

Quinn Stiefbold Playwriting Sampler

Table of Contents

Roll for Initiative 2

A group of high school seniors spend their free time playing a game of Dungeons and Dragons. As the strained interactions of a crumbling friendship bleed into the game, the game ceases to be an escape from their problems and becomes something more sinister. Desmond needs the game to be real, Charlie and Nyla need the game to discover themselves, Rory needs the game to have friends, and DM may not be who he says he is. Ultimately, the world they have built crumbles around them, and they are left to figure out what is real and what is not.

The Wayfarer's Haven 9

The Wayfarer's Haven is a homey shop that provides what people need for strange prices. The proprietor, Elina, appears as a gentle soul who has others' wellbeing in mind. Her one companion is the only returning customer, a woman named Catori. Over the course of the play, Catori peels back the mystery surrounding Elina as the shop threatens to collapse in on itself.

Confessions of a Horizontal Hourglass 19

In a world populated by superbeings, two corporations arose to control the fights of these beings. The Perdion Institute trains superheroes to defend the city; Vivi Incorporated organizes supervillains to attack the city's wealthiest members. Sevin, a superhero with the ability to stop time, can't help but feel that her work isn't justified, and that there may be a problem in the way the system is set up. After accidentally dating her archnemesis and learning more about the so-called "villains," how can she combat a system that's become nothing but corrupt? Not to mention, the presence of a new, unaffiliated villain who doesn't just mean wealthy CEOs danger, but the city as a whole.

Roll for Initiative
by Quinn Stiefbold

CHARACTERS

DESMOND – 18, M, a senior in high school

CHARLIE – 17, F, a senior in high school, club leader, and employed part-time

NYLA – 18, F, her best friend

KAMILA – 17, F, Desmond’s best friend

RORY – 18, NB, a senior in high school, previously known as “Finn”

DM – 18, M, a senior in high school or an interdimensional being

WOLFGANG – M, Desmond’s DnD character, Half-Orc Fighter, party leader

MAEVE – F, Charlie’s DnD character, Tiefling Bard

IRIS – F, Nyla’s DnD character, Half-Elf Cleric, married to Maeve

AELLA – F, Kamila’s DnD character, Air Genasi Rogue

SAWYER – NB, Rory’s DnD character, Human Warlock, newest party member

NPCs – M/F/NB, all of the characters played by DM throughout the game

A NOTE ON CASTING

This cast should be diverse – in concept, Desmond is white, Nyla and DM are black, Kamila is of Asian heritage, and Rory is Latinx. However, an actor of any ethnicity may play any role. This play can be done with the first six characters doubling as the DnD characters, or with separate actors for each role. Any actor in the role of NPC should bear some physical resemblance to DM but need not be of the same gender. It is preferred that Rory is played by a nonbinary or genderqueer actor. Other characters may be played by actors of any gender.

SETTING

*Fall of 2017 – Spring of 2018, Rory’s basement.
A fantasy world of their own creation.*

Act 1**Scene 1**

Show begins in blackout. In the dark we hear:

DM

Alright gang, time to roll some initiative.

The sound of dice clattering. There are exclamations, some of excitement, some of dissatisfaction, and one very distinctive 'Fuck.' The following dialogue should happen almost all at once, taking no more than six seconds total)

KAMILA

18!//

NYLA

//Twenty-fucking-two guys!//

CHARLIE

//13?

DM

Finn?

RORY

Guess.

CHARLIE

Oh no, Finn.

RORY

Yeah, that's a two minus two for zero.

DM

So Iris is going to start us off with –

Lights up on the stage. A party of warriors stands surrounded by 4 NPCs dressed in matching uniforms that give off an evil vibe.

IRIS

Sacred Flame!

MAEVE

Keep one alive for questioning.

AELLA

Sawyer, move!

Aella shoves Sawyer away from an enemy sword.

AELLA

Ow, fucking hell.

The characters onstage continue to fight. There is a clear order to who takes actions and when: Iris, Aella and NPCs simultaneously, Maeve, and finally Sawyer. Two of the NPCs fall, followed by Aella.

MAEVE

Iris, Cure Wounds!

From offstage a distant war cry is heard, and Wolfgang enters. He wields two swords and helps Sawyer take out the remaining NPCs. Iris heals Aella and Maeve pulls out a ukulele.

AELLA

That hurt like a motherfu – Wolfgang?

WOLFGANG

Hey.

IRIS

Hi. Since when are you back?

