

The Greatest Enemy of Truth



A good antagonist helps you create protagonists you give a shit about, so everyone needs to buy into the villain. Create that bad guy – The Authority – as a group at the start of the game. After you create The Authority, figure out what the world you're in is like, decide what holds your YOs together, and brainstorm a bunch of character ideas.

The Authority

You may already have an idea of the world you want to play in, and you can feel free to discuss that beforehand if you want. However, the first step you're going to take in making your ideas concrete is deciding who's going to get to play the baddie. This person is The Authority. The Authority player roleplays whatever's oppressing the kids, is responsible for starting scenes, and decides when you get to throw dice. It's a big job, but it's also a hell of a lot of fun to play the villain. By the way, you may notice that I use the term "The Authority" to refer both to the player and her character. You'll be able to figure out which I'm talking about from context.

The Authority is about power and control. It attacks freedom and joy and hates whatever the YOs love. The most

important thing when coming up with The Authority is to make something that's going to make you – the players, the people sitting around the table – furious. Brainstorm a list of the things that real-life bullies do that make your guts knot up with impotent fury. Keep this list in mind when you're deciding what The Authority will be like. If someone proposes an Authority that you don't give a fuck about, one that doesn't make you want to spit and claw and bite and fight, say so. This is true even if you're playing The Authority.

Keep in mind the scale you want The Authority to operate on. Not every oppressor controls an entire planet. It can be pretty cool if The Authority needs to hide from something more powerful than itself. You can totally do an omnipotent organization that rules every part of the YOs' lives, but the Authority can also be a criminal enterprise on the run from the law, an apparently-legitimate company that has to cover its ass, or a dirty unit in the local police force.

In order to create The Authority, you're going to be choosing stuff from lists. You can probably describe The Authority you have in mind with more than one option on the list, but only pick the one it's really about. For example, while it might be greedy and driven by fear, you gotta choose which one matters most to you as a motivation.

You don't have to follow exactly the order I have laid out below for creating The Authority. Feel free to skip anything you can't decide on right away and come back to it later. When the process is over, read what you've got out loud. You may decide to change some of your earlier choices so they work better with what your concepts of The Authority and the world have become.

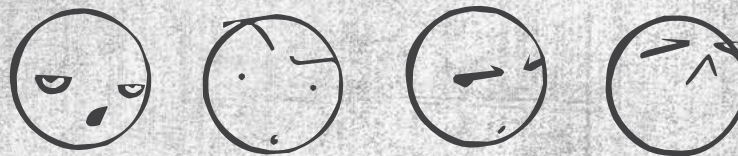
Record the choices you make while creating The Authority on the **Dystopia sheet**, which you can find in the back of the file (p. 104) and on the website (misspentyouthgame.com).

The Authority has a:

- **Name**
- **Description**
- **Vice**
- **Victim**
- **Visage**
- **Need**

Name and description

The name is the name — duh — of The Authority and the description is just a sentence or two about what this thing is. This comes first on the Dystopia sheet for ease of reference during play, but you'll probably end up naming The Authority later, once you know it better.



Vice

The Authority's **Vice** is its underlying motivation. What's at the root of all the fucked-up shit it does?

Choose one of the following:

- **Absolutism:** The Authority knows the way things ought to be done and it can't fucking stand for anything to be even the slightest bit out of place. It's driven by an obsessive-compulsive need for its rules to be followed exactly. The exact nature of these rules is far less important to it.
- **Fear:** Most bullies do what they do because they're afraid of other people having power over them. The Authority is full of bluster, but at its base it's just a scared little kid.
- **Greed:** The Authority is driven by an insatiable hunger that it can't deny. Most of the time it's out for money but it could be obsessed with power, sex, or anything else you can think of.
- **Sadism:** A sadistic Authority gets off on causing pain: physical, psychological, or both.
- **Utopianism:** A Utopian Authority thinks it knows what's best for you and it really believes whatever fucked-up scheme it has will make the world a better place.

Victim

The **Victim** is whatever The Authority is killing, consuming, ruining, perverting, or feeding on.

