



Ellipses RPG

Session Starters

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What is *Session Starters*?

Ellipses RPG was designed to work in any setting or context imaginable. The Log system and Focus skill were my ways of building as much adaptability into the *Ellipses* ruleset as possible. No matter how easy, challenging, or strange a campaign you wanted to run, I wanted you to be able to use *Ellipses* for your role-playing needs.

Unfortunately, I had a problem no amount of game mechanic tweaking could fix. Creating an intriguing scenario for a role-playing campaign off the top of your head is...Difficult. And without a scenario, players could again decide not to bother role-playing due to the hassle of making a new, interesting world from scratch.

Enter *Session Starters*.

To thank you for your kind support of this system (I'm assuming you got this guide legitimately—you didn't pirate this tiny thing, did you?), this manual provides over 20 unique, unusual settings for your collaborative stories, a few of which have been created by some of the best writers in gaming. *Session Starters* will not give you complete, pre-built worlds to explore. Instead, with some evocative text and suggestions, I'm hoping it will provide the spark you need to get an incredible adventure started as quickly as possible.

Feel free to email me at writnelson [AT] gmail [DOT] com with questions, feedback, and tales of your adventures using *Ellipses RPG*!

--Xalavier

DJ PL3ZENTREEZ: Dark Lord of the Night

In a world where music is the only thing that matters, a small number of strange, creative people are the most powerful individuals on the planet. DJs control vast sectors of Earth. One of the more pleasant musical monarchs, *DJ PL3ZENTREEZ*, is playing a set in a monolithic nightclub close by.

Will you and your friends convince him to play a song of your choice, or die trying?

Questions to Ask:

- How does the state of the world affect the people within it?
- What is DJ PL3ZENTREEZ like? Is he as chill as he seems, or does he have something to hide?
- What are the goals of your Players? Are they simply trying to get their song played? Dethrone him? Usurp him? How do you change the session so they can achieve their goals?

Potential Characters:

- Suspicious Self-Proclaimed Bodyguard
- DJ PL3ZENTREEZ's Manager, Second-in-Command
- Overworked Bartender/s
- Distracted Sound Technician

Potential Locations:

- Dance Floor
- Swanky Backstage Apartment
- Dirty Bathroom

Potential Obstacles:

- Numerous locked doors.
- A bouncer who decides you are not cool enough to get in.

Aye Aye Interstellar Galley!

Two thousand years from now, the *Gwarentius*, a starship of unparalleled luxury, is launching from Earth on a tour of the Milky Way Galaxy. It has 7 decks, spans over 2,000 feet, and yet only holds 100 people who will be pampered beyond belief. The ship is rumored to be indestructible. Of all the incredible facts about the *Gwarentius*, there's only one unanswered question:

...Who's going to make the food?

(The answer is Y'all, by the way.)

Questions to Ask:

- What would gourmet food be like in the future? How would it be prepared? What tools would you use? Are robots involved?
- Are Players simply serving the ship? What specific roles would they fill? Do they have another, covert purpose as well?
- Will a catastrophic event occur? If so, what kind? What sort of enemies would the *Gwarentius*' privileged passengers inspire?

Potential Characters:

- Sarcastic Cyborg Waiter
- Disgruntled, Displaced Original Captain (now a Passenger)
- Advanced AI Controlling Most of The Ship

Potential Locations:

- Engine Room
- Ship-spanning Air Vents
- Giant Pool/Summer Simulation

Potential Obstacles:

- Defective machines and dull cutlery.
- A malfunction forcing you to serve passengers individually.
- Space Pests.

Assumed Responsibility

In a dirty, fog-shrouded town, a group of expert private investigators confront the otherworldly, eldritch threats that might otherwise swallow it whole.

You and your friends are not these investigators. However, that doesn't stop you from assuming their identities (and their business) after the group's mysterious disappearance...

Questions to Ask:

- Did the Player characters grow up in/near this town? How does it affect them? Does it affect how people *react* to them?
- Do Players have ties to the strange events happening in town? How will this reveal itself through the course of the story?
- What are Players fighting, if anything? How do Players confront an evil beyond their comprehension?
- Can some of the dark events investigated actually be attributed to natural causes?

Potential Characters:

- Off-Duty Commercial Fisherman (won't stop talking about the sea in poetic terms)
- Local Pastor/Priest/Religious Authority
- Odd, Wealthy Family With Deep Roots in the Community

Potential Locations:

- Creepy Mansion
- Strange Library with Shifting, Looping Hallways
- A Greasy Diner (that serves delicious coffee)

Potential Obstacles:

- Harnessing magic/the supernatural harms the user.
- Unreliable weapons, sources of information.
- **EVIL FORCES NOT OF THIS WORLD.**

“WHY ARE WE STILL IN THIS ****ING HOUSE?!?!”

You've seen the story a thousand times before. A bunch of people go into an abandoned house, see some stuff that scares the bejeezus out of 'em, and are never heard from again. You used to laugh at those people—before today.

Now, you and your friends are in an abandoned home, and try as you might, you can't get out...Not until you get what you came for.

Questions to Ask:

- What are the Players trying to obtain, that may allow them to escape the House? Does this McGuffin have special properties?
- How do you put your Players in frightening situations, while preserving their ability to make meaningful decisions?
- Will Players have to sacrifice limbs, objects, relationships, etc. to survive? If so, how do you facilitate these decisions while still allowing Players to feel safe/empowered?

