



# CRASH!

Or

# LANTEARNS OF THE DEAD

A human astronaut has crashed on an alien planet. He or she is trying to repair his or her spaceship and get home. Meanwhile, the natives of the planet have their own crisis. What will happen when these cultures collide?

## Setup

Choose one player to play the crashed astronaut. Everyone else will play the natives of the alien planet.

Take a regular deck of playing cards (no jokers). Separate the diamonds and clubs numbered 2 through 10 from the rest of the deck. Shuffle those cards and give them to the astronaut. The natives take the rest of the deck and shuffle it. Then go into separate areas to create characters. The astronaut should take Book One: Crash, while the native should take Book Two: Lanterns of the Dead.

When everything is sorted out, the astronaut may rejoin the group.



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# CRASH!

## BOOK ONE: FOR THE ASTRONAUT PLAYER

### STARDATE 1173.543.53.1

Following a robot survey, the second moon of Upsilon Andromadae D was determined to harbor complex life. Following IntEx protocols, I have been dispatched to see if there is any sapient life on the exomoon. Routine mission, really. Probably nothing. Maybe meet an unknown alien culture, though. That would be interesting.

### STARDATE 1173.543.56.2

Strange moving lights detected near the planet's surface. Sensors can't figure out what they are. I'm taking the ship down to check it out.

### STARDATE 1173.543.58.4

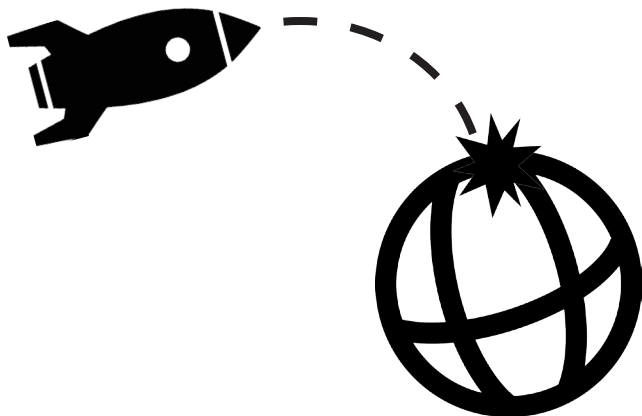
#### **+++ AUTOMATED RECORD +++**

Unidentified blockage in port thruster system. Catastrophic mechanical malfunction. System nonresponsive. Automated rescue teams will be dispatched.

Pilot status: Unknown.

Ship status: Unknown.

Estimated response time: 7.2 years.



### ASSESSING DAMAGE TO SHIP SUBSYSTEMS

Shuffle your deck and draw a hand of 3 cards. Choose one for the first ship subsystem. Draw a new card and choose another ship subsystem. Repeat until every ship subsystem has a card assigned to it.

The card's number identifies the system status. Face cards are fully functional. Aces are entirely non-functional. Numbered cards vary from slightly damaged (9s and 10s) to badly damaged (2s and 3s). As you lay each card on a ship subsystem, select one of the ship parts listed that you need to fix that subsystem (for example, I play an 8 on Cryostasis, and select that I need "16 liters of liquid nitrogen" to fix the cryostasis system).

### **Ship Subsystems, (*failure state*) and the materials needed to fix them**

- 1. Baryogenic lantern** (*Nuclear explosion*) – Beryllium sphere, glass sheets, plutonium or uranium
- 2. Orbital Scale Thrusters** (*Crash during takeoff*) – screwdriver, large amounts of hydrogen gas, a belt or chain
- 3. Alcubierre warp bubble generator** (*Torn apart by tidual forces of faster-than-light travel*) – 0.8 kilos of exotic matter, a large quartz crystal, 1.21 gigawatts of electricity
- 4. Navigation** (*Drifting off course in the void*) – as many magnets as you can find, fiber optic cable, soldering gun
- 5. Cryostasis** (*Die during cryosleep*) – an effective cryoprotectant such as glycerol or glucose, 16 liters of liquid nitrogen, a metal cylinder at least three feet by six feet.



## **DEALING WITH THE NATIVES**

Language is the primary barrier to communication with native sapients. You'll have to figure out how to convey basic thoughts. To represent this language difficulty, you must always speak in gibberish. You can assume that your character is speaking English (or whatever future Earth astronauts speak), but the natives cannot understand a word you say. Only gestures and vocal tone can get through.

