Adrift on the Starry Sky

A Journey for Seven Players

Written by
Jennifer Diewald
Tim Lasko
Theresa Sullivan
Gaylord Tang

GM Guide

INTRODUCTION
Some of the more traditional introduction elements can be found in the **RUNTIME GUIDE, Introducing the Game** section below.

Here, I wanted to mention that this game has had a successful 10-year run before the decision to box it. As a scenic game, it may appear to only have one “railroad” – and that is partly true. The scenes do not vary and the game does not appear to branch.

The design decisions and writing allow for variability within this structure to allow for implicit commentary on societal issues. What do I mean?

For example, the gender of Morgan Lee – a player character – is not specified. The gender of their spouse – Rowan – a non-player character – is not specified. Rowan did decide to take on the Lee family name when they married, which is noted. If the player notices this, how the player of Morgan Lee decides to play the gender of these two character brings forth some societal commentary: a man taking a woman’s last name, a woman taking a man’s, or a same-sex couple taking one’s family name, at the time of writing has slightly different implications.

Decisions made in prior scenes inform future scenes because they subtly change the context in which the drama can play out – even when the decisions apparently seem to be the same. Did Dr. Berg prevail in having their own genetic child in Scene 2? How does that choice inform or not inform the drama of Scene 4?, etc.

Not all these aspects will be spelled out and the drama remains immediately centered on the situation each character finds themselves in. While this game is not re-playable by the same players, it is hopefully fruitful for you to run for different players; the plot of this LARP may play out in subtly different ways.

BLURB AND CASTING GUIDE

Here, we include our recommended “blurb” or short description of the game, as well as a casting questionnaire.

Blurb

Feel free to modify as needed for your local run of the game.

Title: Adrift on the Starry Sky

Authors: Jennifer Diewald, Tim Lasko, Theresa Sullivan and Gaylord Tang

Blurb: A military coup has taken control of The United Earth Concord, the government for the Earth and the few thousands on outposts and stations elsewhere in the Solar System. Those of you onboard the Alexandria are declared enemies of the planet, some more by accident and circumstance than design. Less than fully prepared, with limited company and tight resources, you must flee on a barely faster-than-light life raft across space, to find a suitable planet to create a new Earth.

Adrift on the Starry Sky is a serious scene game with science fiction themes for seven (7) players, lasting four hours. This is a LARP that explores what it means to be human, the limits of endurance, and the human will. As a result of generation-ship style technology, characters will change as they progress through several scenes. Some characters will die during the voyage; those players will be given new characters born along the way.

All characters are written to be gender neutral. It is possible you will find yourself playing a role as part of a couple.

Content Advisory: Adrift on a Starry Sky deals with difficult choices, loss and rebirth, mental illness, physical limits, pregnancy, racism, societal failure, strong family themes, termination of pregnancy, and violent death of a parent. 1-3 pages of reading can be expected between each scene.

Casting Questionnaire

We have used and would currently use the following questionnaire to cast the game. If you know your players better, by all means use that knowledge for casting.

All other things being equal, cast based on the feedback of the players, your knowledge of the game and of the players, and as you otherwise feel appropriate – you don’t need to use this.

[Name, contact information, pronouns, game day phone number – identifying information as appropriate for your run]

Tell us a little about your LARPing experience. Also, tell us some of the things you might like to do in Adrift on the Starry Skies!

How much LARP experience to you have?
__This is my first LARP (That's great and we're honored)
__I've played in a few LARPs
__I've played in a lot of LARPs
__I've lost track of the number of LARPs I've played
__I've played a bit, and even wrote a LARP or two
__LARP is my life; I eat, breathe, play, write, and organize LARPs
__Other: [fill out]

Who would you like to play?
You will play a character's growth from childhood, to adulthood, and old age, and perhaps not in that order. Please rank your interest in each of the following roles:

	Yes, please!	Sounds fun!	If I must
Captain/Pilot			
Doctor/Geneticist			

Farmer/Hydroponicist
Engineer/Repair
Mathematician/Navigator
Psychologist/Communications
Child/growing up ship role
Dying a dramatic death

Be more specific: What order do you rank your "Yes, please!" choices?
e.g. "Farmer, psychiatrist, child, dying drama" as your top four choices, in that order!
_____

What kind of character arc would you like to have?
__I like the idea of a logical progression in my character's life
__I like the idea that an unexpected event could be life-changing
__I like the idea of a death mid-game, returning as a new child born along the way
__I have no real preference; I will enjoy whatever you throw at me

What makes a LARP role enjoyable for you? Why?
_____

Two longer questions to help us cast you better
The answers we get to these questions can be surprisingly important in our casting process.

