

detritus

a character creation game that makes you clean your room // © 2019 fenced forest media / blake s.

YOU WILL NEED

One moderately-to-severely messy room. Messier is better. Do not deliberately mess up a room in order to do this activity. Works best with a lived-in room that has a lot of things in it. (If you don't have a messy room to clean, skip to the Items list, write down 20 items you want to associate with your new character, and roll 1d20 to determine which questions they will map to. On a repeat roll, choose one from questions 21-23 to answer.)

TO PLAY

First, be sure you have a preliminary idea of what game, genre, or context your character is being created for, and keep that in mind as you proceed. Print the character sheet on the following page before beginning, but do not read it, and do not read the list of items. Alternatively, you may hand write the questions and answers.

On a day when you are able, at a time of day when you are at your best, you are going to clean your messy room.

Light some incense, smoke a bowl or have a drink, put on some music or a podcast, meditate, put on certain clothes -- whatever you do to center yourself when you do housework.

As you clean the room, set aside any small, common objects you find out of place. Do not put them away immediately; rather, place them in a container of their own to the side. Objects that are unusual, unique, or hard to describe can be ignored, or included if you don't mind your imagination having a bit more work to do. Things which might normally be thrown away should also be included. Gather as many different types of things as you can; ideally you'll want at least twenty.

Finish cleaning and organizing until your space is one you are satisfied with.

When you've finished cleaning, refer to your container of assorted items. Pull each out, one at a time, in no particular order, and arrange them in a line. Group like with like (all pens together, all forks together, etc).

Each item or set of items will be used to answer one of up to twenty-three questions. Check each item against the list on the worksheet to determine its best fitting meaning. Read these like tarot cards, they need be taken neither literally nor linearly. In turning the item into an answer, consider its physical qualities. Skim through all possibilities before determining an item is not on the list. If an item does not appear on the list, answer the question with the next item. Set the unlisted item aside until the end. When you run out of items on the list, use the unlisted items as inspiration to answer questions that have not been answered, or to inspire new facts about the character being created if the questions have been fully exhausted. If you do not have enough items to answer all the questions, answer the remaining ones on your own. If you have more items than questions, write meanings for them on the back, if you like. You can use these later to flesh out your character during play.

If you really, really, really wanna roll dice, you can use a d20 to determine the order of the questions, choosing from 21-23 on a repeat. You don't need to roll dice. But it can be fun. (If you picked from the list instead of cleaning a room, you do need to roll dice.)

Your completed worksheet will be a profile of a character which can then be used within your chosen system's character creation process. Keep it with your in-game documents, or allow your GM to pull themes from it for your character's story arc.

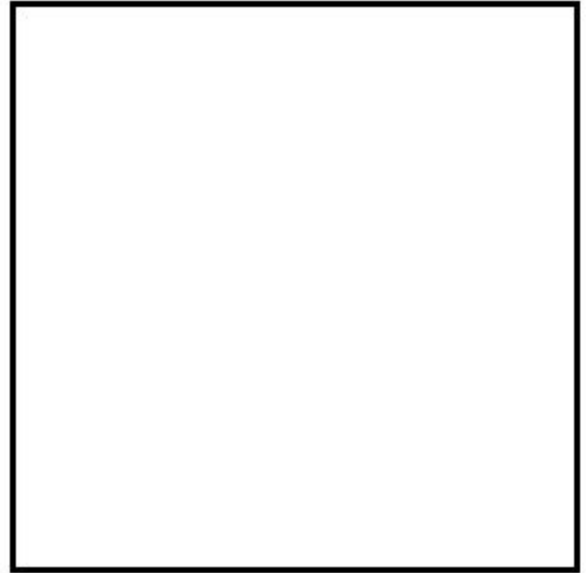
And? Your room is clean. Gotcha.

I recommend ritually showering and recentering after doing this exercise. Drink water and get something to eat.

date: _____
player: _____
character name: _____
pronouns: ____ / ____
system: _____

detritus

character sheet



Draw your character here!

1. Who or what is this character's closest companion, most trusted ally, or most essential possession?

2. What do they spend a lot of time doing or thinking about?

3. What parts of common life are they especially averse to?

4. What is the meaning or story of their name?

5. What have they lost and seek to avenge, regain, or replace?

6. What is their purpose in life, in their own eyes?

7. What is their signature tool, technique, or weapon?

8. How do they feel about romance and sexuality?

9. What is a less important or hidden interest they have?

10. What impression does their appearance give off?

11. How would this person like to be thought of by others?

12. How is this person thought of by others?

13. What places of marginalization & privilege do they occupy?

14. What is their family like? Their hometown?

15. What tropes does this character fall into?

16. What tropes does this character subvert?

17. What phase of life are they in?

18. What are they afraid of?

19. What shameful secret do they carry?

20. What were they unfairly blamed for?

21. What are they best at?

22. What is their most serious flaw?

23. What do they do for a living?

© 2019 fenced forest media

Finish any question you didn't have room for either below or on the back.

