

Chubby Crow Games

As the Crow Flies



by Harper Jay

Credits & Acknowledgments

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This work is an expanded take on “[Alone on the Wind](#)”, an [Alone at the Table](#) game also written by [Harper Jay](#) and published by [Chubby Crow Games](#).

Special thanks to the playtesters and beta readers:

(This will have names here, but at the moment it hasn’t been playtested. If you’re reading this, you’re probably one of my early playtesters or beta readers, and I cannot thank you enough! Your name will go here when I’ve received your feedback.)



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You are a crow.

You hatched one month ago, and now you and your siblings are ready to leave the nest.

There used to be humans here, but they all left. That's what your mama told you, and what her mama told her. Many lifetimes ago, the humans gathered into their rockets and flew to the stars.

In the decades since, the Earth Mother has begun to retake the land and bring magic back to it. Green grass and vines cover the cities the humans left behind. Nature and magic thrive, offering comfort to those who wish it, and adventures for those who seek them.

Those such as yourself.

You take flight from your nest, eager to explore.

The Carta System

As the Crow Flies uses the Carta System to facilitate exploration. Each card represents a different location, and has an associated writing prompt to help you explain what you find. Some cards give or take resources, some give exploration tokens, and some are simply scenery to take in on your journey.

What You Need

In order to play As the Crow Flies, you will need:

- 1 standard deck of playing cards with the jokers removed
- 1 token to represent yourself
- 10 "Feather" tokens of one color
 - (alternatively) 1 ten-sided die
- 4 "Exploration" tokens of another color
 - (alternatively) 1 four-sided die
- A few sheets of paper, or a journal
- Something to write with



Setup

Remove the **Two of Diamonds** and the **Jack of Hearts** from the deck, then shuffle the remaining cards. Draw 22 cards and set the remaining cards aside; they won't be needed. Add the **Jack of Hearts** to the 22 card pile and shuffle. Deal the cards face down into a 4 by 6 grid (shown below), and place the Two of Diamonds in the final spot; this is the Starting Space. Place your **Crow Token** on the Starting Space. Finally, take 8 **Feather Tokens**.



Game Terms

The **Crow Token** represents you and your place on the board/in the world.

Feather tokens broadly represent your health, stamina, willpower, food, et cetera.

Exploration tokens represent locations you've been to that may be suitable for a new home.

The **Goal Card** is the **Jack of Hearts**.

The **Home Card** is the **Two of Diamonds**.

Gameplay

The Nest

The **Two of Diamonds** represents your home, the place you've spent your entire life up until this point. Read the card prompt and answer the questions. Note any other creatures you may have met while confined to the nest. When you are ready to leave home, move on to the next step.

Exploration

To move to a new card, spend 1 **Feather Token** and move your **Crow Token** to an adjacent card; you may move orthogonally or diagonally. Flip the card over and check the **Card Prompts** tables to learn about the new location you've moved to. If you've gained or lost any tokens, remove or add them now. Then, write a few sentences explaining what you see and how the location makes you feel, and answer the question posed. Finally, give it a name. Once this is done, choose a new card to move to.

Suits

Each **suit** represents a theme for each location that you explore.

♦ **Diamonds**

Diamonds are fauna, other creatures that you find in your travels: other crows, birds such as ravens or pigeons, racoons, bugs, dogs, cats, deer, et cetera.

♣ **Clubs**

Clubs are flora and scenery: beautiful groves, city streets overwhelmed by grass and trees, caves and canyons, fields of flowers, et cetera. Club cards *always* grant one **Exploration token**.

♥ **Hearts**

Hearts are magic and mystery, things that stand out among the natural world: ruined temples, animal burial sites, ancient artifacts, the homes of spirits, et cetera.

♠ **Spades**

Spades are resources to help keep you alive and comfortable: food such as nuts or berries or animals, stones and objects that bring you joy, materials for nesting, et cetera. Spade cards will *always* either give or take **Feather tokens**.

Feather Tokens



Feather Tokens represent your health, stamina, willpower, and food access, allowing you to have the strength to continue exploring. You can have a maximum of 10 Feather Tokens, and any gained after that are lost.

Zero Feather Tokens

If you reach 0 Feather Tokens, the game ends. You're still alive and healthy, but you don't quite have the strength or the drive to continue exploring. This doesn't have to be a bad thing, however! You may not have found the perfect location for your new home, but that doesn't mean you can't find joy and fulfillment in what you *have* found.

