

Glorydays Preview Pack v0.3

What follows is a work in progress, the worst version of this project that will ever exist. Additionally, many sections have been truncated or omitted entirely.



A televised game of outer space, crash landings, teenagers, sneaking out, bad decisions, and home before

You do not belong here.

The year is 2003.

**You have crash landed and infiltrated the local high school. You attend as a student.
They have no idea.**

**In one year's time you must deliver your verdict. Conquer this planet, or leave it in
peace.**

You are not alone.

Inspirations and influences

TV Shows

- Roswell
- Veronica Mars
- Buffy the Vampire Slayer
- Smallville

TTRPGS

- Masks: A New Generation
- Slugblaster, and the Quinns Quest review of the same
- Tales From the Loop / Things From the Flood
- A Complicated Profession
- Aaron King's [First Day at Sword School](#)
- Fiasco
- Cortex
- Monsterhearts 2
- Scum and Villainy
- Fiasco
- Capitalites
- Super Normal Study Club

More

- Bully
- Animorphs
- My limited understanding of the *Persona* games
- Down to Earth
- King's Dilemma

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Conceit

During the **day**, you attend the local high school. You do this to fit in.

—

Hang on. That's not true.

—

It's more accurate to say that you are *enrolled* in the local high school. If you attended every day, you'd stick out quite far indeed.

You are aliens. Shapeshifters. Scouts. You are here on a job.

Some of your people want to invade. Perhaps you want to as well. But let's not be hasty. Scouts are never hasty.

There are others. Others of your kind. They may also be students at this school. Some of them will want to conquer the world. Keep an eye out for their tells.

You represent your clan, they represent yours. You do things differently.

Some clans want the glory of the kill now. You are defending your stake. You will strike when ready. Or, you'll move on, looking for better prey. Time will come.

At **Night**, you attend your extracurriculars. Including some of your own. You seek out the other would-be conquerors. You put them in their place. You remind them that Earth is yours until you say otherwise.

During the day you are taught. By night you are the teacher. And there's only one lesson: how scouts earn their reputation.

Ur-Conceit

All of that is true, but there is another, more true reality here. You are actors, cast in an early twenty-first century teenage serial drama.

Inspirations and influences	1
Conceit	2
Ur-Conceit	2
What is this game?	5
What is reading?	5
Why teenagers?	6
One Level Deeper	6
The Rules	6
Safety Tools	7
Episodes	8
Season Openers	8
Season Finales	9
What are we doing?	12
Big idea (I'm new to the genre)	12
Playing the game	13
Core Mechanic	13
Complications	14
Spark	15
Stepping up or down a die	16
Boosts and Hinders	17
Helping	17
Character Creation	18
Choose your playbooks	18
Assign Grades, Clubs, and Approaches (and star signs and arcs and...)	21
Course Catalog	22
Electives	22
Approaches	23
Housing	24
Assign starting stickers	25
Arc Sheets	25

Tensions	26
Arcs	26
Arc rules	27
Relationships	27
Stakes	28
The Rumor Mill	28
Yearbook	28
Gameplay	29
Scenes	29
Scene framing	29
Rolling while reading	34
Stickers	35
Stickers mini game	36
Sticker list	36
Replace a condition	37
Factions	38
Player Principles	39
Director Principles	40
On your first day of school	41
Trouble	42
Once per session abilities	42
Once Ever abilities	43
Big Mysteries	43
Running the game: Director Advice	44
Structure of a Season	44
Arcs	46
Appendix II: Resources	49
Music	49
Names	Error! Bookmark not defined.

What is this game?

This is a tabletop roleplaying game where one player (the Director) takes on the role of students, aliens, teachers, and more to facilitate a collaborative storytelling experience between friends. The other players will create a fictional character and inhabit the world, acting out various arcs to advance their character, and the shared universe.

This particular game of pretend takes place on the set of a TV show. You are all actors who have just landed a role on a medium-budget science fiction show aimed at teenagers. Congratulations! While it's important to remember that you are an actor (and that you should be having *big emotions*, and playing hard), we won't spend a lot of time talking about this as we play.

Instead, the games we play will mirror episodes of the TV show we are creating. We will frame scenes, describing who is present, what's happening, and what the stakes are, and we will cut between these scenes to create tension.

Your actor — you — will be playing shapeshifting aliens from outer space who have infiltrated a local high school in southern Arizona and need to balance schoolwork and human activities with your higher alien goals. You will have two playbooks, one that describes your role and abilities as an alien, and one that describes your role and strengths as a human student. You will also have two storylines, or arcs, that you are working to advance at all times. Whenever a scene gives you a chance to do something on an arc, you should take it — but leave room for others as well!

We will rely on dice to resolve uncertainty. Whenever you attempt an action, you will choose an appropriate class and an approach. The grade you have in that class will determine how big of a die you get to roll, and the approach you choose will modify that die to be bigger or smaller, depending on how good you are at that approach. And because you're a young actor with big range, you can never use the same approach twice in a row. If you were manipulative before, why not try delicate now?

What is reading?

The word “read” refers to both the process of studying a creature in order to shapeshift into it, as well as an individual shapeshift that you have learned. Yesterday I spent an hour reading a rhino at the zoo. I now have a rhinoceros read that I can transform into.

Many aliens can examine a living creature and internalize it. It's like the third invention after space travel. The longer they examine it, the more precise their read becomes. Once

a read is cemented, you can shapeshift into that creature. This shapeshifting is usually flawed in some way.

Once gathered, a read is concrete and unchanging. Any flaws or misconceptions you had during your initial read will persist perfectly over every transformation. Every time you transform into a read, it is identical to every other time.

People can only hold a small number of reads in their mind at a time. Once a read is forgotten, it can **never** be relearned.

So go ahead and read your principal to get out of trouble, but it's either going to take up a slot forever, or it's a trick you can only pull off until something more urgent comes along.

Reads are subtly wrong in a way that you wouldn't notice at a casual glance, but they don't stand up to close scrutiny. The ears are the wrong shape, the eyes don't look quite right. The gait or wag of the tail seems off. The breath smells like violets or carrion. Deep reads don't have this problem, but they require 2 hours of uninterrupted study with the target. A deep read would satisfy even detailed analysis.

Why teenagers?

Teenagers have a relative degree of independence, few responsibilities, and substantial leeway in terms of what constitutes "normal" behavior.

Some other alien factions have attempted to infiltrate governments by reading and replacing important people, or by reading adults and attempting to become well-positioned as a ruler or advisor. This takes time.

One Level Deeper

You are **not** playing these teenager / aliens described above. You are playing actors who are playing these characters. This is a mid-budget teen soap operatic show, like what might have aired on the CW during the early 2000s. Think *Smallville*, *Supernatural*, *Gossip Girl*, *One Tree Hill*, or *Veronica Mars* (which begins airing this year).

The Rules

1. **At no point will you acknowledge you are actors.** We will not have scenes taking place "behind the scenes". Everything at the table is what we see in an

episode of the show. Or at least, it's what's in the script. Some things get acted out that don't make it to the final cut — see safety tools, below.

2. **This is a melodrama.** Your primary goal is to engage the audience and get renewed. The script might have been finalized last night. Read what you've got, and if it doesn't sing, try again next week.
3. **Dial it up.** Whatever emotions you might be having, crank them up 50%. Overact, and leave nuance at the door. You're a teenager. You're an alien. You're an actor. You're trying to get renewed for a second season. Get a little weird, go a little hard. Try on a different emotion. We just gave you three reasons why you can get away with using the wrong one. Play around.
4. **You cannot die.** At least, not in a normal episode. Sure, anything goes in a season finale, but if you're well-loved enough, you'll be back. Between flashbacks and sci-fi, no one ever really stays dead on these kinds of shows. See more about Season Finales, below.
5. **It's 2003.** Cell phones and iPods are common, as iTunes has just launched, but we're still years before the first smartphones. Texting costs money, and phone calls are only free on nights and weekends. If you want to see if someone is free, the best way is to knock on their door and ask. Most houses have cable TV, landlines, and the internet, but the latter two may not work at the same time. For more, see Culture below.

To your characters, all of this is real. It needs as little explanation or foreshadowing as the script allows. There's always time to add drama, miscommunication, and unexpected twists. People, events, and mistakes from the past (the 90s!) come up all the time, with no warning.

Safety Tools

Sometimes things happen on set that get cut. Maybe you're uncomfortable, maybe your actor is. Maybe the script is bad. At any time, you can yell cut and the director has to listen. It's not like they can use that take anyway.

Ask for another take, or briefly explain your issue (“Can we do that again without spiders?”) and the story keeps moving. You can also suggest a fade to black, or a dramatic cut. We don't need to act out these two smooching, let's leave it up to the audience's imagination.

