

THE WRETCHED





Writing, Design, & Layout - Chris Bissette
Design Consultant - Matt Sanders
Wretched Logo - Liz Gist

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Chris Bissette
loottheroom.itch.io
www.loottheroom.uk
twitter.com/pangalactic
patreon.com/loottheroom

Liz Gist
lizgist.artstation.com
twitter.com/crit_liz
patreon.com/lizgist

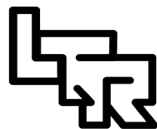
Special Thanks to Matt Sanders, Alex Clippinger, Jamila R. Nedjadi, Adam Vass, Will Jobst, the Brain Trust, and everybody involved in the Wretched Jam.

All my gratitude goes to those who bought the original printing of this game. Those 25 original copies will always have a special place in my heart and I will always be grateful to you for supporting me and The Wretched. Thank you.

Thanks as always to Steph for having the patience to listen to me bang on about these games even though she doesn't fully understand what they are <3

If you want to make your own games using the Wretched & Alone engine, check out the license and SRD produced by Sealed Library:

sealedlibrary.itch.io/wretched-alone-srd



WRETCHED
&
ALONE



SAFETY

Some of the roleplaying prompts in *The Wretched* tend towards the dark and violent. This is a game about fear, abandonment, and survival. It is a game about being hunted. You are trapped, alone, with a creature that wants you dead and there is no way to escape. This is reflected in the text of the game. Generally, if you're okay with films like *Alien*, *Event Horizon*, or *The Thing*, you should be okay with *The Wretched*.

Some specific content to be aware of: **confined spaces, physical injury, solitude and abandonment, death, descriptions of death, hopelessness.**

If you want to know exactly what you're getting in to before you start, read the Debrief on pages 20 and 21. That will explain exactly what is going on in this game.

Ultimately, this is a solo game you are the best arbiter of your own limits. If a particular prompt makes you uncomfortable, don't use it. Move to the previous or next prompt, cross it out and write in a prompt more suitable for you, or just make a pull from the tower and move on.

If at any point the game becomes too much for you, for any reason, stop playing and do something else. Your safety and comfort is more important than a game.

WHO

You are the last surviving crew member of the intergalactic salvage ship *The Wretched*. Adrift between stars after an engine failure, your ship was attacked by a hostile alien lifeform. The crew are dead. You are alone.

You thought you had won. You launched the creature out of an airlock, and that should have meant safety.

It didn't.

The creature survived, somehow immune to the cold empty black of space. Now it skitters and crawls across the hull of your ship. It seeks a way in. It wants you.

Now it is you versus inevitability. Can you keep your life support systems going long enough to repair your distress beacon? With the beacon activated, can you keep the creature at bay long enough to be rescued, assuming somebody hears your cry?

Probably not. But you have to try.

WHAT

The Wretched is a game about human resilience in the face of overwhelming odds and almost certain death. It is a game about isolation, fear, and perseverance.

You play a lone survivor of an horrific attack. You have seen and done terrible things, you have seen your friends - your found family - brutally butchered by something you can't even begin to comprehend, something that you were sure didn't exist until it manifested itself aboard your ship.

You are existing on the edges of your endurance, high on adrenaline and fear and desperation. You are sure you won't survive this, but all you know to do is to keep fighting.

The Wretched is inspired by the music and films of John Carpenter, the music of Nine Inch Nails, as well as the games *You Are Not Alone In This Life* and *you will die alone out here in the black* by Auden Roswell.

HOW

To play you'll need a standard deck of cards with no jokers, a single 6-sided die, a tumbling block tower, and 10 tokens of some kind - preferably a collection of nuts, bolts, and screws, but anything will work. You can play without the block tower if need be, though the game is better with it.

If you don't have access to a block tower but still want to engage with that part of the game, there are alternatives. For more discussion on this go here:

<https://bit.ly/Jenga-Alt>

You will also need some way to record your game. Audio or video logs work best, speaking into a microphone or a camera at the end of each day, but use whatever you prefer - a physical journal, Twitter, or anything else.

