

# <section-header>



You are an 11–15 year old kid. It's the '90s. You run home from school everyday to watch TV on your parents' big CRT. But today, something came in the mail that will change your life forever. You have been invited to compete in your favorite competition game show on a cable TV network aimed at kids! This network's logo might be large, orange, and nonthreatening. You might even win the coolest, most radical prize you could ever imagine. You will certainly have to wear a ludicrous mouth guard. You are about to become... a competition kid!

## WHAT IS THIS?

**Competition Kids!** is a silly roleplaying game for 3-5 players. It's inspired by such classic TV shows as *Legends of the Hidden Temple* and *Global Guts*. During the game, one player takes on the role of **Host** and the other players take on the roles of **CONTESTANTS**. Working together, the players build a game show, create some kids to play in it, and narrate the competition between the kids. One kid will be victorious over their competitors.

Players should play in the spirit of winning for the characters they play, but also in the spirit of telling a fun story with friends. In the end, we all pat each other on the back and celebrate a good time had by all.

## A QUICK NOTE ON TONE AND SAFETY!

Competition Kids emulates children's television shows. Nothing should happen on or off screen that would violate the strictest of TV standards. Any injuries can be covered with a band aid, and everyone is going home in one piece. Playing with the **X-card** is important, as what makes a player uncomfortable is not always easy to know or state ahead of time. Just as our intrepid characters wear helmets, harnesses, mouth guards, and knee pads, we the players stay safe, too! Of course, the X-card is not the only safety tool in gaming. Feel free to see some other options here: **https://www.gauntlet-rpg.com/tools-of-the-table.html** 



The Contestants need a game show to play. To save time, the Host can come to the game with a premade game show concept. Alternatively, you can create your game show concept as a group. If no one has a strong feeling either way, you can roll on the tables below and let fate decide. No matter what you do, don't get too detailed here—a simple theme and a silly twist should be enough to get going. **Don't forget to name your show!** 

d12	Themes	d12	Twist
1	Pirates!	1	Talking Animatronics
2	THE CIRCUS!	2	Product Placement
3	HAUNTED HOUSE!	3	Low Budget Pyro
4	Ancient History!	4	Large Amounts of GOOP!©
5	Moon Base!	5	Mascot-style Costumes
6	UNDERWATER!	6	Knockoff of a Better Show
7	WILD WEST!	7	Up for a Renewal or Cancellation
8	Knights and Wizards!	8	Dance Breaks!
9	CYBERPUNK!	9	Kids Compete Against a Professional
10	WRESTLING!	10	Poorly Constructed Obstacles
11	Space Fighters!	11	Audience Participation
12	RockandRoll	12	Child Celebrity Contestants

## BUT WAIT, WHAT ARE WE PLAYING FOR?

As a group, decide on the super cool prize that the kids will competing for on the show. Cool prizes might be a **4-day vacation for their family**, a **really nice bike**, or **even a few thousand dollars**. Feel free to get outlandish or incredibly mundane with this; you could even design a whole new toy. No matter what, the kids should all be excited to win it!

## BUILDING A COMPETITION KID!

Before play begins, we need to make our kid competitors! All a kid needs is a name, a country of origin, a "nickname," and an interesting hobby. Fill out the sentences below:

"Hey everyone! I'm <u>NAME</u> and I'm from <u>COUNTRY</u>. My friends all call me <u>NICKNAME</u>. When I'm not at school, I like to <u>INTEREST</u>!"

Good work kid, now get to hair and makeup—it's time for some television!

## TIME FOR AN INTRO!

Start by asking the players some of these establishing questions. This provides a little buy-in from players and helps create the game show's imaginary sound stage.

- » What is the big set piece that dominates the screen?
- » How are the kids introduced?
- » What part of the contestant costume will kids be nostalgic for in twenty years time?
- » In what wacky way does the host make a memorable entrance?

## THE INITIAL CONTEST!

Before we get to the real competition, we need to find out how our kids start the game. Each show begins with an elimination round that thins the numbers. All the player characters will make it through this, but maybe not with clean clothing.

First, the host describes the initial challenge, and then each player rolls **2d6.** 

**On a 10+:** You pass this initial challenge with no problem. Describe how you do so. Your starting **SPUNKINESS!** is 2.

**On a 7-9:** You struggle a bit, but make it through; explain your near miss. Your starting **SPUNKINESS!** is 1.

**On a 6-:** Uh oh! Looks like you made it into the slow-mo highlight reel! Narrate your embarrassing faux pax and how you manage to escape total defeat. Your starting **SPUNKINESS!** is -1, but hey, you still have a chance!



After the initial game, each player takes a turn describing the next contest everyone competes in. Races against the clock, feats of dexterity, or just plain absurdity all make for good television.

After describing the challenge, the player will then select one other player character they think will be particularly adept at this task. The selected player character takes +1 to their roll. The player also selects someone else they think is ill-suited to the challenge. The selected player character takes -1 to their roll.

If a character has more **SPUNKINESS!** than anybody else, they take -2 to their roll in addition to any other penalties. Afterall, the executives can't have any runaway victories—that's bad television!

Everyone rolls **1d6** and adds or subtracts their bonuses or penalties.

**On a 4+:** Gain 1 **SPUNKINESS!** Describe how you excel at this game—you deserve it champ!

**On a 2-3:** You don't lose or gain any **SPUNKINESS!**. Describe how you struggle but ultimately push through.

**On a 1 or less:** That's going to leave a mark! Describe how the obstacle gets the best of you. Take -1 **SPUNKINESS!** and adjust your mouth guard, kid. It's going to be all right.

If you are having trouble creating a contest or obstacle, feel free to roll up one randomly from the table at right. Don't forget to add your show's twist and theme!

d12	<b>Contest Style</b> Optionally, roll twice and combine	
1	Obstacle Course / Race	
2	Water Hazard / SLIME!	
3	3 Maze / Escape	
4	4 Climbing / Slide	
5	<b>5</b> Gross-Out / Jump Scare	
6	6 Balance / Teeter Totter	
7	7 Strength / Gladiators	
8	8 Bungee / Trampoline	
9	<b>9</b> Swinging / Zip Lines	
10	10 Trivia / Memory	
11	<b>11</b> Treasure Hunt / Collection	
12	12 Construction / Puzzle	





When everyone has described a contest, it's time for the big finale. By this point, you may have a good idea of what the big finale looks like in this show. If so, go for it! If not, it's time to decide! Large obstacle courses, flat-out races, vertical towers, and lots of fog machines all make for great television. Make sure everyone gets some input on this final challenge. Feel free to ask any of these questions to fill out this final challenge:

- » There is one part of this challenge that is famously difficult. What is it?
- » You all have to wear some additional safety gear for this challenge. What is it and why?
- » You just know you are going to fly through one part. What is it? Why are you so sure?
- Half the show's budget goes into one big effect near the end. What makes it so darn cheesy?

Before rolling, each player should write down a number in secret. This number is your **Determination Level**. The higher your Determination, the harder you try to win that super cool prize. Once everyone has a Determination Level, reveal your number to all players.

Whoever has the highest Determination Level will win the race, but only if they can roll equal to or higher than their Determination Level with 2d6+**SPUNKINESS!**  Roll, then play out scenes in the following order:

- **1.** Anyone who rolls under their Determination Level narrates how their hubris ultimately costs them the game.
- 2. Anyone who rolls above their Determination level but is still beaten by a higher Determination Level narrates how close they came to winning, but ultimately were bested.
- **3.** Anyone who rolls over their Determination Level, and had the highest Determination Level alone, narrates how their determination to win the super cool prize speeds them to victory!
- **4.** If more than one player has the highest determination level, the player who rolls the highest wins. Narrate how you overcame the competition and won in a photo finish!
- **5.** If even that roll is tied, then it's too close to call; both players get the super cool prize and a studio exec has to explain themselves in a closed door meeting!





In the end, the Contestants are all brought together in front of the camera and the credits roll. This may be an actual medal ceremony, or it might just be the Contestants waving goodbye. No matter what, have each player narrate how their character shows affection and sportsmanship to their fellow competitors. It's all a game in the end, and friendship lasts a lifetime!

### GOOD WORK, KIDS!

Running **Competition Kids!** should be a fun, quick-fire noleplaying experience for the players. Keep play time to an our. Shift the spotlight with each move, and always allow hour. Shift the spotlight with each move, and always allow has clarifying, and/or leading questions to players, but always Ask clarifying, and/or leading questions to players, but always uide them towards the spectacular, the grandiose, and the nostalgically adorable. Bring up the super cool prize as the nostalgically adorable. Bring up the super cool prize as conter stage. Populate your show with joy and whimsy. Use confetti cannons liberally.

