

Epilogue: Through the Looking Glass

The Artifact Explained

The artifact is a **physical pacification relic**—one of the crystalline polyhedra left by The Others on Earth's exposed Sunken City crust after Sol Cascade—devices to steer humanity away from its self converted irrationality into a more `Others` like configuration. The Cultist, a post-diaspora devotee, retrieved it through successive weekly expeditions into the ruins, docking his hauler at the Sol station across Prologue Vignettes 1-3 to send encrypted progress reports to his scattered cell: initial scouting, then discovery, culminating in Vignette 3's "I've found the gift" signal. With the artifact in the Cultist's cargo-hold, they purchase a final gate transmission, keyed by the player, while coincidental is not the true cause of the explosion.

Artifact's Nature & Influence

Passifies brains universally (docility, stress-smoothing), feeds on gate energy (keeps it dead until removal). No intent, just alien mechanics halting progress—makes humans feel small via trivial compulsions (player can't touch/grab it; mind redirects to "more important" idiocies). Subtle erosion hits all: crew via proximity/rituals, player via hauler events (3-4 scripted loops teach redirection).

End Game Arc

- With `The Technician`, `The Medic`, and the `Commander` all in their thrall'd place, they start giving out already completed missions
 - mission completion is always elation and thanks
 - missions are not reset, they are left as `The Player` completed them
 - this never ends, only a new random previous mission
 - always with praise and the idea of "just one more fix"
- As `The Player` does these tasks the quest spaces decay a few stages (within assets and time considerations)
- The only NPC not affected is `The Cultist` who you can talk to throughout all this and has something to say at each point along the way, often subtly comment on becoming aware

- This opens the next phase, if the player can see past the loop they can uncover more about the Cultist, the Hauler and the uncanny happening since the explosion. They can see what they have at their disposal to see one of the 4 endings (or something in between) evolve. This is through the looking-glass; you are now given full agency to solve your end the way you want.
- The player may find game props to fulfill their agency:
 - Hangar Door Manual procedure
 - Commander Codes (Open Hangar door)
 - Sedative Injector
 - Spacewalking Harness
 - Eva Suit
 - More as I come up with end states

Ending Spectrum

Endings will be in a spectrum of one of the provided:

1. Pure Stealth (Pyrrhic)

Sneak/hack/misdirect past cultist and commander—hauler undocks clean. Gate lives, message sends ("Sunken city awaits"), crew survives as serene husks. You're the sole survivor without evidence of what happened. Sol open to further exploration, with validation.

2. Violent Return (Murderer)

Kill cultist/commander blocking you, pilot out, space the artifact via cargo bay, return to station. Gate transmits cultist's dead-man message anyway (auto-queue). You are a murderer with an impossible story. Sol open to further exploration, with validation.

3. Brig Failure (Forgotten)

Combat escalates → security lockdown → brigged. Thralls forget prisoners exist; you starve watching them loop rituals through cell glass. Final log: "They don't even see me anymore."

4. Total Submission (Thrall)

Compulsions win during hauler breach—you join rituals instead of undocking. No escape; player character recites "47%... fix" eternally. Station ghosts completely, gate dead while artifact is present. Slowest doom.

5. New Initiate (Embrace)

Convince The Cultist that you do see. That you want to know more and that you are open what the cultist has to share. Joining the cultist in his communion with the artifact, dooming both you and them to endless worship of a misunderstood artifact.

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