Episodes

Each time you play is an episode. At the start of the session, agree as a group which character is the spotlight of the episode, who's going to get the focus. This doesn't mean that other characters won't be present. They'll still support in scenes and work on their own arcs. But one character (or sometimes two) will usually stand out in an episode that focuses on them, their trials, goals, or interpersonal conflicts. It should go without saying that each episode should spotlight a different character so everyone has roughly equal time in the front and center.

When you're in the spotlight, decide what you want to pursue. Is it making progress on the season mystery? Building up or tearing down a personal relationship? Or just making big progress on one of your arcs? Suggest some scenes and play them out!

During season openers, it makes sense to have roundtable episodes, where each player gets roughly equal time in the spotlight. Introduce everyone, giving a brief scene showing what their "deal" is, and who the important people are in their lives. Showcase any themes or arcs they're dealing with right now (Who am I? How can I make friends? Are these people worth saving? Why doesn't the pilot respect me? How can I stop failing math? How can I get to know the hunk in history? Where will I sleep tonight?), and then move on.

You can have roundtable episodes at any point, but this game works best when they're used at the start of big arcs or seasons. One popular approach is to do a roundtable episode after each character has a spotlight episode, showing how they're different and what their next spotlight episode might be about.

Note: you don't have to plan the entire season (or even your next spotlight episode) out ahead of time! Just the opposite, the shorter spotlight portion of a roundtable episode is meant to get you thinking about what kinds of scenes you might want to play out when you've got the whole table's attention.

Season Openers

In the first episode, everyone should frame a short vignette to introduce their individual character before uniting the whole group together.

Example of play

Alice: Okay let's get a scene to introduce all of our characters. I'll start. I think the camera starts on a school bus with the doors closing. As the bus pulls away, we see April for

the first time. She's tall and leggy, and just booking it after the bus, but of course it's too late. She sighs, slings her bag over one shoulder and keeps following the bus, whistling to herself.

Bree: Do you want to end the scene there?

Alice: I'd like to introduce one of my starting contacts. Does anyone want to play Jeff?

Cam: I'll do it!

Alice: Not even a block later, an old blue pickup truck pulls up next to Alice.

Cam: The car stops, and Jeff rolls down his window. Remind me who Jeff is? Another student?

Alice: No, not a student. I haven't defined him too much, just that he's old, lives on a farm near me, and has a truck and farm equipment and all that.

Cam: Great. (as Jeff) Hey April, miss the bus again?

Alice: You know it, Mr. Jeff.

Cam: Just Jeff, please. Go ahead and hop in the back, if you don't mind getting dusty.

Alice: Wait, dusty?

Cam: I'm picturing his truck is full of rocks. Like from the quarry. That's why he's out so early.

Bree: Ooh, I'll add the quarry to our list of locations.

Alice: I like that. I'll hop in the back. Maybe I always show up to school in rock dust. The kids call me "Chalky".

Bree: We'll see about that.

Cam: You're gonna have to wake up early one of these days! Or get a ride from your parents. What is it they do again?

Alice: Sorry, Mr. Jeff, it's pretty loud back here!

Cam: That seems like a good place to end the scene.

Alice: I agree, who's next?

Bree: I'll go! Unlike *some* people, I get to school early. In fact, I'm the first one there, sitting on the steps reviewing my history notes when Jessica arrives. Can I get someone to play Jessica? She's a bit of a bully.

Season Finales

Each character has a Once Ever ability, like the pilot's "call the fleet". These can only be used during Season Finales, special episodes where the stakes (and budgets) could never be higher. You've got to hang those cliffs, or no one will come back for the next season. You've got to convince the execs you *deserve* that next season!

Blowing the budget

[Omitted]

Apple Grove

The game takes place in Apple Grove, New Mexico, a border town immediately on the edge of Arizona. The popular ¹ graduates often end up at the local community college, so they can show up in future seasons, if we get renewed that long.

¹ with the viewers.

Arizona has deserts, canyons, streams, mountains, and cities.

Apple Grove has all the features a growing suburb should have: parks, a shopping center, a quiet downtown, remote desert outlooks where teens go to get away, a wealthy area to contrast against the more rundown areas, bars, clubs, and a small party scene, intermittent bus service, a minor industrial park, and The Complex. The complex is the premier place to hang out after dark. It's a little rough and tumble, with local bands, a bar that's theoretically age-gated, bowling and roller skating on one side, and a tanning salon in the back. It's not a *bad* place to be — they've got an arcade, after all! — but if something bad happens, it most likely happens here.

Of course, no town is static. By season 4, it will grow in size considerably to meet the show's needs. Apple Grove is large enough that residents can remain anonymous if they choose, but small enough to gain notoriety or fame for those who strive. Whatever you need is a 45-minute drive away at most, with most things being available right here in town. There are new developments around the outskirts — Apple Grove is a growing place, and we'll take advantage of the freedom that growth presents when later episodes contradict what we've established early on.

There are a handful of fixtures that you can always use to add intrigue to a plot.

The Base

There's a military base nearby, and a research lab that often collaborates with the government. It's a major employer of folks in town, and a constant threat (and source of story hooks!) There are always people around who would *just love* to get a whiff of genu-ine aliens.

The Academy

A private school where the kids are just a little... off. And that's coming from aliens. What's really going on here? Mind control experiments? Robots manufactured to look like people? Something extraterrestrial? Or just poorly socialized teens with more money than manners?

In short: Apple Grove has everything you need, and don't worry too much about the continuity. Re-use familiar settings wherever possible (keep a list on notecards nearby), but don't be afraid to introduce a new one whenever the demand arises.

INT. A BUSY RESTAURANT. EVENING.

EMIL and NIKKI sit across from one another at a booth.
NIKKI fidgets with the menu, looking down at her hands.
Two untouched cups of coffee steam between them.

EMIL

Did I do something wrong?

NIKKI

(Fear flashes over her face)

I'm sorry?

EMIL

I thought I was finally starting to figure out how to blend in.

NIKKI

What are you talking about?

EMIL

The waitress. She asked me if it was my first time here. What gave it away?

NIKKI

No, she... they ask everyone that.

EMIL

Really? Why?

NIKKI

I.. I don't know, Emil.
(SIGH)

EMIL

So nothing is wrong then. Great!

NIKKI

Well, not exactly.

EMIL

What is it?

NIKKI

I wanted to talk to you. I think we should try something different.

EMIL

Like another restaurant? I thought you liked Dupree's.

NIKKI

No, between us.

What are we doing?

The object of the game is to tell a story about aliens, fitting in, hard decisions, and powerful emotions. Some of these stories will have significant plot beats, while others will be filler that can be skipped on a rewatch. Your group might be tightly paced, with a strict plot, frequent cuts (see Jason Morningstar's cuts), and a breakneck pace, while others may laze around with their characters, getting to know how they act in various situations. Both approaches are valid

Big idea (I'm new to the genre)

Most shows in this genre have a big idea powering the show, and a more focused big idea powering the season. In *Veronica Mars*, we have a teen detective. In season 1, she's investigating the murder of her best friend. *Buffy* saves the world and slays vampires, but in season 4 she's contending with a government agency who is doing research on demons in her hometown.

An individual episode might advance the main plot, but it's usually going to put forth its own smaller plot, one that will be resolved in the course of the episode. Unlike a sitcom, actions have consequences that last beyond one episode. If you get evicted in one episode, you still might be homeless in the next!

Conflicts are grounded, and often rely on high emotions and misunderstandings. Violence is rare, though threats of it are more common. Intrigue and lies abound, but usually the kind of lies that can be seen through within the same episode, if not immediately. The technology level tends to be pretty grounded, aside from when a high-tech gizmo would advance a plot, or create a problem to be resolved in a single episode, and then never be mentioned again.

NPCs (non-player characters — the actors controlled by the director, like teachers, students, and other aliens —) tend to be stereotypes cranked to the max. The evil, boasting egomaniac. The ruthless gambler, the dumb jock, socially inept nerd, grouchy goth, and so on. The town expands as big as it needs to, growing to contain whatever plot contrivances are necessary, but it's always small enough that you can be famous if you'd like, and small enough that you can slip into obscurity if you'd prefer. New people can always come and go, and everyone knows everyone else, at least by reputation.

- Problems are grounded and personal
- Emotions and stakes are high, melodrama runs rampant
- NPCs are stock stereotypes

- The town is just as big as it needs to be, and never any bigger
- Tropes abound — first love, cringey miststeps, clever quips, and breathtaking cliffhangers

The big idea

This is a CW show. There *is* combat, especially in the season finales. But that's not the point. It's about spending time with your friends, blending in, finding a way home, overcoming fears, falling in love, being a teenager.

Think about the best episodes of Buffy, or the first season of Veronica Mars. Watch Roswell, or any episode of Smallville. Be 14 and hormonal, out of place. Listen to Simple Plan.

It's about setting up expectations, locations, and important items and bringing them into play at terrible times. It's about telling a story together. It's about being a weirdo and almost being discovered. It's about learning what it means to be human.