There are only two positive ways out of this situation, and each is more unlikely than the last.

First, you could activate your distress beacon, survive long enough for someone to hear it, and then continue to survive long enough for them to get to you.

Second, you could fix your engines and leave the creature drifting in your wake.

You can fail in a multitude of ways.

BEGIN

Set up the tumbling block tower as you normally would for games of that nature. Roll your die, and complete that many pulls from the tower by removing a block and replacing it on the top row. The tower represents the state of your ship.



If it falls at any time, a catastrophic systems failure results in your death and the game is over. If you do not have access to a tumbling block tower you do not need to use one and may ignore any instances where you are asked to pull from the tower. Your ship will never be destroyed - you are simply more likely to die at the hands of the creature.



Shuffle the deck of playing cards and place them face down within easy reach. If you wish to play a shorter game, make sure the Ace of Hearts is the top card of the deck.

Record your first audio log, reading from the script that follows.

Day 1, salvage ship *The Wretched*. Flight Engineer [your name] reporting. The other members of the crew are dead and the engines remain non-operational, though ship integrity remains good and life support systems are still active. I successfully jettisoned the intruder from the airlock, but it remains alive and continues to try to access the ship. With a little luck I can repair the distress beacon and somebody will pick me up. This is [your name], the last survivor of *The Wretched*, signing off.

All subsequent reports should begin with the statement “Day [x], salvage ship *The Wretched*, Flight Engineer [your name] reporting”, in order to assist with an accurate reconstruction of events should your ship be recovered. The content of the rest of the log is up to you, but should at least summarize the events of the day.

Now you are ready to begin.

THE DAY

The game is divided into phases meant to represent days on board the ship. You can take this literally, playing a slow game over the course of days or weeks, or you can play the whole game in one sitting. This usually takes about half an hour.

Each day has two phases: the *tasks*, and the *log*.

Phase One: The Tasks

- Roll your die and draw that number of cards from the deck, keeping them face down.
- Turn over the first card you drew and consult the Operations Manual. If the Operations Manual asks you to do a specific thing, do it.
- Continue turning over cards and consulting the Operations Manual until your tasks are complete.
- When you have completed all your tasks for the day, discard the cards you have used unless you are told otherwise.

Phase Two: The Log

- Take a moment to consider the events of the day, keeping in mind what you have learned about the state of your ship, the actions of the creature, and how you are feeling.
- Record your audio log for the day.

OPERATIONS MANUAL

Consult the Operations Manual each time you draw a card and complete the task it assigns you. Sometimes these tasks will involve pulling bricks from the tower. Others will involve quiet reflection or answering questions. Some do other things entirely.

Hearts



Hearts represent your ship's systems - life support, water purification, and the like. When you draw a heart, you are interacting with them in some way - doing essential repairs, or booting up a system that was previously dormant.

Clubs



Clubs represent the crew. When you draw a club you are reminded of the people you have lost, and the reality that you are sharing your space with their remains.

Diamonds



Diamonds represent your ship's physical structures. When you draw a diamond you are physically engaging with the ship - patching up the hull, sealing doors behind you, or accessing new areas.

Spades



Spades represent the creature. It may have made its presence known physically, or you may have to deal with the mental toll its hunt is having on you.

OPERATIONS

SYSTEMS



A After days of trying you have finally managed to repair your distress beacon and activate it.

Pull from the tower. Do not discard this card - instead, put it to one side and place 10 tokens on it. At the end of each day, after recording your log, roll your die. On a result of 6, remove a token from the card.

If you successfully remove all the tokens, someone responds to your beacon. Make a final pull from the tower. If the tower stands, you are rescued and the game ends. Record one more audio log as you watch them destroy the creature and dock with your ship. If the tower falls, they arrived too late to stop your ship falling apart in the black. You are dead, and the game is over.