Potential Characters:

- Sentient Doll (may or may not be evil)
- Disembodied Voice
- Trapped Realtor

Potential Locations:

- Twisted Kitchen
- Living Room Filled with Dust, Hunting Trophies
- Rotting Basement

Potential Obstacles:

- Endless hallway/maze.
- Encroaching threat/time limit (full moon, flooding basement...).
- Threatening household objects.

High Noon in Uncanny Valley

A messenger dispatched to a successful mining camp on the frontier of the Wild West finds the area deserted, but completely intact. As the only U.S. Marshals in the area, you and your friends are sent to find out what happened, and why.

Your search for answers leads you in a single direction—the nearby, booming shanty town that sprung up in the camp's wake.

Questions to Ask:

- What resource was the camp producing, or had the potential to produce? Would anyone (or anything) want to take it?
- How did this event occur? Who profits from it? Are the causes supernatural? Natural? Unresolved?
- How will Players find answers? Are there (ideally) multiple ways to discover the same information if things get chaotic?

Potential Characters:

- Corrupt Sheriff
- Mysterious Hermit
- Highwaymen Leader
- Greedy, Two-Faced General Store Owner

Potential Locations:

- Saloon
- Frontier Doctor's Office
- Treacherous Canyon
- Mysterious Frontier Circus

Potential Obstacles:

- Uncooperative witnesses.
- Bandits.
- Bureaucracy.

Crimson Shirts, Clear Hearts

The year is 24XX. As humanity spread into the stars, corporations found reusable clone bodies to be cheap tools for dangerous missions and exploration. When a hazardous task needs to be completed, these genetically-engineered tools are sent into the fray, and revived in an identical, red-suited body after death. However, you and your friends are defective, and can not only remember dying, but dislike the experience.

When an organic, shifting metal planetoid is discovered deep within humanity's borders, the ship you are held upon is the first sent to investigate. Will you change the course of humanity, or die in horrible, unnecessary ways while the crew drinks tea in safety?

Questions to Ask:

- Do Players have a goal they can *actually* accomplish, or will they simply die in horrifying ways trying? Decide upon the approach of the session with your Players before starting.
- What is the planetoid like? Does it contain life? If so, is the life sentient? Hostile? What are their traits? Can you make peaceful contact?

Potential Characters:

- Useless Science Officer
- Corporation Representative
- Sympathetic, Human Commanding Officer About To Retire

Potential Locations:

- Alien Hive/Nest
- Metallic Forest and Ecosystem
- Trophy Room with Artifacts of Earth's Past (*Dinosaurs*)

Potential Obstacles:

- Malfunctioning equipment.
- Hazardous environment/ecosystem.

Vic and Drac Make a Monster

Deep in the heart of Transylvania, prominent scientist Victor Frankenstein and the malevolent force known as Dracula have joined forces to create the perfect Monster.

As villagers in a nearby town, you and your friends do not approve of this plan.

Pick up your pitchforks, storm Dracula's castle, and topple their dark schemes before your dear city is reduced to ashes!

Questions to Ask:

- Do other villagers join your quest? If so, what are they like? Do they serve a purpose? Are they just cannon fodder?
- What kind of relationship do Victor Frankenstein and Dracula have? Can they be turned against each other?
- Are Victor and Dracula's intentions truly evil? Does it matter?

Potential Characters:

- Talking Suit of Armor
- Dracula's Ex-Wife
- Two-Headed Dog (name it something adorable, I beg you)

Potential Locations:

- Dungeon
- Giant Dining Room
- Torture Chamber
- Laboratory

Potential Obstacles:

- Hidden traps.
- Secret rooms.
- Vampire traitors within your midst.
- Impossible architecture (endless staircase, revolving room, etc.)

Castle Brüntfier Rides Again

In a faraway, magical land, the Mad King Brükenheld has decided he needs a home unique enough to suit his name. The home in question is *Castle Brüntfier*—a grand stone fortress with a mind, will, and voice of its own. As impossible as it seems to convince a living castle to let common humans stomp around in it, what King Brükenheld wants, he gets.

You and your friends are the sole agents capable of fulfilling this mission. Namely, you're the only agents currently in his court. Go forth! For Brükenheld! For glory! For frankly laughable pay!

Questions to Ask:

- Where do you start the story? In the King's throne room? Mid-journey to the Castle's last known location? Somewhere else?
- What is Castle Brüntfier's personality? Its motivations? *Can* it be convinced? Could it dethrone the King?
- If the Castle has a moat, is it technically filled with castle urine?

Potential Characters:

- Rival, Would-Be Courtiers
- Dubious Tour Guides
- A Friendly Elf

Potential Locations:

- The Castle Mouth
- The Castle Stomach
- A Nearby, Enchanted Forest

Potential Obstacles:

- A stubborn Castle.
- Scared, panicking, rioting villagers.
- The whims of your Mad King.

You're (Not) Very Welcome

Times are hard in Mcgrufinn, and as townsfolk tighten their purse strings, it's becoming increasingly difficult for freelance heroes to find stable work.