# ELECTRIC DAYLIGHT IN VERDIGRIS

An expansion for Darx Designs in Verdigris

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#### PHANFASMS

Alluring, animal-headed creatures said to be manifest spirits, Phanfasms once lived far from Oz on Mount Phantastico. There they were ruled by The First & Foremost, until they attempted to seize Oz by tunneling into it from below. Ozma intercepted them, stole their memories, and left them to wander the caverns below The Emerald City for all time. Robbed of their memories and their magic, Grisians seek them for their skill in assisting with fey and magical work. Other Phanfasms have come to Verdigris to serve as mercenaries, adventurers, courtesans, and entertainers.

To create a Phanfasm, use the character history tables (rolling on all four instead of only three), queer traits, and affectations below. Phanfasms do not have a thing they cannot resist. Instead, they feel compelled to whisper specific temptations to their friends and loved ones.

Sample Given Names: Quirk, Flint, Cyclone, Shadow, Wander, Myth

**Queerly Disturbing Trait:** Long Shadows, Sharp Beak, Venomous Fangs, Powerful Arms, Snarling Voice, Cutting Claws, or \_\_\_\_\_

**Queerly Appealing Trait:** Majestic Wings, Multicolored Mane, Purring Whisper, Golden Antennae, Silver Eyes, Cheshire Grin, or \_\_\_\_\_

Affectations: Scarlet Coat with Black Brocade Trim, Broad-Brimmed Black Hat, Jade-Framed Pince Nez Spectacles, Tall Leather Boots with Numerous Straps, Shirt of Delicate Lace, or \_\_\_\_\_

Whisperer of: Desire, Indulgence, Wrath, Nostalgia, Dishonesty, Secrecy, or \_\_\_\_\_



#### PHANFASM CHARACTER HISTORY

The Phanfasms roll on each of the tables below.

F	Roll	When you took this form in the time before your memories begin, what head were you given?	
•	1.	Bear. You gain +1 Ferocity and the trait Sturdy.	
•	2.	Viper. You gain +1 Sorcery and the trait Poisonous.	
	3.	Fox. You gain +1 Duplicity and the trait Pounce.	
• • •	4.	Otter. You gain +1 Ferocity and the trait Stare.	
•	5.	Moth. You gain +1 Duplicity and the trait Crafty.	
•	6.	Owl. You gain +1 Sorcery and the trait Nocturnal.	

Roll	You have one memory of Mt. Phantastico. What is it?
1.	A Sworn Friend. +1 Ferocity as well as the trait Cyclones. What was your sworn friend's name, and by what affectation would you know them even now?
2.	A Love Betrayed. +1 Duplicity and the trait Infernos. What face was your love given? How did it change when you two betrayed one an- other?
3.	A Treacherous Plot. +1 Sorcery and the trait Shadows. What lie did you plan to tell the First and Foremost? Why did you wish to harm them?
4.	A Mortal Allegiance. +1 Sorcery and the trait Thunder. What charm did the mortal who bound you so long ago give you for your service?
5.	A Vigorous Dance. +1 Ferocity and the trait Regrets. What one thing (name, face, scent, or voice) do you remember the name of the Phan-fasm who held your hand and danced beside you by?
6.	A Great Ritual. +1 Duplicity and the trait Roads. What dread name do you remember whispering in the dark?

Roli	What practitioner first summoned you from your amnesiac wander- ings to assist them? What did you take with you when you left their service?
1.	Fortune Teller. +1 Duplicity as well as the trait Spy. You still have the spyglass they gave you and the deck of cards you stole from them before you left.
	Alchemist. +1 Sorcery and the trait Fae Chemistry. You still have three strange vials of stranger liquids, and some small, innocuous items made entirely of silver.
3.	<ul> <li>Very Bad Wizard. +1 Sorcery and the trait Distraction. You still have a hand-crank megaphone that can disguise your voice.</li> <li>Minor Witch. +1 Ferocity and the trait Hunter. You still have the</li> </ul>
4.	witch's signet ring and a small jug of disappearing ink. Exotic Entertainer. +1 Duplicity and the trait Glamor. You still have the prehensile feather boa you wore to perform.
6.	Cavern Guide. +1 Ferocity and the trait Rock-Breaker. You still are accompanied by the trained pet mole who scouted ahead for you.
Roli	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·
1.	King Cleaver, The Animate Knife. +1 Ferocity and the trait Streetwise. Name someone in the King's service who is plotting to betray him? General Jinjur, Vigilante Overseer. +1 Duplicity and the trait Relent-
2.	<ul> <li>less. Name someone in the General's service who doubts her ability to lead?</li> <li>Mombi, Outlaw Witch. +1 Sorcery and the trait Disguises. Who has</li> </ul>
3.	Mombi transformed so thoroughly that they've forgotten their own true self?
4.	Fallen Polychrome. You gain +1 Ferocity and the trait Subtle. Who guards Polychrome so jealously that they're suspicious of her other loyal servants?
1-11 14	Langwidere of The Hundred Faces. +1 Sorcery and the trait Thieving. Who did you hide from Langwidere to keep her from stealing their face?
	Dox, Forgotten Volpine Royalty. You gain +1 Duplicity and the trait Sneaky. What gift did Dox give you when you finished your service for him?

#### PHANFASMS & FORMS OF MAGIC

Phanfasms do not know Forms of Magic, but their sheer presence boosts the magic of others. Phanfasms do not need to do anything but be present in order to mark a trait to rescue someone from a failed magical roll or to increase a partial success on a sorcery roll to a full success.

#### **PHANFASMS & BONDS**

When you convince someone to take risky, decisive action with your whispers, and if they know your given name, they gain a bond with you. They may also form a bond with you if they can tell you your true name (though you will forget your own true name again once the bond is complete). The person who would bond you should reroll their hit die and remove one die from their hit point pool. They may ask you for assistance with specific tasks a number of times equal to the number on the die. Refusing any task they give you is risky, though you may choose to ignore any request that cannot be accomplished in a reasonable time, requires you to directly harm yourself or someone else, or would inevitably result in your own destruction. When they work with you on completing an assigned task, they take +1 to their next Sorcery roll to use a Form of Magic.

# EUBER'S MUSEUM OF BOOKS

A sprawling crawl of interconnected buildings and twisting caverns, Heuber's is not quite a library, not precisely a museum, not only a bookseller, and not exclusively a coffee house. Most customers never get past browsing the racks and sipping cannacafe (with or without extra stims) in the six-story Grand Hall of Popular Erudition. Books and magazines are organized around several categories, on numerous levels, including size, author, and prior owners, with any overflowing stock that hasn't made its way to the cellars sitting stacked on the floor. Amid the stacks, refreshments are served at long tables where bosses' lieutenants, aesthetes, and mercenaries mingle. The bourbon selection is said to be imported by way of Louisville, and the fried (and refried) pastries are said to come by way of New Orleans. Agents of the bosses do business here, egoists lecture right alongside neglected geniuses, fashionable decadents discuss private salons in public view, and musicians and puppeteers compete for attention. Showing up at the right table at the right time is a good way to show the bosses you're interested in employment, and any books you've picked up can be sold to one of The Grand Hall's buyers. The Grand Hall never offers more than 3d6 gs for a printed book, 2d6 gs for bound manuscripts, or 1d6 gs for loose notes, though, regardless of a work's actual value, and they take great offense if you negotiate a deal with another buyer while in The Grand Hall itself.

But the Grand Hall is not the whole of Heuber's, and some wonder if the other departments are even cooperating with it.

The Cellar is where books go when the staff believes their time has not yet come. Here they join the overstock of toys, manuscripts, scrolls, and the occasionally vocal skulls of famous scholars and infamous wits. The staff rarely comes down here, though they don't always stop customers from doing so. At least five murders have happened here since Heuber's opened to the public. If Verdigris has doorways to booksellers of Kadath, the scriptoria of Zyan, the collections of The Abbey of St. Clewd, or to The Stygian Library itself, they'd be here.

**The Journalistic Emporium** is where Grisians of extra-Ozian origin go to find out what's happening at home. It's a gill each for that morning's month-old broadsheets from Emporia, San Antonio, Carson City, Tacoma, Saskatoon, or St. John's. Wandering, flat-capped youths will hawk even more obscure and more colorful tabloids, some purporting futuristic dates as late as 1961, though the privilege of perusing them is reserved for those who pay two gs to look at a page and another gill each for anyone reading over their shoulders. The news hawkers are usually good for a rumor, and often know obscure and specific details from far beyond Oz's old borders, though their information may be riddled with inaccuracies and omissions. Among the hawkers is a shy young man named Pip who's been here longer than any of them. Pip has disturbingly precise information about the bosses, their lieutenants, and most everyone else in Verdigris. Young hawkers may be willing to help you broker deals for anything you know, as long as they get a cut. There are no tables in The Emporium, but they do sell sealed bottles of Emporium CocaFizz.