K You hear a skittering, scraping sound in the air vents and you fear the creature - or something else - may have got aboard the ship. How will you make sure you don't attract its attention?

Do not discard this card. Place it where you can see it. If this is the fourth King you have drawn, the creature has gained access to the Wretched and it has finally found you. The game is over.

Q The door lock system fails while you are in the bridge, and you have to spend a few hours forcing the doors open so you can get out.

Pull from the tower.

J You spend a day climbing around in the engines, doing basic maintenance and trying to figure out what needs to be done to get the ship moving again. You end the day as clueless as you began.

Pull from the tower.

10 The life support system keeps making an unhealthy grinding noise, and you don't know what the problem is. What will you do if it fails?

9 The proximity alarms keep sounding because the creature is on the outside of the ship. You had to disable them.

Pull from the tower.

8 What does it feel like to look at the sensors and the monitors and see nothing? How does it feel to know that you may never see land, or light, or have a conversation again?

7 You had to climb up into a narrow crawlspace to fix some faulty lighting. What was it like, squeezed in there between the cables and the hull of the ship?

Pull from the tower.

6 Your scanners keep showing a large object that periodically disappears from the screen, only to show up again a few hours later. Is there something out there, or is it a glitch?

5 You've been finding it harder and harder to catch your breath, and eventually it dawned on you that the oxygen system had shut itself off. You fixed it, but what caused it to break?

Pull from the tower.

4 Your comms system blinks into life, picking up garbled chatter from far-off vessels. It falls silent before you can signal to them. What were they saying?

3 While you slept the fire suppression system was activated. What caused the fire, and how will you make sure it doesn't happen again?

Pull from the tower.

2 The water purification system still works, but it's noticeably less efficient. What does it feel like to drink water that smells faintly of ammonia?

SYSTEMS

STRUCTURES

A After a short but terrifying EVA you managed to boost the range of The Wretched's antenna. How did you ensure that the creature would not attack you while you were outside the ship?

Pull from the tower. Do not discard this card - instead, put it to one side so that you will remember you have drawn it. When the distress beacon is active, a roll of 5 or 6 is sufficient to remove a token from it.

K When you launched the creature out of the airlock you couldn't seal it again. Every now and then the creature comes back to that hole in the side of your ship, scratching and prying at the single internal door that separates you from the cold black of space. How do you react to this?

Do not discard this card. Place it where you can see it. If this is the fourth King you have drawn, the creature has gained access to the Wretched and it has finally found you. The game is over.

Q You spend a day taking the engine apart completely and putting back together in an attempt to fix it, but you're not sure exactly how to do that and you suspect that you may have caused more damage than you fixed.

Pull from the tower. Do not replace this block at the top of the tower - remove it from the game instead.

J You lose power throughout the ship, and while you're trying to fix it the backup generator fails too. You manage to restore power, but you need to cannibalise parts from the backup generator, which will never work again.

Pull from the tower. Do not replace this block at the top of the tower - remove it from the game instead.

10 With the climate control on the fritz, mould springs up in some of your food stores. You can't fix it, so you just seal that locker up and hope that nothing affects the rest of your supplies.

Pull from the tower.

9 Your gravity drive fails. It's a long, slow process dragging yourself over to it with no gravity, and a long day fixing it, but you manage to get it back up and running.

Pull from the tower.

8 A fire starts in one of the engines while you are attempting to get the ship going again. You are forced to jettison it.

Pull from the tower.

7 The many skirmishes with the creature caused a huge amount of internal structural damage. You spend a day tracking down all the issues you can find and fixing them as best you can.

Pull from the tower.

2 Shortly before your engines failed, the ship was struck by a small asteroid that didn't appear on the scanners. Oxygen has slowly been leaking out of the hull where it hit, but you spent a few hours fixing it. **Pull from the tower.**

6 The sewage silo springs a leak. It smells terrible, and you fix it as quickly as is humanly possible.

Pull from the tower.

