

Aaron Lim's Infinite Seas Under the Same Stars

"I see now... this is how it was meant to end. I could not see past this point... I feared it. I fear..." Owl's words were interrupted by a pained wince, as the entire left half of her body succumbed to the transfiguration into ink and paper, more fuel for the Book.

Sparrow cradled Owl's body close, desperately holding on to the last vestiges of warmth in her cheeks pressed against his own. He whispered his secrets to her, his name, his prayers and desperate wishes for another version of events, another world where they could have come to an understanding instead of perpetuating the curse of their families.

Hound steeled her resolve and turned toward the Book, summoning blue and gold flames to protect against the Book's final flailing defenses as she strode toward its dais, pointedly ignoring Sparrow and Owl's final moments together as she staved off her memories of Deer's own last words.

"I'll fix this, Pas. I'll rewrite the Book. You deserve better than this. We all do."

"No." Sparrow's voice started low and hoarse but gained steel and flame as he rose. "No. We have to burn it, Aun. We have to end its hold over all of us. It's the only way."

Wings of red flame burst forth from Sparrow's back as he walked over to Hound, inky black symbols now writhing within each burning feather.

Hound hesitated, a look of frustration stealing over her face, before giving a resigned nod. She took his hand silently, and they started to dance.

Slowly at first, then with increasing speed and passion. Their gazes averted at first, then desperately locked into each other as their flames mingled and blurred into blazing white. For the last dance to work, they had to purge all thought from their minds. Memories of their friends and family, their regrets and fears, all the events that led them here, were all slowly displaced by the dance, until only space and motion remained.

The Book screamed and slammed flurries of pages into the pair as it tried to stave off its demise, but every page it sent was instant cinder, taking with it the knowledge, memory and destiny of the names within it.

Only one word remained.

"Goodbye."

The world bound by the Book ended in a dance of blinding white flame, bringing the cursed fates of the Star Bloodlines with it.

And yet.

“Ok, so we’ve got a new starter today. Paz, I’m going to start him off at the bread station which should be easy enough until he’s familiar with how all the stations work. You show him the ropes, alright?”

Pascal nodded and tried to put on his friendliest smile as he extended his hand toward the lanky 22-year-old with the trainee badge. “Hi, I’m Pascal, but most people here just call me Paz or Pas and I guess I’ll be taking care of you for a bit. Err... cool Cerberus tattoo, um...that’s Cerberus right? Unless there’s some other three-headed dog I don’t know about.”

“Heh yeah! I’ve kinda got a thing for mythology. I’m Ching Aun, but you can call me Aun,” replied Aun, shaking Pascal’s proffered hand enthusiastically.

“Nice to meet you.”

Aaron Lim’s Infinite Seas Under The Same Stars is a collaborative storytelling game about souls fatefully, fatally linked over multiple worlds and realities. You will create 7 Constellations, characters who find themselves drawn to each other in each life or world, and play linked games exploring their stories. They might have slightly different names and histories each time, as the world and circumstances around them differ dramatically. Sometimes friends, sometimes rivals, sometimes lovers, sometimes enemies. Always bound to each other.

What is fated to happen between you? Can you break free from that fate? Would you even want to?

Aaron Lim’s Infinite Seas Under the Same Stars is inspired by Fruits Basket, Strings of Fate, The Wicked + The Divine, Suikoden Tierkreis, Tsubasa: Reservoir Chronicle, Chrono Cross, Neon Genesis Evangelion, 7 Souls in the Skull Castle, Daytripper, Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse, Eureka Seven, Zodiac Lovers and a whole heap of other multiple lives/worlds/timelines media that I forgot to mention here.

Set the Table

Tell the First Tale

Set up the game by describing a World to play in, defining the setting for the game. Combine two prompts from the World list by choosing or rolling randomly. Then look through the sets of Story Threads and together decide on one set to be the Primary Story for this World. Based on the World prompts and Primary Story chosen, work together to flesh out the world you will play in together in this session.

Then, each player creates a Constellation that they will be responsible for throughout the first tale. To begin, choose an animal as a Symbol to represent them, which will set one Aspect of your Constellation and give options for names and looks. The Symbol will also represent the Constellation in all further tales, as they may take on different names and looks in different worlds.

Each player also draws 2 Star cards from the deck and uses them to define two other Aspects of their Constellation. Also note the Name and Element of the Star cards used to define the Aspects next to it.

As you do this, also choose a Name for the Constellation and describe their pronouns, appearance and mannerisms.

Play a short Prologue before going into scenes. Use the Prologue to describe the relationships between the Constellations and showcase their aspects and get to know them before getting into scenes. Prologue will likely be narrated and described rather than acted out, and should show how the Constellations got to know each other and a summary of their regular interactions.

In the First Story, there will be 4 rounds of play.

At the start of each round, pick a Lead Player and draw Star cards equal to two plus the number of players from the deck to the center of the table.

The Lead Player starts the scene by choosing one Star card and adding it to one of the Primary Story's Threads, and setting the scene.

Then each player (including the Lead Player) takes one of the remaining Star cards and uses it to define one of their Aspects, and how this came about in the scene.

Continue 3 rounds until all the Aspects are filled. Also keep all the Star cards that were chosen.

In the final round, pick the Star cards to determine the Ultimate Fate for your Constellations.