The Depository of Classical Delights is overseen by the censorius and solitary Father Gump, an unblinking taxidermied stag's head who is affixed to the room's western wall. Gump controls the entire workings of the room as if they were extensions of his own body: wandering bits of photographic equipment, robotic book carts, automated scribal desks, and the strangely agile animatronic incinerator. The Depository sells its own mass-produced leather-bound reproductions of classic works, inoffensively illustrated and professionally bound, but with any obscene or unhygienic content thoroughly excised. Father Gump will gladly purchase rare classics for 10 × 3d6 gs (payable from buyers in The Grand Hall). If he learns a work might inspire degenerate, radical, or unhygienic thoughts, he will pay twice that for the privilege of burning it. The animatronic incinerator is fed at precisely 11 PM each night. Some say the Depository itself never appears in the same part of Heuber's for more than a day.

The Parlor of Curiosities is where to find Heuber's collections of works of a decadent, occult, or pornographic nature. Included here are the works of Sappho, Goya, Bathory, and Leighton, along with the private diaries and sketchbooks of numerous famous figures. The Parlor is maintained by the ever-smiling Lady Patchwork and her silent rag-doll assistants, who ensure that none of the works here leave the Parlor. When she discovers people who share vices and other interests, she may invite them to small masquerade salons here, though no two attendees will ever tell the same story of what happened. She will happily pay for works that she feels are a good fit for the parlor, usually 10 × 2d6 gs, and may even pay people to steal books from Father Gump before he burns them. A peculiar, earnest, long-faced young man named Howard is frequently browsing here, though he stammers and flees when anyone interacts with him.

The Gallery of Precocious Treasures sells numerous toys and books that might be useful to adventurous children and adults alike. It is run by the kindly Button, a middle-aged, fox-headed clerk in a sailor suit. Button charges 30 + 3d6 gs for almost anything, and never trades for anything but hard, bimetal Gillikin coin.

**My First Diary of Haunting Regrets**: By recording at least one haunting regret in the diary, you can ensure that it will always return to you along with anything folded in its pages. Riskier sorceries allow you to return yourself to the diary instead.

**Thoroughly Educated Lozenges**: These brain pills of exclusive formula are some of the most effective brain pills known in Oz below. Each contains not one but two traits that you can keep until they're marked, but if taken repeatedly on the same day, these lozenges start to permanently replace traits you previously had. Price is for just one lozenge.

Hurricane Horn: This tin bugle plays the sounds of the oncoming storms: peals of distant thunder, lashing of far-away winds, roaring of approaching tornadoes. Played during a rest, anyone who can share a memory of their passage through the cyclone to Oz regains one extra trait. Ambassador Polychrome, The Rainbow's Daughter, is said to especially cherish their music.

- Golden Phantastic Books: If you or your proteges hope to employ Phanfasms in your work, each Golden Phantastic Book contains the full, forgotten true name of one Phanfasm along with honest and dishonest details about their forgotten history and nature. Once you are ready to take the risk, you may attempt to call on this Phanfasm and ask them for a bond. Once the Phanfasm has fulfilled its bond, the book may try to find its way back to Heuber's shelves.
- Queen Lurline Stationary Set: This stationary set comes with ten sheets of special paper, two tubes of sealing wax, two fountain pens with silver ink, and two specially paired fine black envelopes. When you place a letter in Lurline-brand silver ink on Lurline-brand paper into one of the black envelopes and seal it with Lurline-brand sealing wax, it immediately appears in the paired envelope. Refill supplies sold separately.
- Spore Portal Science Jars: Ideal for junior mycologists and aspiring burglars alike! Add water to this jar when you buy it, and store it in a cool, dark place. A forgotten cabinet, the back corner of a book shelf, or the bottom of any old rucksack will do! When you find yourself hitting a wall, simply take a lump of Spore Portal starter, smear it across the previously impassable barrier, and watch the Spore Portal do its magic! In just under one hour, your so-called wall will grow its own Spore Portal! Roll to see what shape it takes:
  - 1. A small, low, creaky doorway
  - 2. A large picture window
  - **3.** A secret door that blends perfectly into what's on either side of the wall
  - 4. A stained glass window with a scene of someone else's memories
  - 5. A ship's porthole
  - 6. A grand door painted red on each side

F10...54.--Method of Mountin tiles at the Museum of Comp



I n The House of Wonders Anatomical & Surgical, the anatomical wax models double as clerks and are happy to guide you through the shelves and exhibits. This is where you will find books, both Ozian and North American, that may assist in the recovery from illnesses, injuries, and poisons. Prices are on a sliding scale, depending on the degree of risks involved in using the proposed solutions.

The Book of Glinda the Good. From a time long before Ozma, Dorothy, or even The Wizard came to Oz, The Witch of the South's ever-expanding book recorded every secret thing that happened or was happening inside Oz's borders. If The Book survived the collapse of Glinda's palace, it most likely made its way here.

But where in the museum could it be, and is it still in one piece? Would Lady Patchwork be keeping it locked away for her own blackmail projects? Are random pages folded into paperback novels in the Emporium or Grand Hall? Does this explain the strange accuracy of Pip's prognostications? Have parts of the book passed through the hidden doors in the cellar into the dark libraries beyond? Did Father Gump burn all or part of it in the incinerator? If so, what would those ashes whisper to you now?



HEAD OF ROYAL BENGAL PIGER. MOUNTED BY THE ACTHOR.

Additional public domain illustrations: J.O. Westwood. The Cabinet of Oriental Entomology (1858). William Dampier. A Voyage to New-Holand etc. in the year 1699 (1729). J.G. Ballard. Another World (1844). W.T Hornaday. Taxidermy and Zoological Collecting (1894).

## Pauns of the Chessboard Forest

New occupations, backgrounds, drives and rituals.

The Forest's Creed

Taboos and geas from a mercurial forest.

## Rosenvald

A curiouser and curiouser adventure into the many-thorned home of roses.



BLAINE MOORE

# Pawns of the Chessboard Forest

The following are new options for treasure-hunters for use with the Incursion *Rosenwald*, or any other session of Trophy.

#### OCCUPATIONS

Barrister (skilled in contracts, language, persuasion)

Footman (skilled in orders, waiting, wrestling)

Herbalist (skilled in medicine, plants, poison)

#### BACKGROUNDS

Awakened Dreamer (skilled in confusion)

Violent Queen (skilled in execution)

White Rabbit (skilled in running)

Wizened Haberdasher (skilled in madness)

#### DRIVES

Obtain a stay of execution for your sister in Ambaret

Recover a long lost artifact of the Queen of Roses

Find the mad prophet of the woods

#### RITUALS

Beastform (take a form halfway between human and animal)

Doom (make a non-monstrous creature feel a sense of impending doom)

Scale (double or halve the size of an object you touch)

Topsy-turvy (briefly change the orientation of gravity for something you touch)

# The Forest's Creed

Those who skirt the edge of the forest, or—if they are lucky to live long enough—those who brave its depths, may occasionally glimpse its nature. It is cruel. It is malevolent. It is insidious, and ever grasping, clawing, dragging those who venture too close further and further into its depths, never to return. And yet, it is not without amusement or joy. The spirits of the forest, or perhaps even the forest itself, may sometimes grant favor to the rare mortals that please them in some way. Alas, the forest is fickle, and some unfortunate souls may by their actions stir greater ire than would otherwise be earned for the mere sin of their trespass.

The following system is directed at the GM, and can be used to characterize the whims of the forest.

Select one Taboo from the table below, roll two dice to determine randomly, or come up with your own.

The first time a treasure-hunter violates the Taboo, they anger the forest and its spirits, causing a retaliation that will induce a Ruin Roll. If the treasure-hunter's Ruin goes up as a result, inflict a condition on them. While continued violations of the Taboo will anger the forest, a treasure-hunter only suffers one Ruin Roll as a result of violating the Taboo.

#### TABOOS



#### THE FOREST'S CREED

iton:

Select one Geas from the table below, roll two dice to determine randomly, or come up with your own.

Fulfilling the Geas will please the forest and its spirits, which will result in a boon of either a Treasure, a Ritual granted by a spirit, or a clue towards fulfilling a Drive. If there are any Rituals published with the incursion you are playing, it is recommended the Geas Rituals be chosen from those—these are local spirits, adapted to the forest around them.

#### **GEAS**



Some of the Taboos and Geas contradict one another; what pleases the forest one day may anger it another. If you randomly select two contradictory items from the tables, simply pick one to re-roll as needed, or leave both in place if you are feeling particularly capricious.

Finally, it is recommended that the players be made aware that the forest is awake and their characters are subject to its whims. However, you may choose to keep the Taboos and Geas secret. If the Taboos and Geas are kept secret, you should have a knowledgeable side character hint at their nature or otherwise give the players some clues during the course of the incursion.