5 You access one of the lander modules and hope that you can use it to escape the ship, but the asteroid that struck before your engines failed damaged it beyond repair. You jettison it into the black in the hope that it will distract the creature. **Pull from the tower.**

4 The creature detaches one of the habitat modules and sets it adrift in space. You manage to seal off that area of the ship before the creature can gain real access. **Pull from the tower.**

3 After you threw the creature out of the airlock it spent hours trying to get through the windows of the observatory deck - the only glass on the ship. You fear their integrity has been compromised, so you spend an hour reinforcing them by welding sheets of metal over the inside. **Pull from the tower.**



CREW

A While rummaging through the crew quarters you found a tool you've been in need of. What was it? The next time you are told to pull from the tower you may choose not to.

K As you were passing the Officer's Mess you tried to avert your eyes from the carnage inside, but you're sure you saw something move amongst the bodies of your crewmates. What do you think it was?

Do not discard this card. Place it where you can see it. If this is the fourth King you have drawn, the creature has gained access to the Wretched and it has finally found you. The game is over.

Q You spend a day clearing bodies out of a small room that you intend to hole up in if the creature gets aboard again. What was its purpose before this happened, and why were there so many people here when the creature came?

Pull from the tower.

J You gather together the bodies of the crew you were closest to and seal them in the remaining airlock, saying a few words of remembrance over their bodies, but you can't quite bring yourself to jettison them. What words do you say, and why is it so hard to send them out into space?

Pull from the tower.

10 One of the crew died while holding a teddy bear his daughter gave him. What was the bear's name?

9 Make a list of the five best hiding places on the ship, in the event that you need to use them.

8 Which member of the crew jumped into harm's way to try and protect the others, and how much time did they buy you all?

7 Before the creature came you were in the very early stages of pursuing a relationship with another member of the crew. What was the last thing you said to them, and why do you regret it?

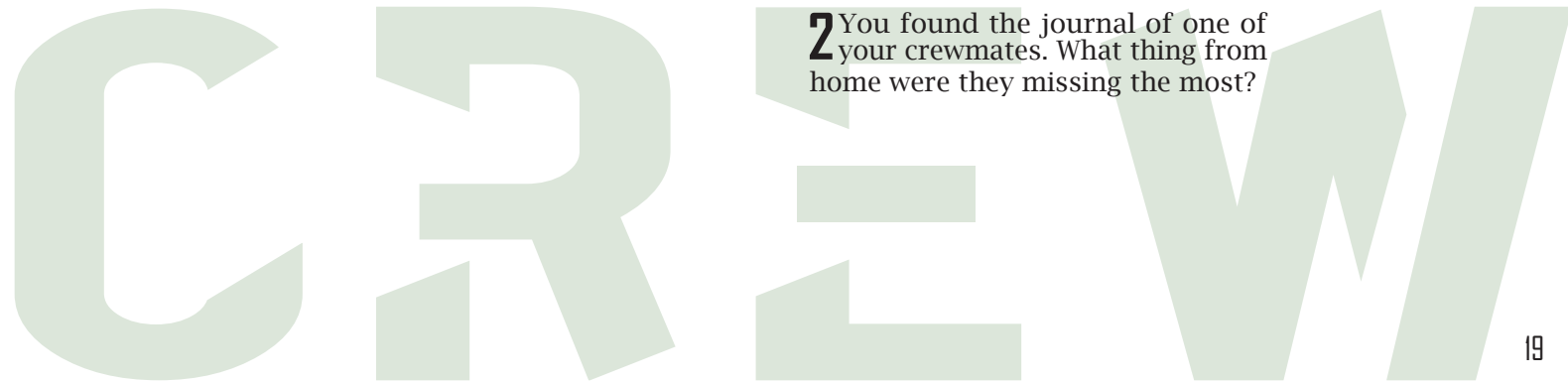
6 One of the crew told you all about a terrible dream they had had a few days before the creature came. In hindsight, they were having a premonition of what was about to happen. Why did you all ignore them?