Playing the game

All you need to start playing the game is the core mechanic of using grades and approaches to handle tasks, (page XX) and arcs (page XX). Skip everything else for your first session, or when you're learning the game. Once you're comfortable with those, you can start layering in more mechanics. Give everyone a club and a sticker from their starting playbooks, read about how to gain and spend Spark (page XX), and start tracking relationships and factions with the yearbook (page XX). When you're ready to pick your next arcs, think about how the tensions (page XX) interact.

Core Mechanic

Gather your relevant dice and roll them. If at least one die shows a 4 or higher, you succeed at the task. If at least one die shows a 1, you get a complication. It's possible to have both. If one die shows its maximum number and you generate no complications, you generate Spark (page XX).

The default dice pool is a d4 plus the die from a relevant grade, modified by the chosen approach.

Succeeding

Whenever you attempt a task, choose a relevant approach (from your alien sheet) and grade (from your human sheet). The grade will give you a die size, and the approach will have you step it up or down.

In order to succeed, you need to get a 4 or higher on the die. If you are rolling multiple dice, you only need to succeed on one of them.

Failing

When you fail at a task, gain stress. Add a d4 of a different color to your die pool (or step up your stress die if you already have one). If you would step up beyond d12 stress, instead remove yourself from the scene and gain a condition.

The stress die cannot succeed or generate spark, but can create complications, and will cancel out one success on a 4+.

Complications

If one or more of the dice show a 1, you generate a complication. This can come from the fiction on hand, your trouble, or just marking a condition. A dice roll will never generate more than one complication (except during a dangerous check, see page XX)

The best complications arise immediately and obviously from the situation at hand, but if it doesn't make narrative sense, the complication doesn't need to arrive immediately, but it should appear within the same session.

Whenever you have a complication, choose the most relevant grade (usually the one you were rolling), and damage it, degrading the die by 1 until it can be repaired.

Example:

Young Bobby pulls a knife on Rix and Debra at the dumpsters behind school. Rix attempts to talk him down.

“Put the knife away, man, that will only bring trouble. You don't need trouble right now. You just got out of juvie, man.” He rolls, getting a 5 and 1. While we could have Bobby slash Rix and then flee, that doesn't really feel like a success!

Instead of stewing on it, Rix's player makes a call: "I'll pull a complication from my trouble, Urban Exploring. I'll go out tonight, maybe to blow off some steam, and when I'm there something bad will happen. A run-in with the cops, twisting an ankle, or disturbing something better left alone."

The Director agrees. "Bobby flicks the knife closed, lifts the collar on his leather jacket and says, 'This isn't over, Ricky boy. Don't think it's over.' He walks away, and you hear the scream of a motorcycle moments later."

The goal is to keep the scenes flowing. Here, we resolved the incident, and set up a new scene (UrbEx gone wrong) with a complication waiting to happen.

Spark

If you get the maximum number on at least one die, and you get no complications, gain a Spark.

You may also choose to fail a meaningful roll to gain +1 Spark. In order for a roll to be considered meaningful, a majority of players must agree. If failing a roll doesn't have lasting (or at least lingering) consequences, it probably isn't meaningful!

Whenever you make a decision that adds drama, especially if it is counter to your character's desires and goals, gain 2 Spark. This is known as the "Melodramatic self-sabotage rule", and can be vetoed by other players if used too often. Any time your choice makes you more vulnerable or helpless, the rule applies. If there are hoots and hollers or covered eyes, the rule definitely applies.

Spark does not persist between episodes.

Spending Spark

There are seven ways to spend Spark:

- Directing a scene
- Healing with an intimate scene
- Imbuing significance with foreshadowing

Directing a scene

When framing a scene (see page XX), a player may spend 1 Spark to dictate how the scene goes. This should be in broad terms (it goes well, it goes poorly). This can be done to help advance an arc, or just to give the fans of the character a win. Going well doesn't necessarily mean a win!

EXAMPLE

Micah prepares to ask Lorraine to homecoming. He spends a Spark so that it goes well. When it's time to roll (Delicate + Debate), he fumbles, rolling a 2. She says no, but lets him know that it's only because she's already agreed to go with friends. If he'd asked her sooner, she'd have said yes. And she's not busy on Friday...

Imbuing with foreshadowing

Players may spend a point of Spark to make something — *anything* — significant. A significant item has to come up later. It can be a person, a place, an event, or a simple motif. Write it on a notecard. At the start of every session, review all significant notecards. Each significant item has to either be present in a scene, or fully invoked and paid off. Each time the item is present, mark it. The more marks it has, the bigger impact it will have, and the more substantial the payoff can be. It can solve a problem without being a *deus ex machine* — it's been there the whole time! *Directors: look for sensible ways to invoke significant items early, paying them off. By the time something gets to 5 marks, it's starting to become very significant indeed!*

Stepping up or down a die

To step up a die, move it up (to the right) on this track. If you ever step up a d12, add a d4. If there are multiple dice in a pool and you are stepping it up, step up the smallest die.

d4 -> d6 -> d8 -> d10 -> d12 -> d12 + d4 -> d12 + d6....

To step down a die, move it down (left) on the track above. If you ever step down a d4, that die is lost. If you have no dice, there is no chance of success. If there are multiple dice in a dice pool and you are stepping it down, step down the largest die.

Over the course of the game, classes will become damaged. For each point of damage on a class, step it down one die. Classes damaged below a d4 cannot be used (or damaged) until they are repaired.

When you attempt a task, you will choose a grade, which will have a corresponding die (see grades, page XX). You'll also choose an approach, which will step up that die according to the scale above. After all adjustments have been made, you roll all of your dice and hope for a 4 or higher.

EXAMPLE

*Chris wants to throw a baseball at Marco's window to get his attention. He has an A in P.E., which corresponds to a d12, or twelve-sided die. He's feeling pretty clever about this decision, and is using the Intellectual approach — not his strength! Chris has a -2 in this, so he steps the d12 down twice, first to a d10, then a d8. No problem! He rolls it and gets a 2. Ouch! He lobs the ball a **little** too hard, and it crashes through Marco's window. He got his attention — but also everyone else's in the house!*

For some particularly difficult circumstances (like a time crunch, or dangerous situation), the director may ask you to step down a die an additional time before you roll.

Boosts and Hinders

Sometimes, things will go your way, or you'll have a relevant advantage. When this happens, you get a boost. Most often this occurs when you have favor or influence with a relevant faction.

When you have a boost, step up your lowest die by 1.

Other times, you can't catch a break. If you have disfavor or animosity with a relevant faction, you'll be hindered. This can also happen with normal, unexpected circumstances or environmental effects.

When you are hindered, step down your highest die by 1.

If you have multiple boosts or multiple hinders, apply them all, one at a time. After all, your highest and lowest dice may change between applications.

Helping

Anyone can help with a task. If they are helping, they can grant a boost, or add in their best relevant die shifted down once. Any complications or stress that arise are shared among all helpers.

Helping can be as simple as cheering on the active character.

Character Creation

You pick two character sheets, a left and a right half. The left half is for your role as an alien, and determines your approaches. The right half is your role in human society, and determines your grades.

PILOT

Trouble:

APPROACHES

ONCE

Call the Fleet

Very

Clever

Somewhat

Introverted

Slightly

Bookish

READS

NERD

Trouble:

CLUBS

GRADES

Name:	Sex:
CLASS	GRADE

SIGN

▲ **AD**

▲ **AD**

Choose your playbooks

Your human playbook determines your role in society, or at least in high school. It lists three adjectives. The alien playbook determines your role on the ship's crew. It lists three modifiers. The order of these modifiers affects your human adjectives. These adjectives have no mechanical weight, and are purely for roleplay and characterization purposes.

Convention dictates that each player chooses different playbooks from each other.

Human

Each human playbook has your trouble, grades and clubs (which determine proficiencies when attempting tasks), a star sign, and three roleplaying adjectives. You can pick any one club to join, gaining its benefit. If it's your first time playing, skip any stickers.

Jock

Running, jumping , throwing, you can do it all. You've got athletic skills and a big game every Friday.

Adjectives: Attractive, dim, confident

Grades: 10 points. Recommend: 1xA, 1xB, 3xD, 1xF. Recommend P.E. or Shop at an A.

Stickers: Choose Talented or Athletic

Misfit

You don't belong here. You represent a specific subculture, maybe emo, goth, or skater. Your people get you. But there aren't many of them around here!

Adjectives: Independent, distractable, creative

Grades: 14 points. Recommend 2xA, 2xB, 2xF

Clubs:

Sticker: Odd one out.

Nerd

You're passionate about subjects that not everyone *gets*. Maybe it's comic books, video games, super heroes, or trading cards. You know things, at least about the things that are interesting to you.

Adjectives: Clever, Introverted, bookish

Grades: You get 18 points and must have at least 2 As. PE cannot be higher than a D

Recommend: 3xA, 2xB, 1xF

Recommend Science or Tech.