When you reach 0 Feather Tokens, choose one revealed Club card to be your new home. If there are no Club cards revealed, you move back to the Two of Diamonds to start a nest of your own, near your old home. Either way, write a few sentences in your journal about the life that you make for yourself, and explain how you manage to find contentment.

We may not always succeed in our goals, and we may not always find the perfect answer, but we can still find joy in the cards we are dealt.

Exploration Tokens



Each time you find a suitable location for a home, in the form of a Club card, you will gain one Exploration Token. In order to win, you must find the **Jack of Hearts** and have collected all four Exploration Tokens, *OR have explored every card on the board*. If you find the Goal Card before collecting all four Exploration Tokens, continue exploring until you find them all, then return to the Goal Card. These tokens can never be lost. If you find more Club cards after collecting all four tokens, gain one **Feather Token** instead.

A New Home

Once you have collected four **Exploration Tokens** and found the **Jack of Hearts**, the Exploration phase of the game has come to an end. After reading and responding to the Prompt, choose one of the revealed Club cards to make a nest and start a new life. Write a few sentences detailing the life that you've made for yourself, and what you've learned along the way.

Alternate Gameplay Options

Legacy Start

If you have played at least once before, you may choose to use the **New Home** chosen in your last game as the **Start Card** for a new game. You are the child of your previous crow, and you've spent your life up until this point living where your parent ended up. If you choose this start, replace the **Two of Diamonds** with whichever card you chose as your **New Home** in your last playthrough.

Smaller Board

During **Setup**, set aside the Start and Goal cards as normal. Instead of dealing 22 cards, deal 14. Shuffle and set up the board as normal, but create a 4x4 grid instead of 4x6. Start with 6 **Feather Tokens**. You only need 3 **Exploration Tokens** to win. This creates a shorter game.

Larger Board

During **Setup**, set aside the Start and Goal cards as normal. Instead of dealing 22 cards, deal 28. Shuffled and set up the board as normal, but create a 5x6 grid instead of 4x6. Start with 9 **Feather Tokens**. You need 5 **Exploration Tokens** to win. This creates a longer game that really focuses on exploration.

Setting Creation

The world of **As the Crow Flies** is left intentionally vague, to allow you, the player, to have as much freedom and flexibility as you want during play. After a game, you will notice that you have a map, complete with notes and location names. Feel free to use this world that you have created to run your next tabletop game, or as the setting for a written story!

If you do so, please let me know on Twitter ([@Kristathan86](https://twitter.com/Kristathan86)); I'd love to see what you made!

Card Prompts

Diamonds

A: In the ruins of an ancient zoo, a large cage of rusted chain link surrounds a thriving but constricted wood. *What do the birds that live there teach you, and what do you teach them?*

2: **This is your home.** This is where your parents settled and built a life for themselves. You hatched here, and have spent your entire life in this nest. It is time to fly free for the first time, and seek out a new home of your own. *What kind of home are you looking for? What do you hope to see on your journey?*

3: The sun glistens off of the dewy grass of this beautiful orchard, carefully laid out by humans long ago, but now growing wild and free. **Gain 1 Feather token.** *What sustenance do you gain from this wild orchard?*

4: In a wide open clearing full of bright green grass, a gathering of dozens of animals of all different species takes place. *Is there some magic here allowing predators and prey to befriend each other, or have they all agreed to peace?*

5: A storm rages overhead, and the local animals have taken shelter to protect from the elements. *What do you discuss while waiting out the storm?*

6: The entrance to a cave sits amid a grove of trees. **Lose 1 Feather token.** *Did you overexert yourself escaping from the bear within, or did you pacify it with some of your precious food?*

7: The skeleton of a tree towers into the sky, its naked limbs covered in the deteriorating nests of many species of birds. *Do you spend time lifting the spirits of the locals, or do you fly away before they notice you?*

8: A calm section of river is dammed by a colony of beavers. *What wisdom do you exchange with the colony?*

9: The river here is tumultuous, with white water spraying into the air and dampening the rocks around it. *What can you reflect upon while watching the rapids?*

10: All of the animals in this section of forest are much larger than average, some as much as twice their natural size. **Gain 1 Feather token.** *What kind of magic infuses this place, and how does it energize you?*

J: A kindly group of kindly and spiritual crows greets you as you enter a ring of brightly colored mushrooms. **You may give away 1 Feather token, if you wish.** *If you do, what gift do you give to the Earth Mother in this holy place? If you do not, why don't you honor the Earth Mother with worldly things?*

Q: The largest beehive you have ever seen hangs from the sturdy limbs of a tree, and in their buzzing you can hear voices. *What do the bees say to you?*

K: The ruins of an ancient city spread below you, barely visible under the natural world that crawls over the concrete and plastic. *What do you ask the deer roaming the streets?*



Clubs

Always gain an Exploration token when moving to a Club card!

