

LAIKA



a game for one person about a day that
has finally
come

by
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in memory of:
the first dog to defy gravity,
and all who follow in her pawprints

many thanks go to
Michael Massey and Freya C
for playtesting and encouragement

Laika was a wonderful dog.

Quiet and very placid.

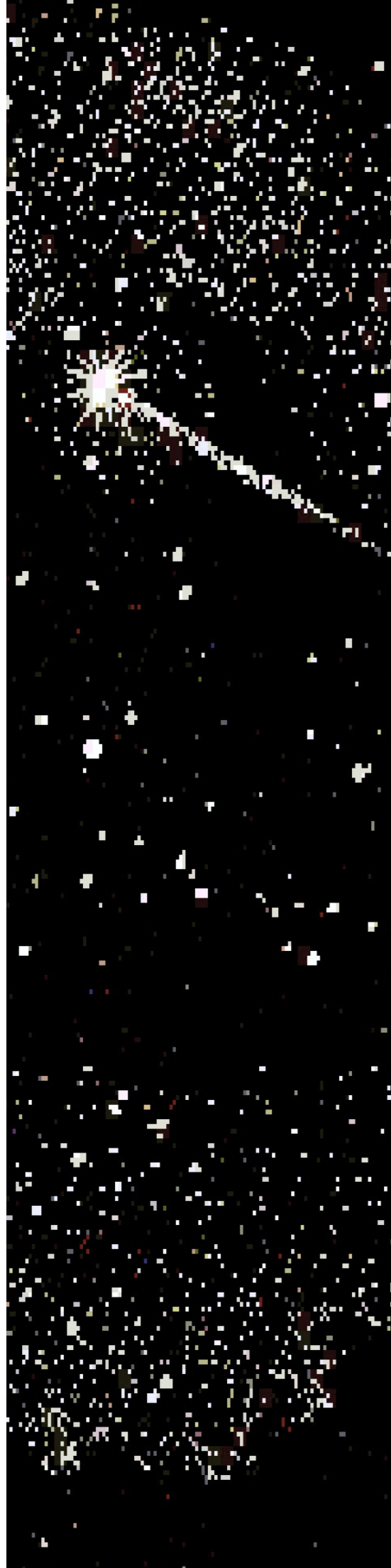
Before the flight to the cosmodrome I once
brought her home and showed her to the
children.

They played with her.

I wanted to do something nice for the dog.

She had only a very short time to live, you see.

- Dr Vladimir I. Yazdovskiy





FAREWELL

The time has come, and you must send something precious far away.

This is something you must do. It has never been done before, and it may never be done again. No one can do this but you.

No matter what safeguards or countermeasures you put in place, you carry a certainty deep inside you — quickly becoming heavy and hard to bear — that you will never see this precious thing again.

However you felt about your task when you started down this path, you have grown more and more attached. Laika, although she might go by another name, is a part of your life, even a part of your family. She features in happy memories and pictures, even though some of them may have been inspired by pity.

But this is all coming to an end as you get ready to send her on a one way adventure. And now it is time to prepare.

LAIKA is a game for one player about saying goodbye, and living with the consequences of decisions that once seemed easy.

It is also a tribute to the first dog to orbit the earth, Laika, who went far into the unknown and never came home.

METHODOLOGY

Before your great, tragic project can reach its conclusion there are some things you need, and some other things you need to know.

Laika is central to this text but, at its heart, this is a story about saying goodbye to something precious. Our furry friend stands in for all of these precious things, and you can substitute her for anything else that resonates with you. This story could be about a magical artifact or a special letter as easily it is about a space dog.

To play LAIKA, you must have:

- A pen and several pieces of paper (or poster/index card)
- Some way of listening to music while travelling
- A physical object that you are willing to send away — Laika
- A container or some other vessel — Sputnik 2
- Some craft supplies of your choice, probably including sticky tape

You also require:

- A name for your project. This text refers to the Soviet Space Program, but yours could even be science-fictional, mystical, or fantastical. The nature of the project is up to you
- A destination that you can reach physically or by proxy/mail
- A song or playlist about journeys, farewells, or anything else that feels right

Your preparations and the culmination of your project should take place across an uninterrupted span of time, where possible. This should take you no more than an hour or so, at most.

NAME

On your paper, write down 'Soviet Space Program', and next to it, the date of today's launch. If you wish to give the event a different name, do so.

Write one sentence defining, in simple terms, what it is that you are doing.

