



PREMISE
WEIRD
FICTION

100
PLOT
IDEAS

DANCING LIGHTS PRESS

PREMISE: WEIRD FICTION

100 Plot Ideas

Dancing Lights Press

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WHAT IS A PREMISE?

A premise is the heart of a story summed up in a single sentence. It should provide a general overview of what happens, without spoiling anything. A good premise contains, explicitly or by implication, four key elements of the story: who the protagonists are, what the goal of the story is, the sorts of obstacles that need to be overcome in order to achieve the story goal, and who the antagonist is.

Each premise provided in this book is more than just a story hook or adventure seed. It is the beginning of a story, your story, that you can flesh out and develop to suit your specific needs. These can be used again and again by varying the details, changing the four key elements, and altering details like locations, themes, and the rewards and complications that stem from whether or not the protagonists can achieve the story goal.

Protagonists

The assumption is that you already have player characters created, if not fully established. For that reason, elements of the premise should be tweaked to suit the abilities and personalities of the protagonists and not the other way around. Suggested character capabilities that could be useful in completing the story goal may be listed, but if no protagonist possesses these traits then a supporting character should be inserted to compensate. Likewise, ties to background elements can either be retconned into a protagonist's history, or given to a supporting character who can either ask for the protagonists' help, or hire them to pursue the story goal on their behalf, as appropriate.

Story Goals

The story goal is the objective that the protagonists must achieve in order to successfully complete the adventure. It's how your audience, whether they are readers, viewers, or players, knows that the story is over. The purpose of the story goal in a tabletop roleplaying game is to keep the players focused and their protagonists on the right track. In a simplified 3-act structure, Act 1 will have the protagonists learning about the story goal and deciding to pursue it. Act 2 will present a series of obstacles that need to be overcome in order to accomplish the story goal. Act 3 will have the protagonists facing the final obstacle, defeating the antagonist, achieving the story goal, and earning their rewards.

Obstacles

Achieving the story goal shouldn't be easy. The protagonists will need to overcome an escalating series of obstacles. These might be linked thematically, or somehow related to the nature of the goal that needs to be achieved. Start with a simple obstacle early in the story, something that plays to the protagonists' strengths and will be relatively easy to defeat. Then think of the hardest thing possible, pushing the limits of the protagonists' capabilities, and make that the final obstacle. Flesh out the middle with obstacles that are increasingly more

difficult, bridging the journey from beginning to end.

Antagonists

Each antagonist should have a personal goal that they are trying to achieve, as well as a motivation for pursuing that goal. This might place them in opposition to, or into competition with, the protagonists. If the premise fits with an established antagonist that you have used in previous stories, you should use them. Tweak other elements of the premise to fit their personalities and abilities. Otherwise, you can create a new antagonist that suits the particulars of your desired story and overall campaign or series needs.

An aging town drunk makes the protagonists an offer that could be incredible if it's actually true..

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have personal goals that are difficult to accomplish. What the town drunk — the antagonist in this story — is offering is a solution to a major obstacle that the protagonists have been unable to overcome.

Story Goal

The objective is to get the protagonists to make a decision. Proving the truth of the offer or achieving their personal goals are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have chosen to accept or reject the offer, the truth will be revealed and the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on belief and acceptance. The least difficult challenge will be determining that the antagonist is sincere and serious about the offer. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include verifying the claims, investigating the antagonist's background, and testing the claims. The final obstacle should be confronting the antagonist to accept or reject the offer.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to convince the protagonists to accept the offer. Their motivation is that they are living under a curse. They received a similar offer in the past, and got what they thought they wanted, but there were tragic and unintended consequences. If the protagonists take the deal the antagonist will be free from the curse. The protagonists will get what they want, but it will result in tragedy for them as well. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist, if the town drunk is a recurring background character.

02

After becoming stranded in a remote location, the protagonists encounter a group of people who refuse to speak or write.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have a reason to be traveling to someplace far from the nearest town or outpost. It doesn't matter if they're hiking in the deep woods, sailing the open ocean, or flying a spaceship into an uncharted galaxy.

