




Sign in *Stranger*



Playtest draft for
a role playing game
by Emily Care Boss



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SHIELD AND CRESCENT
PRESS

scene has been played out and the character has integrated the experience by writing down the experience or sharing it with someone else.

If the E/M die is equal to three times the Assimilation level or more, the character requires the help of others to break out of their Stress Response. A flash-back scene is needed, and another Emotional/Mental roll is made at the climax of this scene. If roll is successful, the Stress Response ends. If a failure, the character continues in Stress until another scene may be played out, and a successful roll made. Treat these scenes as conflicts dealing with a known world element (something written on a player sheet), with additional contacts possible through the presence of other characters assisting the Stressed character in the present of the game. Relationships may be used and increased (or decreased) in the normal fashion.

Answering the Survey Questions:

The survey questions may be answered by interacting with the world and adding elements and their interpretations to the player sheets. Other questions may be arrived at in time as the specifics of the world become elaborated, and players may have their characters follow up different lines of thought.

Assimilation score:

When a character adds many elements from index cards to player sheets, their Assimilation score may rise. The number changes over time:

Assimilation score	Number of new elements added
2	10
3	20 (in addition to original 10)
4	30 (" ")
5	40 etc....
6	50

Notes on Xsians:

The Xsian species has made a group commitment to shepherding and helping humanity to make up for the grave loss of life and liberty that their ship caused. Xsians specialize in learning human languages and all new human colonies are located within easy proximity of a Xsian embassy on alien planets. Colonies in the game will not be located on Xsian planets to begin, though they may be created later in the game. Xsians are tall, greenish-translucent skinned beings with many amoeboid tentacles and glossy white-silver hairlike fronds coming from their head-type area. They have eyes and a mouth, but no nose. Many humans are disgusted by their smell, but their language is often thought to be musical and alluring.

Player sheets:

Character Sheets

World/Species Sheets

Sphere Sheets: natural/cultural/infrastructure

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Story: The Impact

On January 27th, not so many years from now, a large meteorite strikes southeastern Canada. A plague spreads outward from the crash site, killing all life--plant, animal, human--that comes into contact. A quarantine is imposed, but as neighboring people scramble to escape, and the world governments struggle to make sense of the scale of the impending disaster, a new threat looms.

Fire rains from the sky, scorching stone, lake and tree beneath it. For three days light blazes down on what was once Montreal, destroying again all that once lived. Vast shapes appear in the sky, beaming messages in strange ululating tongues, uttered by nightmarish tentacled creatures. All over the world, military forces are rallied, and employed against these alien forces.

The human forces are utterly defeated. The human nations await their fate at their new alien overlords. A calm settles over the earth as its citizens await a message from their masters.

After three months, the message comes, from the same strange hissing tongues, now wrapping themselves around earthly syllables.

"We've come to save you..."

You lived through this change. You are a human facing the end of your world.

Or its beginning.

Beyond

Over time, the whole story is told. The Galaxy is seething with life. Interstellar travel has been happening for untold millennia and sentient species have come into contact with other sentient species time and time again.



With contact has come trade: economic, cultural--and biological. Diseases have ravaged through world after world, the microbial inhabitants of one world finding weaknesses in the genetic defenses of those from another. Worlds have been emptied, opening the way for continuing devastation from domination through warfare.

Until the Cure was found.

The Cure changes life. It creates a common bond between new life that it finds, and those it has come from. A universal inoculation that introduces isolated life to the viral cultures of the intermingled worlds.

Without the cure, all life is threatened. But with the cure...change happens. Slowly, sometimes imperceptibly, but overtime the life one has known becomes something else. Something other. Other than what was and has been known.

The Change

Since interstellar space travel is needed to contact others, the interstellar community leaves newly developing worlds in innocence of their existence until they acquire the ability on their own.

Humanity was in quarantine, violated by the alien ship that crash landed on Earth. The crash had endangered all life on earth. The Xsian crew signaled their people, allowing the Xsian fleet to quickly come forward to raze the exposed population. Given this untimely catapulting of humanity into the galactic community, the Xsians took it upon themselves to sponsor humanity. To offer them the Cure and help them connect with the interstellar species.

However, earth turned them down.

The many nations of the earth warred and squabbled over the best course of action. Consensus could not be formed. Some people of the world rejected the Cure, desiring to continue the quarantine, to preserve the earth as it was and had been. Others sought to embrace this new change, wanting to join the universal community, to learn about new worlds, new technologies and societies.

So a compromise was developed. Earth would not take the Cure. Those who wished to remain on the planet would do so. No traffic from off world would be allowed. Humanity could stay in its cocoon a while longer.