You and your companions are temporarily living with the parents of a childhood friend (and fellow adventurer) until you can get back on your feet. Try not to stretch your welcome with them (or the town at large) as you complete simple chores with the ludicrous abilities, items, and garb of a career adventurer.

Questions to Ask:

- Who is the childhood friend Players will stay with? How are they like (or unlike) their parents? How does their familial relationship affect the Players?
- What kind of chores would need to be completed in a medieval fantasy world? How might adventurers find these tasks difficult?
- How do you challenge Players and provide interesting decisions in this mundane environment?
- How will Players eventually find the work they need to leave?

Potential Characters:

- Postman/Messenger
- Suspicious Neighbor
- Vicious Neighborhood Pet

Potential Locations:

- General Market
- River (for washing clothes, etc.)
- Town Well

Potential Obstacles:

- Your bulging muscles/habit of flinging fireballs or stealing stuff.
- Arguments over cleanliness/division of duties.

Hostile Takeover

As mad scientists in a medieval village, you and your friends were doing pretty well. Your science passed as magic, it helped people from time to time, and no one dared cross you in fears of incurring a *powerful curse* (diarrhea). Yes, life was good—until rival 'Alchemists' set up shop right across from you, claiming to know how to turn anything into gold. From all evidence, their formula works, and as their business rolls in, your store is falling apart.

Disprove their claims, steal their formula, wreck their livelihood, or all of the above.

This is war.

Questions to Ask:

- What steps would Players take to gain access to the Alchemists' secrets, plan a heist, execute the plan, and get away it? Is there another way to deal with these rivals?
- Can you use your prior influence in the community to assist in your mission—is that something you even *want* to do?
- Can you compete with the Alchemists on another level?

Potential Characters:

- Celebrity Bard/Spokesman
- Thankful Widower
- Cocky Business Rival

Potential Locations:

- Planning Room
- Mayor's Office
- Laboratory

Potential Obstacles:

- Government intervention/protection of the shop.
- Unfaithful allies.

Sunny, Sandy Oaks

When the world ended, few thought to stay behind and protect those who might have needed it most—the elderly. However, in a small retirement home in the middle of the desert, you and your fellow residents have managed to continue life where others saw none left.

Now, you've discovered a group of raiders are coming to take everything you've painstakingly built away from you. You won't let that happen.

Questions to Ask:

- What was life like in Sandy Oaks, before and after the apocalypse?
- What tools would the residents of Sandy Oaks have used to defend themselves up until now? What skills could they call upon for an edge in combat or survival?
- Who are the raiders? What do they look like? What are their beliefs, customs, and power structures? Do they have families? Can you end this conflict peacefully, before it's even begun?

Potential Characters:

- Bandit Leader
- Bandit Defector
- Surly Ex-Landscaper

Potential Locations:

- Communal Garden
- Tool Shed
- TV Room

Potential Obstacles:

- Destruction of food sources/supplies.
- Dwindling numbers.

2 Jacked 2 Hack

In the far-flung future of 2018, computer customization is illegal. People of Earth choose one of a few brands of computing device, and are locked into using said ecosystem exactly as prescribed for the rest of their natural lives. However, for those with the will, and the discipline, there is another option. Some, including you and your friends, have taken advantage of the rise of the Micro Gym (and rampant genetic modification) to become buff engines of technological destruction. A select, freakishly muscled elite, with the ability to hack something simply by *punching* it. You are...

2 Jacked 2 Hack.

Storm the gleaming high-rise of the morally-dubious industrialist who made the world this way.

Questions to Ask:

- What can Players hack? What unexpected-yet-logical reactions can you provide for their decisions—especially the 'silly' ones?
- What security measures would a high-rise have in a genetically-modified, dystopian future? How can Players circumvent them?
- Who is the industrialist? What are their motivations?

Potential Characters:

- The All-Powerful Receptionist
- Totally Jacked Head of Security

Potential Locations:

- Parking Garage
- Server Room
- Waiting Room/Lobby

Potential Obstacles:

- Unhackable stuff (that may later be able to be surmounted).

Ptero-A-Go-Go

It is the time of dinosaurs—and the secret, greatest age disco has ever known. Enormous beasts with white, polyester suits and equally massive appetites indulge in every sin they can conceive, while strange electronic music pulses through the prehistoric dancers of neon-smothered nightclubs.

As undercover officers of TOPMEN (Triassic and Omni-Periodic Monsters Eliminating Narcotics), you and your friends are sent to infiltrate the most notorious of these nightclubs: *Ptero-A-Go-Go*. Will you find and stop the source of the crime drowning your community, or succumb to the vices you're attempting to fight?

Questions to Ask:

- What dinosaurs can Players choose to become? How will this choice affect how they interact with the world?
- What are the lines of conduct for Players as undercover agents? How can crossing these lines affect the course of their story?
- What are the underlying causes of vice in this world? Why would Players—or so-called 'enemies'—come to fall in the first place?

Potential Characters:

- Raptor Drug Dealer
- T-Rex Disco Lord
- Brontosaurus Bouncer

Potential Locations:

- VIP Room
- Quite Large Limousine

Potential Obstacles:

- Police or government corruption and manipulation.
- Tense game of dinosaur poker.
- Dance-off.