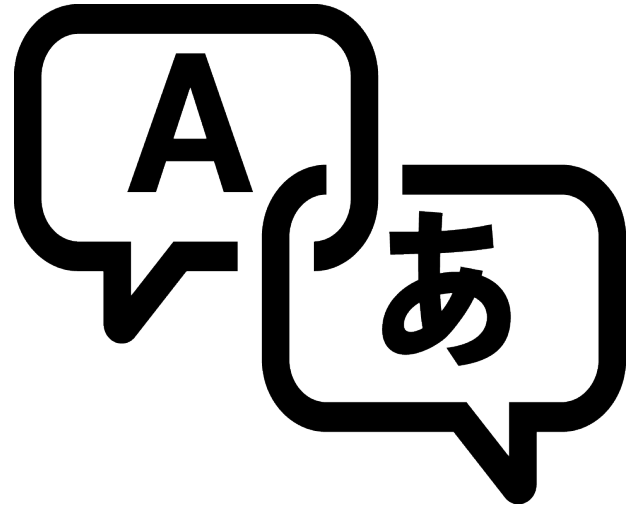
The native players will all be speaking in English. This means that you the player will understand a lot more than your character does. Do your best to ignore what is said and just watch the body language and tone of the other players.

Deliberately misunderstand what some people are trying to convey, especially when it is funny. Your role as astronaut is partly to try to rescue yourself, but you also are acting as an instigator to provoke the natives into interesting action.

## **REPAIRING THE SHIP**

Each time that you find repair parts or substitute parts, have a native player draw cards equal to the number of players. In turn, each native takes the hand of cards and reshuffles one into the deck. (If the order matters, you choose.) You the astronaut should wind up with a single card. If the card is higher than the card you first played, then you can replace the ship system's current status with the new status. Either way, remove the card from the game and cross off that repair part.

If you ever have crossed off all three repair parts for a given subsystem, then you can't improve it any further. At that point, all you can do is hope that the semi-functional system keeps working.



## **JUDGMENT**

If someone attempts an uncertain external task, it is your job to resolve it. Draw two cards and choose one for what the result of the action will be. Face cards are complete successes. Numbered cards are mixtures of success and failure with higher value cards are mostly success while lower cards are mostly failure. Aces are complete, terrible failure. Explain how they succeed or fail.

The card you pick as the result is removed from the game. The card you don't pick is reshuffled into the deck.

## **SETTING INFORMATION**

If you want to know something that your character might be able to observe on their own, pick a native player and ask them. They'll know what to do.





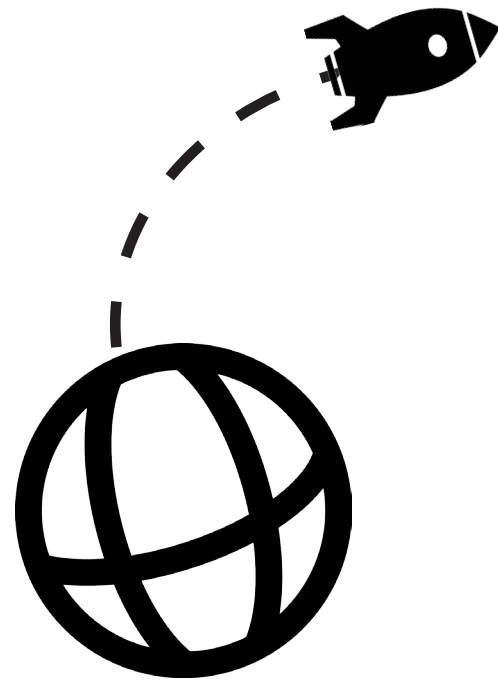
## **LEAVING THE PLANET**

Eventually, you will have repaired your ship as much as you can. You've fixed what you could and just have to hope the rest works long enough to get you off this rock. Theoretically, you could try to launch the ship right away, but I wouldn't risk it.

The ship can support two additional passengers, assuming it supports anyone at all.

When you finally fire up the ship to leave, you'll check to see if the systems work. Starting with the baryogenic lantern, then the computers, thrusters, warp bubble and finally cryostasis. If you have a face card in the system, it works fine. If you have a numbered card, then you draw another card to see what happens. The subsystem keeps working if you got a card of lower rank than the system's value. If you got a card equal or above the system's current value, then the subsystem fails catastrophically. The ship system chart tells you what happens when each part fails. Narrate accordingly.

You only get one shot at this. Either you get off planet or you don't. If you try and it doesn't succeed, then the ship is damaged beyond repair in the attempt. Even if you survive, the ship is torn to shreds and you are stuck here.