SAWYER *(whilst looting the bodies)*

Yeah. How's that leg again?

WOLFGANG

Never better. Those clerics know what they're doing. Reattached it like nothing ever happened.

IRIS

And you found us how?

WOLFGANG

Luck of a hero, I suppose. Maeve, play some healing for Aella.

MAEVE *(singing and playing)*

Sawyer better split that fucking loot up or I'll set a newly healed Aella loose on them.

Maeve's ukulele continues playing as the lights on the party fade and focus comes to a group of teens sitting around a table. In front of them are various papers, binders, and dice boxes. If it is possible, DM should be facing the audience.

DM

The search party eliminated, you return to your slumber. And that's where we'll stop.

KAMILA

What? Come on, Desmond literally just got here.

DM

And told me he couldn't stay long.

Desmond stands up, balancing himself on his crutches; his right leg is broken.

DESMOND

Yeah, sorry guys. Dad's orders. First day back at school tomorrow. He didn't even want me coming for half an hour.

CHARLIE

Yeah, I know that feeling. DM, I've got bad news about scheduling for next week.

DM

Really? Fine, let me get the schedule board. Desmond, don't leave until you've marked in when you're free.

DESMOND

Yeah, yeah. I know.

DM exits.

CHARLIE

Desmond come here how've you been debate hasn't been the same without you.

DESMOND

Sorry dude it's been a bit touch and go for a while.

KAMILA

But you're back now, right? No more dumb hospital shit?

DESMOND

Well...

NYLA

I'm sorry, I'm still confused. Why did you have to miss so much for a broken leg? Like that's a pretty quick trip. When I broke my arm, they didn't make me stay for a month.

DESMOND

A beat.

KAMILA

Sometimes it's like that, Nyla. Don't ask rude shit.

NYLA

He's my friend. I'm asking because I'm worried.

CHARLIE

Guys...

DM reenters with a board.

DM

Desmond goes first so he can leave, then the rest of you fight over it. I'm still free always so I think it's mostly on Charlie.

Desmond moves to the board and begins marking down his free time.

CHARLIE

I can go last – do you mind Nyla?

NYLA

Take your time.

RORY

Hey. Friends. Has anyone started the project for Rimbach?

KAMILA

Shit, is that due soon?

CHARLIE

Two days. I finished yesterday but it needs some work. You have a question?

RORY

Um, yeah. What does it mean when it says 'Consider the analyses we've used in class and take into account multiple perspectives'? It's physics. Why are there multiple perspectives to consider?

CHARLIE

I got you. Do you have your book?

RORY

In my room.

*The two exit. Kamila, Nyla, and DM stand awkwardly for a beat.
Just as Kamila decides to move to Desmond:*

DM

Kamila, can we talk about your character? It's feeling a little underdeveloped.

KAMILA

How so?

DM

It's been a year and Aella isn't arcing. She's not that different from when we first met her and it's getting a little boring.

KAMILA

And?

DM

The game's not just about fighting, it's about people. What's everyone's story, how does everything connect, where did they come from and where're they going. That's what makes this roleplay.

NYLA

It does feel like you're avoiding it.

KAMILA

I'm not avoiding it. Nothing's happened yet to cause her to change. Also, she stopped trying to kill the party members every night, so I feel like that's a pretty big improvement.

DM

It doesn't have to improve her, just develop her. Why don't we meet privately this week to talk about what might help move her along? You had some great ideas when we started out and we're at a good point to work on something.

KAMILA

(a beat)

Sure. Just choose a time off my schedule when no one else's free.

Kamila immediately walks to the scheduling board where Desmond is finishing. The two talk amongst themselves while she marks her own schedule. Rory and Charlie reenter.

RORY

Desmond, your dad started flashing the headlights at the windows.

DESMOND

Fuck, I'm coming. Kamila?

KAMILA

Coming.

Desmond and Kamila exit. Charlie consults a well-worn daily planner to fill out her free time. It's a painstakingly slow process, and she barely has more than an hour here and there, at fairly strange times of night. She has six hours on Sunday.

DM

Rory, text me a pic of the board? I have to run to a meeting.

RORY

This late? For what?

He's already gone.

RORY

Fucking asshole. *(yelling up to him)* Yeah I'll text it to you. Sometime. Eventually.

DM

(from offstage) Today, Finn.

RORY

Ugh. So demanding, but I can't say no. He's too pretty.

CHARLIE

(without looking up) Speak for yourself.

NYLA

You're biased, shut up. Finn, you submitted applications yet?