In future worlds, change the name and appearance. Return all the Star cards into a deck, then add 2 cards for each player and shuffle into a deck.

At the start of each round, pick a Lead Player and draw Star cards equal to two plus the number of players from the deck to the center of the table.

The Lead Player starts the scene by choosing one Star card and adding it to one of the Primary Story's Threads, and setting the scene.

Then each player picks a card and says how they react to the Scene. If they pick a card that matches the Element of one of their Aspects, they can use that Aspect to push the Scene in a direction that benefits them, but they lock in that Aspect again for this World.

They can instead choose to have it go badly for them. If they do, they can draw another card from the deck into their hand.

If they pick a card that matches none of the Elements of their Aspects, they can change one of the Aspects to match the card.

Instead of picking a card, you may play the card you have in your hand.

If your Ultimate Fate card is available you must pick it and play it.

Then, play continues in turn order. On a player's turn, they can choose one of the following actions:

- Play to your Constellation, or to a neutral Constellation – Say what they do in the scene, depending on the prompt from the card and/or the element. You play to one of your Traits. If it's an existing Trait, you also consider the difference in Element. If it's a new Trait, explain what the Trait is.
- Play to a Relationship on your Constellation – sets a Relationship between two Constellations
- Play to one of the Stories – Add a story thread to the current scene. If it's an existing story thread, narrate how it Escalates or Shifts depending on the Element (same or aligned Element Escalates, neutral or opposed Shifts). If it's a new story thread, explain what it is.
- Take a card and save it for later.
- Play a card matching one of your Traits to attempt to Resolve a Story Element using that Trait, explaining how you think it would Resolve. Each other player draws a card from the deck and chooses whether to play it face down or not. Then shuffle the played cards and draw one. If it matches the called element, it goes as you suggest and ends the Scene.

On any turn, you can also take any of the following actions:

- Play a saved card to identify an existing character as a Constellation. Fill their name and details in that Constellation. Use the card to set one of their Traits.
- Play a saved card to add a detail when another player introduces or Escalates a story thread to Escalate it.
- Play a saved card when any player attempts to Resolve a Story Element.
- Call for an end to the Scene.
- Ask questions and clarify
- Say how your Constellation responds to something another Constellation does

Use a wheel of all 7 elements to organize the elements from strongest to weakest

Constellation Aspects:

Good at

Bad at

Loved by

Rejected by

Drawn to

Wary of

Ultimate Fate

Relationships to other Constellations

Story Threads:

A quest, its giver, its goal, its challenges, its failures, its triumphs, its rewards

A tragedy, its best intentions, its thwarted hopes, its cruel ironies, its cold perpetrators, its doomed ends

A romance, its budding seeds, its tempting alternatives, its trials and tribulations, its sweet moments, its daring declarations, its quiet victories

A re-examination/transformation/maturation, its instigators, its confrontations, its realizations, its lessons learned, its lasting changes

A mystery, its victims, its overt questions, its culprits, its hidden meanings, its twists, its resolutions

A reckoning, its debts incurred, its oppositions and delay, its catalysts and drivers, its payments made, its long shadows

A rise and fall, its initial hardships, its opposition, its triumphs, its temptors, its fractures, its saviours

A movement

A gathering, merger, consolidation, convergence, burgeoning, an ascent

A journey and return

A coming of age

A loss of innocence

A fall from grace

An adventure

A heist

A confrontation

A competition/performance

A chase

A rebellion

A hangout/character exploration/slice of life

Tell the Next Tale

Before setting up the next World, remove all cards from the Story Threads and return them to the deck. For each Trait or Relationship that has more than one card, shuffle the cards and pick one to be the new Trait or Relationship. If it is the same card that set the Trait, it stays the same. Otherwise, adjust the Trait or Relationship to match the new card.

There's a new Prologue for each of the Constellations and how they relate to each other based on the new traits before jumping into scenes. You can change their names, appearance, pronouns and other details. Set this before starting new scenes.

Reset the card pool to 5 cards and start the next tale by describing a new World.

Playtest notes:

Feels constrained, could you do romance outside of A ROMANCE, better context for the story threads,

Each player could play exactly one face up card per scene, but could play more face down cards

Early game, setting up more likely to play to story threads than characters

Players play to story threads but advocate for their characters still, should this happen?

Do you resolve the story threads by playing cards or by playing it out?

What happens if you draw all Strong cards or all Weak cards?

Element strength = the most common in the pool, which is dynamic

What if you could take a card and make it a strong element - to change things around, as an action

If keep fixed turn order, think about how element strength affects that - rotating the pool of cards regularly might make this negligible, also narrative focus means less feels-bad

Framing element strength as success bands puts in mind personal action of success/fail

What does it mean to “resolve a scene” or “resolve a story thread”

Maybe just have 3-5 cards and always replace. Maybe another way to track the end of a scene.

Stick to one Main Story Thread per World and let the others come in and out as needed

Story Threads like Setting Elements

Card prompts or elements is fine

Can let other characters respond or add flavour in a scene, rather than the main thing in the scene

Could just add a random card to the resolution, like Battlestar Galactica's crisis resolution

Cut down on the card row to 4 or 5

Set of predetermined characters with predetermined fate decks

Will always work this way, canon events, fixed points

Fox Betrays The Crow, instead of Betrayal, more specific

Can you change them?

What's still worth finding even if you can't change things