Planetfall:

A story-telling game of space exploration

Written and Designed by Marco Kaisth

Introduction:

Planetfall is a storytelling RPG where you and your group take the roles of a crew of space travelers (as high or low tech as you'd like, though the game was written for the 1950's Bradbury-founded idea of space travel, with rocket men whose lives are devoted to finding new worlds, in mind) investigating and landing on an undiscovered planet, rife with mystery and possible danger. The game has no Game Master, but every person has an individual role in the crew, including the Captain who directs the action. The roles are as follows:

- **Captain-** The Captain directs the action of the game, often laying the groundwork for the action and facilitating play when needed. They have no specific role except for generally piloting the spaceship and also having the ability to veto proposed actions (so they can keep gameplay in check without one player dominating it with silly/counterproductive suggestions).
- **Anthropologist-** The Anthropologist is responsible for the cultural side of things and narrates all encounters with living creatures, be them lost humans, sentient plants, or the Great Ant Minds of Balthonals.
- **Guard-** Wherever you're going you're going to need a guard. Specifically, someone who can point out when those 300 foot tall trees look like the branches are reaching towards you and the sap burns off clothing, or when you realize that isn't a cloud coming towards you, its a conglomerate of sentient water droplets intent on drowning your party.
- **Scientist-** You need someone who can tell you the exact nature of the hive-mind of that swarm of super advanced slugs heading towards you, or can deconstruct the alien ray gun into a Ronheisen Fuel Cap. Your scientist can do either of these things and much more.
- **Surveyor-** From a seeing eye glass to a sextant, you've got it, and you know how to use it. Think this sounds boring? Who else could describe the elegant Martian rivers or the architecture of the dog-people of Hermion-7?

NOTE: Not all roles needed to be filled to play, the Captain is the only essential role.

Gameplay

The play of *Planetfall* is simple. First, using 5 flashcards per player, go around the table writing down things you'd like to be in your story. These can be as simple or as serious as wanted by the group and be **things**, like a raygun, **quotes**, like "Into the abyss we travel..." or **strings** (more on these in a moment). Things and quotes should be referenced by players in the game, and when they are, are removed. Strings, however, represent relations, not discreet things or quotes themselves, so need to be used in conjunction with two things or quotes. An example might be "...And...", "... So she said..." or "...Would never work as well as..." Make sure you have at least 3 times as many quotes and objects as strings! The game is resolved when all of the cards are removed from the table. After these cards are written, the Captain will begin the game by describing piloting the ship onto the world. *Planetfall* is played by players narrating in turn what happens to them and everyone on the ship. Narration is passed from player to player when the area of one player's specialty in encroached on, for example, if the Captain is narrating and he says "As we begin to exit the ship, it appears as if moonlit shapes are dancing in the treetops," the anthropologist can then say "Living shapes...:" And continue the story. The specialties are intentionally broad and overlapping so no player is forced to narrate longer than comfortable. The cards are picked up whenever the player weaves them into the story and act as a pacing mechanism to give the game a clear end condition and signal the players when they should wrap up the story. If players wish to play competitively they could also rule that whoever has the most cards at the end of the game 'wins'.

NOTE: It may seem at first like the Captain's utility is limited, but remember, a Captain always keeps his crew in check, and if anyone narrates something that doesn't match the tone of the game, the Captain can stop them and take over.

Variants

Planetfall is meant to allow for variation, so here are a few variants that come to mind:

1. The competitive variant mentioned where whoever takes the most cards from the table wins (it is recommended the Captain does not compete but makes sure that no players make too wild connections).
    1. This can further be changed by having you have to roll a die in order to take over storytelling, needing a 5 to take over, and for every additional clause the narrator

adds, needing one less on the roll to take over, with no one being allowed to roll twice for the same narrator.

2. Another way to play competitively is to have the narrator judge each connection to a card from 1, being barely cogent to 4 being seamless and interesting and assigning that many points to the player who makes the connection.

2. Every player comes up with an adjective to describe a character, and then they are mixed and distributed randomly, and each player must act as if their character is that adjective.
3. *Planetfall* is easily adapted to almost any setting. Go for *Piratefall* and sail the high seas, or *Waterfall* in a submarine deep under the oceans. While I may be running out of puns, the possibility for settings in endless.

Happy adventuring!

Planetfall was created for the RPGGeek 24 hour RPG contest.
Planetfall was written and designed by Marco Kaisth, Founder of Heathen Kings Press.
All Rights Reserved.
For questions or concerns, email Marco at marcokaisth@gmail.com
Heathen Kings Press's other project, Conclave, is on Indiegogo (until 9/27/14 at igg.me/at/conclave) and starting in December will be available for purchase. To preorder and get the game along with Indiegogo backers at a reduced price inquire at the address above.

24-HOUR RPG 2014

HEATHEN KINGS PRESS