Stickers: Star Student. Choose either High Standards or Unpopular and Unfit.

Prep

You're popular, and you know it.

Adjectives: Bubbly, attractive, aloof

Grades: 10 points. Recommend: 1xB, 3xC, 1xD, 1xF

Clubs:

Sticker: Popular. Choose Flirtatious or Best Friend.

Alien

Alien playbooks have your trouble, approaches unique to your playbook (each playbook also has access to the three core approaches), lodging, current reads (other than human),

modifiers on adjectives (usually somewhat, very, slightly), and a once ever ability. These are typically invoked only in season finales, and have wide-ranging consequences.

If it's your first time playing, skip any stickers.

Assign your 5 approaches scores based on the score spreads provided.

A playbook will tell me how many total reads you can know at one time (not counting your human form or your original alien form), any reads you may know currently, as well as any stickers (page XX) you may start with.

Each playbook also contains two questions. One is personal, the other is about another character. Choose a character at the table and share your answer about them.

Choose your troubles for each playbook.

Infiltrator

You pick up on culture, you can blend in with anyone anywhere.

Approaches: Delicate, Meticulous. -1, -1, 0, +1, +1

Reads: 5. Start with an additional human read and something sly.

Stickers: Start with Fast Reader I. Gain either Honest Liar or Deceiver.

Once: Release the mind spores. Every human and animal you have interacted with has been infected with a mind virus. You can control them in large mobs (add 2d10 to your pool, step it down twice for each task you assign after the first). How will you use this power? Will you have the support of your friends? What happens when you lose control?

Questions: As an alien, how do you acquire sustenance? Do you eat like a human, photosynthesis, absorb nutrients through the skin, or something else altogether? When did you learn you can trust ____?

Pilot

If there's a vehicle, you can drive it.

Approaches: Cocky, Calm. -2, -2, 0, +2, +2

Reads: 3. Start with something fast, and something flying.

Once: Call the Fleet. Summon the alien troops back home. They'll come loaded for bear, intending to conquer the planet. This causes a war, and is generally considered a bad idea.

How long after calling them will they arrive? Days? Months? Years?

Questions: What's your most obvious alien tell? What secret do you know about ____?

Reader

You're really good at transforming into different creatures.

Approaches: Emotional, Direct. -1, -1, -1, +1, +2

Reads: 5. Start with something exotic, something inspiring, and something unsuspecting.

Stickers: Start with either Inorganic I, Fast Recovery, or Fast Shifter. Gain either Fast Reader or Versatile.

Once: Split your mind into a clone of yourself. It has all the same reads and memories as you, and you can communicate telepathically within 100 miles. What subtle difference sets you apart? Is it stable, or will one of you start to decay physically, morally, or otherwise?

Questions: What part of human culture do you "just not get"? Why are you afraid of ____?

Soldier

You came to conquer. You find weaknesses in systems and people. Forming relationships is forbidden. Forming relationships is forbidden. You are not allowed to form relationships. You **must not** form relationships.

Approaches: Haphazard, Assertive. -2, 0, 0, 0, +2

Reads: 3. Start with something powerful and something durable.

Once: You can travel in time either forward or backwards any distance. After 24 hours in that time, you are snapped back to the moment you left. Special: You may do this 3 times.

Questions: You have a secret place or memory you often return to. What is it, and why is it significant? Why do you go to ____ when you are scared or needing comfort?

Assign Grades, Clubs, and Approaches (and star signs and arcs and...)

Each human has 6 grades, and each Alien has 5 approaches, 2 unique to the playbook, and 3 core approaches shared by everyone. Each playbook has 5 numbers ranging from -2 to +2. Assign each approach a score. See your specific playbook more instructions.

*Note: while your chosen approach dictates how you act in a scene, don't let it stop you from using the emotion you crave. This is a teen drama, you can **absolutely** be aggressively sad.*

Optional Rule: Melodrama

If you're really stuck, at any time, you can choose "Melodramatic" in place of any other approach, using the replaced approach's modifier and marking it as the most-recently used approach like normal.

Changing approaches

The approaches you use dramatically change the tone of the game. Use different default or playbook-specific changes to great effect. If running a detective game, the core approaches might be mischievous, sly, and self-loathing. But if playing with young children, you might change to

You have 6 classes. You must take a P.E. class, an English class, and either a Science or a Technology class. The other 3 classes can be filled with anything.

Many classes offer a capstone perk that is unlocked while you have an A in that class. If the grade is damaged below an A, the perk cannot be used. Perks automatically succeed with a check. A player lacking a perk can still attempt to achieve a perk's effects with a check like normal.

Course Catalog

Physical Education (P.E.)

- Archery
- Karate

Perk: Once per season, you can kick a hole large enough to crouch through through any material.

English

- Speech
- Writing

Science

- Biology

Electives

Social Studies

- World History

Shop

- Wood shop
- Plumbing

Perk: Once per episode, you can procure enough water to fill a Honda Civic

Home economics

- Chef

Foreign language

- Chemistry

Technology

- Film
- Robotics
- Computers
 - i. Photoshop

Perk: Once per season, you can create a forged document that can briefly fool a government agency.

Business

- Accounting

Performing Arts

- Choir

Art

- Music

Math

- Accounting

When you take a specialized class (e.g., Speech within the English group), step up the die for that specialization by 1. All other classes in that group step down by 1. You may take multiple specializations within the same group, but you may not take both the general and a specialization for the same class (you cannot have “P.E. (Archery)” and “P.E.”). Specializations can only be taken at a D or higher.

Remember, you can take a class at an F and still get a d4 for it. If you attempt a task without a relevant grade, you don’t add any dice.

EXAMPLE

Chrissy takes a B in Chemistry. Usually, a B would give her a D10. When she wants to make homemade fireworks, since this is a chemistry task, she can instead add a d12 to her pool. But, if she wants to identify an animal (zoology), she’ll roll with a d8. If she had taken Science at a B instead, both rolls would be with a d10.

Approaches

Each character has five approaches. These represent how you tackle problems and how you act in a scene.

Every character has the same 3 core approaches (Aggressive, Calculated, Subtle), as well as two unique to their alien playbook. Talk to the director about swapping out for your own approaches instead.

Each approach is rated from -2 to +2. Whenever you take an action, choose an approach and modify the dice pool by that amount (see stepping up and stepping down dice, page XX).

You may never use the same approach twice in a row. *You're actors, show some range!*

If an approach would get lowered below -2, decrease another instead and gain a blank sticker. If an approach would increase above +2, increase another instead OR gain a **gold star**.

Star Signs

[omitted]

Decide housing

Where do you live? This doesn't have any mechanical effects, though it may impact certain arcs, inform how you interact with other people, affect which arcs you can take, and impact how you see the world.

Your home should be a source of drama, intrigue and story hooks. You can choose to live anywhere. Here are some options, and some questions and arcs they may prompt:

- Halfway house
- Abandoned infrastructure (subway station, amusement park, etc)
- On a construction sight. What rumors do you hear?
- With True Believers. Do they know your secret?
- Under the stars.
- At the crash site. What measures do you take to keep it hidden?
- In a public facility (e.g. zoo). Who on staff suspects?
- On a crashed spaceship
- On a campground
- With a fake alien family (see XX)

Alien Housing

[omitted]

Assign starting stickers

These are things like “Fast Reader” or “Extended Reading list”. Certain playbooks start with specific ones. New players can ignore these, and add them in when you’re more comfortable with the core mechanic.

Arc Sheets

Each character will be pursuing two arcs at a time, one corresponding to their human goals, and one corresponding to the aliens goals. Each arc sheet has an overarching goal (Experience a romantic human relationship) and a number of sub goals (First kiss. Go on a date. Ask someone out. Get dumped). These sub goals will be achieved via scenes in play. Some may come up organically, but more often, scenes will be suggested and framed specifically to trigger one of these goals.

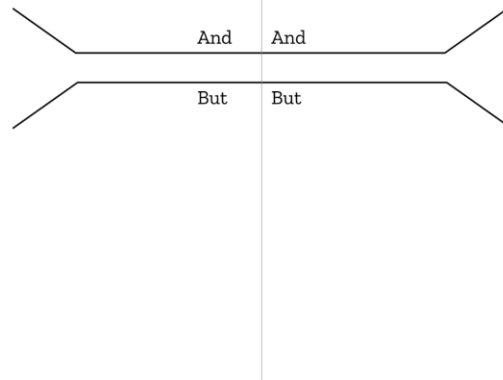
You can start with any arc you’d like as long as you meet the prerequisites, but each playbook has a suggested starting arc. Each character should have their own arcs, so don’t take another player’s starting arc until they disavow it.

Okay, I think I’d like to ask Casey out. Can we have a scene by my locker at the end of the school day?

Question: Should these arc sheets have and/but on both sides so they can slot into either side?