## **GOING NATIVE**

It's perfectly reasonable for your astronaut to choose to remain on this planet. Maybe you attempt to launch and fail. Maybe you don't. Either way, you need to find your own place on this world. If you pursue this course, you don't have to worry about your ship, but you will have to worry about your relationship with the natives. If they're hostile to you, you don't stand much chance of surviving. You'd better work to find some allies among the native people and a place to live. Maybe some food, too.



# LANTERNS OF THE DEAD

## BOOK TWO: FOR THE NATIVE PLAYERS

### THE ELDEST PLAYER READS

*You, my people, are the true people of this land! Our world is a reflection of ourselves, and that we are a reflection of this world.*

*But our world is in crisis. We, the people of this land, can see no way out. As is traditional in times of crisis, we perform the "lanterns of the dead" ritual. The floating paper lanterns symbolize the spirits of the dead, rising up to the stars. If Cratnukla does not weigh them down and Bahanaxel does not throw them off course, they will carry our prayers to Ahuatlot.*

*But this time, the ritual does not go as planned. A strange light appears in the sky and streaks to the ground near our home. What has fallen to Earth to interrupt our ritual?*

Each suit of cards is symbolically tied to a figure out of native myth:

**HEARTS** are **Ahuatlot**, the Wise Healer who represents peace and understanding.

**DIAMONDS** are **Bahanaxel**, the too-clever-for-her-own-good coyote-like predator (technically a kind of crustacean).

**CLUBS** are **Cratnukla**, the large, stupid, slow moving flightless bird, covered in a tortoise-like shell.

**SPADES** are the **Delkaba**, an aggressive rodent-like insect. Delkabas are known for fighting creatures many times their size.

Each player will write two concepts down. These concepts will either be central to the people or they will be unknown to the people.

Choose concepts that will be relevant to the crashed human astronaut. You want things that will come up during the game because they're specific and relevant to the astronaut's escape attempt ("What is this 'metal'?").

Alternatively, you may try concepts that are broad and affect every aspect of culture. For example, **Left Hand of Darkness** by Ursula K. Leguin has a society of humans without gender. Although this does not directly impact the protagonist's goals, it shapes the native culture and complicates the relations between the visitor and the natives.

It is also good to have a mix of concrete and abstract concepts. Some concepts should be physical things that you can point at: e.g., "Ape", "Money", "Water". Others should be more intangible items and pieces of culture and philosophy: "Love", "Fiction", or "Outer space".

Once you have a list of concepts, you need to decide which are centrally important to the culture and which are unknown. Deal 3 cards to each player. They will use these to define which are essential and which are alien.

## **BAHANAYEL'S WARNING**

The cards you use during cultural definition will not be used in play, while the cards you don't use now will be the deck for the game. Thus, if you make your society peaceful and friendly initially, you will have problems later on. But if you build in conflicts and problems right away, you may find the situation easier later on. Choose wisely.

Starting with the eldest player, every player places one card next to a listed concept and explains how the concept works among your people. Then you pass your hand to the left, draw a card and play another card. The suit of the card determines how your culture relates to the concept.

**HEARTS** – This concept is of central importance to your people, culturally or biologically. Why is it so important?

**DIAMONDS** – This concept is important to your culture, but it is different from how we know it on Earth. What is different about it?

**CLUBS** – You have no such concept, but there is a similar concept. How do you substitute one concept for another?

**SPADES** – You have no such concept as this. It is completely anathema to you. Why is it so alien?

## **DELKABA'S WARNING**

Never let the astronaut see the cultural information sheet. The astronaut must figure out how to navigate an alien culture all on her own.

Pass your cards to the left and draw another card.

This is a good time to pause and discuss how the culture is starting to shape up. What is their power structure/society/government like? Who is in charge? How advanced are they technologically? Don't feel like the culture is restricted to a primitive or tribal society. The only limit on the native culture is that they haven't developed radio communications or spaceflight yet. (This is so that

their culture is unknown to the crashed astronaut.) You just have to get a rough idea of the culture. You'll define it more as you create your PCs and as you play.

Decide as a group what current crisis the natives are facing. If they don't do something soon, their culture will be destroyed, but they lack the ability to solve the problem. The crisis is probably a side effect of the concepts you dealt with above. What is this crisis?

