



ACROSS THE BORDER

You've never been closer to the border, or closer to getting caught. Tonight you will dodge patrols and natural perils as you try to cross over. With the help of a local guide, and a lot of luck, your journey might be successful.

This is a game about covertly crossing a border. One player will be the local guide and the rest will be characters trying to reach the other side. You play it while going for a hike, ideally in nature, but you can also play it on city streets. The local guide should read these rules in advance and print out the conversation cards.

Players: One local guide to facilitate and 3 to 10 border crossers

Material: Yarn, scissors, printed Conversation Cards

Length: 45 to 90 minutes

Designed by Randy Lubin, [Diegetic Games](#)
For the [Game Chef 2017 Competition](#)

CREATE THE SETTING

Pick a Local Guide

Choose one player to be the local guide. This character grew up in this region and knows it well; they've guided other groups across this border. This player will set the pace of the game and bring about its conclusion.

Find a Place to Play

As a group, pick a place to play the game. If you're near a park with hiking, choose a trail that is long enough to last the length of the game and wide enough for players to stand in a group without blocking the path. If you're playing in an urban or suburban setting, pick an area that provides fodder for the *Interpreting Your Surroundings* guidelines, below.

Select a Backdrop

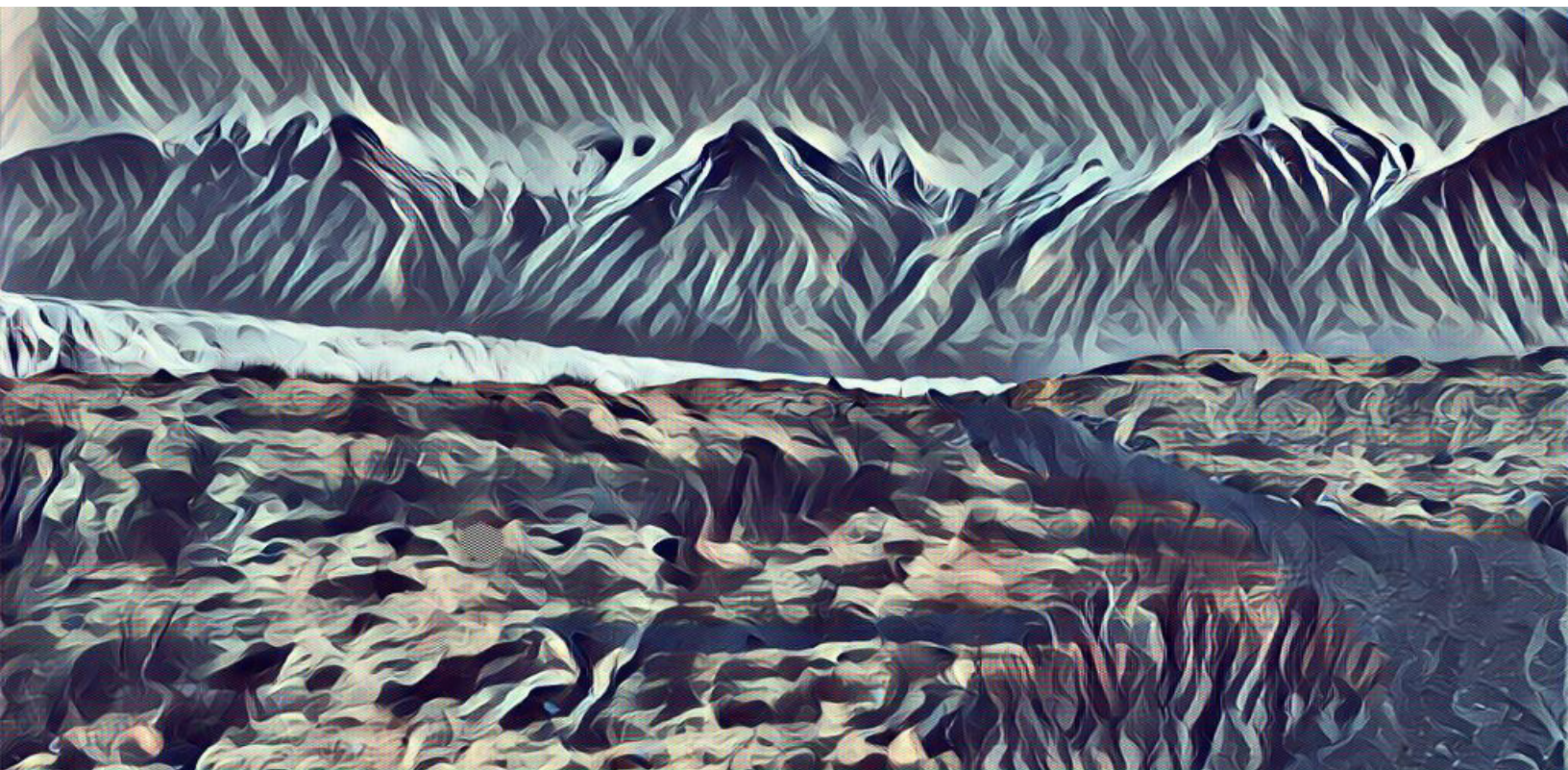
As a group, choose one of the following settings as the backdrop for your crossing. Then, answer the corresponding question.