Choose one of the following:

- **Freedom:** Freedom of choice, speech, religion, the press, movement: all of these things and more are anathema to The Authority.
- **History:** This is the kind of Authority who publishes history books that say America was this big empty wasteland waiting for white people to come and build strip malls.
- **Humanity:** It chews up people somehow: kills them, shreds their sanity, enslaves them, and so on.
- **Nature:** The Authority commits crimes against nature, the world, animals, plants, and natural processes.
- **Progress:** They want to stop technology from getting out of their hands or prevent social change. Maybe the wrong people are getting away with kissing each other, or The Authority is wigged out that people are able to edit their own genes.



Visage

The **Visage** is the form The Authority takes. The face it wears tells you what you need to do to attack it directly.

Choose one of the following:

- **Corporate:** The Authority is a business, big or small. Could be anything from a street gang to an interdimensional megacorp. Whatever the scale, it's got one reason for being: make it for a dollar and sell it for two.
- **Personal:** It's just one guy, someone with personal magnetism and a vision.
- **Religious:** It has a direct line to God, or Heinlein, or Adam Smith, or whoever. The Authority operates on unquestioned received wisdom and sees disagreement as moral failing.
- **State:** The Authority is the holders of "legitimate" reins of power or, from another perspective, the group of bandits you've chosen to let bleed you slowly.
- **Systemic:** A process, a culture, a civil paranoia, a life-defining test regimen, etc. Since it's got no face to spit in and no headquarters to stinkbomb, this Authority can be very difficult to directly confront.



Need

In order to be interesting, characters must want things. The Authority is a character, and its **Need** is what it wants.

The Need is a sentence or two that says what The Authority desires and what it would do to the world if the YOs weren't there to stop it. It's important that this not be something passive. "Things will stay like they are" is a terrible Need, but it's one that I see people try to pass off on me all the fucking time when I'm playing with them. How the hell are you going to motivate The Authority, roleplay it, or — as YOs — fuck with it if all it wants is for nothing to happen? The Need is the sword hanging over the YOs' heads. If they fail, something terrible is going to happen and it'll be their fault. Give the Need teeth — sharp, jagged ones.

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Example: The Authority

Brainstorming

From our brainstorming we realize we want an Authority that is really helpful but that punishes you terribly if you step out of line even a little bit. The hypocrisy of a thoroughly violent villain that yammers incessantly about taking care of its people really engages me, so I volunteer to play The Authority in this world.

Name and description

Our world is a technocratic Utopia where everything is handed to you, but where people are killed — “gentled” — when they reach the age of eighteen. The Authority is going to be named the Morpheans, the cops who keep everything running smoothly. The description is “The police force empowered to maintain the city’s peace and hunt down people who try to run from gentling.”

Vice

So what do we want the Vice to be? Considering we called it a Utopian society during our earlier chatter, Utopianism seems like a good choice. We could choose Absolutism or Sadism. They’re certainly going to be hurting people and they have rules they would be insistent on seeing followed to the letter. After we discuss these options, we decide we’re

still really most interested in Utopianism, and the other stuff will be flavor.

Victim

Now, what’s the Victim? What’s The Authority preying upon? This isn’t immediately obvious. They kill people and they control almost all aspects of the society, so both Humanity and Freedom work well with the idea we have. We discuss which of those motivates and upsets us more and decide that we want the focus of the game to be on the loss of life, so Humanity is the Victim.

Visage

For Visage, you could argue that at root our game is about a Systemic Authority that uses the Morpheans as its pawns. But since we’re really interested in the Morpheans being our primary baddies, and they’re the cops, we decide State makes the most sense.

Need

Finally, the Need. This is kinda hard, too. To say “the society will stay as it is” will be passive and shitty. It’s the most obvious thing that the Morpheans want, but it doesn’t give me any direction to play them in and it lacks a sense of impending doom. We decide that there’s an underground network that doesn’t believe in gentling and smuggles kids out to a refugee settlement. I write “Identify and destroy the underground network” for The Authority’s Need.

Dystopia

You know what The Authority looks like, who it's messing with, and why. Now it's time to figure out what the world it's ruining is like. You're going to give the game a rating, create some sci-fi stuff that makes the world different, figure out what's uniting the YOs, and then brainstorm and assign some character concepts.

Rating

What kind of game do you want to have? What content should be in it and what shouldn't? Sometimes you're in the mood for a profanity-laced trip through ultraviolence, and sometimes you want something light and funny.

Decide on a **rating** for the game. For example, you might use your country's film board ratings, the video game ratings, or the television rating system. Pick the system and rating that works best for how you see the game going, then record it on the Dystopia sheet (p. 104).