ARK

ARK



Tensions

[omitted]

Arcs

Each character will start with 2 arcs from those available to them. One arc will come from their human sheet, and one will come from their alien sheet. Certain arcs will be available to all players, while others have prerequisites. For example, the Romance arc is available to anyone with the playbooks Wannabe, Romantic, or Infiltrator, but anyone else will have to complete the First Kiss plot before unlocking it. First kiss can come from house party, school play, or other arc sheets.

Once one character chooses an arc, cross it off — no one else should undergo the same arc during a season. A character may undergo the same arc as a previous character in a new season under dramatically different circumstances, but it's better to dig deep and try something new instead.

Arcs play off each other (see tensions, above). I think there are some generic arcs that start unlocked for anyone, and each playbook (human AND alien) have unlocks as well. So Pilot can have “repair the ship” for example. And each arc (or scene from arcs!) can unlock others.

- Arcs are 3-5 subgoals that are TIGHTLY coupled to a main goal. Could be tracks or simple binary check boxes, depending on the goal
 - Example: repair spaceship (arc).
 - Become proficient in human technology (check a box every time you successfully use a new piece of human technology or discover a new use for the same)
 - Obtain powerful fuel source (e.g. Uranium)
 - ...
 - Build rapport with human authorities
 - Check a box whenever an adult praises you. Check two boxes if they have specific authority over you (a teacher, police officer, etc)

Arc rules

Some arcs have multiple paths. When you take one of these, you make a choice about how it will turn out. Paths may provide different rewards or stickers, unlock new arcs, or simply showcase who your character is. We are what we do, after all. Once you start on a path (by choosing A, B, or C), you must continue down that path until the arc is complete.

A list of arcs can be found on page XX.

Building your own arcs

[omitted]

Relationships

Whenever an arc tells you to gain an enemy or friend, you may add a new NPC to your yearbook, OR advance an existing one. When in doubt, it's best to keep the cast of characters fairly small, but the web of relationships large. Lean towards reusing NPCs instead of creating new ones, but favor establishing new relationships with existing NPCs over modifying relationships you have.

It's fine to have one friendship continue to grow stronger, or to have an enemy turn into a friend (or vice versa!), but having just one or two relationships continually bounce up and down can get stale. It's better to have one good friend, one strong enemy, and a handful of intermediate acquaintances.

Stakes

Some arcs will tell you to establish stakes. This means giving significance to something. Get invested. Ask a crush to watch the big event, place a bet on its outcome, or put something on the line. Make it matter.

Some arcs tell you to confide in a friend. This should be an intimate, emotional scene where you lay it all out on the line. What you hope, what you fear. Monologue and let us see what's going on in that big, hormonal brain of yours. But don't do it against a wall! What else is happening while you vent? Are you fixing a leaking pipe? Eating ice cream in bed? Rounding up lemurs you released from the zoo? Give us some business to watch, to pepper your narration with.

You can use stories to apply significance (and thus stakes) to items or rituals as well. It's not just a knife, it's the knife your brother gave you hours before he died. It's not just a dance recital, it's your best friend's last eligible year, and if you don't win in this year, that dream of hers will be over. Tell these stories to other players, or act them out in a flashback.

The Rumor Mill

Face the rumor mill is a common consequence at the end of an arc. People talk. How does this affect you? How will you handle it? Do the two line up? Do you ignore it? Face it head on? Let your reputation build? Or do you punish those who talk, or otherwise try to silence the words?

This should be addressed in a scene, vignette, or narration, and can also be used to adjust how NPCs see you in your yearbook. Whenever this consequence comes up, adjust one relationship based on whether the gossip is positive or negative. If no reasonable relationships exist, add a new NPC, or adjust a faction's standing with you as appropriate.

Yearbook

[Omitted]

Enemies in play

Enemies exist to cause problems for you.

Every time an enemy could reasonably be involved, they are. Remove their dice from the pool (that is, degrade the pool that many times — 3 for a d8), then increase their pool (towards friendly). Is that too often? Should there be an incentive to bring them in? Oh, sure. At the end of each session, degrade one relationship, and, if you had an enemy and didn't bring them in, degrade that enemy (towards a bigger die). If you get a d12 enemy, they are AUTOMATICALLY added to every roll until they get down to a d4. They have made it their goal to destroy you no matter what.

The yearbook tracks more than just students and staff at school. Use it to track all NPC relationships.

Each character in the yearbook has a space for a doodle or portrait, your relationship level (friend / enemy ranked from d4 – d12), and optionally a nickname or quote that sums them up. You can also annotate any favors or abilities that this character has.

Gameplay

Whenever you take an action, you will choose an approach and a grade.

You can take any shape, if you study the creature in real life. That's how you're human teenagers here.

But there's a limit to how many shapes you can hold at a time, determined by your class's reading list.

Scenes

Scene framing

Characters will take turns framing scenes. In its simplest form, framing a scene simply means to describe who is present and where it is occurring. "Jack and Billy fight over the last pretzel at the concession stand while Loretta eggs them on".

If you don't know what should happen in a scene, look at your current arcs (or the arcs of the spotlight character) and ask how to advance them. Think about the previous scene, and what would logically follow.

Remember: each player at the table has agency over their own characters. You can add other characters to a scene, but their player (or the director, for non-player characters) has ultimate say over what they do and how they react.

EXAMPLE

Debra (Director): How do you want this to go?

Brett: I'm hoping it goes well, but I don't have any spark to spend, so let's play it out and see!

Enter and exit scenes with intention. Cut early, cut often. Keep the pace high. Don't be afraid to cut when danger is established, or when the first part of a threat is dealt with. What that looks like: three gang members approach. A knife flicks out. We see how Aleina reacts, then cut to a new character. Or, Aleina takes down the first gang member with a swift kangaroo kick. Does she deal with the other two? Do they run away? Doesn't matter, we know she's winning. Cut to what happens next. This keeps things moving and exciting, and is especially important if only one character is in a particular scene. Keep everyone engaged. Anyone can cut at any time, don't take it personally or be a jerk about this power. If other people want a scene to continue, they can veto a cut.

Reuse everywhere. Favor referencing an existing location, item, or character over introducing a new one.

Scene Order

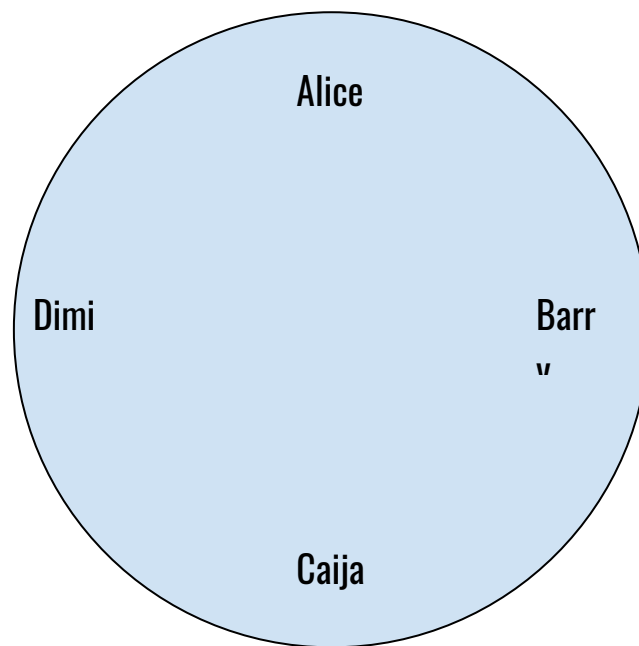
In games with a director, it's their job to prompt the next scene in a broad sense (What are Kim and Allen doing?) and then allowing the next player to frame it in more detail. Players may spend Spark to take more control over the tone of the scene (see Spending Spark, page XX). After each scene, the director will prompt the next person at the table, so that after each scene, the next person has a chance to frame their character and be relevant.

Hanging threads

At the end of each scene, if there are any unresolved items, the player who framed the scene should write it down on a notecard in front of them. Most of the time, this will be a consequence they decided to act on later, but it could also be the next thread of an investigation, or other unresolved tension.

After the following player frames their scene, the director will ask if there are any pressing scenes before proceeding. A pressing scene is one with a notecard in front of them. This hanging thread will be resolved in a short scene that will not produce any more hanging threads. It's a simple, short scene to show the character blowing off steam, invoking a complication, or otherwise closing the loop.

Follow-up scenes should not make any kind of checks, as they should be pure resolution with no chance of establishing further complications.



Alice frames her scene, but takes a complication when failing a Speech roll. She writes down “Consequence: Trouble from home”. Barry frames his scene, and before moving to Caija, Alice resolves her consequence. Dimi takes on the role of her father, who demands that she show results and soon. Alice damages Speech, lowering the die by 1. Then Caija frames her scene. When it’s done, the director will check if Barry has any hanging threads, and if not, proceed to the next turn at the table.