#### INCURSION

# Rosenwald

In black forest, find white a rose Seek ye the object of your greed At risk of assuming death's repose To claim a Trophy of the lost

Forlorn wand'rer, you'd best take heed Your base desires come with cost Unless you keep the forest's creed Become a trophy of the lost

Be peaceful here in all you do, or else by sin your fate is signed only the virtuous through and through their desired trophy can safely find

But should your stars be twice aligned and be your fortune with gold emboss'd pay your debts to all mankind AND CLAIM A TROPHY OF THE LOST

Deep within the forest, beyond where the way turns weird, all that is lost may be found amidst the roses of the Rosenwald. Priceless art, forgotten relics, and even the souls of those separated from the mortal coil. But the roses cling tightly to their prizes, and one must brave the thorns to pry them free...

#### THEME

Wonderland

#### MOMENTS

- You look back the way you came after cresting a small hill and are struck by vertigo; you stand atop not a hill, but a mountain, with an ocean of trees stretching to the horizon behind you.
- ♦ A skull the size of a boulder sits on the forest floor, a massive oak splitting its dome and rising into the canopy.

- A small lake provides a reprieve from the trees. Its waters are clear and uninhabited. A desiccated corpse lays at the edge of the water, flaked with salt.
- ♦ A table laid with all manner of game dressed up to serve, from the minuscule to the grotesque, in a procession from smallest to largest. A dormouse is followed by a snake, a pigeon, a hare, a chicken, a turkey, a pig, a man, a deer, and, finally, a bear.
- The screech of an owl is mixed with a shrill scream. The owl lands on a branch with a person the size of a child's doll clutched in its talons. A moment more and the person is gone, swallowed whole.
- $\diamond$  The burnt out husk of a village. Some of the charred timbers are so massive
- they must have been whole trees. Others could easily have been kindling.
- ♦ A bridge cobbled together from pebbles stretches across a creek. A fat toad takes shelter in its shade.
- ♦ A thicket of rose bushes, white, but painted red with the blood of the fresh corpse that litters the pathway.
- ♦ A hazy glade filled with sweet smelling smoke that fills your lungs with pleasant warmth.
- Thousands of milk-white cocoons hang from the canopy on streamers of silk.
- ♦ A flock of flamingos stand placidly around a pond. They scatter as the treasure-hunters approach.
- $\diamond$  A stump stained with blood, a headsman's axe lodged deeply in the wood.

#### CONDITIONS

- Your hands contort and become misshapen. Before long they are like the paws of beasts—fierce, clawed, but only able to hold your accustomed tools with great effort.
- ♦ Your feet are wracked with pain, and wearing your boots becomes torturous. What creature's feet are these that now are yours to tread the earth?
- $\diamond$  You find yourself swaddled in your clothes, and realise you are shrinking.
- Your very clothes and equipment constrict you, unless you shed them or make frequent adjustments. Minute by minute, hour by hour, you are growing. Each new inch added to your height is an extra ache in your bones as they become more strained.
- It is a struggle to maintain focus; you are overcome with an intense feeling of impending doom.
- ◇ Intense vertigo plagues you. It is difficult not to run into things when it seems like the ground ought to be a wall or the trees the floor.

♦ You have become jumpy. Every shadow seems to hold a vast monster that might swallow you whole.

- ♦ Thorns have begun sprouting from your skin.
- You cannot trust your eyes; colors and shapes have become distorted, shifting into each other
- You have the strangest sensation that you have begun a metamorphosis, that you are changing into something. Perhaps something beautiful. Perhaps something terrible.
- Smoke emanates from your nose and mouth with every exhalation. Your lungs feel uncomfortably warm.

#### RING 1

TERRORS: There is no sudden transition, but at some point you notice that wild roses have come to dominate the undergrowth. The absence of their thorny brambles marks out a path deeper into the wood. A woman's voice is carried on the wind, punctuated with raucous laughter. The treasure-hunters come across a clearing where several bandits are gathered in a mockery of a justicar's court. Presiding over the court is a woman in a lavish but filthy red dress, perched on a crude wooden throne set atop an overturned wagon. The would-be defendant appears to be an unlucky traveller, kneeling before a bandit that is half beast and half man. The woman pretends to read a list of crimes from a scrap of paper. "His nose is too long!" she says, eliciting a laugh from the bandits sitting on a fallen log in lieu of a bench. "Being too poor to pay the toll!" she says to more laughter. "Wearing an ugly shirt!" The list goes on.

The treasure-hunters can easily sneak past the proceeding, but if they linger and watch they may be called upon as witnesses in the trial, or may ultimately witness the traveller's execution. If they interfere, they may find themselves on the stand facing similar charges if they cannot overpower or outwit the bandits, or amuse the bandit queen.

TEMPTATIONS: More "criminals" are seen tied to the trees at the edge of the court. One is recognized by a treasure-hunter as someone important to them. Another whispers promises of treasure to any that will set them free, claiming they know how to convince the forest to let them pass unhindered. If you are playing with Taboos or Geas, this second prisoner can warn the hunters of them, even if they don't know all the details. The Bandit Queen wears a simple golden circlet that bears a single heart-shaped ruby of considerable size.

#### RING 2

TERRORS: The treasure hunters have come to the end of the rosy path, which opens up into pond-strewn woodland. The pond water is black and thick, and churns constantly with bubbles that fill the area with a noxious haze that disorients the treasure-hunters both by obscuring the environment and each other, and by leading them astray with ghostly hallucinations. The ponds, should they fall into them or attempt to drink from them, prove caustic, and will severely damage equipment and may cause horrific acid burns. As the treasure-hunters drive deeper into the forest, the haze thins out and hangs closer to the ground, but it doesn't go away.

TEMPTATIONS: An old and decrepit town square can be found hidden in the haze. Broken cobbles and a few remains of long-rotted timbers lead up to an untouched fountain that yet holds clean water. The centerpiece of the fountain is a rose bush of wrought iron brambles encircling emerald leaves and silver roses. A ray of light breaks through the canopy to strike a larger rose at the top of the bush, making it shine a resplendent silver-white.

#### RING 3

TERRORS: The way forward lies through a foggy cave with many twisting paths. The hunters encounter several bodies in the darkways beneath the earth, each bearing the face of one of the bandits encountered at the start of their journey. Whichever path or paths the hunters take, they arrive at a field of corpses scattered in groups of two or three. Ghosts in the fog play out a thousand betrayals, collapsing into mist when they meet their corpse on the mossy ground. Some of the faces are familiar; how does each treasure-hunter see one of their companions betray them?

TEMPTATIONS: A hallucination of the past—a phantom that fades in and out of the fog—haunts each of the hunters, reminding them of their drive. It follows them even to deeper rings, and whispers to them in words just beyond comprehension. The lilting voice of the bandit queen echoes on the wind, naming each of their sins.

#### RING 4

TERRORS: The dense underbrush grows thicker and taller until eventually it becomes overbrush, and crowds out the view of the forest until it is as dark as a cave. Whatever their current relative sizes may be, in the final rings of the forest the hunters find themselves of a humble scale, those of average height becoming no taller than a squirrel. The animals here are misshapen and twisted. Thorns poke out between the birds' feathers, and their beaks and legs are black. The fur of the other critters is oily and matted, and their teeth are needle-sharp and too many for their mouths.

A fat cat slumbers on the path. When the hunters come upon it, they only have a brief moment to consider whether they can sneak past it before its mouth opens in a wide grin full of dozens of needle-like teeth. Its eyes open and shine like lanterns, then its fur ripples, and it slowly fades from view. The cat is interested less in hunting and more in harrying and toying with the hunters, appearing suddenly to bat them and send them flying into the thorny brush, separating them.

TEMPTATIONS: The thorns of the brambles ahead are littered with what appears to be the bodies of a well-equipped travelling group. Who among the hunters recognizes one of the bodies? What visible sign does this person have that is tied to another treasure-hunter's drive? A shrike rests lightly on a nearby branch, ready to snap prey from the forest floor and add them to the collection of its victims impaled upon the thorns.

#### RING 5

TERRORS: The treasure-hunters, still at their reduced size, come across a bush bearing a single rose as white as the new-fallen snow amidst dozens of roses flecked red with stains of blood. The thorns of the bush are black and dripping with ichor, tangled around the corpses of all who came before. Those unfortunate souls are pale as the rose itself, their blood having been drained to sustain the rose bush that rules over the heart of this wood. It is too late now to retreat; the brambles have blocked the path. Do the treasure-hunters submit to their judgment? Or do they fight their fate? The whispers of the rose entreat each hunter to deliver the others for their judgment, so that they alone may be spared.