What is your favorite science fiction story / novel / movie? Why?
_____
_____
_____

The external AE-35 module is failing and needs to be repaired. Someone has to go outside the ship, work their way down to the module pod, run diagnostic tests, and repair the problem. The ship's only Engineer has a broken arm and can't get into a spacesuit. You've been chosen to go out and make the fix. Who are you, why did the Captain choose you, and what are you going to do?
_____
_____
_____

The Most Important Questions
The answers to these are confidential, and will help us do our best to put you in a role you'll have fun with. This is a small LARP, so it may not be possible to satisfy every challenge -- but we'll know enough to talk to you about it.

This is a small LARP. Is there anyone out there who you absolutely cannot play with for four hours?
_____

Are you related to or in a relationship with someone else playing in the LARP? If so, who and how -- and should it affect your casting?
For example, "Java-Thermos-Creamy is my child, built from broken espresso machines, and we're allergic to plots containing soy," or "Ellipsoid's Shadow is a partner in our N-ary Vector Marriage, where N ≈ 3.4, and we love *angst*-filled plots together," or "Calvin and Susie are my parents and I don't want romance plots with them. Ewww!"
_____

If you are related to or in a relationship with someone else, are you capable of deceiving or betraying them in character?
__This doesn't apply to me
__It's only a game, so I will be gleefully throw their characters under the bus, as needed
__I'd rather not do this
__My character will always work with their character, no matter how they're written
__Other..._____

Is there anything else you'd like to mention that's important to your experience in this LARP?
_____
_____
_____

Of all the questions we've asked, which is the most important answer for you?

_____

Your safety during play is important.

CONTENT CONCERNS: This is a LARP for mature players, dealing with some challenging subject matter, including difficult choices, loss and rebirth, mental illness, physical limits, pregnancy, racism, societal failure, strong family themes, termination of pregnancy, and violent death of a parent.

We'd rather you choose not to play if any of these themes would be a problem for you.
__I understand these concerns and I can play safely with all of these themes in the game.

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS CRITICAL: This is a small LARP that cannot run if someone who signed up doesn't show up. Please do everything you can to be on time for the game. If you must drop, please give us as much advanced warning as possible, so that we can try to find a replacement. All the other players are depending on you!
__I understand that my participation is necessary for the fun and play of the other players and the GMs

Casting Guide

While nothing helps like playing or running the game a few times to get a sense of how the answers to casting map to the characters, here is a quick chart that may help:

Character	Starting Age	Role	Dies in Scene	Death Drama?	Reborn as?
Alexandria	5	Starship/AI (Psychologist)	N/A	N	N/A
Aria Lee	8	Child → Captain/Pilot	N/A	N	N/A
Justice Qazi	42	Farmer/Hydroponicist	2	N	Tarachand
Kjella Berg	30	Doctor/Geneticist	4	Y	Tobie
Morgan Lee	45	Child/Growing into Ship Role	1	Y	Rowan
Santos Rojas	14	Mathematician/Navigator	4	Y	Phoenix
Sasha Mendel	24	Engineer/Repair	3	N?	Sasha/Alien

Kjella Berg and Santos Rojas are more appropriate for “advanced” LARPers, while Aria Lee and Alexandria may be easier for beginner LARPers.

After you have decided on a cast, write it down. **DO NOT** share a cast list with your players. Part of the drama of Scene 1 is realizing the original crew planned for this journey listed in the “Alexandria Crew Roster” bluesheet is not on the ship (and what, if anything, to do about it).

If you have ample time before the run of the game, and access to email, you may wish to follow the “Pregame Character Hints and Distribution” document.

If you want to email them, we have included sheets in the “Characters/Only Prologue+Scene 1 for email” folder. Alexandria’s sheet there includes their Immediate Prologue Scene.

PRINTING GUIDE
"Adrift on the Starry Sky" has seven (7) player characters. You will need to print out the following to have one for each character, and one for a GM copy.

Printing
Documents to be printed can be found in the appropriate subfolder or the general game folder.

Bluesheets
- 8 copies of "Humanity's Presence in Space"
- 8 copies of "Alexandria Mission Statement"
- 8 copies of "Alexandria Crew Roster"

Scenes
- 8 copies of each of "Prologue Scene," and "Scene 1" through "Scene 5"
- 2 copies of "Scene Immediate Prologue"

Characters
- 2 copies of each Character sheet: "Alexandria", "Aria Lee", "Justice Qazi", "Kjella Berg", "Morgan Lee", "Santos Rojas" and "Sasha Mendel".
    - Separate both copies of all character sheets into 6 parts, 1 for each Scene, including the Prologue message.

Other materials
- 1 copy of this guide
- 1 copy of "Name Badges". Choose one of either Avery 5392 or the print and cut version
    - Keep them ordered by name and age for later collation and distribution during play (recalling some players will be reborn as children with different names)

Collating
This separates 1 set of documents for your use, and 1 set of documents per character, per scene. Envelopes may be used if convenient.

