

All artwork by [Niko Gesell](#), Creative Director

## NARRATIVE OUTLINE 1.0



*This narrative outline was produced in 2024 for a since-cancelled game project being produced by StrayDogs, a small indie company. The project received funding from the German government, but was abandoned due to a shift in creative vision. All narrative work shown here was created by Marianne Cassidy, and belongs to StrayDogs.*

# PROJECT CONTEXT

I joined **StrayDogs** as the sole writer/narrative designer after being reached out to by a colleague I had previously worked with at Fishlabs. He had an idea for a game, but he needed a narrative person to help shape it. I worked part-time, juggling the project with a full-time position at Mad Head Games. We gained a programmer 3 months in, and received funding after another 3 months. The next 6 months were then spent refining the vision and prototyping. But, after a year on the project, our founder and director realised he wanted to pivot to filmmaking, and myself and our programmer decided to leave the studio for gamier pastures.

This document contains the story outline for the game, ***Frequency of Mine***, from start to finish. I was granted permission to include this work in my portfolio.

## NARRATIVE BRIEF

- The story must deal with themes of **climate grief**, but must also counteract this with some level of **hope**.
- The story must be about **connecting with people** and **building community**.
- The story must blend storytelling via **branching dialogue** segments with creating scenarios for players to solve **environmental puzzles**.
- The story must feel **cinematic**, and blend filmic environmental storytelling with gameplay.
- The story must be predominantly **linear**.

## CONSTRAINTS

- The team does not have the capability to produce a tonne of character models, therefore, **the narrative cannot involve interacting with NPCs face-to-face**.
- The team does not have the capability to produce large-scale interior spaces, and should therefore **take place outside as much as possible**.
- The story should **take place in distinct “areas”**, rather than a continuous open space.
- The story should allow for plenty of **asset reuse** on the art side of things.
- The game needs to be eligible for funding from the German government, therefore, **the story cannot say anything deemed inappropriate by German funding bodies**.
  - At time of writing, this included any “pro-Palestine” or “anti-Israel” messaging.

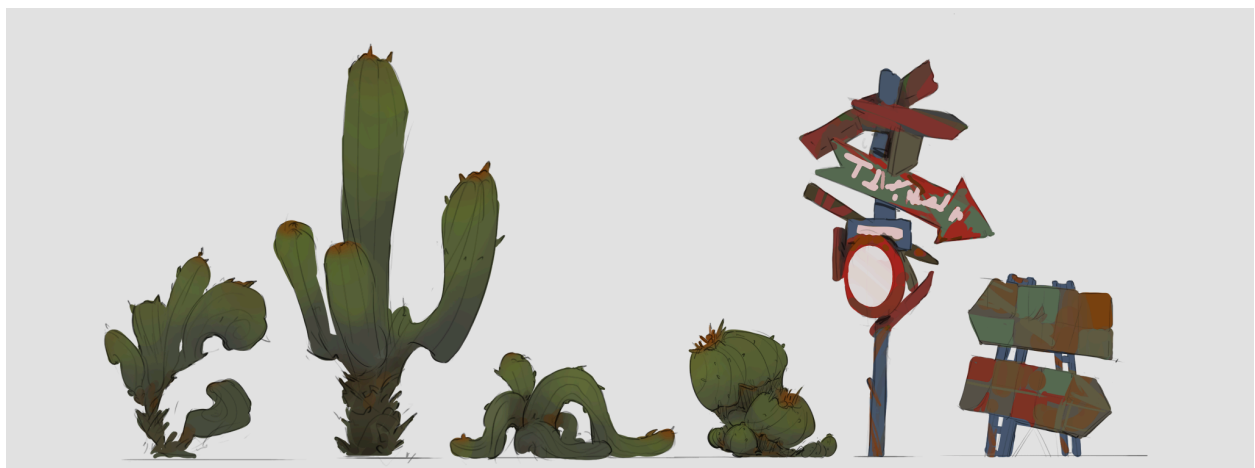
## PERSONAL GOALS

- To tell a story with themes that would connect with players on multiple levels:
  - Climate grief depicted side-by-side with personal grief and loss
  - Isolation and loneliness
  - Humanity’s infinite capacity and potential for connection and empathy
- To pitch a story with a diverse and multifaceted cast, including the protagonist.
- To include Arab representation, and have a meaningful, heartfelt story between two Arab characters as the final emotional thesis of the game.