A: An ancient but sturdy human-made tower reaches the clouds. *What about this tower stands out that could make it an ideal place to live?*

2: A dense thicket whose canopy blocks out the sunlight leaves the forest floor here filled with perpetual darkness. *Why is this gloomy paradise an appealing place for a nest?*

3: Bright and colorful wildflowers are peppered among the tall grass of a prairie that extends to the horizon, with the occasional orange-barked tree holding berries in its branches. *Which flowers would you look forward to seeing every morning if you lived here?*

4: A clearing in the center of a dense grove of trees houses many animals living peacefully together. *If you lived here, would you be a social butterfly, or a quiet recluse?*

5: The leaves of the canopy in this forest have become enchanted, and a warm rain pours from them every night. *How could you use regular nightly rainfall to your advantage if you were to make a nest here?*

6: A hole in a rock wall leads to a spacious cave whose walls are lined with perches and natural shelves. *What kind of life could you make for yourself in this underground haven?*

7: A pine tree looms over the woods around it, its cones long and slender, its crown disappearing into the clouds. *What can you see from the top of your potential new home?*

8: A massive lake sits in the crater of an ancient volcano, and an island near the rim is said to be home to powerful natural magic. *Would you rather explore the extensive shore of the lake, or settle on the island?*

9: A long stretch of river courses through the rocky terrain, creating ten waterfalls along its many forks and streams. *Which waterfall is your favorite, and what about it makes you consider living nearby?*

10: Animals and spirits live in harmony in a beautiful field over the bones of an ancient human city. *What do they have to offer each other, and what could you bring to them if you lived here?*

J: A human-made building of brick and wood has been repaired and reinforced by the local animals, and turned into a sanctuary and shrine to the Earth Mother. *How could you bring honor to the Earth Mother by making a nest here?*

Q: What started as a dam kept growing onto the shore of the river it spans, growing longer and taller as the years went by, until a thriving animal city formed along the wooden structure. *If you made your home here, would you become a Great Dam builder, or would you contribute in some other way?*

K: Human-made buildings stand completely covered in vines, forming a beautiful boxy green skyline. *What aspects of a mostly in-tact human city do you find appealing when considering a new home?*



Hearts

A: A small stone structure that seems to predate even the humans stands as it has for tens of thousands of generations. *What do you learn about the connection between magic and animals while you are here?*

2: The sky above the plains is dark even during the day, and there are no stars or moon in sight. **Lose 1 Feather token.** *How did you escape the plains as the dark sky tried to steal your life essence?*

3: The sky above the plains is bright even during the night, and the sun shines with no clouds to obscure it. **Gain 1 Feather token.** *How did this mystical sun rejuvenate you and keep you moving forward?*

4: A circle of mushrooms glowing with ultraviolet light beckons you, asking for a story of your travels. *What story do you tell to the mushrooms?*

5: A community of wind and rain spirits have taken up residence in the clouds, causing this area to become the nexus of an unceasing storm. *Do you brave the elements and fly into the clouds to speak with the spirits, or do you push through the area as fast as you can?*

6: The cave system you find yourself in becomes a labyrinth, threatening to trap you, but when you reach the center you suddenly find yourself outside once again. *What secrets of natural magic did you learn within the caves?*

7: The blue-green needles of a pine tree catch your eye, its branches long and arching, some drooping all the way to the ground. *What do you learn from the song that this tree sings through its bark and pines?*

8: A lake of perpetual ice fills a snowy basin, with no river flowing in or out. *What kind of life do you see below the ice?*