Immigration: Your homeland is in chaos and you've decided to seek a better life. You've saved up enough money to pay a local guide to bring you across the border to a new country. There you hope to find safety and prosperity.

Why is your homeland in chaos?

Enemy Territory: Across the border is enemy territory and getting caught means torture or death. You have different missions but they're critically important and you'll risk everything to achieve your goal.

What makes the enemy nation so vile?



CREATE THE CHARACTERS

Define the Local Guide

The local guide should answer the following questions aloud:

- How many times have you made this trip?
- Have you ever had trouble on this route?
- Are you guiding for ideological reasons or just for the money?

Define the Border Crossers

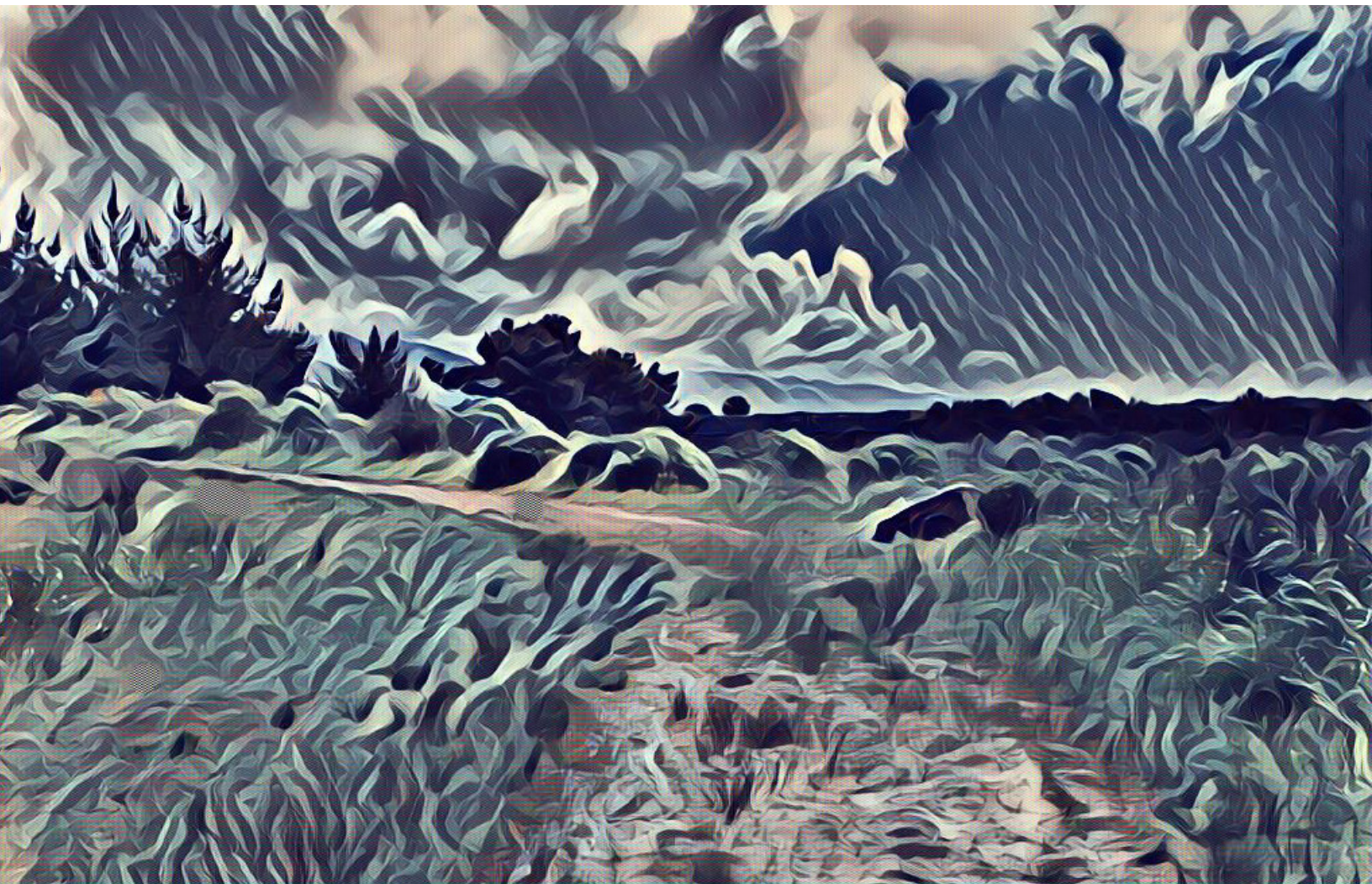
Each non-guide player should answer the following questions, based on the backdrop:

Immigration:

- What are you fleeing from (violence, oppression, poverty, etc)?
- Who are you leaving behind?
- Pick another border crosser. You know them from your past; how?

Enemy Territory:

- What is your mission (sabotage, espionage, rescue, etc)?
- What is your background (soldier, spy, civilian, etc)?
- Pick another border crosser. You know them from your past; how?



FINAL SETUP

Conversation Cards

The local guide should hand out two or three Conversation Cards to each player. These are the conversation prompts included at the end of these rules. Once the game begins, the players should use these cards to spark conversations. Conversation don't need to involve the whole group and multiple conversations can happen in parallel. Players should start a new conversation whenever the timing feels right, but it's okay for there to be periods of silence and to have leftover cards at the end of the game.

Safety

Your safety is much more important than this game. Any player can stop the game at any time, for any reason, physical or emotional. Tell the other players if you want them to wait for you or to finish without you.

By default, the game doesn't involve any running, climbing, or otherwise physically exhausting actions. If your group wants to include these types of movement, get unanimous agreement in advance. Use your judgment about sticking to marked trails and make sure you don't trespass. Don't forget to bring water and wear sunscreen – if you get sunburned in the game, you get sunburned in real life!

Linking the Group

The game begins with all of the border crossers linked together with yarn. The yarn is symbolic of the group's shared fate and that the border crossers must stick together to survive. You will need a long thread of yarn, about three yards per player, including the local guide.

The border crossers should get in a line. The local guide should tie one end of the yarn around the right wrist of the last player in line; knot it in place. Then they should measure out 2-3 yards of yarn (about one and a half arm spans) and then tie a loop around the hand of the next player in line and knot it in place. Continue down the line, leaving about 2-3 yards of slack between each player. Once all of the players are tied together, measure out an additional 2 yards of slack and tie a loop at the end. The loop at the end is for the local guide to hold, as they lead the other players around; the local guide can always hand the loop to the front player and walk off on their own.

The local guide should have scissors with them; they are the only one allowed to cut the yarn. When the group is ready, the local guide should read the following line aloud, then start the game:

“Thank you for trusting me to guide you across the border. It isn't far now, but these lands are heavily patrolled. I know this region like the back of my hand and I promise you safe passage.”

From this point on, try to stay in character.

PLAYING THE GAME: THE LOCAL GUIDE

The local guide is responsible for getting the players across the border. They also keep an eye out for danger and interpret the surroundings for the rest of the players.

Start by reassuring the players that you know this route well and that you will get them safely across the border. Make it clear that there are dangers ahead and that everyone should follow your instructions quickly and carefully.