The judgment of the rose is harsh, but it may occasionally be satisfied. Any treasure-hunter that suffers its justice has their actions and their history considered by the players at the table, and if they are considered "sinless" they may yet escape the forest alive. All others are drained of both their blood and sanity in measure equal to their sins. For each treasure-hunter killed by the bush, the white rose is stained with their blood, and a new white rose blooms from a bud elsewhere on the bush.

TEMPTATIONS: Each hunter knows with certainty that their deepest desires can be satisfied by the rose, if only they are pure enough. They are not pure enough, but their companions are more impure, and their own purity can be enhanced by slaying the impure. Perhaps then they may be found worthy.

# **STORM** HEROES OF ALTERNIA **RIDERS**

by Jason Cordova

Featuring additional content by Michael G. Barford

Illustrations by Sam Mameli

Layout by Sam Roberts

TO BE USED WITH STORM RIDERS, FOUND IN CODEX JOY 2

05

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# INTRODUCTION

**I'M A HUGE FAN OF STORM RIDERS.** When Michael pitched the game to me, he only told me the part about playing heroes in a classic, 1980s-style fantasy action cartoon. I was a huge fan of *He-Man and the Masters of the Universe* growing up, and so accepting the pitch was pretty much a given for me. (Hey: When you're pitching something, know your audience, right?)

When I got the first draft back, I was delighted to discover Michael had gone much further than the original pitch. He added a meta layer to the fantasy cartoon story that involved the life of an audience member watching the show at home (no doubt inspired by Brandon Leon-Gambetta's excellent *Pasión de las Pasiones*) as well as censorious broadcast standards, the commercial needs of toy manufacturers, and television commercials. What was a solid pitch for a He-Man or Thundarr roleplaying game became something completely transcendent. What Michael grasped is that it wasn't so much the cartoons *per se* that were special about the era (let's face it: they were frequently crap) but rather it was the American culture surrounding those cartoons that makes us remember them the way we do.

At this point, I have run about twelve sessions of *Storm Riders*, and I love the game so much it went on to become one of my Favorite Games of 2018. I thought it would be neat to revisit the game, talk about my experiences with some of its key features, and begin to establish an implied setting: Alternia. What follows is a toybox (ha!) of expansions and advice for this delightful game. First, Michael presents some thoughts and procedures for creating custom classes (for both *Storm Riders* and its progenitor, *World of Dungeons*). Next, I offer some advice on how to deepen your experience with Audience Members and the GM Moves. After that, I present an entirely new worldbuilding mechanic: Playset Questions! Finally, I have some tables to help fill out your roster of Alternia heroes and villains.

# CHARACTER CLASS TOOLBOX

BY MICHAEL G. BARFORD

WHILE THE RULES FOR Storm Riders are perhaps deceptively simple, the mechanics are designed to be easy to use and reference, never getting in the way of play white still delivering on the design goals. Character creation should be quick and paintess, and math should be an infrequent concern. While the classes presented in *Storm Riders* have a fantastical bent, it shouldn't be too difficult to create your own classes or "reskin" present ones to match a different setting. For example, Jim Crocker's *GRUNTS* adapts the classes for G.I. Joe-inspired heroes, Rich Rogers has done a *Star Wars* re-skin. Here are some basic frameworks you can use when creating new class moves for your game of *Storm Riders* or *World of Dungeons*.

#### STATE A FACT

Stating a narrative fact is a powerful tool, one that players can use to avoid making rolls entirely. Remember: when leveraging fictional positioning, a player may not need to roll to overcome an obstacle. Providing specific contexts for characters to state facts also allows a player to point the GM towards things they find interesting.

One example of this kind of move is the Rider's Traveller: "When you encounter a new place, you can state a fact about it." When a player takes this move, they are telling the GM, "Hey, I want to see new places and describe them!" So, naturally, the GM should follow suit. This is a good move to give a class that has a particular area of expertise. A Navigator may be able to state a fact about astronomical phenomena. A Sculptor could state a fact about any automata they encounter. This move could also be used to introduce new elements to your surroundings, though only occasionally. Once per session, the Stormcaller can foretell the weather, and the Face has a friend in this town. This move can also give the player an opportunity to create an obstacle with a reward, based on a successful roll: a Rogue could introduce a trap and maybe describe the treasure it's guarding, while the Hunter knows the monster lurking in these lands and maybe how its organs could be utilized. Whenever the players need a bit more excitement, they can push this button.

#### TIP THE SCALES

Use these moves to adjust the results of rolls to affect outcomes. This may come in the form of a +1 or granting "advantage" to use the results of the best two dice out of three rolled. These moves come in handy for describing things that everyone could probably attempt. but your character can do best. A static, passive bonus is usually a little boring and uninteresting. To spice things up, add a fictional. trigger to make this a more active bonus. In Storm Riders, anyone can get in a fight, but when a Warrior shouts their **Battlecry**, they get a mechanical upper hand with a +1. Doesn't that sound more fun than "+1 fighting?" Maybe when a Vigilante condemns a villain's injustice, they take +1 against them, or a Bard's performance could better sway a crowd. Anyone can call out a baddie or pick up a lute, but nobody does it quite like the Vigilante or the Bard. In practice, you'll see that these moves reinforce the archetype through the player's description of their actions in a way that a static bonus all too easily overlooks.

#### TWEAK THE SHEET

These types of moves fiddle with all the extra stuff on the character sheet. They may grant additional health or stats, or otherwise engage the mechanics in a passive way. These moves are a little less exciting but offer consistent outcomes. The Sidekick in Storm Riders can shift one attribute up and one down-another one of their moves relies on failure, so it's helpful to have a low attribute. Don't feel bad about including one or two of these options for your players: they may not be as flashy, but they will see frequent use. This is also an opportunity for you to scrutinize the character sheet and bring new life to existing portions, or find something beautiful in the margins. Can you come up with a move that takes advantage of the characters' names? Could a move add a new section to the sheet, or a new stat to use? A player who enjoys engaging with their character sheet will likely be drawn to a class with moves like these.

#### ATTEMPT THE EXTRAORDINARY

This is something special that only this class can do! This framework lets you describe abilities with broad applications, like magic or jury-rigging, or specific ones that require more creative usage like fire breathing or aura reading. To avoid turning this move into an "I win" button, you may want to restrict it in some way. You can emphasize the "attempt," like the Royalty in *Storm Riders*, whose Command allows them to converse with and attempt to command magical creatures. This implies that a roll is likely required to succeed. Maybe it will cost you something, like World of Dungeons's Cleric needing holy water. Perhaps the action takes up a lot of energy (or spotlight) and is restricted to occurring only a few times during a session. The Solar can draw on the power of a day's worth of sunlight to accelerate the growth of the plants around them. The Pirate's Pretty Bird can eavesdrop on a conversation, but only once per session. The concept for Things in Storm Riders is based on this framework.

#### THINGS AND AIMS

When designing a new class for *Storm Riders* you will need to think of a Thing for that character, along with an Aim. Things are defined as special props, equipment, or accessories that the player can describe for their character. Mages have a magic focus—is that a wand? A staff? A crystal ball? When picking a category for your class's Thing, leave room for interpretation but try to make it evocative. A Padawan could have a lightsaber, or they could have a loaned lightsaber, or even an elegant weapon for a more civilized age. It doesn't necessarily need to be a physical object, either—GoRobos have a vehicle transformation and Deckers have a virtual avatar.

## EXAMPLE: THE REDEEMED

Let's pull this all together to create a new *Storm Riders* class as an example. This class is inspired by all the baddies whom the hero was able to convince to change their evil ways and join the forces of good! For the purpose of this example, we will use one of each of the frameworks from our toolbox to create this class's abilities:

#### State a Fact: Takes One to Know One

You can spend 1 HP to determine a villain's motivations, and 2 HP to gain insight into their plans.

The Redeemed can empathize with villains as they were once one themselves! However, this doesn't always make them the most popular with the audience at large. The GM could tell them outright what the villain's motivations and schemes are, but it's certainly within their power to ask the player to decide (I know that's what I would do)! The tax on Hot Points also helps to restrict this ability, or at least make the decision to use it more interesting.

#### Tip the Scales: Proselytize

Take +1 forward when you try to convince someone to change their villainous ways.

This one's pulled right out of the hero's handbook, but the Redeemed has a better chance of getting through to an ex co-worker than the fellow who trounced them for the umpteenth time last episode. And if it doesn't work, at least you can say you tried.

#### Tweak the Sheet: Paradigm Shift

Rename one of your attributes.

A seemingly small change, but a very exciting one. Power, Mind, and Heart are baked into the premise of the game. Giving the Redeemed the chance to alter that allows the player to explore different values and possibly interrogate the morality of the setting, or simply to better define the methods their character uses to save the day. Maybe they'll swap Power for Stealth, or Heart for Cool. The possibilities are endless.