Systems of Control

Now you come up with **Systems of Control**. Each YO creates a science fiction thingie that empowers The Authority. Systems of Control are what make the world you're playing in different from the one you're living in. This stuff tells you about the world, tells you exactly how The Authority fucks with your YOs' lives, and serves as a guide and touchstone

for detailing the world you play in. Each YO creates only one System of Control, and each System of Control must be different from the others. If one of the Systems of Control is removed — which can happen during play — the others still have to make sense on their own. Finally, these Systems of Control are also part of the endgame scoring mechanic (p. 80).

When creating Systems of Control, don't let The Authority be totally omnipotent. Create a world with wiggle room for the YOs. This is also a good time to consider what scale The Authority is operating on. Is it in control of everything? Is it a clandestine organization? Is it on the run from the law?

Systems of Control can be technological (radio frequency ID tags implanted subcutaneously at birth) or they can be social (families have been declared illegal by the government).

People sometimes get stumped when coming up with these. Offer to help out your friends when you see them struggling and ask for help when you're stuck. If someone comes up with a System of Control that's really going to ruin the game for you, let him know, but don't be a prick about it. Just calling bullshit isn't enough. At least say what you don't like about the idea. Even better, suggest a version of it that preserves the initial idea without fucking up the game for you.

What you write indicates the themes that are going to be important in your game. If there's a slave-race of aliens, your play group pretty obviously cares about bigotry. If sex is restricted — or if it's compulsory — you're going to be

dealing with love, sexuality, and maybe gender. Make sure that the Systems of Control highlight what you want the game to be about.

Finally, make sure you don't define the world to death. While it's fun to come up with tons of Systems of Control and build up a bunch of detail for the setting you're going to play in, if you lock down all of these details too early you won't have anything to create or explore in the game. Limit yourself to one System of Control per YO, and vary them so they don't just repeat or embellish one another.

When you've got these worked out, record them on the Dystopia sheet (p. 104) so people can check them out easily.

Example: Rating, Exploits, and Systems of Control

Rating

First we decide that we're going to use the US movie rating system since we all know it pretty well. We then discuss what we think will show up in the game, and decide that while there might be some nudity and sexuality, there probably won't be a lot of cursing or bloody "on-screen" violence. Still, since naked swimsuit areas mean an R rating these days, we go with R.

Systems of Control

Dave has an idea for a System of Control: Every baby born has a little stone implanted in her palm that shows how close to getting gentled she is.

Rachel then comes up with an idea for a system of control that the society provides whatever pleasure anyone could want without cost or effort, and that denying pleasure to one another is considered a deeply aberrant act. The idea is that the omnipresent access to pleasure on demand breeds complacency. Plus, the mandatory free-love thing makes it hard for people to form lasting, individual romantic relationships that might be the seed of a threat to the Morpheans' control.

Zeke wants the Morpheans to be equipped with deadly laser guns! This makes Joanna wince. She likes the trend in sci-fi lately that's moved back toward bullets, and laser guns stretch her suspension of disbelief too far. She explains this to Zeke and suggests that maybe they have a wide array of futuristic, non-lethal weapons. He likes this and suggests some possibilities, like will-sapping foam or mists sprayed into crowds that reduce the victims to states of joyful incapacitation.

Joanna starts with an idea about the hand-chips also acting as tracking devices. This is just a feature of Dave's System of Control, though. Since she's mostly interested in surveillance, she decides that there's a daily compulsory sharing ceremony, in which kids meet with randomly-assigned groups of strangers and report their movements for the past day.

Exploits

Just as The Authority has its strengths, the YOs also have advantages that they can use to smash its grip on the world. These areas of Authority vulnerability are called **Exploits**. For example, maybe genetic self-editing is a big part of youth culture. Maybe the city you live in is depopulated and big enough that there are vast areas that The Authority can't patrol. Depopulation and genetic manipulation act as a holes in The Authority's Systems of Control (p. 8): in other words, things that the YOs can Exploit to attack the bad guy.

The Authority creates the YOs' first Exploit the same way the YOs created its System of Control. Like Systems of Control, Exploits are sci-fi elements, things about the world you're playing in that are different from the one you live in. They also serve to underscore thematic elements you want to explore in the game.

After you work out what it's going to be, write it down on the Dystopia sheet too.

During play you will be writing new Exploits and Systems of Control, as well as getting rid of some existing ones. It is the balance between Exploits and Systems of Control that determines who wins at the end of your story (p. 80).