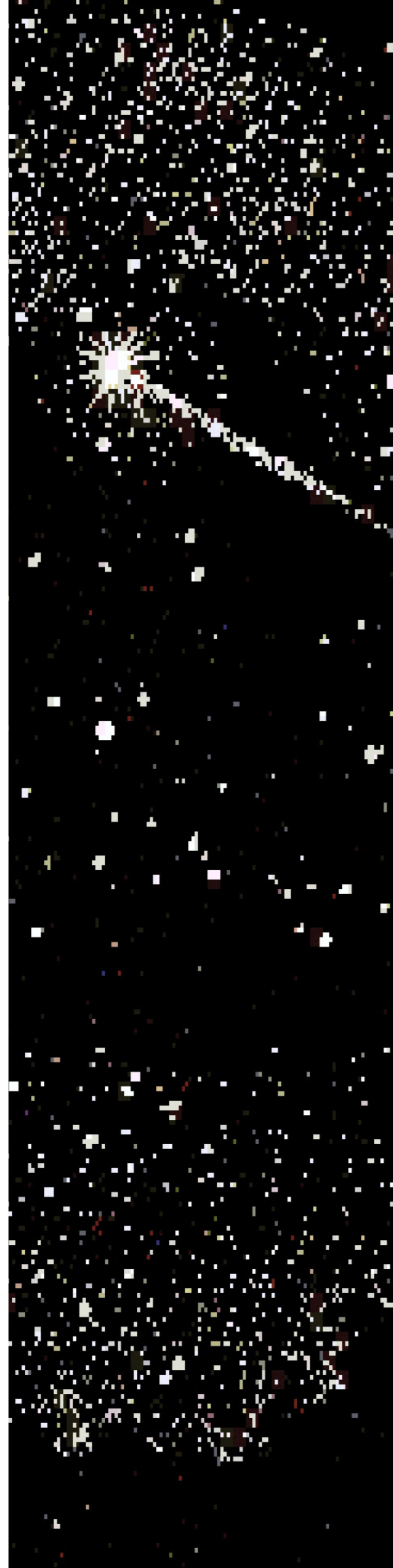
DESTINATION

Laika is going to outer space, and this is represented by a journey of our own. You must plan out the route to a physical destination in your world. It must be accessible either physically or by proxy (such as mail).

Your destination is where you will send or take your charge. This could be the garbage bin outside your house, or it could be another country. Don't choose somewhere that will get you in trouble or pollute the environment.

It must be somewhere that you can leave or deposit Sputnik 2, along with Laika, and not return to collect them. Once she has been sent, you are certain that you will not be able to get her back.

Once you have chosen a destination, describe what it is on your paper. Is it really just a garbage bin, or is it Earth's orbit? Maybe something altogether stranger?





VESSEL

You must now construct Sputnik 2.

Find a suitable vessel. Anything works, as long as you're prepared not to get it back. Tupperware containers, cardboard boxes, spice jars. Bigger is better, but don't worry too much about realism. A universe can fit within an old wine bottle.

This is your project — you decide.

On your index card or poster, under the name of your project, describe Sputnik 2 and why it has taken you so long to get to this point. Were the reasons for these delays technical or emotional?

Decorate or improve the vessel somehow. This is essential, otherwise you cannot guarantee that it will safely transport Laika to her new home.

SOMETHING PRECIOUS

The most important part of your project is that you must send Laika away, perhaps forever. On a second piece of paper, write down Laika's name, and describe her.

Draw a picture — something small that represents a photograph of her.

Then, find a physical item to represent Laika. It must be able to fit inside Sputnik 2.

LIFT-OFF

Everything is in place, and the time has come for launch. The following steps will guide you to your destination:

10.

First, you must emotionally ready yourself for this moment. Even though Laika doesn't understand what you say, you share an emotional attachment. Interact with her, preferably using speech, closeness, and touch. It doesn't matter that she might not speak back.

Imagine that this scene is taking months ago, when today seemed like it was infinitely far in the future.

9.

Take Laika (and the item representing her), place her inside Sputnik 2. Do not seal her away just yet. There is more yet to do.

8.

Strap Laika in and calm her. This is a big day for a dog so small.

7.

This is the last opportunity that you will have to say something. There is no one else here, so you can say whatever you're thinking. Even if there is no way Laika could hear or understand your words, you are certain they mean something.

6.

Seal the vessel. It must be sealed to protect Laika. If anything were to happen, all of this would be for nothing. If your vessel is large enough, you should place all of your notes, sealed, within. The only thing you should leave out is the sheet with your drawing and description of Laika.

5.

Choose an appropriate song or playlist, and start it.

4.

Ready yourself, and open the door.

Are you doing the right thing?

3.

Walk with Sputnik 2 and guide Laika to her destination.

Know that she is safe in your care.

2.

Deliver Laika to her new home, vessel and all, and turn your back on the weeks, months, or years that have brought you to this moment.

You cannot look back.

1.

Return home and wait for news, just you and the picture you drew.
There is nothing more you can do, now — Laika is gone, and you will
never see her again.

0.

Remember her.



Woof
- Laika