Interpreting Your Surroundings

As you hike, periodically describe the setting through the eyes of a local. When there is danger nearby, alert the players and give orders to keep quiet, stay very still, or move quickly. Use sights, sounds, and smells from the real world to inform the fiction.

Here are ways to pull the real world into the fiction, but you should get creative:

- Other groups of hikers might be nearby surveillance patrols
- Local fauna or pets on the trail might be dangerous wild animals
- Forks in the path might be other ways to reach the border; why are you taking this path?
- Bridges and road crossings might be high risk areas
- Water fountains, sprinklers, or a lake might be a safe place to rest for a few minutes
- A water tower or billboard might be a watchtower
- Sirens, police cars, ambulances, and trucks might be border patrols

Call these sights out to the border crossers and add detail. Have you heard about trouble here before? What was this place like when you grew up?

Escalating Danger

Aim to escalate the danger over the course of the game. Patrols might be far in the distance at the start but a near threat by the end. The group will never be caught, but there should be a growing sense of risk as the game progresses.

Interacting with the Group

Over the course of the game, take actions which shake the group out of their routine.

Here are some suggestions:

- Tell everyone to get quiet, stay low, or move quickly when there is a nearby threat
- Lead the group to an overlook and explain what they see
- Hand your yarn loop to the lead player and scout ahead, then report back on what you see
- Leave their sight if you want them to worry about you returning
- Have the group stop for a rest and explain why the spot is safe
- Have the group use foliage or ledges as cover; have them move quickly from tree to tree



PLAYING THE GAME: THE BORDER CROSSERS

Trust Your Guide

Your local guide is the expert, follow their instructions and you just might make it across the border. That said, feel free to state any concerns and to ask questions, when it's safe.

Provoke Conversation

Unless the local guide urges silence, the group should engage in frequent conversation. When the time feels right, bring up a topic from one of your conversation cards or build on an ongoing topic.

Watch the Yarn

This is dangerous territory and you need to watch every step. If the yarn touches the ground, let the local guide know. They will cut the yarn where it touched and retie it; this will lead to less slack between these characters.

Make Sense of Your Surroundings

The local guide is responsible for interpreting your surroundings but you can help. Anything you see or hear might be something significant in the fiction. A house under construction might be the site of a new surveillance outpost; smoke from a chimney might be a forest fire. Ask the local guide what it means or speculate with other border crossers.

ENDING THE GAME

The local guide is responsible for ending the game when the time is right.

The Border Crossing

Try to choose an interesting feature to represent the border crossing. This could be a bridge or paved roadway that the group must cross. You can select the border before you start or decide along the way. If there isn't a good feature nearby, pick an arbitrary place to be the border.

When the border is in sight, stop the group. Tell the players that they must cross one at a time, to reduce the chance of being caught. Announce that you will not cross the border with them but they should be safe on the other side. When they reach the other side, they should wait for the group to reassemble and catch their breath before continuing onward. Wish them good luck.

Cut the yarn tied to the lead player and tell them to cross the border carefully – stay low and move quietly. Once they reach the other side, cut the next player's yarn and send them over. Continue until all players are across.

Once all the players have crossed, give them a minute to celebrate their success. Then, join them and tell them that the game is over.

Epilogue

Once the group has reassembled, each player should provide a short epilogue for their character. Are they successful in this new country? The local guide should also provide an epilogue; what do they do with the money? Do they ever get caught?



Conversation Cards

You betrayed someone back home, before beginning this journey; who and why?

You've heard rumors of guides betraying their clients; share one such story.

If you make it across the border, what worries you most about the next step?

You've had a reoccurring dream about crossing the border. How does it go?

Share a rumor you've heard about dangers that await you on the other side.

Share how you've prepared for this trip.

How do you feel about your hometown?

Talk about someone you've left behind.

Conversation Cards

You have contact you have on the other side of the border. Who is it?

How optimistic are you about your chances on the other side of the border?

How do you feel about the country you are about to enter?

What scares you most about the crossing?

Which other border crosser do you dislike?

You disagree with something about the local guide's approach - what is it?

You have some doubts about your decision to make this border crossing. Why?

Making this trip puts someone you care about in danger - who and why?