RORY

Fuck.//

CHARLIE

//Fuck! *(she hurriedly removes some of the free time she had before)*

NYLA

Don't tell me even you're behind.

CHARLIE

Mom added a new category of schools so now I have a billion more essays to write.

NYLA

Gross.

Hurry up.

CHARLIE

Make me.

Nyla and Charlie play-wrestle for a moment, grab their bags, and exit with Rory. DM enters and begins pushing furniture out of the way. Rory and Charlie enter, help push the set away, and the three take their seats at the table.

The Wayfarer's Haven
by Quinn Stiefbold

CHARACTERS

ELINA – 20s, F, proprietor of the Wayfarer's Haven

CATORI – 20s, F, returning customer, follows her own rules

JACK – late-20s, M, ELINA's older brother, strikes an intimidating figure

ENSEMBLE – rotating cast of customers who come to the store

SETTING

A place in between space and time.

SUMMARY

The Wayfarer's Haven is a homey shop that provides what people need for strange prices. The proprietor, Elina, appears as a gentle soul who has others' wellbeing in mind. Her one companion is the only returning customer, a woman named Catori. Over the course of the play, Catori peels back the mystery surrounding Elina as the shop threatens to collapse in on itself.

CONTENT WARNINGS

Blood, moments of intimacy.

ADDITIONAL NOTES

// indicates that lines should be jumped or overlapping

A character name followed by no words indicates a nonverbal response.

Scene VI

ELINA sits on the floor, working on a large jigsaw puzzle. Her movements are languid and slow, and she studies each piece carefully before attempting to place it. The store is half as empty as it was before.

CATORI slips in, not through any visible door, apparently unnoticed. She looks at the real doors to the store. Trying to open one, it is locked. She looks for a place to put the bags of merchandise. Eventually, she plops down beside ELINA and picks up a puzzle piece.

ELINA

Put it back.

CATORI

What?

ELINA

Please don't touch – I can't. Sorry.

(complete emotional 180)

How are you? Anything I can do for you?

CATORI

Are you serious?

ELINA

Did something happen.

CATORI

Did something? You were hurt! You passed out, and your store spat me out.

ELINA

That doesn't sound right.

CATORI

Th? Elina, look around you!

ELINA

What about it?

CATORI

Everything's gone! I –

Elina. What's the last thing you remember?

ELINA

That's a strange question.

CATORI
Answer it.

ELINA
I helped a young hero. They needed a sword.

CATORI
When did you last see me?

ELINA
I, uh. Oh! I gave you what you needed.

CATORI
No, I was here when the hero was.

ELINA
No you weren't.

CATORI
I *was*.

ELINA
(*forceful yet smiling*)
You haven't been back since then.

The store rumbles slightly.

CATORI
You – I. Yeah. I haven't.
Wait, no. No. Don't you dare pull this shit with me.

ELINA
Pardon?

CATORI
You're not gonna wipe my memory. I know what happened, and if you want to pretend it didn't happen, fine, but don't, don't. You can't do this to people.

ELINA
My apologies. How would you like me to behave?

CATORI
I don't know! Like a real person!

ELINA
I don't understand.

CATORI

Stop.

ELINA

Pardon?

CATORI

Quit it.

ELINA

I'm sorry? Quit what?

CATORI

That! That, that, fake, – everything.

ELINA

You're really going to have to be more specific, because I have no idea what you're//

CATORI

//You always act like nothing happened. I'm not stupid. I can see you're upset, stop, stop, stop lying to me!

ELINA

Please put those pieces down.

CATORI

Why? Does it bother you?

CATORI throws puzzle pieces at ELINA.

ELINA

Catori! What has gotten into you?

CATORI

Does this piss you off? Does it make you mad?

Come on! Yell at me, get mad! Fight back!

(Kicking at the puzzle)

Are you upset? Don't you ever lose control?

ELINA

Stop!

The room shakes and the lights flicker. It's far worse than ever before. CATORI stumbles backwards, but ELINA seems unaffected by the shaking space. ELINA takes several deep breaths and the room returns to normal.

ELINA

Please excuse me a moment. I am going to step into the back room.

(As she exits) What you want is by the register.

CATORI doesn't move until ELINA has exited completely. Once she is gone, CATORI rushes to the counter and finds the Book. Steeling herself, she tries to open it. It opens easily, and she begins to flip through the book.

The lights shut off. When they come up, ELINA sits on the floor with her puzzle, wearing a 1950s-style housedress. Her face is unscarred.