After Scene 1, we have found paperclips for individual character's materials and name badge, and manila folders for the general scene sufficient to keep things organized. It also seems to be a good compromise between having things prepared and not using too much paper.

There is likely a way of saving more paper by doing this all electronically. The prologue scene(s), the bluesheets, and Scene 1 may be distributed in this way beforehand in addition to what is suggested, above in **Casting Guide** via the "Pregame Character Hints and Distribution" document.

Assemble the GM Copy:
- 1 copy of this guide
- Bluesheets tab

    - 1 copy of “Humanity’s Presence in Space”
    - 1 copy of “Alexandria Mission Statement”
    - 1 copy of “Alexandria Crew Roster”
- Scene 1 tab
    - 1 copy of “Prologue Scene”
    - 1 copy (uncut) of “Prologue Messages to Characters”
    - 1 copy of Scene Immediate Prologue
    - 1 copy of “Scene 1”
    - 1 copy of each Character Sheet portion for Scene 1
- Scene 2 tab
    - 1 copy of “Scene 2”
    - 1 copy of each Character Sheet portion for Scene 2
- … and so forth until
    - 1 copy of “Scene 5”
    - 1 copy of each Character Sheet portion for Scene 5

Assemble the individual character copies, scene 1:

- 1 copy of “Humanity’s Presence in Space”
- 1 copy of “Alexandria Mission Statement”
- 1 copy of “Alexandria Crew Roster”
- 1 copy of “Prologue Scene”
- 1 copy of “Scene Immediate Prologue” **only for Alexandria**
- 1 copy of “Prologue Messages to Characters” for that character
- 1 copy of “Scene 1”
- 1 copy of that character’s Character Sheet portion for Scene 1
- 1 copy of the Scene 1 name tag for that character

Assemble the individual character copies, scene 2:

- 1 copy of the Scene 2 name tag
- 1 copy of “Scene 2”
- 1 copy of that character’s Character Sheet portion for Scene 2

… and so forth until:

- 1 copy of the Scene 5 name tag
- 1 copy of “Scene 5”
- 1 copy of that character’s Character Sheet portion for Scene 5

RUNTIME GUIDE
We generally hope the game runs itself without much direct intervention by the GM. You will be called upon to end each scene.

You may be asked to answer some questions and/or deal with apparent discrepancies. We've listed some of the most common answers below.

As the runner, you are empowered to make changes on the fly as needed. However, we hope that many of the answers to runtime questions may be apparent with a careful review of character sheets, bluesheets, and these materials.

Define in your mind how your space will be used in terms of the Alexandria ship. In a hotel room suite, we've usually defined the area by the bathroom as engines/engineering, a space as the medical area, and an area as the main living/meeting space.

Introducing the game
[After sharing any safety protocols you wish to use, we suggest communicating the following.]

"Adrift on the Starry Sky" was written at the Build Your Own Game Workshop at NELCO 2016, August 20-21, 2016. The participants in the workshop were:

- Jennifer Diewald
- Tim Lasko
- Theresa Sullivan
- Gaylord Tang

Additional material has been added by the writing team and Julie Diewald since that initial run. This GM Guide was collated and drafted by Gaylord Tang through to 2026.

This game, for seven player characters, is broken into several scenes. Each player character will be given preliminary scene information that describes what has happened up to a certain point. Then, the characters will role-play until a decision point is reached.

You CANNOT solve all of the problems that result from a given scene, especially in the first scene. There are issues that will go unresolved, as they always are. Play to the solution of the primary problem and STOP. (The GM may help encourage or identify a resolution if necessary.)

This is a story of birth, death and rebirth. Some characters will die along the way. There are some things that cannot be fixed.

[NAME] is playing the Alexandria, the ship AI. They are a full character, with goals and drives, that may change over the course of the journey.

[Solicit questions or clarifications before continuing. Share how you've defined the physical space in terms of the ship. Place Sasha/Santos in the engineering/engines area. Dr. Berg is likely near hydroponics – or at least separated from the rest at start. Aria and Morgan are close together and Justice is within view of them.]

[Start the game! Get people into position and tell Alexandria read the Scene Immediate Prologue to get started.]

In terms of pacing, Scenes 1 & 5 may go relatively quickly. Scenes 2-4 are generally longer.

Scene 1
This scene ends when:

- Morgan Lee's death is processed by Aria Lee
- Justice Qazi attempts to comfort Aria
- Alexandria shares all the "other information Alexandria learns during the scene" on their character sheet
- Players accept or realize they're stuck on the journey

Prompt these points as needed if players seem confused.