ITEMS AND THEIR MEANINGS

Adapters or chargers

a home base. a familiar place or person which gives power. restoration. rest. sleep. a hostel. a station.

Art objects

derive meaning from the object itself.

Art supplies

the means or act of creation. a creator. a creative discipline.

Bandaids

first aid. healing. attention to the needs of others. a quick fix.

Batteries

a second wind. a gift which makes the difference between life and death. the help of others.

Beads

instead of one thing, come up with a list of several different things. choose based on what the beads' colors remind you of.

Bobby pins

difficult solutions. rigidity. functionality. picking a lock.

Body jewelry

self-determination. a decorated individual. performance and pageantry.

Bones

a sibyl. a destroyer. meat. the end.

Books

a wizard or scholar. a library or librarian. books. old knowledge. reading and writing.

Bottle caps

a poor substitute. a street currency. a weighted flipping coin. a crooked gambler. pandora's box.

Bottle or can openers

bottles, empty. bottles, full. enjoyment and the potential for enjoyment. a letting out. potions. spirits.

Bracelets

shackles or claims. displaying one's wealth. self-decoration. celebration. a clanging.

Bread tags

whatever kept it together is gone now, having been thought unimportant. in that absence, everything falls.

Broken pieces of things

broken pieces of things.

Business cards

a stranger with an opportunity for you. an offer of help. a referral.

Cables or cords

important connections. the ties that feed with power.

Candles or wax

what is left after the fire. a hardening, softenable. a derivation, returnable.

Candy

sugarspun dreams and sugarcoated lies, sick from so much of it.

Chopsticks

versatility. poise. control. precision. a stake for a vampire.

Chip clips, other clamps or clips

a valve. airtight. occlusion. a tightening. conservation. a person who abhors waste.

Cigarettes or weed

an interstitial moment. a quick break. a soothing habit. psychoactive plants. smoking. a smoker.

Cleaning tools

covering up. cleaning up. tidiness, cleanliness. fixing mistakes. removing evidence. a housekeeper. a tidy person.

Clothing or accessories

essentials. outfits. wardrobe. fashion. a well-dressed person.

Coffee or bar items

productivity. morning writing. a scholarly, creative, or official type of person.

Coins

money, but not a lot. minimum wage. tips. grunt work. a person without much.

Combs or brushes

hair. self-maintenance. a nice appearance. daily care. a well-groomed and stylish person.

Condoms

sex. a sexual partner. protection. armor.

Containers

organization. compartmentalization. secrets that ought to stay kept. things in their places. a stranger taking over.

Cooking implements

home cooked meals. comfort. welcomeness. a gracious host.

Corks

a secret let loose. a seal broken. something released which cannot be returned. potions. a bottled spirit.

Corkscrews

wine. vineyards. vines. grapes. removal by force. a vintner. a sommelier.

Crystals

elemental forces. magical resonance. the aura. an energy worker.

Dead insects

ghosts and skeletons. quick lives. unwanted creatures. the casualties.

Deodorant

propriety. a poker face. good grooming. a covered stench. concealing one's nature.

Dice

the whim of fate. an unfair thing to befall you. an unearned success. a critical failure.

Disks, cassettes or cartridges

a story within a story, a game within a game. escapism. characters. a pocket world. an album. a game designer. a composer.

Dryer sheets

the person or thing that provides the small pleasant touches.

Earbuds

internal life of the mind. music. a podcast. a whispered-in ear.

Earrings

opulence, nobility, royalty, someone who acts like royalty

Erasers

a mistake that can be taken back. forgiveness. covering one's tracks.

Feathers

the archer. the fletcher. the poor bird.

Food crumbs

take what you can, it isn't much. a trail left for the lost.

Forks

a stabbing crudeness. to seize by force. eating.

Fur or hair

the lining of a nest. fibers. traces. evidence.

Game tokens or minis

strategy. positioning. tactics. war as play.

Gardening supplies

subsistence. connection to the earth. gardening. a garden. crops. fresh produce. a gardener. a farmer. a farm.

Gum or breath mints

flavor. intensity. sensation. taste.

Hair clips

setup. holding fast. standing one's ground. staying firm. a stubborn person.

Hair ties

utility. sport. work. restraint. a binding. a professional person.

Incense

prayer. offering. ritual. a ritualist, cleric, or religious leader.

Jewelry findings or broken jewelry

traveling merchant. junk shop. jewelry making. a jewelry crafter.

Keys

workspace at home. a home base. familiarity. stewardship. a groundskeeper or janitor.

Keychains or lanyards

personal belongings one carries. keeping track. important things. keys. a manager. an event organizer.

Knives or other weapons

knives. the tarot suit of swords. combat. violence. bloodshed. a person willing to kill. a person who has killed. a murder.

Lids to things

diplomatic solutions. keeping something from rotting. a quiet or secretive person.