Exploit

I'm stumped on what to give the YOs for their Exploit and ask for help. Eventually we come up with the idea that the YOs live in an arcology with sectors that the Morpheans have written off as too dangerous for habitation or patrol. In these abandoned places, wild people are said to dwell. This gives the YOs a hidey-hole where Morpheans are unlikely to go. Maybe the fabled underground railroad the kids have heard about runs through there.



The clique and casting

Crows come in murders, dogs come in packs, and Youthful Offenders come in **cliques**. What kind of rebels are you going to be? Are you a band? A skate club? Rogue EMTs? What draws you together and why do you stick together? Come up with something interesting and grabby. I pretty much guarantee that if you say “classmates,” you’ll be bored. At least make them classmates that are always in detention together. Write a description of your clique on the Dystopia sheet (p. 104) and give it a name if you feel like it.

Now you’re going to start **casting**. Brainstorm a bunch of YO character concepts that should be a part of the clique. Treat it like you’re TV writers figuring out who your recurring cast should be. What “jobs” need to be filled by the group? What kinds of personalities ought to be played in order to underscore the themes suggested by the Exploit (p. 10) and Systems of Control (p. 8)? Come up with about twice as many concepts as there are YO players. The concept is best as a short, two- or three-word phrase – something flavorful, but brief. For example: “little pothead,” “genehacking genius,” “rich kid,” etc.

At some point the ideas are going to come more slowly and eventually stop. Try reading them out loud and see if anyone can think of any more. When you’re done, read all the concepts you’ve come up with aloud one more time. When you hear one you like, say so. If no one else wants it, it’s yours. If someone else does, negotiate. Consider

combining concepts, too. You can have a lot fun slapping together shit that seems really weird at first: a rockstar scientist, a badass coward, or a graffiti artist vigilante. While this is just the first seed of your character and doesn’t need to be recorded, if you want to, you can write your concepts on your **Permanent Record** (p. 105). Any unused concepts are raw material for characters played by The Authority, either as individual agents of nastiness or characters on the YOs’ side.

Once each of you has picked your concepts, it’s time to make your dude.



Example: Clique and casting

Clique

The clique we come up with is The Underground Network: a band of kids based in the abandoned parts of the city who seek out those who are about to be gentled and offer to get them to a safe home outside of the Morpheans' reach.

Casting

Our concept list is:

- ex-Morphean
- seducer/seductress to the cause
- hand-gem hacker
- basement weapons engineer
- forager
- spelunker of the forgotten city
- cult deprogrammer
- newly-liberated runner.

Some of our concepts address themes suggested by the Systems of Control and Exploits — seduction, weaponer, spelunker — and some just make sense for the world we created — ex-Morphean, forager, etc.

Zeke leaps on the idea of playing an ex-Morphean, and he especially likes the idea of one who is currently on the run after having been liberated. Dave wants to play a seducer, someone who finds people on the edge and helps them choose liberty. He thinks this would work great with the deprogrammer, but Rachel really wants to play that character so he agrees to give it up to her. She combines the deprogrammer with the person who hacks the hand-gems so that her character is a mind- and tech-hacker. Joanna loves the idea of playing a bold explorer of the lost city's depths and is already imagining her YO as a teenage-girl version of Indiana Jones.

Summary: The Authority

- Bully brainstorming (p. 3)
- Name
- Description
- Vice (choose one) (p. 4)
 - Absolutism, Fear, Greed, Sadism, or Utopianism
- Victim (choose one) (p. 5)
 - Freedom, History, Humanity, Nature, or Progress
- Visage (choose one) (p. 5)
 - Corporate, Personal, Religious, State, or Systemic
- Need: what does it want, what drives it, what happens if it wins? (p. 6)

Summary: Dystopia

- Rating (p. 8)
- Systems of Control (p. 8)
 - Sci-fi elements
 - Differences from the real world
 - Shows themes you're interested in
 - One from each YO
- Exploits (p. 10)
 - Sci-fi elements
 - Differences from the real world
 - Shows themes you're interested in
 - One, by The Authority
- Clique (p. 11)
 - What holds you together?
 - Name (if desired)
 - Description
- Casting (p. 11)
 - Two- to three-word character concepts
 - Twice the number of concepts are there are YO players
 - Choose at least one, combine two or more if you like