# GAME OVERVIEW

*Frequency of Mine* is a 3D first-person narrative game that sends players on a **linear journey** through a **splintered world, ravaged by the climate**, where all humanity has left are **their bonds with each other**. Stepping into the shoes of Nasira, a short-range **radio messenger**, players will explore **long-abandoned locations**, navigate roadblocks by solving **environmental puzzles**, and **make radio contact** with the region's remaining denizens, nestled below in **bunkers** that protect them from the **toxic atmosphere** on the surface.

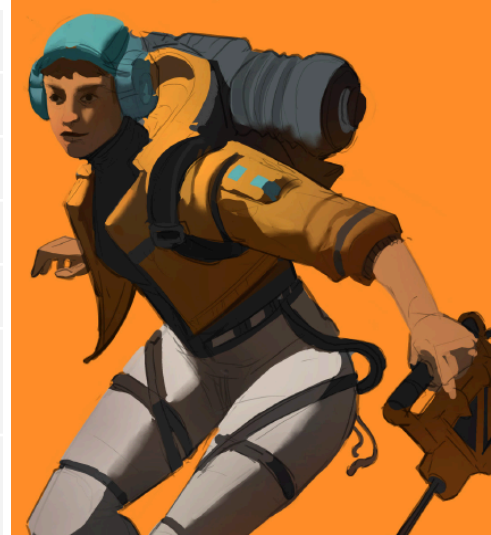
Inspired by **narrative-driven** games like *Firewatch*, *Oxenfree*, and *Everybody's Gone to the Rapture*, and **emotional** games like *Journey*, *Frequency of Mine* is focused on telling **meaningful stories** with **memorable characters**, delivered alongside a **breathtaking art style** and **satisfying, simple mechanics**.



# CHARACTERS

## OUR PROTAGONIST

Name	<b>Nasira</b>
Age	42 (born 2023)
Gender & Pronouns	Female (she/her)
Ethnicity	Syrian, Arab
Job	Radio Messenger
<b>Wants</b>	To do her job, no attachment. Just get through life, alone
<b>Needs</b>	To open herself up to human connection, to have hope



## BIO

Nasira has only known a world ravaged by climate catastrophe and human suffering. Her parents are long dead from war, and her younger brother was one of the many victims of the world's collapsing healthcare systems. Then, as a final blow, Nasira's girlfriend died from respiratory complications in 2058. Shortly after, Nasira volunteered for delivery duty. It's not a popular job – it's dangerous and unpleasant. But Nasira can handle it, just about. And it gives her an excuse to rarely spend time in her home bunker and to instead take up residence in a messenger station, alone.

By 2065, Nasira has the job nailed. She's one of two radio messengers in the region, and between them, they keep the area connected. However, one day, Nasira is told she needs to move to a new area: one of their messengers was killed in a landslide, and now several bunkers have been left in the dark. Equipped with her radio, Nasira sets out to aid the area.

## PERSONAL ARC

Nasira starts off just going from day to day, numb and disconnected. She's lost everyone she ever loved, and she avoids becoming invested in the people she helps for her job.

By the end of our story, she has reconnected emotionally with the world, and gained hope for both people and the planet, enabling her to use that hope to both inspire people and find peace within herself.

## SECONDARY CHARACTERS

In order of appearance:

**Ugochi** | she/her

Another radio messenger in Nasira's home region. Ugochi and Nasira have a friendly, if distant, dynamic.

**Suzanne** | she/her

A biochemist living in Area 1's bunker. She has been monitoring the Earth's atmosphere, keeping tabs on its survivability.

**Kiyoko** | she/her

An engineer living in one of the bunkers in Area 2. She is passionate and argumentative, but all for the sake of her bunker.