Once everyone has framed two scenes showcasing their character, it's time to bring the episode to the end. Each player's first scene can ask questions and establish new stakes, while their second scene should be moving towards closure. The director should encourage scenes to move towards finality. If necessary, one final scene can be proposed to either tie up loose ends, or dramatically end on a cliffhanger by summarizing outstanding threads and revealing a dynamic new threat.

Advanced Scene Framing

[omitted]

Ending a scene

A plot scene should end when the plot has advanced. To make scenes longer and more interesting than just "Alex goes to the barn and hides the duffel bag", add conflict.

Ideally, this is done at the staging phase, but the director can also introduce complications. What's the worst thing that could happen when you're hiding that bag? Probably someone coming out and seeing you. Do they notice the bag of stolen goods? Will they remember this interaction later?

A character advancement scene should alter emotional states for one or more characters involved. How does your mood change? When framing a scene, think about how your emotions will change over the course of the scene. Go from high to low or vice versa.

Leave cliffhangers for your characters. End the scenes with a pair of bad options and start the scenes with terrible decisions, the best choices from the options on hand. Always consider your intention, your desire, what you want, and the conflicts and obstacles that prevent you from getting it.

Scene framing tools

These are levers the director should be pulling to add drama to an existing scene, or encourage other players to think about when framing them.

Set up, pay off. Introduce hanging elements in a scene and pay them off later. The chandelier factory, the subtle foreshadowing.

Telegraph what you think is going to happen, and either give it to them or subvert it. Think about Wile Coyote walking off a cliff and looking down. We see what he expects, and he doesn't get it. You can just as easily imagine him lazily reaching out one arm, accidentally grabbing the road runner by the neck as he runs by and looking at the camera like, "Uh, wait, that worked? Now what do I do?"

Reveal drama. Expose a secret or lie. Blackmail, threaten, or extort, or announce that someone else is doing the same

Give them what they want. What happens if a character gets what they want? Give it to them in the worst possible way. Your crush returns your phone call in the middle of a compromising alien situation. Offer stakes: you can get what you want, but there's a cost or a risk. Will you pay it?

Misinterpret. What could someone walk in on and draw the wrong conclusions from? People aren't rational. Have them storm out, throw punches, make ultimatums. Always at the least convenient time.

Say yes. Whenever a hook is offered, summon your inner Molly Bloom (not the poker player, the other one). If it seems against your character, that's a perfect excuse for another scene wrestling with that choice. Do you punish yourself for it? Seek solace and advise from another? Indulge in vice to forget? Or just change, a little bit, to become the kind of person who says yes to that particular hook.

Detention. Two people hate each other? Stick 'em together on a group project. Make them collaborate and stew. What dreads arise?

Ask the hard questions: Ultimately, a scene is down to one decision. Will you chicken out? Do you get what you want? What are you willing to offer, and what does it ultimately cost you? Everything else is just acting out the result.

Running Scenes

Who is your character, at their core? Are they a clown? A coward? An egomaniac? A priss? A leader? A lady's man? Fall back on that. Tropes are tropes for a reason: they work.

What needs to happen to advance the plot? How would your character react with the information they have? What interesting and relevant actions can you take? How can you advance your arc.

If all else fails and you're stuck in a scene, go harder. Ramp up the intensity, the emotion, the insanity by a few notches. You'll be stuck no more. Let the fallout that arises come in a future scene. Make problems for your characters, and revel in the chance to fix them or be punished by your choices later.

What do you want? What's stopping you from getting it? What are you willing to do to get it? Frame the scene by asking these questions, and let the scene answer the question of “does it work”.

Cut it all!

End scenes a beat earlier than you think necessary. Leave some ambiguity. Don't frame boring scenes. No one wants to know when Batman brushes his teeth. Keep the intensity high by cutting away when things get slow, and picking back up when they are hot.

Where did Trish get that gun? Dunno, we can leave it as an open question, ask about it during the scene, or have a flashback if we *really* need to know later. Hint: the only time we need to know later is if it's going to cause more problems. Did she steal it from someone who wants it back?

Rolling while reading

You will attempt to perform tasks while in a form other than human. When you do, form your typical dice pool (d4 + relevant grade, if any). Add a d6 to the pool because you are reading. Then, starting with the player on your left, each person (including you and the director) adds something about the read that they think would be helpful or harmful. On a harmful, step down. On a helpful, add a d6 to the pool. Players can pass if they think it is entirely neutral (I guess a chimpanzee is...fine at swimming?). Once the pool is built, modify it by your approach as usual.

Tasks where the read can do it without question do not roll. A fish can swim and a bird can fly. If there's uncertainty (can the fish outswim the hungry dolphin?) roll. Do not roll if the task is inapt, and the read cannot do it at all. A whale cannot pick a lock, and a squirrel cannot drive a car.

EXAMPLE

Debra (Director): The cops are breaking up the house party. Kids are jumping over fences. What do you do?

Alicia: I run to the bathroom, turn into a dog and dig under the fence. With all my Fast Reader stickers, it only takes me 3 minutes.

Brett: A dog?! I'm just going to jump the fence.

Debra: We'll get to you, Brett. Alicia, you get a d4 and a d6, and then we all get to weigh in whether we think your form is helpful, harmful, or neutral. I'll start. Dogs are good at digging, helpful.

Charlotte: You're a dog, no one is going to arrest you or pay any attention to you. Neutral.

Brett: Everyone is going to be making sure you're okay and not escaping. Harmful.

Charlotte: You think the kids will look out for the escaping dog when the cops are here?

Brett: Good point, dogs are inconspicuous. Helpful.

Alicia: I just realized that cops are kind of afraid of dogs. Harmful.

Debra: Okay, so you got two helpfuls and one harmful. Add 2 d6, and step down your biggest die.

Alicia: So that gives me a d4 and 3d6, when I step down that's 2d4 and 2d6. I'm doing this Recklessly, which is a +1, so that's back to 1d4 and 3d6. Let's roll it!

Stickers

You can have 4 stickers on your character sheet at any time. At the end of each session, you'll put a dot on every sticker you have. When you would gain a 5th sticker, you must replace one of your oldest stickers, one with the most dots. Some effects let you **refresh** a sticker, replacing it with a fresh copy. When you do, lose all dots, but keep any other modifications to it.

Some stickers (like forged grade) go in specific places, and do not count to your total.

Many stickers provide a benefit when they are gained, often changing your approaches. This benefit is not lost when the sticker is lost. Some stickers provide an ongoing ability while the sticker is active. Many stickers have no mechanical effects, they simply apply a label that informs your character. The blackmailer sticker doesn't *do* anything, except it's a label that you have that you carry around with you. It informs how you act, and how others see you. If a sticker seems particularly apt, it can boost or hinder a roll.

When you complete certain arcs or gain a condition, you get a sticker. Conditions are stickers that apply stress in appropriate situations.

If you did not gain a sticker during an episode, you will play the Sticker Mini Game at the end of the session to gain a new sticker. Choose your sticker from the pool of available stickers, which is determined by playing the Sticker Mini Game.

If you would ever be instructed to gain a sticker you already have, either refresh it, or gain a Gold Star instead.

Stickers mini game

[Omitted]

Sticker list

You can have 4 stickers on your sheet at one time.

General

Cassandra: When another player rolls, you can predict the highest number that will show across all of the dice. If you are right, put a tally here. When you get 5 tallies, replace this sticker with **Fortune Teller**.

Gold Star: Choose a grade that doesn't already have a gold star. Once per session, add this grade to another roll. Describe how an insight here was unexpectedly helpful.

Dedicated: Increase your lowest approach by 1.

Forged C: Cover up any grade with a C.

Reads

Inorganic: You can shift into an inorganic object, like a key or paddle. This occupies one of your read slots like normal.

Extended reading list: Add an extra slot to your reading list.

Fast reader: Every time you take this sticker, halve the time it takes to learn a new read (round down). One sticker is 1 hour, two stickers is 30 minutes, and so on.

Versatile: Each time you get this sticker, choose one ability (such as flight, digging, echolocation, prehensile tail, pouch, lift 5x body weight, climb, swim, breathe underwater, pouch) from one read you have, and give it to one other read. If you ever lose the source read, replace this sticker with <empty>.

From Arcs

Moderation: Whenever you would roll a d12 or a d4, instead roll a d6.

Starting

High Standards: You must roll a 5+ for it to be considered a success. If you roll a 4 on a d4, roll again and add to the result. If this re-roll shows a 1, that's still a complication.

Odd one out: When your dice pool contains exactly 2 dice and they are not the same, add the smallest die to your pool that is not already present.

Replace a condition

Blank: A new sticker can be placed over this. Treat a blank sticker as if it was tied for your oldest sticker.

Class: Write the name of the class. Get it as an F. You may replace this sticker with the same class one grade higher.

Club (tryout): Write the name of the club. You cannot use its special ability until you replace this sticker with the club. Take this again to replace it with Club and gain access to the once per session ability.