Campfires and Stardust

You will tell your Players that they are going to a forest by a peaceful lake for an evening of roasting marshmallows, stargazing, and scary stories.

What you will **not** tell your Players, is that they will be forced to confront the same horrors they so gleefully describe if they wish to survive the night.

Instruct your Players to describe the kinds of scary stories they would tell around a campfire, give them a period of calm role-playing, and when they least expect it, use elements of their stories against them as you reveal the true goal of the session: Survive to see the dawn.

Questions to Ask:

- How do you integrate elements of Player stories into their living nightmare, while retaining or subverting the intent of the original tale?
- Why are your Players' stories coming to life? Can they defeat the threat, or simply survive it?
- Is the horror of the session going to be psychologically oriented, or gory/slashy/stabby? Decide upon the approach of the session with your Players before starting—without revealing the twist!

Potential Characters:

- Park Ranger
- Exposition Hermit
- Vacationing Family in a Trailer

Potential Locations:

- Cabin
- Rickety Treehouse/Watchtower
- Abandoned Picnic Area

Tell Virgo I Sent You

(based on upcoming novella *Tell Virgo*)

In the near-future, Earth has been consumed by sand, and mankind's finest cities lie in ruins. Those who don't care to carve the local bandit leader's brand into their flesh and roam the wasteland in search of prey survive however they can. You and your friends live somewhere in the middle of this balance as unscrupulous tour guides—con men—leading gullible scavengers on nonsensical tours of “historic treasures” to pay off your debt to the eccentric bandit leader Virgo.

The deadline for your *rather large* loan has almost arrived, and the Virgo Boys are getting impatient. Your last chance of survival is a group of exceptionally wealthy, dangerous clients.

Time to give the best, whirlwind, hoax-filled tour of your lives.

Questions to Ask:

- What would the world look like sixty years from now, in a sand-filled apocalypse? What would survive? What would change?
- How will Players present trivial artifacts to make them appear more impressive than they are? Will the Clients believe their explanations? Can Players force them to pay anyway? How?
- Who are the Clients? How do they react to Player decisions? Why are they taking this tour? Do they have other motives?

Potential Locations:

- Ornate Columns Half-Buried in Sand
- Ruined Mall
- Sand-Filled Office Building

Potential Obstacles:

- A surprise appearance by a rival group of bandits/tour guides.
- Skeptical guests.
- Post-apocalyptic consumer watchdog groups.

SkeleCaddies

The son of notorious monarch Boneton McSquish, Dark Baron of the volcanic Underworld, is coming of age. Unfortunately, Prince Boneton McSquish II is a foppish nerd. As his most trusted servants, the Baron tasks you and your friends with helping the timid heir complete a match of the only sport guaranteed to make men of boys, by any means necessary—golf.

The course is a death trap, and if the Prince is harmed, what remains of your undead lives will be made *very* unpleasant.

You are skeletons. You are caddies.
You are SkeleCaddies.

Questions to Ask:

- What are the arbitrary rules of a golf course in the Underworld?
 - What would an evil golf course in the Underworld look like?
- What hazards will the Prince face—and Players protect him from?
- The Prince is bad at golf. How can you help him circumvent obstacles? How will you bend the rules to further your goals?

Potential Characters:

- (Potentially Chatty) Cerberus
- Uptight Goblin Groundskeeper
- The Prince's Macho Rival in the Nobility

Potential Locations:

- Posh, Overpriced Dining Area
- Observation Station/Security Hut

Potential Obstacles:

- Mythical Underworld creatures (dragons, zombies, etc.).
- Moving holes.
- Lava river/lake.

All Hail The Spider Prophets

(based on the world of *All Hail The Spider God*)

Zimforth—The Spider God, killer of gods, capricious lord of manipulation and despair—is dead. It's corpse spilled out of the sky in a web-slathered blaze, slamming into the ground with the simple, iron sword of a mortal buried in its head.

As the only surviving ~~prisoners~~ practitioners of the miserable cult, you and your friends are left alone in a world that has continued for decades without you. Do you try to make a life in this new world? Become the new Spider Prophets, spreading the word of Zimforth in an attempt to bring it back? Or begin the long journey of belief and deception that might turn you into gods yourselves?

Questions to Ask:

- The Player Characters have been in a cult for a significant period of time. How has this weird, quasi-medieval fantasy world moved on since? What difficulties does this introduce for Players?
- What are the goals of your Players? What steps are needed to achieve them? Can these goals and steps shift as Players discover themselves further?

Potential Characters:

- Sympathetic Followers of a Previous Cult
- Eric — Lost (Heretic) Prophet of Zimforth

Potential Locations:

- Abandoned Temple
- The Site of Zimforth's Fall/Corpse

Potential Obstacles:

- Evangelists of a new, rival religion.
- Former (rightfully disgruntled) parishioners.
- Existential doubt and dread.

The Gods Are Coming

Strange, supernatural forces are leaking into the reality of Victorian London. A small segment of the city is...changing, its people twisting to match the increasingly distorted landscape.

As members of an undercover police force, you and your friends must investigate the source of Evil, acquire the equipment necessary to defy it, and purge the legion from our world.

The gods are coming—and you have no idea why.