**Jonas** | he/him

An engineer living in one of the bunkers in Area 2. He can come across as coldly logical, and struggles to empathise with Kiyoko.

**Alex** | they/them

A chronically ill person who has fled their bunker in Area 3. They are dying, and require Nasira's help easing their passing.

**Gunther** | he/him

An actor and theatre enthusiast living in Area 4's bunker. He needs Nasira's help collecting props for a play he's putting on in his bunker.

**Hassan** | he/him

A teenage boy whose bunker was infected with a lethal disease. Nasira encounters him in Area 5, as he is on the cusp of taking his own life.

# FULL NARRATIVE OUTLINE

*BLACK SCREEN, RADIO CRACKLE*

We enter halfway through a conversation between NASIRA and the other radio messenger in her region, UGOCHI. They tell Nasira she needs to move regions due to the loss of another messenger there. Nasira is given the coordinates for the messenger's station, and we fade onto a PATH for the player to walk along.

*FADE IN FROM BLACK*  
LOCATION: RURAL PATH

## PROLOGUE

LOCATION: MESSENGER'S STATION

The player goes along the path for a short time before reaching the MESSENGER'S STATION entrance (a TINY HUT with a TRAPDOOR to an underground bunker inside). In the hut, the player finds a few things left behind by the old messenger (a MAP of the area, a few RADIO STATION CODES and accompanying coordinates, a JOURNAL).

If the player tries to enter the bunker right now, Nasira will say she's not ready to call it a day yet, and not enter.

Using the map and the radio coordinates, Nasira learns where she needs to go to reach the first bunker.

*FADE OUT TO BLACK*

*FADE IN FROM BLACK*  
LOCATION: OPEN ROAD

As the player begins walking:

TEXT FADE IN/OUT:

"EPISODE 1: SUZANNE"

Nasira comments to herself that she should be close to the bunker's radio signal soon.

LOCATION: MOTEL & GAS STATION

After following the OPEN ROAD, the player reaches a rundown, abandoned GAS STATION, with a GARAGE attached. A roadside MOTEL is close by. Nasira will voice her suspicion that the bunker is nearby, and that she already has the code from the messenger's station.

Here, the player is tutorialised on using the RADIO and finding frequencies. Once Nasira connects, she speaks, seeing if anyone will respond.

A woman responds to Nasira, asking who she is. Nasira answers, and explains what happened to the previous messenger. The woman is upset — the last messenger had done a lot to help their bunker. But she's practical and quick to get down to business. She introduces herself as SUZANNE, a biochemist, and tells Nasira that the last time their messenger was there, he'd helped them set up apparatus to monitor the air quality, and that they'll need Nasira's help dismantling the equipment so they can process the results.

With Suzanne's direction, Nasira finds the various APPARATUS and safely dismantles it to deliver back to the bunker for reading. While doing so, she and Suzanne talk about the region, Suzanne's bunker, and her atmospheric tests. Suzanne's hope is that with careful monitoring, they'll be able to pick up any hints that the atmosphere might be improving in humanity's absence.

Nasira takes the apparatus to a nearby DROP CHUTE and carefully bundles it inside. Suzanne confirms receipt on the other end, and begins to take the readings. She gives a frustrated sigh — no improvement, not this time.

When Suzanne isn't disheartened by the results of the test, Nasira is confused. But Suzanne explains that it was the result she expected, and life goes on. She thanks Nasira for her help, and Nasira says she'll come back next week.

*FADE OUT TO BLACK*

## EPISODE TRANSITION

*FADE IN FROM BLACK*  
LOCATION: NIGHT PATH

Nasira walks along her RETURN PATH at NIGHT. We have a few moments focused on atmospheric and visual appreciation as Nasira approaches her messenger station.

*FADE TO BLACK*

*FADE IN FROM BLACK*  
LOCATION: DIRT PATH

As the player begins walking:

TEXT FADE IN/OUT:

## "EPISODE 2: KIYOKO & JONAS"

Nasira travels down a DIRT PATH in a SPARSELY WOODED area. She comments to herself that there are meant to be two different bunkers nearby.