Approach: Gain a new approach at -2. You may take this again to increase the approach by 1 each time.

Special

<**Loose end**>: Whenever you gain this sticker, annotate what it's for. Whenever you are looking for plot elements, or in a season finale consider using this one. When you do, replace it with a blank sticker.

<**Condition**>: When you gain this sticker, cover up a positive sticker, grade, club, or approach, or grade. When covering a sticker, it need not be your oldest one. Write down what the condition is. Whenever it is relevant, add stress. Conditions can only be removed by playing the sticker game and choosing Condition.

Factions

There are 6 human factions and 4 alien factions you can gain and lose favor with. Certain stickers adjust favor. When you interact with a faction, add their faction die to all rolls.

Rules

- Each faction has a goal.
- Their main goal (e.g. conquer the planet) is a clock broken into 5 sections. This Major clock will only be ticked when the minor clock (below) completes.
- Each segment of the Major clock is represented by a 5-clock, the Minor clock. At the end of each episode, if the faction was not opposed, check the next minor tick. If the faction gets a major, specific win (such as infiltrating a government), complete the rest of their Minor clock immediately.
- Whenever a Minor clock is complete, clear it and check the next box on the Major progress track.

Clock

A clock is a track with some number of segments. When you advance (or tick) a clock, you mark a segment. When it's full, something exciting happens.

Human Factions

You get a perk if you're maxed out (d12 relationship) with them.

Custodial

Goal: Recruit 3 students to the secret order of the Janitorialus

Perk: Access to maintenance and steam tunnels, covertly connecting all areas of the school, and major in-town hubs.

Geeks

Goal: Get the school recognized for its scientific discoveries

Perk: Access to one piece of illegal technology, like a credit card skimmer/flasher, or a fake ID press.

Gang:

Goal: Recruit enough muscle and perform a show of force to earn respect where it really matters: on the turf.

Perk: Once / season can intimidate, kidnap, threaten, or extort.

Alien Factions

Ancients (largely extinct, looking for host planet + populace + workers to rebuild and re-establish)

Goal: Reveal technological secrets to high-priority Earth targets in exchange for favors to be named later

Short term goal: Recruit vulnerable people with charisma and/or technological knowhow and reveal capacitive touch screen technology to help build the smart phone.

Infiltrators: keep evidence of aliens out of headlines, continue to intermingle with humans)

Goal: Co-exist peacefully for another 30 years until the Egg is ripe.

Short term goal: Engineer or fake a radioactive disaster to minimize human activity in the northwestern Chihuahuan desert.

Player Principles

- Go hard. Over-emote, get mad, jealous, horny, sad, excited, and every other emotion teenagers have.
- Adults can't be trusted, especially those with particularly high status, those new in town, or those who have had a sudden personality shift.
- Chase your arcs. You've got two goals. If you're ever stuck, look for a chance to knock out the next one.
- Spotlight others and help them chase their arcs. Everyone gets time at the table, help others face and overcome interesting problems. When someone else has a useful skill or read, ask them for help (and offer the same, keeping the focus on them)
- Reuse and reintroduce yearbook characters. If you need a scene against another character, reach for one we already know.
- Leave loose ends, and tidy them up in time. Help the Director by giving them lots of plots to use against you. Protagonists are only as interesting as the hurdles they face.
- Be open about the worst thing that could happen to your character, or the hardest choice they'd have to make. Chase it. It makes good drama, and good TV.

- Remember: teenagers are always trying very hard to be seen as adults.

Director Principles

- Use character names wherever possible.
- Re-use NPCs. If a scene needs a character, reach for one we already know.
- Reuse locations. Apple Grove can grow, but to make it feel lived in, revisit the same handful of locations. *Plus the more we re-use sets and locations, the happier our producers are!*
- Know the players' active arcs, and offer chances to key them up.
- Put characters in hard spots. Make them make tough choices.
- Add drama. Misunderstandings, big emotions, miscommunications, jealousy, high stakes, inopportune groundings, projects with bad partners, impending deadlines, flat tires, dead batteries. Murphy's Law all the time. This is high school. Every day feels like the end of the world.
- Drop hooks - and rope for yourself. Resist the urge to tie up *every* arc or scene with a tidy bow. Leave villains swearing revenge, have lingering shots on unhatched eggs, even if you never return to them.
- Check loose ends. Anyone with loose end stickers should be on their toes!

You are alien

You have the power to shapeshift into any creature you see. It takes one hour of prolonged intuition, studying the target. You can attempt to rush this process, but once you've learned the target, it's immutable. Every time you shift into it, it will be the exact same, likely with some imperfections.

The actual shifting takes 3 minutes. The shapeshifting is based on first impressions. You can try to **rush it**, in half the usual time, but this requires a check, likely with difficulty (page XX). If you fail it, you can lose control, or get stuck halfway between forms.

Since they're based on first impressions, Reads are imperfect. You can slow down and **study** the target, without the imperfections, but this takes 4x the usual duration. Otherwise, there are misconceptions. The teeth are wrong, or the first thing you noticed is over-emphasized. Most people won't notice at a quick glance, but quick Reads won't pass detailed scrutiny.

Once you learn a read, it cannot be modified. The impressions you had are cemented and permanent. You can forget a read, but once forgotten, it can never be learned again. Each alien has a limited number of reads they can hold in memory.

You can shapeshift directly from one form to another, but there is a refractory period. You must spend 10 minutes in a read before you can exit to another. Additionally, if you spend more than 10 hours in one read, you have to make a check to leave it. If that check is failed, it can only be repeated once a day, and each time with an additional level of difficulty.

Whenever you learn a new read, add it to your Reading List. Each playbook has its own limits that can be increased with stickers.

On your first day of school

For each of your grades, roll the associated die. Then assign each die to a question and answer it. A hit (4+) can be assigned to a positive question or a neutral one. Misses can be assigned to neutral or negative questions. The outcome of neutral questions should reflect the assigned dice. If you put a good die on a neutral question, it has a good outcome. If you assign a bad die (a “miss”), it is a bad outcome.

Positive

Who do you click with? (Faction)

You make a new friend. How? *This can be another player or an NPC*

Neutral

What do the teachers think of you?

You make a memorable impression in one of your classes. What happens?

You meet someone you can't figure out, or otherwise makes a striking impression on you. How?

What unusual thing did you find in your locker?

Negative

You make a mistake fitting in. Is your cover blown?

You offend another student, or otherwise make an enemy. What happens?

You upset one of the factions. How?

Trouble

You have one trouble from the human side and one from the alien side. This doesn't change, it's a source of constant complication. If you need a complication, look to your trouble to bring something in.

You get two troubles, one for each playbook. Some troubles are generic, others can only be alien or only human. Your trouble can be anything, specific (Urban exploring, father has specific desires for earth) or generic (dangerous hobbies, family issues) but here are some ideas. Like your lodging, your troubles should be toothy enough that you can draw upon them for drama and, well, trouble, at any moment. Think about the shape of trouble that can arise. If your trouble is amateur photography or video recording, does that mean you're likely to capture something on film that you shouldn't really be seeing?

- “That’ll be the death of you” — a dangerous hobby, habit, or skill.
- Famous father
- Nose for trouble
- Legal issues
- Dangerhound
- Jumping off of bridges
- Amateur photography / video recording
- Younger sibling (that’s you)
- Parental duties
- Living in a shadow
- Known to the authorities

Once per session abilities

We’re assuming a session is 2-4 hours of play. If you’re playing longer than that, please feel free to refresh these abilities at about that frequency. Some of these (like lying to people, or sneaking into places after hours) may have consequences!

Once per session, you can pull on your club to do something uniquely powerful. Some examples are below, but this is not a list meant to limit you.

These abilities come from **clubs**.

- Basketball: You can smuggle or distribute a small package undetected.
- Chess: You can predict what an opponent will do. Step down their difficulty by 2, or step up your check to counter them by 2. Or, simply use their predictability to frame a scene where you have the upper hand.
- Custodial: You can use underground tunnels to discretely move around town
- Dance: You can silently communicate simple messages and intentions with your partner, even over great distances as long as you are touching or in sight.
- Drama: You can lie to an authority figure. If it is remotely plausible, they will believe it automatically.
- Fencing: Superior footwork and grace. Use this how you will.
- Fishing: Set perfect bait, subtly snag a light item such as a key or badge at a great distance.
- Football: You can summon 11 buff guys to provide cover, threat, or intimidation.
- Golf: Steal a golf cart amped up to nearly 15 MPH.

Talk to your director to include your own club and boon!

Once Ever abilities

Each alien playbook has a Once ability that can only be done by that playbook. Other playbooks can take the same action (though it's rude to do so!), but it won't have an impact. It'll be dismissed as a hoax, or become a minor background detail. If you want the action to matter, you need to be that playbook. Otherwise, it simply won't resonate.