Questions to Ask:

- What is the nature of the threat? Lovecraftian horror? Demonic forces? Can Players defy the Evil by means other than combat?
- What is the corrupted section of London like? Is the area prosperous? Poverty-stricken? How are its inhabitants reacting to the growing danger, and your presence?
- How do Player professions and personalities affect their journey through this Victorian world?

Potential Characters:

- Hooded Informant
- Nervous Innkeeper
- Market Stall Salesperson

Potential Locations:

- Occult Society and/or Bookstore
- Oppressed Orphanage
- Medium's Parlour

Potential Obstacles:

- Fear—seen in the bureaucracy, citizenry, etc.
- Possessed townsfolk/potential traitors.
- Your police force doesn't actually exist.

Keep The Doctor Away

An average party, in a normal location, is shattered by the sudden knowledge that no one in the room has eaten an apple in the past day. Breath hisses through gnashed teeth as black lightning cracks the sky, revealing foul shadows approaching your location.

The Doctors have arrived.

You and your friends must defend yourselves, or suffer the due judgment for your sins.

Questions to Ask:

- Where is this party/gathering/small collection of people located? What improvised defenses does this place allow you to create?
- What is the nature of the Doctors? Are they shapeshifting monsters? Scuttling parasites? More human than beast? Can you bargain with these creatures?
- If eating an apple prevents the Doctors from hunting you, will finding an apple cause unrest among the group? Violence? What kept you all from eating an apple for so long? Eat a *damn apple*.

Potential Characters:

- Over-Enthusiastic Doomsday Prepper
- Cynical Party-Goer Who Inevitably Dies First

Potential Locations:

- Ballroom
- High School
- Regular Home
- Warehouse Rave

Potential Obstacles:

- Difficult to fortify locations.
- ***Human weakness.***

Jimmy, Stop Eating Mr. Carlson!

The year is 1950...something. The United States of America is basking in a post-war environment of economic prosperity, communist fear, rock and roll, and of course, institutional racism. As the spearhead of an alien invasion force, you and your friends will wear the skins of an average suburban family, and attempt to blend in at a neighborhood barbecue for a single day.

Will you use your findings to find a new life among the humans, tell your commanders of humanity's weaknesses, or obliterate the scourge of mankind from the planet entirely?

Questions to Ask:

- What types of aliens are your Players? What abilities and weaknesses does their origin grant them?
- What dangers will the Players encounter at the barbecue due to their extraterrestrial background?
- Will you customize the session further, transporting Players to another place in history with its own cultural tensions, references, debates, and prejudices?

Potential Characters:

- Local Priest
- Prejudiced Neighbor
- Pretentious Rock-Obsessed Teens

Potential Locations:

- Backyard of Salty Death
- Swanky Gazebo

Potential Obstacles:

- Cultural misunderstandings.
- Suspicious neighborhood conspiracy-theorist.
- Burnt food.

Tasting Amy

As eternally youthful vampires, there's really no better way to harvest your daily supply of blood cells than gathering a bunch of horny teenagers to a house party. After all, people go missing every day, and who could keep track of each of their friends when the night gets particularly wild...

You and your friends' duties as hosts of a wild party are three-fold: Get five fresh victims in the basement, let no one discover your true nature (or the carnage in the basement for that matter), and make sure the teenage vampire hunters crashing the party die before dawn.

Questions to Ask:

- How will Players manage their duties as hosts, alongside the more pertinent questions of who they'll consume and how?
- Are the teenage vampire hunters legitimate threats? Will Players have ways to deal with them that don't include violence?
- As creatures of the night, do you have supernatural assistance?

Potential Characters:

- Jock Who Can't Handle His Alcohol
- Goth Stereotype With A Heart Of Gold
- Drug Dealer Who Thinks He's Being Discreet (But Totally Isn't)

Potential Locations:

- Recreational Room/Arcade
- Trap Door-Equipped Bathroom

Potential Obstacles:

- Drunk, rowdy teens.
- Police intervention.
- Your own hesitance to slaughter humans in their youth.

Necrodadicon

Just because you're Eldritch abominations doesn't mean that you don't want what's best for your kids. As dedicated parents, you and your friends will shepherd your otherworldly spawn through their first day of school, using every cursed ability at your disposal to ensure the occasion is as positive as possible.

Making dad jokes is mandatory.

Questions to Ask:

- What form do your Players and their in-game children take? What abilities does this bestow? How can these powers backfire?
- What challenges will your Eldritch spawn face on their first day at school? Bullying? Inaccurate dietary considerations? How will you confront these wrongs as parents who can **bend flesh and reality to your wills**?
- How will Players interact with other parents accompanying their own children? Will these parents prove to be obstacles? Allies? A bit of both?

Potential Characters:

- All-Powerful PTA Secret Society
- Inept Principal
- Free-Spirited Math Teacher Who Served You In The Past

Potential Obstacles:

- Embarrassing classroom incidents.
- Ability use having unintended side-effects.
- Bullies.
- Terrible food.
- Bureaucracy.
- The inexplicable presence of a holy order dedicated to your destruction.

Red Adolescence

You and your friends are teenagers scraping out a meager life in the post apocalypse. Radiation burns cover your bodies. If you hadn't smashed your mirrors long ago, you'd weep at the patchy hair on your scalps and the teeth hanging in your gums by a thread. On the edge of your latest personal disaster, you've somehow heard of a Haven to the East. A place where people like you can live and die in peace...A chance to escape.