LOCATION: RURAL TOWN

After walking a bit further, she rounds a corner to see a SMALL TOWN, with a BUNKER HATCH near the entrance. The bunker's FREQUENCY COORDINATES have been written on the door.

After inputting the frequency, Nasira is met with an argument between two people — she can't even get a word in. Eventually, Nasira is able to interject and introduce herself. She explains what happened to the last messenger, and one of the people — JONAS — angrily blames the other — KIYOKO. Apparently, it was her bunker that sent the last messenger in the direction of the landslide that killed them. The two start arguing again, and Nasira has to mediate their tempers back down to a simmer before she can ask if there's any way she can help them.

Both bunkers need various ELECTRICAL PARTS replaced, which the player can find and scavenge around the town. As they explore, the player can optionally read NOTES and DIARIES from the old inhabitants who fled to the bunkers, and learn more details about how the town became split between the two.

As Nasira recovers the parts, she radios back in to report the items to Jonas and Kiyoko. Depending on what texts they've read in the town, they may unlock new dialogue options for these conversations and for later.

After all the parts are scavenged, Jonas and Kiyoko direct Nasira to the SECOND BUNKER, on the other side of town from the first one. Nasira finds it, and is about to put half of the electrical parts down a DROP CHUTE when another argument begins:

Jonas, in bunker 1 (B1), insists that they should get **more** parts due to having a greater need for them than bunker 2 (B2). Kiyoko is furious, and accuses Jonas of being greedy. Nasira is quickly able to see that the problem here is the rigid separation of the two bunkers, not the number of resources available. She proposes a tunnel be built between the bunkers.

Jonas says the project would require resources they don't have, but Nasira promises to work with them to acquire whatever they need. Kiyoko objects too, saying her bunker is surviving just fine on their own, but Nasira points out — based on earlier dialogues — that B1 has specialists in fields B2 is lacking in, like dentistry. Wouldn't everyone benefit in the end? Eventually, after prodding, both parties are convinced. Nasira gives them an equal cut of the electrical parts, but says that going forward, they'll have to compromise according to each bunker's needs until the



tunnel is completed. Everyone agrees, though Kiyoko is bitter at the idea of foregoing future resources.

As the player interacts with B2's drop chute to deliver the parts, we fade out.

*FADE TO BLACK*

## EPIISODE TRANSITION

*FADE IN FROM BLACK*

Nasira is now outside B1, and reports that she's dropped the parts down the chute. Then, her suit begins beeping at her. Moments later, the world wobbles as Nasira becomes dizzy — she's overheating. Jonas asks if she's okay over the radio, and Nasira insists she is, before disconnecting. She takes an unsteady step backwards. As her vision pans up and blurs, she hears a distant, muffled voice. The voice gains clarity as her eyesight swims.

It's a doctor, and they're talking about someone's condition. It sounds serious. Nasira responds to the doctor — isn't there anything she can do? The doctor says no. The sick person, a woman, speaks to Nasira, trying to comfort her, but Nasira is beside herself. She can't lose someone else, not again. The sick woman is all she has left.

As Nasira regains her sight and balance, she says a final "I need you" to the woman in her memories. Her suit stops beeping as her temperature returns to an acceptable level. Nasira comments that she'll need to check on the suit's integrity before she heads out the next day.

*CUT TO BLACK*

*FADE IN FROM BLACK*

LOCATION: REGION OVERLOOK

Time has passed, and Nasira is sitting on a CLIFF LEDGE overlooking the area. From this height, there's a layer of SMOG across the landscape. We see a few distant WINDMILLS, but only one is still moving.

TEXT FADE IN/OUT:

**"EPISODE 3: ALEX"**

Nasira comments that it's a hot one today — she'll have to avoid over-exerting herself, if she can manage. She stands and turns towards the PATH behind her, then pulls out her map to decide where she should go today. As she puts the map away, we fade out.

*FADE TO BLACK*

*FADE IN FROM BLACK*

LOCATION: OFFICE COURTYARD

Nasira treks into the COURTYARD of what was once an assortment of OFFICE COMPLEXES. She finds the BUNKER ENTRANCE in the ground between two BUILDINGS, but there's no hint for their radio frequency anywhere.