Lighters

fire. inspiration. heat. light. a limited source.

Lip balm

balm. the love of others. a softness. a girl.

Lotion

responsibility in care. tender handling. a caregiver. the mom friend.

Lozenges

take medicine and push on. a troubled singer. sickness. the throat.

Magnets

polarity. attraction to the opposite. revulsion to the like. a relationship of complementary opposing forces.

Makeup or nail polish

theatre and dance and fashion. queerness most bright and fantastic. femininity for all. a peacock.

Makeup brushes

refinement of skill. detail. glamour. an exceedingly put-together person.

Medical equipment, syringes, medications

medicine. medical care. severe injury or illness. chronic illness or disability. a pharmacist, clinician, nurse, or doctor.

Nails

self-defense. weapons. claws. scratching an itch.

Necklaces

ornament. pomp. keeping something close to one's heart. a lover.

Needles (sewing, knitting)

piercing. a pinprick. a needle. sewing. a sleeping curse.

Noodles

starvation. dereliction. decay. abandonment. forgetting. a forgotten or abandoned person. a starving person.

Paper

a blank slate of unseen source. pieces of information. a collector of data.

Paper clips

malleability. grouping. material. metal. an office.

Pencils

art. drawings. drawing. an artist. an architect or designer.

Pens

writing. poetry. fiction. a poet. a novelist.

Perfume

scent and memory. overpowered. recognition. perfume. a parfumer.

Pet supplies

an animal. a pet. a service animal. a talking animal.

Photos

photographs. photography. a photographer. pictures. portraits. illustrations. likenesses. faces. visual representation.

Pills

chronic illness. medical conditions. a chronically ill person. palliatives. pharmacy.

Pins or buttons

use the pictures or text on the buttons to determine a set of answers.

Pipes

daydreaming. an afternoon break. sitting by the fire. watching a sunset. a grandparent.

Plant parts (not food)

herbs. tea. plants. a witch.

Razors

sharp separation. severing. clearing. cutting. a barber. a surgeon.

Religious or ritual items

prayer. divine intervention. a person of faith.

Ribbons or bows

pastels. frills. softness. pretty things. a young child.

Rings

promises. worth. a wedding. a handfasting.

Rubber bands

a slingshot. tension. fastening. gathering. a revolutionary leader.

Safety pins

punk. DIY. mitigated danger. someone with an edge.

Scissors

schism. separation. divisive events. a sharply polarizing figure.

Screws or bolts

an integral part. a load-bearing connection. counterclockwise. clockwise. an engineer.

Seashells

the beach. the sea. seafood. fishing. a fisher. a merperson.

Seasoning or sauce packets

spices. food. flavor. a cook.

Seeds

gardens. cultivation. potential. a secret kept. pregnancy or germination. a baby.

Shot Glasses

drinking. a great party. a night out. bars. a heavy drinker.

Soap or shampoo

ritual cleansing. deep cleaning. hygiene. upkeep. a bath.

Spoons

energy. disability. ability. capacity. measurement.

Sporks

versatility at the expense of dignity. someone who tries to be everything and ends up not doing much.

Sports or fitness items

brute strength. fitness. sports. martial arts. a fighter or athlete. a strong person.

Stamps

credentials. invoices. the mail. labeling. accountancy. a clerk.

Staples

security. fastening. a circus or sideshow performer. a carpenter.

Stickers

make your indelible mark, little one.

Stones

rigidity. hardness. weight. ancient history. fossils. gems. an archaeologist. a paleontologist. a geologist. a gemologist.

Straws

selectivity. a pipeline. a steady stream. advantage. a simple machine. a merchant. a restaurant.

String or thread

ties. ligature. knots. strings. to tie. to sew. to mend.

Sunglasses

summer, warmth, protection, bluster.

Tacks

caltrop. notice. display. a comfortable living space. a dangerous tool.

Tampons or pads

blood. puberty. birth. pregnancy. a month. a cycle. dysphoria.

Tape

tight binding. romance. marriage. adoption. attachment.

Tea

meditation. contemplation. ritual. repose. a quiet day reading. study.

Ticket stubs

sentimentality. memories of good times past. concerts. dating. friendships. theatre. music. a fan or performer.

Toothbrushes

mornings. evenings. maintenance. health. the teeth and mouth. a dentist.

Toothpicks or floss

deep and thorough criticism. calling the unspoken into the light. extirpating the rotten. aerating the soil.

Tweezers

perfectionism. aesthetics. nitpicking. obsession and compulsion.

Twist ties

tension. torsion. wire. flexibility. a seal.

Tools

utility. appropriateness. things that work. tools.

USB drives

reference. a library. knowledge. information.

Washers or nuts

a steadying thing. a necessary part. that which holds firm. they who hold another firm.

Watches or compasses

time. direction. flashy wealth. reliability. glamorous adventure. a dapper lesbian.

Wet wipes

preparedness. gear. grooming. cleaning.