Let's be honest.

It wasn't like you had anything else to do this weekend anyway.

Questions to Ask:

- Five years following a modern nuclear war, what would the world look like? What would our Players still miss from the time before?
- What was the personal disaster that spurred our protagonists to leave their homes? What consequences will follow them?
- How did Players find out about the Haven? Can they trust the source? What will they find when they reach their destination?

Potential Characters:

- Untrustworthy Guide
- Younger Sibling/s
- Mad Salesman

Potential Locations:

- Wasteland Bazaar
- Mysterious Bunker
- Blown-Out Canyon Society

Potential Obstacles:

- Heat/dehydration.
- Raiding parties.
- Irradiated river.

Bacon and Dregs (of Society)

(created by Laura Michet of *Where The Water Tastes Like Wine*)

Every small town around here has a Benny's—a cheap restaurant chain that serves breakfast food all night. At Benny's, the syrup tastes like chemicals, but you can get cheap pancakes at three in the morning. Which is great, since none of you have a job.

What you do have are festering, loser-class high-school grudges—against one another, and against the interloper who just parked outside, walked in, pulled a gun, and demanded the cash in the register. Uh...what are you going to do about that?

Questions to Ask:

- What grudge do each of the Players have against the robber? The person with the gun has changed a lot since high school... what's changed?
- Everyone in this friend group group has A Problem with someone else in the group...some unsolved quarrel dating back to high school. Let the Players decide what they are.
- Who else is here? Where are they sitting? Are they part of the holdup? Or allies?
- Everyone has somewhere they have to be in the morning. What's waiting for your Players on the other side of the night? How could this burglary screw that up?

Potential Characters:

- Your High-School History Teacher, Recently Divorced, Crying Into Her Milkshake
- Long-Distance Trucker With A Dangerous Look In His Eyes
- The Robber's Getaway Driver

Potential Obstacles:

- Uh...the gun! (Is it loaded? Is it real???)
- The bear eating hash browns out of the dumpster out back.

Vacation in Peace

(created by Hannah Powell-Smith of *Get Seen Tonight*)

It's hard enough to wrangle a road trip without your ancestor's ghost haunting your car! This troublemaking ghost has never seen the world beyond your small town, and they have agreed to leave this mortal plane—on the condition that you take them on a vacation first. On your trip, you and your friends or family must deal with dangerous supernatural phenomena while making sure to cut loose and have fun along the way.

Just make sure everybody comes back.

Questions to Ask:

- Who is the ghost, and how does it behave? Will they be an ally or an enemy on the road ahead?
- How will the Players' proximity with a ghost affect them, and what otherworldly powers will they manifest as a result?
- When the time comes, will everyone really want the ghost gone?

Potential Characters:

- Mysterious Hitch-Hiker
- Inept Amateur Occultist

Potential Locations:

- Unsettlingly Perfect Village/Small Town
- Almost Empty Cornfield

Potential Obstacles:

- Bad motel food.
- Car problems.
- Storms, locusts, tornadoes, or other environmental problems—ordinary or supernatural.
- The ghost misunderstanding, or ignoring, the concepts of privacy and personal space.

Leaving Lex-Vegas

(created by Tea-Powered Games of *Dialogue: A Writer's Story*)

Professor Lex Munro, resident Mad Scientist at S. Teemed University, has got it all: Public fame, academic repute, and constant funding. As the brightest minds of academia, you are Lex's assistants in a prestigious lab working on exciting projects.

There's one tiny problem: the Professor's work is a buzz-word-filled sham...a sham you need to accommodate in order to keep your jobs while working on your academic masterpiece in secret. Finish your masterpiece, publish it, present it, and seize your big break, all while keeping up with Lex's outlandish demands and making sure they don't swoop in and take the credit.

Questions to Ask:

- What is your lab's specialty? Biology? Music?
- What is the nature of your masterpiece, and what has each person contributed to it?
- What is Lex like in private, and what makes you different? Can you maintain that difference in your own rise to the top?

Potential Characters:

- Ridiculously Competent Administrative Staff
- Smug Tenured Professor
- Cheerful Funding Judge

Potential Locations:

- The Lab
- The Office (where you sleep)
- Foreign Conference Hotel

Potential Obstacles:

- Experiments gone wrong.
- Peer Review.

A Magical Getaway

(created by Cash DeCuir of *Over the Alps* and *Fallen London*)

Do you remember when they aired those TV specials about the planetary alignment, all those years ago? It was back then—that night at the slumber party. At the stroke of midnight, all of you woke up. More specifically, your secret powers woke up, turning you all into Magical Scouts. Yes, just like that, you and your friends became grade-school protectors of the innocent! You saved the day, grew older, saved the day again, and graduated into the real world only to save the day again. And again...and again.

It's tiring work—but soon, for the first time, you're all going on vacation! At least, so you hope. Your vacation requires some last-minute preparations. Some of life's obligations require fulfilling, and you need to ensure the city will be safe without you for the week.

Questions to Ask:

- What kind of secret powers do you have?
- Are you sure there's nothing you're forgetting before you go on vacation? Nothing at all?
- Why do the Dark Forces want to spoil your vacation?