Just then, Nasira's radio crackles to life. A frail voice asks if anyone's there, and Nasira responds, asking if they're from the bunker. The person coughs, laughs, and answers: not anymore. They introduce themselves — their name is ALEX, and they're holed up in one of the offices nearby, with no suit. They're using a generator to keep the air conditioning running, but the atmosphere will kill them eventually. Nasira asks Alex why they're outside if they know it'll kill them, and Alex tells her they're already dying. Before Nasira can get more information, Alex asks if she could come to the entrance of the building — there's a drop chute into the office, a relic from when humanity still lived on the surface but mostly stayed inside.

Nasira goes to the BUILDING, and their radio crackles again. Alex can see Nasira through the SECOND FLOOR WINDOW. They ask if she'd be able to find some things for them, to ease their passing. They didn't have time between leaving the bunker and hurrying to get the generator set up, as the heat and air were too much for them. Nasira agrees, but also asks if they know the frequency for the bunker they came from. Alex says they might — would that make her help them? Nasira says she'll help them either way.

Alex asks for items from around the area that Nasira will be able to access by breaking the WINDOWS of the buildings nearby, using a CROWBAR she can also find. Once she has everything and has placed it in the DROP CHUTE, she radios Alex. They thank her, and she asks if they'll explain why they're out here now. Alex says she'll understand if she tries to radio the bunker herself, and they give Nasira the frequency coordinates.

As Nasira is about to input the frequency, she experiences another bout of heat stroke, losing her balance and vision. Nasira is talking to someone in her old bunker. They're trying to talk her out of becoming a messenger, as the job is dangerous — but Nasira's mind is made up. There's nothing left for her in the bunker now that her girlfriend has passed away.

As Nasira recovers from her delirium, Alex's voice fades in. They could see Nasira beginning to faint from the window, and had been calling out to her. They ask if she's okay, and Nasira gently-but-firmly brushes them off. She disconnects to input the bunker frequency.

After Nasira gets through and asks if anyone is there, a stern voice responds: how did she find the frequency? Who is she? Nasira begins to explain that she's the region's new messenger, but the person cuts her off, saying their bunker no longer requires messengers. They're fully self-sufficient. Nasira is surprised, confused, and a little impressed. She tells them about Alex, but they say they already know — and they're surprised Alex has lasted this long, considering they left three days ago.

Nasira asks the bunker dweller why Alex left, and why they aren't helping them. The person says that Alex isn't the first to leave. They weren't pulling their weight, so the bunker began to remove certain "privileges", such as food, then medicine. But Alex was stubborn, so they chose to leave.

Nasira can tell the bunker dweller she disapproves, but they are unaffected. They tell her they don't care what an outsider thinks, and they also don't need her services, before closing the line.

Nasira, disheartened, patches back into Alex's frequency. Alex thanks Nasira for her help earlier, and says they're using the items she brought them. Nasira tells Alex what the bunker dweller told her — that Alex was lazy, and left out of stubbornness. Alex laughs, then explains:

They were born with a chronic disability. They had help managing it before the world fell apart, but they always struggled, even back then. Now, with most of their treatments inaccessible, most of their days are bad days. It wasn't terrible at first: the bunker's community initially tried to take care of everyone. But over time, things changed. A leader was elected, but then they began to hoard resources, using them as a reward for services rendered. If you couldn't contribute your "fair" amount, you didn't eat. You didn't get meds.

Alex's health was declining fast in the bunker, and they weren't the first. They knew they were going to die if they stayed, so they decided they would rather see the Earth from topside one last time. They miscalculated, however — they hadn't fully understood how toxic the surface had become. They had planned to walk to a field to watch the sunset one final time, but it was so hot they barely made it to the office building, and now they're declining faster than ever. They wouldn't last 5 minutes out in the heat.

Nasira tells Alex there are fields not far from there, just within radio distance. She says to wait for her: she's going to call again very soon.