CATORI

Elina?

ELINA cannot hear CATORI. CATORI looks back at the book, the room shakes again. The lights flicker and come up to reveal JACK standing behind ELINA. As the scene progresses, CATORI finds she cannot move towards the other characters or interact with them in any way. They pay no notice to her.

JACK

Elina.

Elina.

Elina?

ELINA

What.

JACK

It's been a week.

ELINA

And?

JACK

And? Elina, where have you been?

ELINA spreads her arms wide, before returning to her puzzle.

JACK
What does that mean?

ELINA
Here.

JACK
The store? You've been sleeping here.

ELINA
Yes.

JACK
Is something – did I do something? Why won't you come home.

ELINA
Why?

JACK
Wh – Elina, this can't be healthy.

ELINA
I'm happy.

JACK
Are you?
Where's your manager.

ELINA shrugs carelessly.

JACK
Aren't there other people who work here?
Elina?
Elina, look at me when I'm talking to you.
Elina!

ELINA
Let go!

JACK
Please, let's step away from the puzzle.

ELINA
Is that what you need?

JACK

Is that? Sure, yes. I need you to step away from the puzzle.

ELINA

Of course!

What can I help you with today?

JACK

Will you come home.

ELINA

No.

JACK

B – El. Just for a little bit.

The store trembles and lights flicker.

ELINA

No.

JACK

What was that?

ELINA

Hm?

JACK

We should leave, if the building collapses//

ELINA

//I'm not leaving.

The store rumbles.

JACK

That's it. You're quitting.

ELINA

I'm what?

JACK

You can't work here anymore. It's messing with your brain.

ELINA

I don't understand.

JACK

That's okay, we'll go, we'll, we'll get you some help. But this place, it's.

ELINA

I am happy here!

JACK

Then why haven't you been home?

ELINA

Why don't you want me to be happy?

JACK

I do!

ELINA

Why are you taking this away from me?

JACK

This isn't you.

ELINA

You don't know that! You don't know anything!

JACK

Come on. Let's go.

The shop shakes and lights flicker violently as JACK wrestles with ELINA, attempting to pick her up and carry her out.

ELINA

No! Stop!

JACK

Please, Elina. Come outside, you'll see that this place isn't good.

ELINA

I've never been happy like this before!

JACK

It's hurting you, it's unstable.

ELINA

It would never hurt me.

Stop you're hurting me, Jack, ow, ow!

JACK immediately releases ELINA. She rushes away from him, hiding by the register where CATORI holds the Book.

ELINA
I hate you!

JACK
I know you don't.

ELINA
I do! Get out get out get out!

A high-pitched whine fills the shaking shop. JACK and CATORI cover their ears.

JACK
Elina –

The lights cut out with the sound of breaking glass. When the lights come up, JACK is gone. ELINA is smiling, a hand on her face. She looks around the shop, comforted. She takes the hand away from her face, revealing a mess of blood. ELINA can't seem to feel the pain. She is happy.

CATORI
Elina?

The bloody ELINA turns to CATORI, seeing her for the first time.

ELINA
Welcome to the Wayfarer's Haven. How can I help you?

Confessions of a Horizontal Hourglass

by Quinn Stiefbold

CHARACTERS

SEVIN FIDAN – early 20s, F, a superhero suffering from chronic depression

ZEMFIRA FIDAN – late 20s, F, SEVIN's older sister

DANI AMPARO – early 20s, F, a supervillain constantly mislabeled in media

JACK PERDION – 60s, M, white capitalist

POISON DROID – early 20s, M, an actual supervillain

RIGHTEOUS RAVEN – early 20s, F, a superhero that is more villain than most villains

ENSEMBLE ROLES – receptionist, news anchor, etc

A NOTE ON CASTING

Both Fidan sisters are Turkish Muslims and Dani is Latinx, and the actors in these roles should reflect these identities. With the exception of Jack Perdion, all characters can be played by actors of any gender.

SETTING

A large city.

Scene xxx: Office Lobby

The lobby is barren, featuring several uncomfortable plastic chairs, a side table, and maybe a reception desk. SEVIN sits on an end chair, hunched over a clipboard filling out forms. Unnoticed by SEVIN, DANI enters and approaches RECEPTIONIST.

RECEPTIONIST

Afternoon, Ms Kahala.

DANI

Hey Mitch. How're the kids?

RECEPTIONIST

Good, Rachel started first grade a couple weeks ago. I'll let Lyra know you're in.

