

The Stars Are Not Right

A game about searching for home in an unforgiving galaxy

Premise

A routine space survey mission goes awry. A spacetime fissure opens and sucks your spaceship in, disgorging it somewhere across the Galaxy. Most of the crew, including all senior officers, are dead. Someone has to take charge and find a way home. That someone is you.

Setup

What you need:

- 3-6 players, one of whom will be the game master (GM)
- Some paper and pencils
- A handful of **dice** of two colours:
 - **red** dice (🎲) represent physical qualities
 - **green** dice (🎲) represent mental qualities

Character creation:

Each player answers two questions:

- who they were before the fissure;
- which position they occupy now.

Choose (or roll) from the tables below; original professions can repeat; new positions must be unique. Then take the indicated dice to form your personal dice pool.

Profession	Dice
Cargo handler	🎲🎲
Damage control	🎲🎲
Cook	🎲🎲
Morale officer	🎲🎲
Data analyst	🎲🎲
Medical technician	🎲🎲

Position	Dice
Captain	🎲
Chief Engineer	🎲
Science officer	🎲
XO	🎲
Pilot	🎲
Weapons Officer	🎲

Ship setup:

The ship (give it a name!) starts with **10 Reserves** ⚡. They represent power, supplies, and overall integrity – everything that keeps the crew alive. **Reserves** can be used to increase the dice pool and can be lost or gained as a result of dice rolls (see Task resolution) or through narrative events.

If **Reserves** reach zero, the ship's systems begin to fail. The crew is adrift. Whether this ends the story or becomes its new chapter is for all of you to decide.

Task resolution – core mechanic

Whenever the outcome of an action is uncertain, the involved player rolls dice.

Dice pool:

The player decides how many dice to roll (minimum 2); call this number **N**. They may use any or all of their personal dice, and may spend any number of Reserves to add extra dice – one Reserve per die, of the colour of their choice.

Check success:

Count how many dice show a value strictly below **N**.

- 0 dice: Failure – lose 1 **Reserve** ⚡
- 1 die: Partial success
- 2 or more dice: Full success

Check for pairs:

Look for any matching values among the rolled dice.

- At least one **mixed-colour pair** (one **red** and one **green** showing the same value) → Remarkable effort: gain 1 **Reserve** ⚡. The action went exceptionally well on a full success; on a partial success or failure, an unexpected benefit or insight emerges alongside the outcome.
- At least one **same-colour pair** (two or more **red**, or two or more **green**, showing the same value) → Overreach. A complication arises: tangential to the action on a full success, directly related on a partial success or failure.
- **Both a mixed- and same-colour pair** in the same roll → Push to the limit. The character achieves the remarkable benefit and gains 1 **Reserve** ⚡, but at a significant personal cost – the complication centres on the character themselves, not the situation.

Finally, the player, with GM's help and approval, describes what their character did and what happened. The colour of the die with the lowest result determines how the task was primarily solved:

- **red**: with physical strength, fortitude or agility
- **green**: wits, charisma or mental fortitude.

If the lowest result is tied, you solved the problem with both!

Credits

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Inspiration: Star Trek: Voyager, Space: 1999, Lost in Space, Battlestar Galactica, The Expanse and many others

Shape of play

Everyone at the table is first and foremost participating in creating a story. The GM introduces scenes and situations; players describe how their characters respond. Rolls happen when outcomes are truly uncertain; a roll should always drive the story forward. Before any roll, the GM should briefly state what a full success would look like, to calibrate expectations and communicate stakes.

Example of play:

GM: *You follow the signal to a forested mountain region. A tribal village sits at the cavern entrance. What do you do?*

Alice: *I try to land the shuttle out of sight in the trees. I will roll only my personal pool – two red, one green. N is three.*

(Rolls: **green 5**, **red 5**, **red 1**. This is partial success and a remarkable result. The crew gains 1 **Reserve** ⚡.)

Alice: *I guess I land but... clip some trees on the way down?*

GM: *Yes, and the noise carries. As for the remarkable result – your exterior cameras pick up local youths watching from the foliage. They seem curious, not frightened.*

Alice: *Perfect. Let's go introduce ourselves.*

Longer play:

At the end of each session, the group notes one to three **arc outcomes** – short statements of something the crew achieved or learned (e.g. "*We earned the trust of the Verath navigators*"). In a later session, a player may invoke an **arc outcome** to re-roll any of their dice or suggest a small detail about the world or non-player character. Each **arc outcome** may only be invoked once.

Scenario seeds

The Dead Station

You find an abandoned space station – no power, no crew, no signs of civilisation on nearby planets. A distress beacon is still firing a coded message, and its energy signature is strangely reminiscent of the anomaly that ripped you from known space.

The Auction

A subspace message reaches your ship: somewhere nearby, an auction is being held for a "fissure drive" – experimental technology that may be able to replicate the spatial displacement that brought you here. Several other species are sending representatives; what could you bid against them?

The Storm

You drop out of subspace far earlier than expected. The drive is malfunctioning. Worse, you have emerged inside a plasma cloud, and the lightning flashes appear to be converging on your ship – deliberately.