#### Attempt the Extraordinary: Feint

You can spend 1 HP to reroll any one die.

The villain, as an archetype, is always revealing their secret ploy to turn disaster to their benefit. The hidden knife, the secret trap, "It's all according to plan." That's rubbed off on this class, which likes to subvert expectations and achieve victory with more discreet methods. However, as we all remember from playing pretend, the kid who keeps pulling out the surprise force field is not always the most endearing. We can represent that, and restrict this useful ability, by charging HP much like we did with the previous one. Note that it says "any one die"—the Redeemed could use their dirty tricks to help their allies as well!

#### Thing: Disguise

This class is better suited to deception and trickery than others. This could be an old uniform from their time with the Legion of Evil, a magical mask, or maybe their whole head spins around to reveal many faces.

#### Aim: Aim to Challenge the Notions of Good and Evil

Morality in **Storm Riders** is very black and white. Introducing the Redeemed allows for the audience to start to question these concepts as presented in the show. Children may develop a more mature understanding of morality; adults may reflect on their own values. This is what makes the class intriguing at a macro level, and we should encourage that to be explored.

# GROWING CLOSE TO AUDIENCE MEMBERS

WHEN I BEGAN RUNNING Storm Riders, I knew instinctively that players would really love the audience member part of the game. What I didn't anticipate was just how much players felt like this was not only a cool feature of the game, but a very central part of the experience. In fact, whenever I would do Stars & Wishes (our home-grown session feedback procedure, first authored by Lu Quade), almost every player would Wish for more time with the audience member. It seemed like they could never get enough!

And, indeed, I've found it can be kind of tricky to get enough time with the audience member. As a GM, you have to be really mindful of that part of the game, or it will get short shrift. Here are some notes and techniques related to the audience member, informed by my experience running the game.

#### LEAN INTO THE CORE GAMEPLAY LOOP

It isn't emphasized in the core Storm Riders text, but there is a really important gameplay loop that you have to engage if you want to get adequate time with the audience members. It is: the hero character does something that induces a complication or cost > the GM makes the loss of Hot Points part of that cost > the player chooses to do a Refresh scene in order to regain the Hot Points (to, ahem, refresh your memory: Refresh scenes involve the audience member's reaction to the hero character). Refresh scenes can also be used to recover the use of a Thing, but the Hot Point loss route is the one you have the most control over as a GM Again, it's deemphasized in the core text, but you should be inflicting Hot Point loss fairly frequently. Just because Hot Points are abbreviated HP, it doesn't mean they represent "health." This was a major mistake I made when I first ran the game. Hot Points represent how

"cool" the hero character is perceived to be by viewers, and so you can inflict Hot Point loss anytime a character doesn't look cool (whether they get hurt by an enemy, they fail at an action are humiliated, lose an argument, and so forth). The correct amount is always 1-2 HP, except in the case of something truly, epically bad happening to the hero character, in which case you can inflict more.

#### PICK UP WITH THE AUDIENCE MEMBER DURING TRANSITIONS

Another way you can engage with the audience member is to reserve transitions for them. Coming back from a bio-break? Check in with the audience members to see how they are reacting to the episode so far. Are the hero characters traveling to the fortress of the King of Eggs? Skip the traveling scenes and do a round of audience member vignettes instead; then, when that's done, hard fry—I mean, frame—right up to the King of Eggs. This can also be a nice pacing mechanic: if you need the hero characters to be at the big bad so you can resolve that situation before you run out of time in the session, do some audience member vignettes and then skip straight to the big bad.

#### ASK LOTS OF QUESTIONS

This is mentioned in the core rules, but it bears repeating here: ask how the audience member is reacting to the on-screen action. If Tigress and You'Fraidies are about to feed one of the heros to their giant tabby cat, ask the player how their audience member is reacting to the scene. If the hero raises their magic sword to the sky for the first time and invokes the ancient power of Alternia, ask the player how this makes the audience member feel.

#### CONSIDER ADULT AUDIENCE MEMBERS

This note doesn't have anything to do with how frequently you engage the audience member, but rather, it's something your players might consider doing to add some depth and texture to the audience member mechanic. That is, consider creating an audience member that isn't a kid. I had some players do this and it made for a very different—but equally enjoyable—*Storm Riders* experience. Below is a table of some adult audience members to inspire you.

206	ADULT AUDIENCE MEMBERS & WH	Y THEY WATCH THE SHOW
2	<b>Jerry</b> , who runs an urban legends website	Believes the show holds clues to what happened to a production assistant who went missing back when the show originally aired.
3	<b>Scott,</b> who loved the show as a kid	and now wants his significant other to love it as much as him.
4	Susan, a grieving mother	Her child was recently killed in an accident and she watches his favorite show to remember him.
5	Anthony, a movie studio exec	He's going to pitch a modern, updated, live-action version of the show to his boss as soon as he understands what the show is about.
6	Patrick, a divorcee	Watches the show with his kid on their weekends together.
7	Samantha, a real housewife	She's watching the show as research for her kid's upcoming 8th birthday party. How else will she show her social rivals she loves her kid more than they love theirs?
8	Iwan2beeleev999, whose eyes are wide open, man!	Believes the show contains coded messages from the U.S. Government about the existence of extraterrestrials.
9	<b>Stewart,</b> a <i>real</i> fan of the show, not like these pretty people who are only into it because it's cool now	He's trying to win an argument on the internet, probably with a woman who he's accused of being a "fake fan."
10	Albert, an embittered writer	He's writing the tie-in novel for this dumb-ass cartoon until his real work gets noticed by a big publishing house.
11	Tasha, a performer	She's putting on a burlesque show themed around the cartoon and needs some ideas for the various acts.
12	<b>Kelly</b> , a mom	She loved the show as a kid and is trying to show it to her minor son, an Instagram influencer who really can't be bothered, as a way of bonding with him.
# EXPLOITING THE GM MOVES FOR MAXIMUM FUN

IN MY EXPERIENCE, fully half of the raw fun of playing *Storm Riders* comes from the three GM moves: It Was Meant to Do That, Rewrite, and Commercial Break. The following are some notes and techniques for getting the most out of the GM moves.

#### DON'T WAIT FOR MISSED ROLLS!

Each of the GM moves says "On a miss,..." meaning they are to be used whenever the player rolls a 6-. However, you may find this doesn't allow you to use the GM moves as often as you'd like. I started occasionally using the GM moves as the complication for a 7-9 result especially if we had gone most of the session without seeing one in action—and I found this didn't unbalance the game in any way. In fact, it made it considerably more fun.

#### HAVE SCENES WITH CORPORATE AND CREATIVE

The GM moves Rewrite and It Was Meant to Do That imply they should have their own, separate scenes outside of the cartoon hero fiction and the audience member fiction, and I strongly recommend you do that. Come up with a fun characterization for Agatha Besper and chew the corporate officers out. Come up with a characterization for a corporate apparatchik and speak to the players as if they are the various



members of the writers room when something goes wrong. Give the players a chance to come up with their own characterizations. You'll find that the players keep this going throughout your campaign, creating a third character (after their action hero and audience member) to play as during these corporate meetings. It's a hell of a lot of fun.

#### DO AT LEAST ONE COMMERCIAL BREAK OUTSIDE OF A DIE ROLL

The Commercial Break move is a delight, and Frecommend you do the move at least once outside the context of a die roll. I usually save it for right before we go on a bio-break during the session. If you feel the need to reward the player who narrates the commercial break (since the move is normally used to turn a miss into a success), let them treat it as a Refresh or give them a bonus to a future die roll (but, in my experience, it's unnecessary—players are usually happy to do the commercial break). Below is a table of Commercial Break prompts and ideas to inspire GM and player alike.

2D6 COMMERCIAL BREAK PROMPTS AND SOME ASSOCIATED IDEAS				
2	Dolls for boys	The Buddy Doll, The All-American Boy Doll, My First Bully Doll		
3	Marshmallow breakfast cereal	Religi-O's, Morse Code Crunch, XOXO's: The Cereal of Love		
4	Things you throw	eXXXXtreme Football, Crazy Ring, Basketbomb		
5	Local businesses	Flint Brothers Fine Furnishings, Jake Adcock: Attorney at Law, Chet Easterly Car Depot		
6	Only girls like cats	Healthy Paws Cat Hospital playset, Cat Cat-eur: Feline Fashions on the Runway board game, Princess Catalina doll		
7	New console video games	Zaaarlaaak!, Super Bento Brothers, Space Incursion 2020		
8	Just five easy payments!	Happy Pooch dog massager, Suck-n-Cut vacuum barber, New Beginnings meditation tape series		
9	Knock-off Storm Riders	Tempest Warriors, Storm Lords, Vortex Masters		
10	Gross out toys	Snot Taco, The Gangrene Gang, My Little Abattoir		
11	Stuff for smart kids	Just a fucking globe you put pins in, Abacus: The Origin of Math, pocket periodic table		
12	Computer learning games you'll still remember as an adult	The Donner Party Trail, Where in the World is Alvaro Santiago?, Math Rats!		