*FADE TO BLACK*

*FADE IN FROM BLACK*

LOCATION: FIELD

Nasira is standing in a FIELD overlooking some HILLS. The SUN is just beginning to set. Nasira connects to Alex's frequency, and they answer — they sound a little distant and patchy, but the two can hear each other. Nasira describes the SUNSET to Alex as the sun goes down; she describes the BREEZE through the YELLOW GRASS, the INSECTS buzzing through the hot air. Alex chokes up as they thank Nasira, then says they're tired — they're going to sleep now. Nasira offers to visit them again, and Alex says they both know that won't be necessary. Alex thanks Nasira again, then Nasira is alone in the field as NIGHT falls. A SHOOTING STAR darts across the sky.

*CUT TO BLACK*

## EPISODE TRANSITION

Over a black screen, we listen to a flashback of Nasira and her deceased brother. It's pre-bunker times. The two talk and laugh, reminisce about their parents, but her brother's laughter turns into coughing. Nasira tells him he should get it looked at, but they can't afford it.

*FADE IN FROM BLACK*  
**LOCATION: TOWN SQUARE**

Nasira is standing in a TOWN SQUARE, looking at old, discoloured POSTERS in a SHOP WINDOW.

TEXT FADE IN/OUT:

### "EPISODE 4: GUNTHER"

Nasira sighs to herself. She's unusually quiet compared to her usual mutterings. She explores the square, and eventually finds a frequency code graffiti'd onto the stone of a DRIED UP FOUNTAIN. She tunes her radio to it, and asks if anyone's there. An eccentric, bubbly man responds, introducing himself as GUNTHER. Nasira explains who she is, and though Gunther is saddened to hear about the previous messenger's death, he's the first to welcome Nasira to the region. She's taken aback, and unsure how to react; no one else has been this positive towards her.

Nasira asks if there's anything the bunker needs, and Gunther enthusiastically says she came at a perfect time — he's an actor and playwright, and he and some of the kids in the bunker are putting on a show. They're missing a few props, though. Maybe there are some old objects kicking around up there that they could repurpose?

Nasira asks if they don't need anything a little more survival-related, and Gunther admonishes her for not considering art a matter of survival. Nasira — slightly begrudgingly — agrees to help.

For his first request, Gunther wants Nasira to find a top hat. In the end, she's able to find a BUCKET, a FRISBEE, and some BLACK PAINT. Reporting these to Gunther, he decides they're perfect. He reminisces about a play he was meant to be in just before everything fell apart — *The Importance of Being Earnest*. He was to play Algernon, and he had a top hat for the part, a real one, made from silk. He's one of the only adults interested in acting in his bunker — but the kids have a lot of enthusiasm.

Next, he wants Nasira to find a plush rabbit. Nasira is able to find a TEDDY BEAR and a BABY BONNET WITH RABBIT EARS. She reports them to Gunther, who laughs, but says they're probably the best they'll be able to get.

For his final item, he asks Nasira to find a working CD player — they have CDs, but their player broke. Nasira is able to find a rusting CD PLAYER, but has no way to test if it's working. After she reports this, Gunther thanks her either way, and says it's worth a try.

Gunther is delighted with the items, and thanks Nasira for helping him and the kids. He tells her he was actually a pretty big deal in the national theatre before everything moved underground. He'd had his dreams set on moving to NYC and being on Broadway someday. But NYC isn't there anymore, and neither is Broadway. Nasira tells him she's sorry he can't achieve his dreams anymore, but Gunther says he's been able to find a new purpose teaching the kids. He still has his partner, too — he's a pianist, living down there with him. They're going to put on one hell of a show, one that'll go down in bunker history.

Nasira asks again if there's anything else they need, survival-wise. He tells her they're managing well at the moment: they have artificial sunlight and crops, clean water, and hope. But she should come back next week to hear how the show went — maybe they'll need something from topside then.

They say their farewells, Nasira's heart slightly patched up from her earlier experience at the office complex.

*FADE TO BLACK*

*FADE IN FROM BLACK*

LOCATION: ABANDONED ROAD

TEXT FADE IN/OUT:

## "EPISODE 5: HASSAN"

Nasira is walking down a ROAD with a TUNNEL at the end, going through a large HILL. It's blocked by BROKEN DOWN CARS and other SCRAPS. Scrawled into one of the car doors is a radio frequency. Nasira checks her map — she's not quite at the bunker marker yet, but maybe it's through the blocked tunnel.