But those who wished to leave, could do so. Never to return.

Follow-up:

Failing rolls engender consequences appropriate to the type of die it was rolled on. The severity or intensity depends on how much the difficulty was missed by.

- | | | |
|-----|------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1-3 | Minor consequences: | momentary effect |
| 4-6 | Moderate consequences: | short term inconvenience |
| 7-9 | Major consequences: | lasting threat |

Physical die failures: the consequences are tangible and felt. The exact nature will depend on the circumstances of the interaction. It may be physiological, tactile, violent or caressing.

Physical Examples:

- | | |
|----------|---------------------|
| minor | splashed, bad smell |
| moderate | punched, turn blue |
| major | stabbed, poisoned |

Social die failures: the consequences are cultural or about interpersonal interactions. It may be with local inhabitants or other humans. Someone may have an emotional response to what the colonist does, or talk to others about what the humans are doing. One of the colonists may turn others against the person in question.

Social Examples:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| minor | someone frowns or does something puzzling |
| moderate | anger is expressed, the colonist gets snubbed |
| major | the colonist is isolated or shunned, friends turn into enemies |

Emotional/Mental die failures: the consequences are internal and psychological for the colonist, they have a stress response to the situation. Acclimating to the strangeness of a new world is difficult. The lack of normal rules and surroundings can be disorienting and panic inducing, especially when newly immigrated. The colonist's Assimilation level impacts these types of failures.

Whenever a character has a Mental/Emotional die failure, the player needs to follow up with a scene reflecting some aspect of the character's life on Earth. Depending on the severity of the failure, the character may be in a state of severe anxiety or emotional response until this has been done. Instead of three states there are just two for Emotional/Mental die failures: Resonance and Stress Response. They are calculated in the following manner:

If the E/M die is equal to less than twice than the character's Assimilation score, the character experiences Resonance.

If the E/M die is equal to or more than twice the character's Assimilation score, the character goes into a Stress Response and remains in that state until a flashback

Resolving the roll:

If there are no successes: Follow the follow-up rules for each type of die. The element remains on the white index card as it is.

If there is one success: Follow the follow-up rules for the failing dice. A new description may be added to the white card.

If there are two successes: Follow the follow-up rules for the failing die. A new description may be added to the white card and a connection may be made to a known world element or species (one written down on a player sheet). Connections are made by simply making a note on the white card.

If there are three successes, the element may be placed on a Sphere or species sheet, (as appropriate) and skills may now be related to it in future interactions.

When interacting with things written on the player sheets, use the above procedure, but the following may be used as contacts:

- Relevant training (either Earth profession or Lunar training)
- The presence of someone with relevant training
- The presence of a Xsian translator
- A relevant recorded memory

Relationships:

If another character is involved in the situation that you have a relationship with, you may add Contact levels equal to the number of pluses or minuses you have for the character by bringing the character's positive or negative relationship into the narration. The other player has the option to add your character as a relationship, or to add a minus or plus as well.

However, relationships called on in this way are subject to change:

Positive relationships: for each failing roll, erase one plus sign or add a negative sign if more failures are rolled than the relationship has pluses.

Negative relationships: for each successful roll, erase one minus sign or add a positive sign if more successes are rolled than the relationship has minuses.

A Xsian base was built on the moon. The Lunar site is a joint human/Xsian community; a gateway for those humans who wished to travel into the universe. To establish human colonies on different worlds. To learn about what the galaxy holds for humanity. To step into the unknown.



Preparation: Species and Worlds

Begin Play by having each player create a world and a new alien species. Fill out a World & Species sheet to do so.

World Name: create the name of a world inhabited by some alien species, on a distant solar system light-years from Earth.

Primary Species: there may be several sentient species that live on this planet. You are creating the species which is the primary species. This may be because it is the most populous, or because it is the species indigenous to the planet. Or it may be because it is the species that dominates the planet for reasons cultural, military or economic. Circle "yes" by Home Planet if the species originated here. Do not chose the Xsians. They hold a special place in the human universe and information relating to them is included in the game.

Language group: this is the (or a) family of languages used by the primary species on this planet. The name is the first entry to a lexicon to the language. It will inspire the sound and look of the language as a whole.

Size: choose the size and type of the planet. This will influence how many other species may be present in sizeable numbers. The range of choices is satellite, small planet, large planet, giant. Giant would be a gas giant, such as Jupiter or Saturn.

Environment Type: this describes the area that is inhabited by the primary species. This choice will influence much about the descriptions of the world, the species present and what the humans will have to do to adapt to living on the world. The choices are land surface, subterranean, aqueous, gaseous, space. Space may mean is is an artificial colony, or that the species are vacuumorphs, etc.