Story Goal

The objective is for the protagonists to get away. Discovering the full truth behind the location and saving the silent people are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have found a way back from the remote location, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation and exploration. The least difficult challenge will be establishing that they people can communicate, but choose not to. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include finding evidence of earlier inhabitants, discovering where the silent people came from, and facing the dangers generated by their desires. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the protagonists make their escape.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to keep the protagonists and the silent people stranded. Their motivation is unknown, but likely based in cruelty and their own sadistic amusement. Whatever the protagonists openly ask for, wish for, or express a desire for, the opposite will happen. If they wish for rain, it will be hot and dry. If they need to repair something, the means to repair it will disappear or be destroyed. The silent people only discovered this after their on means for escape were destroyed. This premise will only work with either an unfamiliar antagonist.

03

At an opulent party some time in the past, a mysterious guest is from the protagonists' future.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have found their way into the past. They might be time travelers, or have walked into some supernatural event. Someone should know something about the time period, and even some of the famous and notable people at the party.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover the antagonist's plan. Getting back to their time period or fulfilling some nominal reason for being at the party are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have dealt with the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation and action. The least difficult challenge will be in discovering the antagonist learning they are from the protagonists' future. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include not being discovered as time travelers, protecting the timeline, and learning the full scope of the antagonist's plan. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the protagonist foil the plan.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to kill the protagonists. Their descendants will be responsible for something terrible in the antagonist's time. The antagonist's motivation is to prevent a future tragedy. Doing so in the past somehow prevents collateral damage in the present of the antagonist and protagonists, because none of them belong in this time. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

A supporting character loses a bet and agrees not to perform some ordinary task for a year, but the longer she goes without speaking the more reality changes.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have an established supporting character with some sort of habit or hobby that is a distinguishing trait. What she gives up will drive the theme and obstacles of the story.

Story Goal

The objective is stop the changes to reality. Fully comprehending why this is happening and saving the supporting character are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have released the character from the bet so she can resume the prohibited behavior, reality begins to correct itself and the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on observation and discovery. The least difficult challenge will be connecting the changes to the supporting character's behaviors. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include realizing that things would not have happened if the supporting character had done what they usually do, dealing with the ramifications of changes, and testing their theories. The final obstacle should be releasing the supporting character from the bet and convincing them to resume their normal behaviors.

Antagonists

The antagonist in this premise is the concept of destiny. By changing their behavior, the supporting character isn't in the right place at the right time. Their actions are supposed to prevent some massive tragedy, and even small variations from their routine will have noticeable effects.

A corporate executive is haunted by the ghosts of dead employees, and the protagonists are forced to investigate.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have some connection to the executive. They might be a current or former employer, or a friend or relative. If there are deceased supporting character with a connection to the exec, they can be among the ghosts.

Story Goal

The objective is to see the executive brought to justice for what they did. Getting rid of the ghosts and determining whether the protagonists are ghosts or not are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have found a way to punish the executive, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be determining that the ghosts are out for revenge. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include discovering what the executive did, linking his actions to the deaths, and finding the evidence necessary to prove it. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the executive as they are brought to justice, allowing the ghosts to go to their final rest.

Antagonists

In this premise, the ghosts will act as the antagonists in the early part of the story. They will harass and attack the executive as well as the protagonists if they attempt to help them. Once the truth is discover, the executive will be revealed as the true protagonist. The ghosts are they victims out for justice. The executive's motive is to not have their past crimes discovered, while evading both earthly and metaphysical punishment for their deeds.

After a respected surgeon suddenly becomes an alcoholic, the protagonists have to discover the reason why.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have some connection to the surgeon. They may be friends or colleagues, or the surgeon might have been slated to operate on a protagonist or supporting character when their impairment is discovered.

Story Goal

The objective is learn the surgeon's secret. Figuring out why this has happened and finding some sort of solution are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have determined what has driven the surgeon off the deep end, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out that something happened. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include learning what the surgeon has been doing since their discovery, figuring out their master plan, and sorting out a way to stop them. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the surgeon where they reveal the full truth.