# NEW TECHNIQUE: PLAYSET QUESTIONS!

WHEN I WAS A KID, the coolest thing in the world to me—the most coveted toy of them all—was Snake Mountain. It's true the playset had very little resemblance to the Snake Mountain in the *Masters of the Universe* cartoon, but it was loaded with cool features: a huge demon face with a working lower jaw; a microphone shaped like a wolf's head that made your voice echo; a trap door near the entrance; and a big-ass snake that swiveled around on the top.

While running *Storm Riders*, I developed a world-building technique inspired by all the cool features of Snake Mountain and similar playsets. When the heroes arrived at a new location, I would ask them a thematic question related to the features of the toy version of that location (this is very similar to the **Paint the Scene** GMing technique I have discussed on The Gauntlet Blog). As the players informed me of what made the playset in question so cool, I would then translate their answers to be encounters their hero characters had during the story.

Here's a simple example: The heroes are getting ready to raid Crackshell Mountain, the fortress lair of The King of Eggs. I ask the following playset question: "One holiday season, Crackshell Mountain was the most in-demand toy; parents were literally fighting each other in the Toys R Us aisle to get one for their kids. What were the amazing features of this playset that made it such a hot holiday toy?" The answers from the players:

- It had plastic turret guns that fired eggshaped pellets at the action figures.
- The interior of the toy had a pool of yellow slime that was supposed to look like egg yolk.
- It had an egg-shaped dome that could be "cracked" open, allowing you to reach into the center of the playset.

I then incorporate those answers to be dangers and encounters the hero characters face in our cartoon. Respectively:

- Upon their approach to Crackshell Mountain, turrets fire rotten egg gas grenades at the heroes.
- While infiltrating the ground floor of Crackshell Mountain, wicked sorceress Hexate animates the yolk pool to be a titanic yolk golem that attacks the heroes.
- During the final encounter with The King of Eggs, a massive dragon rips open the dome of Crackshell Mountain and snatches one of the hero characters.

On the next page is a table of Alternia playsets and associated questions to inspire you.

### 2D6 ALTERNIA PLAYSETS & QUESTIONS

2	<b>The Cat Tower,</b> lair of the evil Tigress and You'Fraidies	"This playset was marketed as a functional tower for your real-life cat. What are the features that enabled you to bring your kitty into the <i>Storm Riders</i> action?"
3	<b>The Crystal Grotto,</b> home of Princess Crystálya and her beau, Prince Apricot.	"This playset was designed to get more girls interested in <i>Storm Riders</i> . Which features demonstrate what a 1980s marketing exec thought little girls wanted?"
4	<b>Gorladon's Palace,</b> the swampy lair of Gorladon the Bullfrog Emperor	"Slime was all the rage with kids in the 1980s. In what unique ways did this playset incorporate slime?"
5	The Palace of Alternia	"Only rich kids had this massive playset. Apart from its sheer size, what made it so expensive?"
6	Fennelwick, the village near the palace	"Why was the Fennelwick playset so lame?"
7	Hexate's Spire, the lair of the evil sorceress	"This playset was noteworthy for its 'real' magic, and it was so cool, even boys wanted it, despite the fact it was for a girl character. What are some of the 'magic' features of this playset?"
8	The Crimson Jungles of Kamorak	"This playset was famously recalled after a number of manufacturing and design defects caused some kids to get hurt. What did it do?"
9	<b>The Snake Pit,</b> lair of the evil Serpentius	"Snakes. SNAKES! Snaaaaakes! Snakes?"
10	Griffoe's Griffon Stable	"This simple playset was mostly just a collection of different griffon figures standing in front of a cardboard diorama of a stable. What are the different types of griffons you could get?"
11	<b>Galaxor's Palace,</b> a satellite above the surface of Alternia	"The introduction of Galaxor—and much more explicit science fiction elements—heralded the end of <b>Storm</b> <b><i>Riders</i></b> . But this playset was pretty effing cool. What were some of its rad, space-themed features?"
12	Wizbit's Potion Shop	"Wizbit's Potion Shop doubled as a real-life, portable soda fountain. What were some of the 'potion' recipes kids could serve to their friends?"

# HEROES & VILLAINS

Here are two tables to help you populate the world of Alternia.

206	HEROES OF ALTERNIA & (	COOL ACTION FIGURE FEATURES
2	<b>Tridentia</b> , last of the Amazons	The action figure squirted water from its tiny coral tiara.
3	<b>Bobby Badboard,</b> of Earth	The action figure could ride the little skateboard it came with.
4	Clarissa, of Earth	The action figure could do a "spin attack" with the little skateboard it came with.
5	The King of Alternia	If you pressed a button on its back it would say "Hello? Hello? Can anyone hear me? This is the King of Alternia speaking."
6	<b>Princess Crystálya,</b> ruler of the Crystal Grotto	The action figure's plastic smelled like bubblegum; its clothing was made from a shimmery, iridescent plastic.
7	Prince Apricot, sexy but safe	The action figure's perfectly sculpted torso smelled vaguely like apricots.
8	Galaxor, savior of Alternia	If you pressed a button on the figure's back, a gemstone chest piece glowed blue, representing the character's "cosmic energy ray."
9	<b>Muck and Filth,</b> peasants of Fennelwick	These poorly-sculpted action figures had no special features, but you did get two of them in the package, so that has to count for something, right?
10	Man-E-Torsos	You could remove the head and limbs of this figure and attach it to different torsos. Included torsos: knight torso, ninja torso, and robot torso.
11	Sir Reach	This action figure's legs and arms could be extended by two inches each.
12	The Queen of Alternia	No special features, but the action figure's dress was made of green velveteen fabric.

### 2D6 VILE ENEMIES OF ALTERNIA & WICKED ACTION FIGURE FEATURES

2	<b>Wizbit,</b> bumbling frog magician	If you pressed a button on the figure's back, it said: "Hippity-hop! Blippity-blop! You'll never stop stop stop me, Heroes of Alternia!"
3	Hexate, evil sorceress	The figure's eyes glowed yellow with "magical energy."
4	<b>The Crabster,</b> the last of his kind	The figure features crab pincer hands with several points of articulation.
5	<b>Griffoe,</b> misunderstood Lord of Griffon-kind	The figure came with a saddle so other characters could ride it.
6	<b>The King of Eggs,</b> Alternia's big bad and an exile from Huevosia	If you pressed a button on its back, it would say one of several egg or chicken-related puns, such as: "EGGS-cellent!" or "What a HEN- teresting idea, Beastore!"
7	<b>Beastore,</b> the King of Eggs's right-hand monster	The action figure's plastic smelled like game.
8	<b>Serpentius,</b> who is sssnaaakesss!	Snakes.
9	<b>Gorladon,</b> the Bullfrog Emperor	If you squeezed the figure, slime came out of its mouth.
10	<b>Ambassador Henalina,</b> duplicitous agent of the Huevosians	No special features, but the action figure's dress was made of red velveteen fabric, and the head had real chicken feathers on it.
11	Screamaar	A recalled toy that randomly "screamed" throughout the day and night.
12	<b>Pigguns,</b> the King of Eggs's lackey	The action figure's plastic was coated to taste like bacon.



The Toffee Duke's favorite method of executing political prisoners is to dip them in molten sugar, sprinkle them with nuts, and then crack them into pieces. These pieces are then sent to the four corners of the Toffee Duchy—a warning to those who would raise a frosted hand against him.

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The Council of Architectural Confections issues public apologies for any loss of life when a graham cracker structure collapses, particularly when the city's families and communities are affected. However, there's too much money in construction and, as such, no political will to change zoning and safety laws around candy home construction.

- A mysterious traveler from beyond the forest introduced the newest blight to crops in this cursed land—scintillating yum-gem trees, mesmerizing and delicious. Yet, nobody talks about the bloated sugar flies whose pods grow bigger in the trees' high reaches every night, or the blood they feed on.
- Mathilda Wake has created the greatest lollipop in all the land! Don't believe those who say things like, "It's structurally unsound" or, "It may fall at any moment and crush us all!" They are spoilsports and brats! Come on, help us slather another layer on the lollipop, and watch it grow greater still! Whee!

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In the depths of the confection forests lies the golden caramel hind, blessed by the Cavity King to drive all who see it to the deepest obsessions. To sup upon its syrupy flesh ceases hunger forever, but locks the mouth of any diners in vile rictus unless they offer their eternal servitude to the rotten-toothed monarch.

