Heart may **twist** in order to buy ownership. If he passes as well, the scene isn't owned, though the Heart may suggest means to the Hero. If the Hero accepts and wins the conflict, the Heart gains a point.

If the scene isn't owned, the outcome of the conflict is resolved by a roll of Lunge-Parry-Riposte. The Hero's player and the Storyteller's player each roll a single 12-sided die three times (for Lunge, Parry and Riposte), when the Hero's player add 1 to Lunge and Riposte and subtracts 1 from Parry. They compare results, when higher number wins, re-rolling ties. If the Hero won 2 or 3 rolls, then he wins the conflict. If the Storyteller one 2 or 3 rolls, then the Hero loses the conflict. The winner of the conflict then gives a suitable narration to the flow of the rolls and the eventual outcome of the conflict.

If a scene is owned by the Aiding Season, the Focal Season, or the Storyteller, they can decide if the Hero wins or loses the conflict. However, if they decide the Hero loses the conflict, they must immediately narrate consequences for that loss, and cut to the next scene where the loss sets the stage for the next stage of the quest, and the next conflict. The Hero may take the consequences of the loss as means.

If the scene is owned by the Thorn, then the Hero always loses the conflict, and then the Opposing Season must narrate the consequences of that loss, and set the stage for the next scene. In the next scene the Hero must face the same conflict again, but this time must use different means described by the Opposing Season at the beginning of this new scene. This new scene is owned by the Focal Season, and the Hero may take a Sacrifice or Loss here.



Seasons may interject a scene with other scenes, or with inter-cuts of different scenes. Again, remember they are in Dreamtime, and the history of the world is not linear as far as they are concerned. Flashbacks, parallel story-telling and other similar effects are common when the Seasons meet to talk. A Season may not interfere another Season, but she may interfere the memory of the Hero or some other character in the tale.

Scenes don't have to involve conflict, but every scene must be a part of the eventual arrival to the Threat and the end of the Quest. As mentioned before, scenes do not have to be in a straight line from start to finish. Seasons may wish to describe scenes that portray part of the hero's quest that conforms to their Agenda, or explains a Bolstering or Prick, or the way a hero gained some means he already used in the tale.

Investing and Twisting

During the tale, the Storytelling Season and Opposing Season may **invest** in order to gain ownership of a scene. Investment is done by describing an event or telling a short anecdote in which something is very important. That important something is either a place, an object, or a quality of a human being, and it becomes the means used in the owned scene (in the case of the Storyteller) or of the next scene (in the case of the Opposing Season). During this scene, the Hero must use those means in order to defeat the conflict. The purpose of investing is to require the Hero to perform certain deeds or act in certain ways as to highlight certain beneficial elements of a certain agenda, or the disadvantages of other agendas. If the Storyteller or Opposing Season invests, they receive a point. Remember that the Storyteller always invests at the beginning of the tale, when explaining his Love.

When a Storyteller or Opposing Season invests, another Season may use that investment as a twist. Only a Heart may twist, so only a Season that portrays the Heart in the current Tale or in a future tale may take the investment. Write the investment in the appropriate place, and note to which Season it belongs. When playing the Heart, you may use a twist to own a scene. If the twist belongs to the Storyteller of the current scene, you can only twist if no one else owns the scene (as described earlier). If it belongs to the Hero of tale current tale, you may twist to own the scene even if the Hero bought it with Sacrifice or Loss. The Hero must still Sacrifice or Lose. If it belongs to the Thorn of the current tale, you may twist even when the Thorn invests to buy the scene. In that case, the Hero still loses, but you own the next scene and not the Thorn.

For example: *Tim plays Winter, and during the second session, he claims two investments, from Jordan, who plays Summer, and Mike, who plays Autumn. During the last session, when Winter plays Heart, he can twist when Summer buys scenes (since he's the Hero) or when Autumn invests in scenes (since he's the Thorn).*

How to twist

Twisting is done by telling the story of the investment, but in a twisted way, in order to arrive at a different conclusion than the original intent. The new twisted story becomes the means in the scene owned by the Heart. If the Hero wins the conflict, the player whose investment it was loses a point.



For example: during the second session, Jordan invests in a scene by describing a thrilling climb on a hill to pick some flowers for his girlfriend. Jordan says the important thing in the story is the drive to give, even in the face of difficulties. Tim writes that down. During the fourth session, Jordan buys a scene, but then Tim twists it: he tells another story, of a man so possessed by the desire to give big expensive gifts, he neglects his love and spends all his time pursuing wealth, until he's left all alone. Jordan must now use the new means, which Tim describes as overwhelming greed.

Sacrifice and Loss

The Hero may buy a scene by claiming Sacrifice or Loss. That is done by the Focal Season, during the description of the conflict (if the Storyteller and the Thorn didn't invest in it first). The Focal Season reminisces how by beating the conflict, the Hero lost something dear to him. The player then erases one of his means. A Hero without means is a Hero that can't buy scenes. The difference between Sacrifice or loss is in the narration: Sacrifice is when the means are lost in order to gain the upper hand, and Loss happens when the Hero is too preoccupied with defeating the conflict, and can't prevent the loss from happening. A Hero who Sacrifices or Loses gains a point.

Ending the Quest

Apart from the two first scenes, most of the scenes in the tale are scenes that promote the plot and display difficulties for the Hero. There are, however, two more unique scenes: Facing the Threat, and the Return. Facing the Threat occurs when the Hero reaches the end of his quest. The Hero must always own this scene by taking a Sacrifice or Loss here. This is the only scene where the Hero may sacrifice or lose the Heart or Thorn instead of means (he can do this if he has no means, and may do this even if he has means).

The Return is always the last scene of the quest: the Hero rests in his new stereotype, and order is restored or the boon is granted: the purpose of the quest is fulfilled. No one owns the Return, and there is no conflict here.

After the Return, the tale ends. The Storytelling Season provides the appropriate closure, describing how the outcomes of the Quest benefited the reason she loves mankind. If other parts of the Quest did not provide the appropriate inspiration, she should write that as her agenda: the means for mankind to achieve the status of loved once more. This agenda is what the Season wants her sisters to adopt.



Daybreak

At the end of the fourth tale, after the Return when Spring sums up, Winter opens the discussion. Now the Seasons must decide who it was that made the most compelling point, and was able to persuade her sisters that her agenda should rest in seed in the frozen bosom.

Winter should allow no more than 15 minutes for this discussion – the dream is about to end, and the Seasons have to reach a consensus. Being set in their ways, the Seasons cannot combine agendas, though they may compromise as far as interpretation.

The Seasons should debate whether or not the tales reflected the loves of the Storytellers. Remember that Seasons never lie, and remember the rules of Formality.

Playing Again

The game ends when the dream ends. However, the game can be played again. Of course, playing in the post of different Seasons and with different people would lead to different tales. But you should also consider playing again with the same Seasons, perhaps with the same Loves, on different world. Another idea might be playing on a world with a cycle of darkness and light (like *Song of Ice and Fire*, or *Shadowrun*'s cycles of magic) where you can play the same Seasons, and observe how your previous success, or failures, affected mankind's development.



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