Antagonists

The surgeon functions as the antagonist in this scenario, even though they should be portrayed as a tragic figure. They recently had some sort of accident, appropriate to the setting or the themes used in the story. Since then, they can see how and when their patients are going to die. They have tried to do things to change the future, but always fail. This means that they know at the start of an operation whether or not their patient is going to survive. They have started drinking because this knowledge is driving them insane. To try to break the cycle, they have recently decided to try killing people who are destined to live, rather than saving people slated to die.

The protagonists are on an ocean voyage, where an unusual salesman wants to sell them something before they make shore.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have some excuse to be traveling. It can be personal or professional in nature. They might all have the same reason, or individual reasons. There ought to be specific things each protagonist is looking forward to at their destination.

Story Goal

The objective is for the protagonists to realize what is happening. Dealing with the antagonist and the hazards of the ocean voyage are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have discovered the truth, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be resisting the sales pitched. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include realizing that something is off, noting similarities between the other passengers, and picking up on the recurring theme of the items the salesman is pitching. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the salesman as he explains the reality of the situation.

Antagonists

For this premise, the salesman acts as the antagonist, even though his motives are benevolent. All of his various wares have to deal with life and death — travel insurance policies that are good as long as the protagonists sign before they reach shore, custom life vests, miracle herbal health supplements, and so on. The salesman also tries to engage them in conversations about things they regret, things they might have done differently in the past, and things they've done to help other people.

The ship is sailing into the afterlife, and the protagonists are dead. The goal of the salesman is to save their souls, getting them to repent so he can absolve their sins. At the end of the story you can have the protagonists wake up from a dream, if you don't want to actually kill them all off.

One of the protagonists begins seeing their own ghost in the mirror, and has to figure out what's going on.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any special sort of skills or a particular type of background. If they have things to feel guilty about, or suspect that there's something they are being warned about, that can be leveraged for additional suspense.

Story Goal

The objective is for the protagonists to avert a tragedy. Learning the source of the ghost or why they are appearing are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have stop the event that is already unfolding, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out that the ghost is trying to communicate. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include working out that time travel is involved, grasping that they need to intervene in some upcoming disaster, and figuring out a plan of action. The final obstacle should be the action required to change the future and avert the death of the protagonist having the vision.

Antagonists

For this story, the protagonist's ghost acts as the antagonist. They are destined to die soon, and have astral projected into the past somehow to warn their younger self of the events leading up to their death. Once the protagonist's death has been averted, the ghostly antagonist will cease to exist.

On a retreat in a remote location, the protagonists and supporting characters are visited by aliens who grant them incredible powers.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have a reason to be in a remote location. It might be for business or pleasure, personal or professional reasons. It's implied that the setting is one where aliens and powers don't exist, at least not openly.

Story Goal

The objective is for the protagonists to survive their own delusions of grandeur. Dealing with the existence of aliens and rationalizing how physics-defying powers work are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have figured out that the powers will be problematic, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on discovery. The least difficult challenge will be working out what the protagonists can do with the powers. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include figuring out how to communicate with the aliens, determining that some of the supporting characters will misuse their powers, and discovering what the aliens want. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist prior to the aliens revealing the truth.

Antagonists

For this premise, the antagonist is a supporting character or group of supporting characters who wish to misuse their newfound powers for personal gain. They will be figuring out how to get back into the world to exploit their abilities, and will stop the protagonists if they oppose them. At the end, you can have the aliens remove everyone's powers and deliver a moral to the story, or use this as the launching point for some sort of science fiction or superhero series.

This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists discover that the janitor in the building where they work is really an alien spy.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have a regular office or some other building that they visit frequently. It works best if aliens aren't an established part of the setting. Being in a place where their might be government, industrial, or scientific secrets is a big help.