## **CHARACTER CREATION**

Your player character will be defined by how you relate to your cultural concepts. Choose one of the concepts that someone else defined and a card from your hand. (Don't let two players pick a concept from the same third player.) The card you play will define how your character relates to that concept / lack of concept in society. Explain how that concept affects your character as you play the card.

**HEARTS** – You have a positive view of this concept or lack of concept. Why is this situation beneficial to you?

**DIAMONDS** – You are ambivalent or reluctant regarding this concept. What is holding you back?

**CLUBS** – You are suffering because of your society reverence/lack of this concept. How are your traditions oppressing you?

**SPADES** – You are angry at how the native society treats this concept. You wish the revered concept brought low or the missing concept brought into your lives. Why?

Pass your hand to the left and draw. Then play a card from your hand onto the remaining concept that you authored. (Use the same chart.) Now that you have your character relating to two concepts, you can start to define who they are in the culture and how they relate to its society. Tell the others your basic character concept and how you relate to those concepts. Pass your hand to the left and draw once again.

Now you will define the relationships between player characters. Choose a character and a card. The card determines how you feel about them. They may feel entirely different about you, but that is up to the other player to decide. You may want to make a relationship map of the PCs (and any relevant NPCs).

**HEARTS** – You admire this person. Why?

**DIAMONDS** – You have a positive opinion of this person, but some factor is complicating the relationship. What makes your relationship so messy?

**CLUBS** – You can deal with this person, but you don't like them. Why do the two of you not get along very well?

**SPADES** – You hate this person. Why?

Pass your hand, draw and define another relationship. (Use the same chart.)

Pass your hand and draw once last time. Now you will determine what it is that you want from the astronaut. Play a card and describe what you think she can provide you once you meet her.

**HEARTS** – You believe the astronaut brings new knowledge. What can the astronaut teach your people?

**DIAMONDS** – You want the respect your people by showing that you are better than the astronaut. How will you prove you are superior?

**CLUBS** – You hope that the astronaut's coming will solve your crisis. Why do you think the astronaut is the answer to your problems?

**SPADES** – The astronaut is an invader, here to destroy your culture. You cannot let this outsider meddle in your affairs. Why are you opposed to this outsider?

Name your characters, in whatever manner is traditional among your people. Shuffle together the remaining cards in your hand and the remaining cards in the deck. The cards used in creating your culture and your characters will not be used in the game.

Send someone to fetch the astronaut. Reshuffle their deck into yours and begin play.

## IN PLAY

### SCENES

The astronaut frames the first scene. Thereafter, the native players each frame a scene in turn until you come back to the astronaut. Keep on going around like that. Scenes end whenever it makes sense.

At the start of each scene, draw a card. This card will give you a guideline for how your character behaves in the scene. Try to follow the instructions of the card suit, but also try to make your behavior make sense and be dramatically interesting.

**HEARTS** – You are peaceful, friendly and understanding.

**DIAMONDS** – You appear to be friendly, but have your own malicious goals at heart.

**CLUBS** – You are stubborn, slow and inactive.

**SPADES** – You are angry, unhappy and argumentative.

### LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION

The astronaut does not speak the tongue of this land. Her language is not the language of the native people. As natives of this land, you can all speak freely to each other. But communicating with the astronaut is fraught with troubles.

You as a player will likely have an idea what the astronaut is trying to get across. (If you don't, play out your confusion until you start to get an idea.) When the astronaut tries to convey ideas to you, consult your card:

**HEARTS** – “Oh, I understand you perfectly”

**DIAMONDS** – You seem to understand, but in fact you accidentally or deliberately warp the meaning.

**CLUBS** – You do not understand at all.

**SPADES** – Your character is offended and insulted by the astronaut's actions.

### AHUATLOT'S WARNING

The astronaut is not a GM or an NPC. The natives are not multiple GMs for one astronaut PC. The job of every player is to create an entertaining story for each other.

### JUDGMENT

Sometimes, you need to know if someone accomplishes some uncertain action, particularly physical tasks. Ask the astronaut to adjudicate these situations.

### SETTING DETAILS

When someone wants to know about the planet and its life and other details, they choose another player and ask them a Yes or No question about the setting. E.g., “Are there any large herd animals we can harness for the job?” The person asked draws two cards and chooses one. The card chosen decides how the responder can answer the question:

**HEARTS** – “Yes, and...” plus amplifying details.

**DIAMONDS** – “Yes, but...” and details that limit the utility.

**CLUBS** – “No, but...” and some details that minimize the negation.

**SPADES** – “No, and...” The suggestion is quite wrong indeed.