Nasira inputs the frequency and asks if anyone's there. There's no response, so she asks again. After a long silence, a voice — young, maybe a teenager — responds. What does Nasira want, he asks? Nasira explains that she's the new messenger, and she's here to help, if they need it. The teenager says they don't need anything, and to please go away.

Unconvinced, Nasira asks how old the kid is. They hesitantly say they're 15 years old. Nasira asks if there are any adults she can speak to; the kid says no. What does he mean, "no"? He elaborates: they're all dead. Everyone is. He's the only one left.

Nasira is stunned into silence for a moment. Then she asks for the kid's name. HASSAN. She asks Hassan what happened. There's an emptiness in his voice as he tells her: a disease

spread through the bunker two months ago. People began dropping like flies, and no one could react fast enough. For some reason, Hassan never got sick — maybe he's immune, or asymptomatic. Either way, it's just him, now.

Nasira asks how long he's been by himself — 3 weeks. Did the previous messenger know what was happening? Yes, but nothing could be done in time. A sample of the virus was taken to another bunker with better facilities for analysis, but they hadn't found a solution yet, last they heard. Maybe they're still working on it. It doesn't matter, Hassan says. Nasira asks why it doesn't matter if a cure might mean he can be immunised and move to another bunker, and Hassan reveals his plan to take his own life. Everyone he knew and loved died from the disease. He doesn't have anything to live for.

Nasira goes into crisis mode, and begins trying to talk Hassan down. But he ignores her, and tells her to stop trying. Nasira refuses to give up on him, and resolves to go to the bunker to stop him.

Searching the area, Nasira finds the COMPONENTS for a makeshift BOMB to blow the blockage in the tunnel clear, which she does.

LOCATION: ROAD TUNNEL

Heading in, Nasira experiences another bout of heat stroke and exhaustion. The sound of her suit beeping is drowned out by the sound of birdsong — a non-existent sound in the apocalypse. Over the birdsong, we hear a conversation between Nasira and her girlfriend. They're discussing their life together, and their plan to move into one of the bunkers. They're scared, but they have each other — and that's all they need.

As Nasira recovers from the flashback, she searches the TUNNEL INTERIOR, and finds the METAL DOOR to the bunker built into the side of the CONCRETE. She bangs on the door, yelling for Hassan to talk to her. Her radio crackles — no need to bang like that, Hassan says. She's going to give him a headache.

Nasira, having got Hassan's attention, doubles down on her plea for him to go on living. He can move to a new bunker, all they need is a spare suit for the journey, and while those are in very limited supply, there are a few around. Once he moves, he can start over, make a new home there. Hassan insists he doesn't want to start again, and Nasira breaks. She tells Hassan about her own experience with loss, and how close she also came to giving up on life. It was by becoming a messenger and seeing all the ways humanity continues to have hope and work together that made her feel like she could keep going. It hasn't always been easy, and people have sometimes let her down, but she keeps living for people like Hassan — people who need her help — and for herself.

Hassan begins to reconsider. He thought he couldn't live with the grief and pain, but maybe it's possible. He asks Nasira if she thinks he could become a messenger too, and she says yes,

someday. Maybe he could even take over her post, when he's old enough. But right now, he needs time to recover and grow.

Hassan asks Nasira if she'd be able to come inside the bunker. She can keep her suit on to protect her from the virus, but he doesn't want to be alone. Nasira agrees, and as the bunker door unlatches and opens, we fade out.

*FADE TO BLACK*

## EPILOGUE

*FADE IN FROM BLACK*

LOCATION: REGION OVERLOOK

Nasira sits on the same cliff ledge she looked out over earlier in the game. She looks beside her, and we see someone else in a suit — Hassan?

The SUN SETS over the hills in the distance, and the two watch it sink down together. The moment the sun disappears below the horizon, we cut.

*CUT TO BLACK*

# END #