 The slumbering jelly ursines of the brown sugar dunes are awake for just three days a year. During that time, they mate, groan baleful melodies for hours on end, and feast upon the largest among them.

 If you brush away the crystal sugar from one of the rotund, gelatinous mounds that line the Gumdrop Pass, you'll see there is a tiny fairy trapped inside—as a mosquito in amber—their face twisted in agony.

The Peppermint Stick Forest was sparkly and beautiful from a distance. It was only up close that travelers realized with revulsion and terror that the crimson section of the sticks came from giant ampoules of blood stored inside the thick glass piping. Dr. Kerry Minter howled with frustration each time the travelers fled, knowing that the people of this land would never understand the importance of his life's work.

The caramel found inside a sugarpig is too pure to be handled without protection. Should you get any of it on your skin, it will burn like boiling water and leave a dark green welt. The harvesters wear thick plastics from head to toe, even though the slaughter pens are dank with a most ripe humidity. The witch's hut is decorated with gingerbread and chocolate drops, made all the more inviting by a strange, rustlike aroma wafting from them. This is something different, it tells you, this is something more real than honeydrops and licorice-this will make you strong and fierce. And it is true. It will make you strong and fierce, and also beholden to the witch who bakes her own blood into those candies. Once you've eaten from the witch's hut, you won't want anything else.

In the distance looms a clock tower of glimmering crystal candy encapsulating hundreds of hunger spirits in the gears. When it chimes at the nadir of darkness, all know it is time for the Midnight Feast, a debauched saturnalia of fermented sodas and laced cupcakes that draws in all who hear the saccharine sounds.

The delicate, cream-filled fauna of the Butter Waffle Woods gather every morning and stare silently to the south, as if waiting for someone or something to arrive. If you watch them long enough, you'll notice their eyes begin to slowly widen in terror, and then-like thatthey run off.

La Dama Catrina serves delicious sugar • skull sweets to visitors of her elegant • hacienda. Each skull is decorated with colored sugar and bright, candy jewels, and if you hold one up to your ear, it will whisper things to you: tales of La Catrina's wickedness, gossip about her neighbors, or secrets within her home.

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The Sea of Melted Dreams, where enormous jelly beans broach like whales to feed on the liberated—but helpless bloated raisins, carried by currents of raspberry rippling through the ice-cream waste. All the while, the beans are hunted by choc-ships crewed by the all-sorts indentured for life to the Candy-King.

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Do not stay here. You might think this vista of trees and rolling hills would make a pleasant place to picnic and eat your salty sandwiches. At first, you will notice the long grass twitching as if something small were moving through it at ground level. If you do not heed this warning, your blankets will soon be festooned in sticky trails as thousands of gelatin annelids converge to feast on all that they find, be that bread or brain.

Scholars of predatory candy fauna have .... yet to catalog or capture a beast that abducts and drains children, leaving their exsanguinated remains to be discovered in a glittering foil-like sack, along with a pink, dry tab of chewing rubber. But they have named it: Brat Sucker Joe.

If you take a stroll through the bejeweled  $\cdot$ upper canopy of Jellybean Jaunt, take • care to stay on the raised foot bridges between jellybean trees. Waiting below you are the writhing masses of rejected jellybeans, partially chewed and spat out by picky children. They remember the insult as they consume one another, growing larger each day, waiting to snatch and chew unwary children before spitting them out for the greater jellybean mass to taste. How will they judge YOUR flavor?

The village of Noelle has had a giant, gold foil-wrapped chocolate orange hovering over it for centuries. Each year it gets just a little bit closer. Most believe the titanic chocolate orange will eventually fall from the sky, crushing everything below.

The Licorice Beastie skulks the salt flats, lonely and abandoned. It will offer any passersby broken-off pieces of its horn to taste in an apparent attempt to make friends. The licorice horn is astringent and salmiak-flavored, but if you show any distaste while trying it, the Beastie flies into a frothing rage.

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The Honorable Order of Gumball Knights enforce the Chewing Queen's will with merry laughter and brutal efficiency. Their mechanized lower bodies resemble the glass orbs of gumball machines, but allow them to roll over all terrains with surprising speed. The gumballs within can be deployed through slots on their chests as projectile weapons that burst into colorful and extremely sticky gunk, trapping or smothering their prey.

People who get lost in the Ice-Cream Lands are transformed into new flavours .... for everyone to taste. However, everyone who partakes in one tasting loses every memory of their childhood, with every further tasting consuming more and more memory. Eventually, they finally forget the first tasting and float away into nothingness.

You know what they say about Duchess ••• Hard-Candy's peppermint hounds: their peppermint bark is worse than their peppermint bite! It's a lie, thoughnothing's worse than the bite of a peppermint hound.

Enormous cotton candy spiders trap their victims in piles of fluffy spun sugar.

The Peanut Butter Sphinx and the ••• Chocolate Pythia are engaged in a never-:: ending debate about which of them tastes best. Their conversation has dragged on for decades, with each finding new and interesting arguments to support their side. Little do they know, a great worm in the earth—listening to determine which of them to swallow whole-has just settled on the fact they probably taste delicious together.





The Candy Corn Maze covers several hundred square acres, and only the locals who harvest the dense, sugary crop can fully comprehend its twisting, non-Euclidian passages. It's safe enough during the day, but at night the feral children who live sequestered away in the densest clusters of stalks roam the passages, giddy with the rush of gorging themselves on the unripe kernels, seeking any sort of liquid to wash it down.

Before sunrise on the last day of the war-ground strewn with licorice • intestines—the fizzy folks' skin erupted in all directions as a fresh wind of Mentos rained in from the west.

Those who dare to sail the Milky Sea should stay close to shore and keep a ... sharp eye on the horizon. The dread pirate C'mander Crisp hunts those waters, firing fusillades of crisberries from his ship's cannons.

The Slurpie of the Lemonade Springs is a warning to all who seek to slake their ••• thirst, for those who are careless or too greedy when drinking from the yellow waters will find their tongues stolen by the beast, who seeks the rarest of flavors to quench its curiosity for taste.

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The Candy Wife smiles and grins, offering rewards to those who play her games of chance. Foolish children seek to win treats, sweets, and their heart's desire if they are willing to bid high enough. Wise children live to see another day.

Polycarp's nebula moth is a stunning creature, its deep blue wings dotted with iridescent gold. Its larvae are liver-eating parasites that prefer large mammalian hosts. Its eggs are tiny, but enclosed in cases that perfectly mimic malted milk balls. Victims often report that the egg cases were sweeter and richer than they expected, but otherwise indistinguishable from the candy.

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Given the effect that life in the Candy Royal Court, it has become the fashion to employ increasingly baroque and elaborate Wax Lips to hide the ravages of plaque and gingivitis. The fact that they begin to wilt and run after only a few hours—less on hotter days—ensures a brisk trade for the Guild of Parafineers and their supplier, the Queen Bee.

Upon witnessing the effects of the first :: successful Atomic Fireball test, its lead developer, confectionist J. Opie Rebertheimer, was said to have muttered, "And now I have become cinnamon, destroyer of worlds."

Unwary travelers who taste the luscious candy apples growing from the trees along the road through Treacle Valley will undergo a dread transformation: their hearts crystalize to rock candy, their blood thickens into molasses, and their flesh becomes gingerbread.

Although they look and taste nearly identical to marzipan mushrooms, avoid accidentally eating meringue mushrooms at all costs: they are the eggs of parasitic intestinal gummy worms.

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Have a Seven-Layer Cake! The first one layer brings joy the second holds a toy the third is finest lace with the fourth, you must say grace the fifth brings forth a merry tear the sixth is cold and holds a fear that nothing pure may now survive The seventh layer takes your life.

:: Have you seen the Muffin Man? He hops on one foot across the land Oh, have you seen the Muffin Man? He's in no rush but has a plan

Yes, I have seen the Muffin Man With bulbous head of nuts and bran He has no eyes, no arms or hands But always knows right where you stand

So if you see the Muffin Man, Hurry, child, hurry Run as fast as you can



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of Their Race

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Colin Fahrion, Keeper of the Slaughtered Hearts Per Falk, Keeper of the Unlit Effigy

Luis Farebrother, Keeper of the Songs of Satyrn's Sounding FeITK, Keeper of the Urn that Holds the Ashes of the Red Poet's Heart

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Mike Fedinando, Keeper of the Gaze, Adoring and Wanton Robert Ferguson, Keeper of the Mighty Thews Scott Field, Keeper of Malvett's Living Dream The Fifth World, Keeper of the Wisdom of Emerald Nightmare

Finn, Keeper of the Spider Tombs

Asbjørn Flø, Keeper of the Ten Hidden Keys

Marcus Flores, Keeper of the Chromatic Gates

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