Potential Characters:

- Co-Workers
- Deceitful Travel Agents
- Fanatical Supporters

Potential Locations:

- Your Separate Offices (with Varying Work Cultures)
- The Airport

Potential Obstacles:

- Adult Life.

Witchy-Watchy

(created by Cat Manning of *What Isn't Saved (will be lost)*)

Birds plummeting from the sky. Smoke rising from the river—not to mention that eerie glow at night. Electronic billboards flashing oblique prophecies of doom rather than smiling models. Even non-magically inclined residents have started noticing these strange phenomena plaguing their city. However, you're attuned to this sort of thing, and can't help but notice that these occurrences are clustered around the best magic shop in the city.

Did a summoning spell backfire? Will the river ever stop flickering green? You've got to investigate the source of these manifestations and find a way to resolve them before you and your beloved magical refuge end up in real trouble.

Questions to Ask:

- Why is each character invested in this shop, as opposed to practicing on their own? What are their guiding principles?
- What is actually causing the phenomena? Is the source magical? Natural?
- What is the state of magic in the city? Are there other covens or practitioners? How much do non-practitioners know about magic?
- How do your characters practice magic? Spells and chanting? Burning candles? Drawing sigils?

Potential Characters:

- The Overworked Apothecary

Potential Locations:

- The Magic Shop's Secret Garden

Potential Obstacles:

- A summoned demon with their own agenda.
- A rival coven leader who's using the unrest to consolidate her own power.

Cryptid Keepers

(created by Kevin Snow of the upcoming *Southern Monsters*)

In the woods, swamps, and sewers of a rural town, monsters are afoot! Blurry photos adorn the pages of the local newspaper. Folks clock out from their factory jobs and discuss rumors at the one bar on Main Street. Your neighbors like to keep their head down and go about their day-to-day life, so it's up to someone to investigate. Why not you?

The more you find, the more your neighbors mock and distrust you, and *some* cryptids have dark histories that long-time residents want to keep secret...

Questions to Ask:

- Why does each Player seek cryptids? Did a chance encounter leave them desperate to uncover the truth? Perhaps they host a local public access television show?
- What cryptids are in this town? Aliens? Sasquatches? Axe-wielding goatmen? Think about stories you've heard in your own neck of the woods!
- When and where is your story set?
- How do your characters hunt cryptids? Elaborate machines? Phone cameras and determination? Actual weapons?

Potential Characters:

- The Mayor Sweating Their Upcoming Re-Election
- The Sheriff Who Doesn't Cotton To All This Trespassing

Potential Locations:

- The Campsite In The Woods
- Happy Hour At The Local Bar

Potential Obstacles:

- Rival cryptid hunters armed with expensive gear and bad attitudes.

Corporeal Synergies

(created by Heather Robertson of *Extreme Meatpunks Forever*)

You are a group of parasites slowly devouring a businessman's brain and controlling his limbs. You'd usually take some time off for something like this, but it's a really important day in the office, and the quarterly review is coming up, so you're just going to have to suck it up and go to work anyways. In this scenario, each Player's statistics modify the relative skill of the body part they're currently controlling.

Your goal: to make it through the day without attracting suspicion from your coworkers, and nail that business presentation!

Questions to Ask:

- What do the parasites look like? How do they operate?
- What is the parasite's secret weakness?
- What body parts can the parasites control? Ideally, there should be more controllable body parts than Players.
- What does each Player's parasite want that the others don't?

Potential Characters:

- The Office Prankster
- The Boss Who Has It Out For You
- The Cute Guy in Sales

Potential Locations:

- CEO's Office
- Accounting Department
- Inadequate Staff Kitchen

Potential Obstacles:

- Janet using the conference room even though you already booked it months ago.
- Body parts you're not currently controlling signaling for help.

The Firey Frontier

(created by Katherine Morayati of *Take* and *Human Errors*)

Space: the final place where an enterprising music festival organizer can bring an unparalleled, immersive music, art, culture, dining, and extraterrestrial week to the universe! On a luxurious private site, far removed from the stresses of Earth, visited by the hottest and most adventurous celebrities, this festival is an otherworldly experience unlike any of its kind.

...So the marketing pitch went. Right now, you're looking at a bunch of space junk, a couple freeze-dried pizzas, a bit of stray wreckage, and some rundown ships to transport it all. It's your job to fix it all up before the guests arrive in two weeks. The obvious thing to do would be to call the whole thing off. But no. Let's just do it and be space legends, man.

Questions to Ask:

- What roles do Players play in organizing the festival? Performers? Marketing? Engineers? How'd they get the job?
- What's the setting for the festival? A space station, a planet, the very void of space? How do people get there? Are locals happy about your plans?
- What will it take to pull off the festival? Is the goal to be a huge success, or just that everyone gets back to Earth alive?

Potential Characters:

- The Malfunctioning AI/Social Media Personality

Potential Locations:

- The Hunk of Junk You're Meant to Call a Space Station
- Luxury Satellite Yacht (models optional)
- The Barely-Terraformed Moon Stage

Potential Obstacles:

- Making it all look great in the ads down on Earth.

Succu-Tying the Knot

(created by Kristin Ruff-Frederickson, Narrative Designer)

This morning, your family of lust demons in the Second Circle of Hell received a wedding invitation from Damien, your first cousin once removed. He's embarking on a new stage of life, and you're all so happy for him! There's just one little problem—he and his betrothed are mortal.