Job Listing: interstellar classifieds. This is the occupation available to the human colonists. Give its name in the language of the Primary Species. Example: "Prelling" the "frighain". Nearest Earth Equivalent is an approximation of what the job entails.

Other Species: Choosing from the Species created by the other players, choose a number of other species that are also present in sizeable numbers on this world. The number of other species depends on the size of the planet.

Planet Size:	Number of Other Species
satellite	one
small planet	two
large planet	three
gas giant	random*



For gas giants, roll a ten sided-die. On a 1-3, there is one other species, on a 4-6 there are two, on a 7-9 there are three, on a 10 there are four other species.

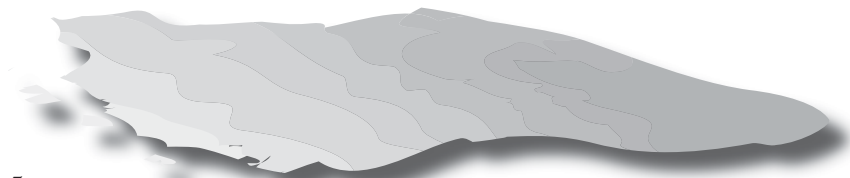
Notes: this space is reserved for further development of the world and the primary species. Use the back of the page for a lexicon for this language group.

Alluring/Repellent: two aspects of the primary species. One that humans find attractive, one that they find disquieting.

Words, Words: The last piece of preparation is for all the players to write 10 words, 5 nouns and 5 verbs, on small pieces of paper. Put the nouns together separate from the verbs, and place them all in two piles in bags or cups. Set them aside for later in the game. Do this before every session. Add new words to the ones left over. If all are used in a session, have everyone create a new set at that time.

Color table: (roll on a 10 sided die)

1: white	2: black	3: grey	4: brown	5: red
6: orange	7: yellow	8: green	9: blue	10: purple



Rules of the Game

This game is a game of exploration for the players as well as for the characters.

There are two primary rules:

- 1) You don't know what the meaning of anything in the world is until it is written down one one of the player sheets (eg the character sheet, the world sheet, etc)
- 2) Everything else you encounter in play has no set meaning, and must have conflicts rolled every time they are interacted with, in order to determine their meaning.

When generating things in the world, use the following procedure:

- 1) pick an object and a verb from the groups of words written down by the players at the start of play.
- 2) you may roll for a color if desired and appropriate (see color table)
- 3) the players collaboratively interpret the word on the paper and describe objects and entities encountered in the world. Describe them as appropriate to the environment that the humans are living in.
- 4) write these descriptions down on an index card and place it in the center of the table.

When interacting with things described on index cards, use the following procedure:

- 1) Describe how the human tries to interact with the world element.
- 2) Determine the Difficulty by counting Contacts. Valid contacts for elements only written on index cards are the following: Connections with other known world elements, the presence of a Xsian translator.
- 3) roll three 10 sided dice of three different colors. One die signifies Social outcomes, one die signifies Physical outcomes and one die signifies Emotional/Mental outcomes.
- 4) A success is rolling a value on a die that is lower than the number of Contacts a character has. All that are above are failures.

Uniform Survey, Questions for Study:

1. What sentient species are present on this planet and what are their characteristics?
2. What foods are edible for humans on the planet?
3. What is the weather on this world? The length of the day?
4. What are the land, seas and atmosphere like?
5. What kinds of shelter do the local beings utilize?
6. What energy sources are used?
7. What are the modes of transportation?
8. What notable plant and animal species are present in the local environment and larger world? What are their characteristics and uses?
9. What are life cycle and stages of development of species here?
10. What forms of reproduction do the sentient species utilize?
11. What forms of reproduction are present in other species?
12. What forms of governance do the beings on this planet utilize?
13. What forms of religion, philosophy or spirituality are practiced?
14. What cultural norms and practices are present?
15. What are the major institutions such as marriage, family, church, government, education?
16. What forms of currency or trade are used or practiced?
17. What forms of industry and manufacture are there?
18. What forms of communication and media are used?
19. What forms of technologies are present?
20. What is the history of habitation of this planet?
21. What political entity is the colony located within?
22. What forms of laws are operating where the colony exists?
23. What forms of entertainment and art are practiced by the inhabitants of this world?
24. What are the great works of art in the mediums of this world?
25. What are the monuments and landmarks?
26. How are the young of the species present educated?
27. What are the social stratifications present (eg race, class, etc.)
28. What are the relationships between the political or cultural groups?
29. Where is there warfare going on? Who is involved? What are the issues at stake?
30. What are the social ills on this planet? How are they addressed?
31. Who are the major historical and mythological entities here?
32. What major ideologies and theories have been formulated?