5 You have been carrying a rifle with you for a few days now. You pried it out of the cold grip of a dead crewmate's hands. How did that make you feel, and do you think the rifle will be effective if you need to use it?

4 Where did you hide while the rest of the crew were dying?

3 You had to use someone else's ID to access an area of the ship normally forbidden to you. Whose ID was it, and what were you doing there?

2 You found the journal of one of your crewmates. What thing from home were they missing the most?





THE CREATURE

A You find a way to distract the creature from its attempts to gain access to the ship. What is it?

If you have previously drawn the King of Spades you may shuffle it back into the deck.

K The past few nights you have been dreaming about the creature. What happens in your dreams?

Do not discard this card. Place it where you can see it. If this is the fourth King you have drawn, the creature has gained access to the Wretched and it has finally found you. The game is over.

Q What do you imagine the creature calls itself? *Pull from the tower.*

J The creature can survive out in the cold black of space, where nothing should be able to live. Is it coming into your territory to destroy you, or is it simply defending its domain?

Pull from the tower.

10 You find something left behind by the creature - blood, or a body part, or something you can't quite explain. Describe it.

Pull from the tower.

9 Despite the thick hull of the ship separating you from the creature outside, you somehow know when it is near your section of the ship. How?

Pull from the tower.

8 You didn't see the creature properly because you were hiding, but you heard it. What did it sound like?

Pull from the tower.

7 The creature whispers to you through the ship's comms. You don't know how it does it. What do you hear before you kill the audio?

Pull from the tower.

6 You find yourself muttering a short phrase over and over again like a catechism. What is it?

Pull from the tower.

5 Something happened to the lights when the creature was near your hiding place. What was it?

Pull from the tower.

4 Down one of the long, straight corridors between rooms on the ship, you follow gouges in the walls and floor left by the creature. Describe them, and which part of its anatomy you think left those tracks behind.

Pull from the tower.

3 Describe the way the creature moves across the outside of the ship.

Pull from the tower.

2 Today you felt like giving up. You couldn't summon any energy, and your tasks weren't completed. Return any cards you haven't yet turned over to the deck and shuffle it.

Pull from the tower.

CREATURE

Take a moment.

Breathe.

D E B R I E F

What happened? Did you light the beacon? Did rescue come, snatching you away from a cold lonely death?

Or did the creature take you? Did you stare into its maw as it descended, one final victim to a nameless horror?

You tried to repair the engines. You had hope that it could be done. Everything you knew about the situation you were in told you it could be done.

That was a lie.

You have been telling a story during this game, but the story began before you drew your first card. The rules in this book are a story, and they were told to you by an unreliable narrator - the human capacity for hope, and the desire to survive against all odds.

There was never any hope of you repairing the ship. No matter how many tasks you completed, the engines were never going to fire again. The best you could do was to survive for long enough for help to come, and even that was unlikely.

You were doomed from the start. And somewhere inside you you knew this, even as you were desperately clinging on to hope.

You may not have survived, but the log of your final days lives on. What becomes of it now? Will it be found by a salvage ship much like yours, to serve as a warning for those intending to brave the cold depths of space? Did you pass it on to your rescuers, a chronicle of what you went through?

Or is it lost forever, adrift in the black where nobody will hear your words again?

When you close this book, put down this game, what will become of all you have done here?



**YOU ARE UNLIKELY TO BE
REMEMBERED**

You are the last surviving crew member of the intergalactic salvage ship *The Wretched*. Adrift between stars after an engine failure, your ship was attacked by a hostile alien lifeform. The crew are dead.

You thought you had won. You launched the creature out of an airlock, and that should have meant safety.

It didn't.

The Wretched is a solo journaling RPG played with a deck of cards, a tumbling block tower, and a microphone.