Big Mysteries

[omitted]

Running the game: Director

Advice

The ABCs of soap opera storytelling

[Omitted]

Structure of a Season

Each session of Glorydays is expected to take 2–4 hours of play, and represents one episode of a TV show. These episodes combine to form a season. A season is expected to take 6–10 sessions.

Structure of an episode

Start

First, choose what kind of episode it is. Is it a season opener or finale? A roundtable episode? Or a spotlight? Decide what arcs are going to be in focus.

Episode

A cold open establishes the tone of the show or episode. Is there a big, jarring inciting event?

Then, go around the table until everyone has a chance to frame two scenes. Once everyone has framed two scenes, consider what needs to be done in order to reach a resolution on open plot threads and to complete the arc. Frame as many scenes as necessary to bring the episode to a close. See Framing a Scene (page XX) for advice on maintaining focus and keeping the spotlighted character and arc in the limelight.

Commercial breaks

Every hour or so, get up, stretch, snack, use the bathroom, drink some water. Gossip in small groups (2-3 people at a time, not the whole table) about what you hope and fear will happen to your characters, then come back and make it so.

End of Episode

Recap what happened. Take note of any loose ends. As a group, decide what song will play over the closing credits of this episode. Spend any unused spark on relationships.

GAYNOR
You've got to stop telling people
you're an Earthling.

MALIK
Why? I'm trying to blend in.

GAYNOR
It's not helping! It's... we
don't say that.

MALIK
You tell people you're from New
Mexico.

GAYNOR
That's different.

MALIK
How?

GAYNOR
We don't leave Earth. We're all
from here. It'd be like telling
your sister who your parents are.
She knows.

Burn your stress: Roll your stress die, then step it down and repeat until it steps below a d4. Each time you roll a 1, mark your Conditions track. When it's full, clear the track and gain a condition (page XX).

Finally, perform the home life ritual. Each player, one at a time discloses something that is affecting them outside of the episode. It can be a conflict with a friend, an issue at home (wherever "home" may be, see page XX (choosing a home)), or anything else on their mind. Once the issue is identified, roll a d6. On a 1–3 the issue appears and gets worse. On a 1, it's the worst outcome possible. On a 4–6, the issue appears in a positive direction. A 6 is about as good as it could possibly be. Explain how the issue comes up, and narrate or act out a brief scene with the character on your left and how they find out about it.

These home life events can be entirely off-screen, coloring character progression between episodes. Significant events (like death) can lead directly into cold opens or set the stage for future episodes, or just impact character relations. In this way, characters continue to grow beyond what we see on the screen.

Example: Ron's biggest concern is his girlfriend Janelle, who is studying abroad. They had a bit of a fight, and he hasn't heard from her in a month. Before he rolls, he decides that the worst outcome is that she finds a new beau overseas. Rob rolls and gets a 4. Good news! He gets a postcard from Janelle saying France is lovely, and she can't wait to tell him all about it. Ecstatic, he runs over to Casey's house to share the news.

Arcs and events

Be aware of what arcs and beats each character is pursuing. If someone has "Make a bad decision", be prepared to offer them cigarettes and point the way to the nearest jumping bridge. Introduce NPCs who exist to offer temptation, to facilitate the beats, and to offer choices. Nasty, tempting choices. Keep the story moving, and keep the beats hitting.

Stress and conditions

Whenever you fail a roll, gain stress. Stress can also be applied directly by enemies, complications, or situations.

Whenever you gain stress, add a d4 of a different color to your dice pool. If you already have a stress die, step it up by one instead. Whenever your stress die would advance

beyond a d12, you are instead removed from the scene. If it's a social scene, you leave in an embarrassing or shameful way. If it's a physical confrontation, you are defeated or flee in terror. Face the rumor mill.

Whenever you roll, also roll your stress die. It cannot succeed or generate spark. It can generate complications. If the stress die rolls 4+, it cancels one success.

Stress can be reduced by framing an intimate scene (page XX). Additionally, at the end of a session, burn your stress (see End of Episode, page XX). This can also lead to a condition.

Opposition dice

Opposition dice work just like stress dice but they are temporary, lasting for just one roll. The director will tell you to add them whenever a faction, person, or force is working to oppose your action. This will be a single die (usually a d6) per opposition. If two factions are working to hinder you, one weak and one normal, you may roll a d6 and a d4 for opposition.

Conditions

You will gain stress (page XX) over the course of an episode. When you burn stress at the end of each episode, there's a chance to mark your conditions track. This track has 5 spaces. When it fills, clear the track and gain a condition. The track clears at the end of each season.

Whenever you gain a condition, apply a blank sticker to your character sheet. This will cover up a useful sticker, read, club, or grade. On the sticker, write down what the condition is. Shamed, nervous, confused, anxious, embarrassed, scared. Conditions can be removed by replacing them during the sticker mini game at the end of each episode. Whenever the negative condition applies to a roll, add stress (page XX).

Arcs

Whenever you complete an arc, you gain 2 Spark, in addition to any other rewards.

The Music

Discover Earth music. What song enthralls you?

Learn about instruments. What's the first one you pick up?

Start a band. Who do you invite?

Get booked at a local bar you otherwise wouldn't be allowed to enter.

The Fight

Be provoked, and walk away.

Get provoked again.

Establish stakes.

Get into or break up a fight.

Face the rumor mill.

The Farm

Shoot tin cans behind someone's farmhouse. Where do you get the guns?

Steal the gun at an inopportune time.

A. Lose it.

Explain yourself. Degrade a relationship.

Gain the sticker: Loose end: missing gun

B. Secret it away.

Gain the sticker: Itchy trigger finger

The Substance

Get offered an illegal substance.

Refuse

Gain a gold star

Partake

How does it affect aliens differently?

Refresh 2 stickers. Gain the sticker **Risktaker**.

The Aloof

Blow off another in a time of need.

Face the rumor mill.

Have a road to Damascus moment. What causes you to care about others?

Intervene when you could have walked away.

Gain the sticker: **Good egg**.

The illness

Get taken out by a common human disease. Chicken pox? A simple cold? What will it be? Who helps you in your time of need?

Your alien nature reacts in an unusual way. What is it, and how does this compromise you? What rare or uncommon medicine do you require, and how do they obtain it? Take a loose end: favor owed sticker. Advance one relationship by d4.

The giveaway

Someone is on to you. They don't know how, exactly, but they know that you aren't normal. What gave it away? Was it the fact that your hair changes length when you re-adopt this read? A cultural reference you missed? A lie you've caught yourself in? Who figures it out, and how do you placate them or ensure their silence?

Starting jock

Use your muscles or athletic skill to impress.

Call a shot. Establish stakes. Attempt it.

If it didn't work, gain 1 Spark and keep this Arc.

Dark Forest

Get a warning against something dangerous.

Do not heed it.

Be reduced by someone more powerful than yourself. *Is it the one who warned you, or someone else?* Gain the sticker **Loose End (we have to go back)** and a favor owed to the NPC who saved you. If the dangerous thing has been destroyed or otherwise removed from play, instead gain the sticker **Loose End (they've done it again)**.

The prank war

Commit a prank.

Commit a bigger prank.

Commit a bigger prank.

Get warned that you're going too far.

A. Ignore the warning.

Execute one final prank. How does it all go wrong? Replace this arc sheet with Detention and gain an enemy at d8.

B. Heed the warning.

Execute one final prank against someone who deserves it. *Who is it and why?*

Gain a prankster collaborator at d8. Once per session, roll their pool to create an elaborate Rube Goldberg machine, or lure an unsuspecting rube to a specific place.

The Delicacy

Discover a human delicacy (it doesn't have to be food!) and fall in love.

Go overboard.

Be confronted about your obsession.

- A. Rein it in (gain **Moderation** sticker).
- B. Let it get out of control. *What problem does this create?* Gain or advance a d4 enemy, and gain the **Excess** sticker.

The mistake

Approach a situation with bravado

Establish stakes.

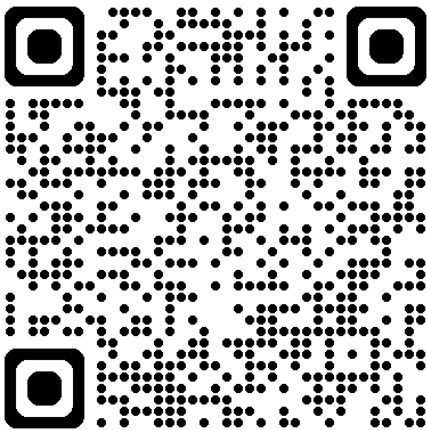
Attempt it, and screw up.

Brush yourself off and make amends.

Appendix II: Resources

Music

Check out the official Glorydays soundtrack, full of period-appropriate pieces. It's split into three sub-playlists by mood, or check out the main list for 100 songs you might hear on the radio in 2003.



<https://alexrinehart.net/glorydays/music>