You want to attend both the ceremony and wedding reception for your beloved cousin's sake, but the natural magic exuded from your incubus/succubus forms make it difficult to avoid enthralling mortal guests, and accidentally sucking out their souls. Don your best formalwear and travel to the earthly plane to fulfill your familial duties—just make sure not to accidentally seduce the betrothed or their family, or you'll ruin the wedding!

Questions to Ask:

- How do Players plan to balance the natural charm of their incubus/succubus forms? Self-induced garlic breath? Recounting embarrassing personal stories in minute detail? Plain ol' magic talismans?
- What sort of gift are you going to bring the groom? Remember—you're from Hell and you probably didn't get to see the registry?

Potential Characters:

- Wine Aunt and Dad Joke Uncle
- Wary Priest
- Newly Divorced Sibling Looking To Get "Back In The Game"

Potential Locations:

- Dance Floor and Karaoke Stage (newlyweds get first dance!)

Potential Obstacles:

- Polite small talk with relatives.
- Your irresistible moves on the dance floor.

Flesh Mask-uerade

Thieves and scoundrels have found their trade substantially improved after the madwoman Gertrude Lemmox invented the Portable Temperature Reduction Device (PTRD). The criminally-inclined cut off their own faces, replacing them as needed with useful alternatives chilled at the moment of harvest by a PTRD. You and your friends are a group of such figures, which is fortunate. This very night, you're going to infiltrate the mansion of the Madwoman herself as she celebrates her 57th birthday with a party that will be...unforgettable.

Create a series of eccentric aristocrats (more than the number of people playing) who would be at Lemmox's party, and overlay the Ellipses skills, 'Description', and character portrait portions of *their* Ellipses character sheets on top of your own to 'switch' faces throughout the night and unravel the Madwoman's secret!

Questions to Ask:

- Why is your group pursuing the madwoman Lemmox? Are you after her wealth? Her technology? Her research notes? Her head?
- Why has Lemmox invited so many people to her home? What is she hiding? Are her intentions sinister—or pitiable?
- How will your group impersonate the aristocrats whose faces they've stolen? Can they slip into new disguises if discovered?

Potential Locations:

- Disgustingly Opulent Bathrooms
- Electricity-Lit Grand Dining Hall
- Sealed Panic Room/Research Center

Potential Obstacles:

- Traps scattered throughout Gertrude's mansion.
- Secretive mansion staff with hidden motives and naked blades.
- An anxious, suspicious Baron (you're wearing his wife's face).

Space Popsody

The future is *incredible*. Earth is a smoking husk of ash and screams—but we've got spaceships now! Tearing across the stars, we hunt each other for pleasure and profit, fighting for the fuel and GrowVat supplies you need to survive in the colorful void. One thing no one lacks is music. All of it, stored on compact units in your ship holds.

Music fuels your victories, accompanies your tragedies, and grants the crews of the lonely lifeboats drifting through space abilities beyond belief. Boot up your playlists—it's time to soar.

Questions to Ask:

- What music does your crew of Players listen to? 70s pop? Techno? Grunge? Does each Player have a chosen genre or theme song? How does music mold your identities, and that of other people in the world?
- Everyone is going to die. There are no outposts. No way of replenishing the finite supplies humanity carried with them when they took to the stars. How does your crew live with this ever-present knowledge? Do you kill to survive, or care while you can?
- How will your group use music to affect the session? Will you deploy songs selectively to communicate character? Turn a shuffled soundtrack on and let the current song modify the tone of the session and events occurring? A bit of both?

Potential Characters:

- Impossibly Stylish Goth Captain
- Friendly Merchant Woman Playing Sexy R&B Slow Jams

Potential Locations:

- A Song-Filled Valhalla For Dead Musical Warriors

Potential Obstacles:

- Living a carefree existence in the face of irresistible death.

Chicago Mobster Moms

Chicago. The 1920s. Booze still flows at the height of prohibition thanks to illegal speakeasies, and you—the heads of the mafia families that make the underground decadence of the period possible. When you aren't whacking the competition or managing your various front-companies and criminal operations, you fill strong maternal roles in your community. In fact, most of your time is spent taking care of the people 'polite society' forgets or rejects outright. When the day's work is done and the kids (if a character has them) are put to bed, you roam the streets, righting wrongs and kicking ass.

You're the Mobster Moms of Chicago—and don't you let anyone fuhgeddaboutit.

Questions to Ask:

- What problems will the mobster moms solve in the campaign? Delivering food to a hungry family? Shooting up a drug lab dealing to kids in the community? Finding a lost dog's owner?
- Do issues in the community have a common root—say, a negligent landlord, or corrupt congressman?
- What kind of people are in each Player's gang? Friends? Convicts? Maybe even family members?
- How will Players express care, both to each other, and for the people they encounter?

Potential Characters:

- Overenthusiasticly Murder-y Mob Lieutenant
- Chill, Bought-Off Police Officer

Potential Locations:

- Chicago. It's a Big Place.

Potential Obstacles:

- The Law suddenly growing a backbone.

Paying Your Student Loans

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This scenario is a fantasy.

Personal Notes

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