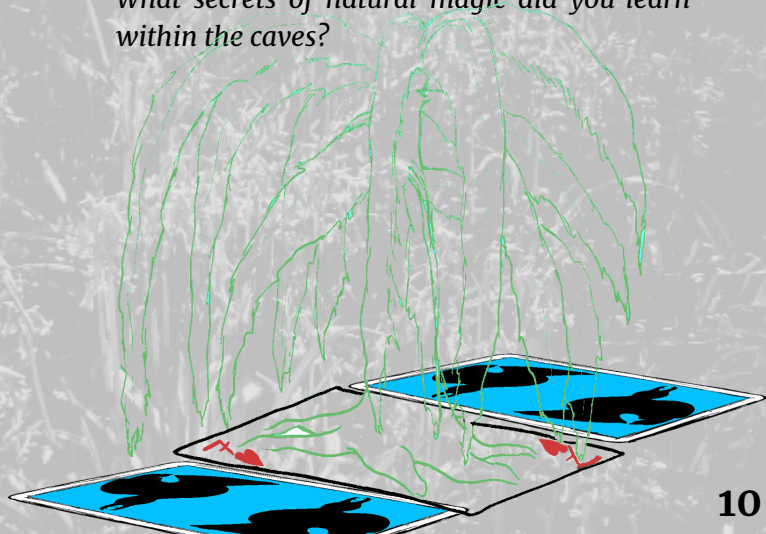
9: The river falls over the edge of the mountain, crashing down on the rocks below. *What spirits are able to live in the open around this massive waterfall?*

10: When you sleep in this grove, your dreams are filled with visions of the past; a crow from a thousand generations back, a crow-like creature with scales as well as feathers, and a flat-headed fish with a naturally armored body. *What wisdom do you garner from your ancient ancestors while you sleep?*

J: **Goal Card.** Amid a clearing sits an effigy built by the first crows, wayfarers who created a direct link to the Earth Mother. **Gain 1 Feather token.** *When you commune with the Earth Mother, what guidance does she give you toward finding your new home?*

Q: A pile of small bones that stands as tall as a tree sits in an otherwise empty field; crow bones mingle with the bones of countless other animals. **Lose 2 Feather tokens.** *Which bone does the pile magically extract from you?*

K: Among the desolate and uninhabited ruins of an ancient human city, the spirits of humans long since deceased wander the streets looking for purpose. *What do these spirits teach you about the fall of humanity, and what can you learn from the information?*



Spades

A: The roots of a massive oak tree have pushed and torn through an ancient human-made dwelling. **Gain 1 Feather token.** *How do you spend your time relaxing in the sheltered nook of the tree's roots?*

2: Under the cover of night, you unearth an old cache of food. **Gain 1 Feather token.** *Is this an abandoned and forgotten place, or are you stealing resources from the animal that left them here?*

3: As you settle in for a night's rest, bright orbs of light appear along a decrepit human street, as lamps from ages past somehow flicker to life. **Lose 1 Feather token.** *How is it possible that these street lamps work after all this time?*

4: The shape of a human stands with its arms outstretched amid a wide field, the once carefully farmed land overgrown with wildflowers and wheat. **Gain 1 Feather token.** *What can you learn about the ancient humans from this deteriorated straw replica?*

5: Winds push and pull at your wings, and a chilling rain barrages you as you try to fly through the storm. **Lose 2 Feather tokens.** *How do you recuperate and find the will to move past this intense setback?*

6: A burrow beneath some bushes leads into an abandoned den with some old but salvageable food. **Gain 1 Feather token.** *What do you think happened to the animals that lived here?*

7: Beneath a thick layer of moss, you find raindrop-shaped glass baubles strung along a plastic string surrounding a massive tree. **Gain 1 Feather token.** *How do you bring this trinket along with you on your journey?*

8: A lake teeming with fish glistens in the sun. **Gain 1 Feather token.** *How do you honor the fish that gave its life to sustain your own?*

9: The shore stretches as far as your eyes can see, and no matter how far you fly, you never find the end. **Gain 2 Feather tokens.** *What gifts do the water and sand give that rejuvenate you?*

10: What first seems like a lucky break turns sour as the stockpile you've found appears to be tainted by painful, mournful magic. **Lose 1 Feather token.** *Why did the food turn to ash in your beak, and how do you purge yourself of this negative magic?*

J: A brick building stands alone, appearing to be an old place of worship for the forgotten humans. **Lose 1 Feather token.** *Why do you feel compelled to leave an offering to the Earth Mother, and what do you leave her?*

Q: Tree branches lined with nests make up the canopy of this wood. **Gain 1 Feather token.** *What do you take from an uninhabited nest, and what do you discuss with the other birds?*

K: Unlike most other ancient human cities you have seen, this one is completely devoid of life, it's blackened streets empty, and sickness seems to hang in the air. **Lose 1 feather token.** *From what you can see, what do you think happened here?*