Colonists

Next create the characters that will begin the colony on one of these worlds. Set aside the world sheets until later.

Name: choose a name for your character.

Description: write a brief description of the character. A word or two about their physical appearance, or personality will do. Examples would be: "retiring young mother", "tall, engaging black man", "willowy teen".

Earth Profession: what this character did for work or as their calling on their home planet.

Belongings: trans-system travel is difficult and expensive. Each colonist is provided with clothes and supplies to provide for their minimal needs, and is only allowed to bring personal effects of the amount that would fit in a standard shoe box. Included is any equipment that may be needed for the colonists' Lunar training speciality. List here what your character brought.

Stress Response: activity or type of response this character has under extreme stress. The stresses of living on an alien planet can be great, and these characters will be tested as they never have been before.

Assimilation Level: the degree to which this character has adapted to their new environment. Assimilation may be represented by cultural changes such as dress, language and comfort with new things. It may also be represented by physical or physiological changes. The Cure may make the characters undergo genetic changes that help them better survive in their new home. But these changes may cause stress and alienation from other humans who have not undergone them. All characters begin with an Assimilation level of 1.

Lunar Training: While transitioning from their old life to their new, the characters spent six-months to a year on Luna, undergoing intensive waking and hypnogogic training for a new set of skills that will be needed on the new colony. The team of colonists has been specially chosen for their balance of complimentary skills. Each player should choose a training from the following list. There must be at least one Medical specialist, but there can be no more than one of each.

The training specialities are listed on the next page.

Trainings:

Medicine	Zoology
Engineering	Geology
Linguistics	Politics/Law
Psychology	Culture (art, religion, popular)
Botany	Economics/Trade

Each person's former profession or calling on Earth can also give the character insight into different areas than their Lunar training. These skills will be called upon to help them understand and make sense of the strange new world around them.

Relationships with Other Characters: this is with other colonists or important aliens. Begin with at most one relationship. These will be formed and added to over time. Write the person's name on the list, then write one word or a short phrase describing the nature of the relationship. Example: "Mother", "lover", or "betrayed", or "desires". Boxes next to these lines refer to the intensity of the relationship. Plus (+) and minus (-) signs are entered in the boxes, with one being being the lowest intensity and three being the highest. These will be adjusted over the course of the game during conflicts and followups. Starting relationships may have one positive or negative sign entered. Strongly positive or negative relationships will give bonuses in the game.

Journal Entries: personal log for the character. Colonists are encouraged to keep records of their personal experiences. Throughout the game, flashbacks of the colonists' time on earth will also be played out. These memories may be used to help the colonists deal with issues that arise with settling on the new planet.

Play: Leaving Luna

When these entries have been completed, play may commence with the team getting together to choose their new assignment while on the Xsian base on Luna. Let the scene begin by having everyone re-introduce themselves to one another, and talk about the training they've received over the past six months. Then, bring out the world sheets and discuss the pros and cons of each possible situation.

Decide IN CHARACTER which world the group will choose. There may be controversies. Let the characters be influenced in their choices by their past and present career choices and any insights as to desires and impulses that the players find as they play the characters.

All players have the option to create a relationship with another character at this time if their character has experienced friction or frission with someone.

Once the characters have decided on a planet, have each person, in turn, describe the fare-wells that their character makes to family and friends on the planet. Record this as the first journal entry for each character.

The team is ready to enter into their new life, on a new world.

Enter the Unknown

New colonists are issued a standard package of supplies and items:

- 3 dozen packages of standard coveralls: blue and green (s,m,l)
- Hygienic supplies: toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, sanitary pads
- Field towels (wring and dry)
- Single ply blankets
- 1 winter overcoat per colonist
- 1 pair of boots per colonist
- 1 all purpose camp knife per colonist
- 6 crates of full spectrum E-Z rations
- Desalinator/Water decontaminator unit
- One hand-held computer with solar power unit complete with solitaire and the King James Bible

Write these items down on character sheets. Since interstellar travel is expensive, the colonists are expected to fabricate what they will need on their new home. They are sent with 6 months supply of food, and currency (if appropriate) enough to supply them with shelter for 1 year.

Each person is allotted their shoe-box worth of personal belongings. Included in this space is any specialized equipment that each colonist may wish to take to support their speciality. Aside from that they have their training and each other.

The other item sent with them (included in the files on the hand held computer, is a list of survey questions which they are asked to fill out and return to Earth for study purposes. The colonist's mission is two-fold: to learn and to survive. The colonists will take these supplies and all that they can find on their new home and begin these tasks.

The survey question are listed on the next page. They are for long term investigation and exploration.