Additionally, there is **no need** for you to intervene on any discussion on how the ship should be led (e.g. democratic vote? Assign someone a captain?), who owns the ship, and questions of that nature. They are away from the place where those things can be enforced anyway, so it is up to the players to decide.

This is an intentional lacuna, which players can choose to fill and may influence further drama.

When you call this scene, check up on players, distribute scene 2 documents, solicit feedback, and have players start Scene 2. The player of Justice can decide where they physically are on the ship. The others can set their own locations.

Scene 2
This scene ends when:

- A decision is made about how the next child will be born

In case it's forgotten, the "Alexandria Mission Statement" does list gestational units as standard equipment aboard Alexandria. Any pairing, using this technology, is possible.

That said, if the player of Dr. Berg wishes to say they wish to carry the child in their body, you need not intervene except to clarify (if it seems necessary) that this does require the character to have a womb going forward, whether femme or masc presenting.

Rowan was born using the gestational unit, and a random selection of two gene samples in the gene bank, as per Morgan and Rowan's personal wishes.

When you call this scene, check up on players, distribute scene 3 documents, solicit feedback, and have players start Scene 3. The player of Sasha is likely in the medical area. Others can set their own locations as appropriate.

It may be helpful to share how you're doing on time. ("We're great." / "We're on time." / "We're cutting it close.")

Scene 3
This scene ends when:

- Alexandria shares all the "other information Alexandria learns during the scene" on their character sheet
- A difficult decision is made to accept Sasha as a crew member

Much of the information that could be ambiguous can be found on each character's sheet. If players seem stuck, point out the appropriate section and/or remind them of "there are issues that will go unresolved, as there always are" stated in the game introduction.

When you call this scene, check up on players, distribute scene 4 documents, solicit feedback, and have players start Scene 4. Santos and Aria start together. Others can set their own locations as appropriate in relation to them.

The "climax" of the five scenes, Scene 4 is a potentially difficult scene for both the player of Kjella Berg and Santos Rojas. We have taken efforts in both the blurb, content warnings, and bluesheet statements regarding the difficulties of living in space for long periods of time to suggest the possibility Scene 4 could occur without explicitly saying this is going to happen. (It is also why the casting questionnaire asks players to check off their understanding of this.)

If it appears helpful, you may want to take each of them aside privately to make sure they're okay with playing things out. Act appropriately if this does not seem to be the case.

It may be helpful to share how you're doing on time. ("We're great." / "We're on time." / "We're cutting it close.")

Scene 4
This scene ends when:

- Santos Rojas accuses Kjella Berg of murder
- A decision is made on how to handle Kjella Berg

You may want to familiarize yourself with the details of this situation in case the PCs miss it and ask you for guidance. The timing is largely in Santos's sheet, the why and how, without exact timing and through the lens of deteriorated mental health, in Dr. Berg's sheet:

- Three months ago, the gestation pod was hidden in the seed bank area.
- Last week, Santos went to investigate and found it.
- The next day, Santos confronted Dr. Berg in the medbay.
- Three days later, Santos began to feel sick. The illness' progress is *fast*.

Alexandra's sheet doesn't give specific dates for when Dr. Berg asked for privacy, which covers *at least* the times above. They were distracted and missed anything unusual with the seed bank and – possibly along with the rest of the crew – anything unusual with Dr. Berg.

For the scene ending, any and all answers work, from execution, confining to quarters or forgiveness. Many of the decisions in prior scenes can inform this one – does Dr. Berg already have genetic children on the ship? Did their decision partly come from the refusal?

When you call this scene, check up on players, and distribute scene 5 documents. Note that Kjella Berg passed away prior to Scene 5. It is written as a short sentence so as to be ambiguous - this may have been by natural causes if not by the characters' action.

Note that the former player of Kjella Berg is now a child along with the former player of Santos Rojas – likely friends! – in Scene 5.

This scene is on the surface of the planet instead of the ship, and you should redefine the play space as such for your players ("These areas are now the surface of the new planet!"). In terms of how they get there, you can follow the lead of the players – whether they want to take the shuttle and land or start from the shuttle on the surface.

You can give guidance on how much time is left.

Scene 5
This scene ends when:
- Characters have some time to enjoy the new planet
- Characters realize it's safe and would work as a colony world
- Alexandria and/or Sasha decide whether to stay or go

There are no right or wrong answers here. Call the game when done!

FINAL THOUGHTS
Congratulations on your run of Adrift on the Starry Sky and thank you once again!

We hope you've enjoyed running as much as we've enjoyed writing.

Please feel free to reach out with feedback. At the time of writing, bluesheets and a listing of game runs are maintained by Jennifer Diewald online:
http://www.vortexofchaos.net/adrift_on_the_starry_sky/index.html.