DANI

Thanks.

DANI turns to pick a seat and notices SEVIN. She quickly ducks her head and tries to disguise her face as best she can. Her only seating options are the seats next to SEVIN, or the seats next to those. She sits as unobtrusively as possible, and quickly picks up a magazine. SEVIN ignores her, continuing to finish out her forms.

RECEPTIONIST

Oh – Ms Kahala – we have a new form, if you could?

DANI takes the clipboard offered. SEVIN spares her a glance but doesn't recognize her. She finishes her set of forms and brings them up to RECEPTIONIST.

SEVIN

I think that's everything? There are some that I didn't know how to answer but...yeah. That's everything.

RECEPTIONIST

Everything looks in order. If you have some time, we can process these right away, try to get you in to meet with someone in an hour or so?

SEVIN

No, yeah, yeah. I mean, I don't have anywhere to be.

RECEPTIONIST

Alright. Take a seat, and I'll let you know if we need anything else from you, Ms (he checks the clipboard) Fidan.

As SEVIN returns to her seat, she finally recognizes DANI. She sits, picking up a magazine of her own.

DANI
I'm proud of you.

SEVIN

DANI
You'll love Lyra, she's real good at her job.

SEVIN

DANI
Sevin.

SEVIN
What.

DANI
Could you at least acknowledge me?

SEVIN
Sure.

SEVIN returns to her magazine.

DANI
Sevin, please. Let's talk.

SEVIN
What's there to talk about.

DANI
A lot.

SEVIN
Like?

DANI
Like why I kept things from you. Or how you went through my stuff, or how you flipped the fuck out at me and just fucking left. Like how we feel about each other.

SEVIN

DANI
I'm worried about you.

SEVIN

I'm not yours to worry about anymore.

DANI

SEVIN

Look, I'm here, right? I'm 'getting help' or whatever it is. But maybe I shouldn't here, because this is your// therapist, and I don't want to infringe on your mental health.

DANI

//She's not *my* therapist, and she's the only one who can be trusted with superbeings, so, no, you're not infringing.

SEVIN

But *I* dumped *you*.

DANI

And?

SEVIN

What do you mean, and? You should be mad. You should hate me, want nothing to do with me. The very sight of me should make you want to kill me.

DANI

What, like some whiny straight man? I'm a fucking adult. And don't tell me what I should feel.

SEVIN

I just don't. Why're. Ugh. Nevermind.

A beat.

DANI

I don't think I'm capable of hating you.

SEVIN

That's not healthy.

DANI

Neither is hating someone to the point of violence!

SEVIN

I'm not saying you would be violent, but// that you'd feel like you should

DANI

//Why do you care so much about how I should feel anyway?

SEVIN

DANI

SEVIN

Sorry.

A beat.

DANI

I know it might be a touchy thing for me to bring up right now, but. Between the news reports and everything, I really am worried about you.

SEVIN

What news reports?

DANI

You haven't seen any? I mean, you gotta know what they're saying.

SEVIN

I try to avoid listening to what they think of me.

DANI

Perdion made a public appearance. They're spinning a story that a supervillain has you hostage somewhere.

SEVIN

Wonder how they came up with that idea.

DANI

I thought you might've told someone about me, but you didn't. I thought maybe I'd see you on the next raid, but you weren't there. Hell, I thought I'd at least see you on TV, but all I get is people saying they don't know where you are. What the fuck is going on?

SEVIN

They've never made this big a deal out of it before.

DANI

Do you not remember last time?

SEVIN

Okay, but that was after several weeks. It's been only a couple days.

DANI

It's been months!

SEVIN

Oh.

DANI

You okay?

SEVIN

But even if – I told Perdion what's up.

DANI

You did?

SEVIN

Yeah. I quit.

DANI

You quit?!

SEVIN

Yeah.

DANI

I didn't know you could do that. Actually, no, I'm pretty sure there's something in the bylaws that says you can't do that.

SEVIN

What can they do?

DANI

A lot! No one knows who you really are, and they can disappear you if they want. Sevin, they control our lives, they own your apartment, they pay you, all of your life is under their control.

SEVIN

And so what if they do?

DANI

Sevin...

There's a crash from behind the reception desk. RECEPTIONIST exits to investigate.

SEVIN

Do you usually have to wait this long?

DANI

I mean, sometimes. But this seems –

DANI is cut off by a horrible scream from offstage. Both women jump to their feet.

SEVIN

Get behind me.