Story Goal

The objective is for the protagonists to scare the alien away. What the aliens are planning and what information the spy is trying to learn are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have made it clear to the spy that their cover is blown, the alien will flee and the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be discovering that the janitor isn't human. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include watching the janitor, figuring out what they're up to, and not getting caught. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to see how far humans have progressed with a specific idea or piece of technology. Their motivation might be to see if the humans are ready to join the rest of the universe, to determine if they can repel an invasion, or to decide if they're too dangerous to the rest of the galactic community. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist, if the janitor has been a background character in previous stories.

11

An elderly relative of a protagonist dies in a nursing home, and leaves them a magic hand mirror.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have an elderly relative that fits the bill. An established character works best, but they can be retconned in to fit.

Story Goal

The objective is to determine what to do with the mirror. Keeping it out of the hands of the antagonist and figuring out how it came to belong to the family are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have dealt with the issue of the magic mirror, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on discovery. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out that the mirror has magical powers that only work for the related protagonist. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include evading attacks by the antagonist, researching the origin of the mirror, and learning more about the secret history of the protagonist's family. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist over the mirror.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to acquire the mirror. Their motivation is that they believe themselves to be the rightful owner of the artifact. They also wish to use the powers of the mirror for personal gain. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist, if they are an established relative of the inheriting protagonist.

12

While passing through a small town, the protagonists encounter a fellow traveler with amnesia.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have a reason to be traveling to an unfamiliar small town. It can be business or pleasure. The characters can be traveling together, or be strangers who have all stopped here randomly.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover who the traveler is. Finding out how he lost his memory and learning the antagonist's plan are secondary considerations that will be resolved as part of achieving the story goal. Once the protagonists have helped to recover the traveler's memory, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be agreeing to help the amnesiac traveler. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include figuring out that the antagonist poisoned him, determining the link between the antagonist and the traveler, and trying to locate the antagonist. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist.

Antagonists

In this premise the amnesiac traveler is secretly the antagonist. He came to town to kill someone with poison, but had an accident and was exposed to a small dose himself. This was not enough to kill him, but temporarily wiped his memory. He and the protagonists should reach that conclusion that a separate, unknown antagonist tried to kill him. His memory and his goal of killing someone will return after the protagonists have figured out that there is a poisoner on the loose. The antagonist will then have to eliminate the protagonists and possibly other supporting characters because they are now loose ends in his plan. This premise will only work with an unfamiliar antagonist.

The protagonists all meet new romantic partners, but the love interests aren't what they seem.

Protagonists

This premise suggests that the protagonists are single and looking for romantic partners. Even if they are in a committed relationship, however, it doesn't preclude other people from being interested in them. That might even add some additional wrinkles to the story.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover the truth about the romantic partners. Finding love and defeating the antagonist are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have found out the love interests' secrets, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on observation and investigation. The least difficult challenge will be accepting that these fun, attractive people are genuinely interested in them. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include spotting the mysterious man following them, learning where the love interests go, and putting together all of the clues. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist, who reveals the truth.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to field test his company's lifelike robots. Their motivation is to make a lot of money when these products become commercially available. The romantic interests who come on to the protagonists are robots, completely indistinguishable from human beings. The antagonist will be following them around, jotting down coded notes and taking pictures. His excuse if caught is that he is a private investigator, hired by the parents of the love interests to make sure they aren't getting into any trouble. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

The protagonists meet a used car salesman who claims to be a time traveler from the Old West.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have reason to meet the used car salesman. His profession can be changed to something more appropriate to the setting, but should be mundane, with connotations of being a little bit shady.

Story Goal

The objective is to help the salesman defeat the antagonist. Finding a way to get him back to the Old West and figuring out how time travel works are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have seen the antagonist taken down, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation and action. The least difficult challenge will be accepting the salesman's story that he fell asleep in a nearby cave in the 1850s and awoke in the present day. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include a gunfight with the antagonist, trying to locate the antagonist helping the salesman prepare for the confrontation. The final obstacle should be a gunfight between the protagonists and the antagonist's gang.

Antagonists

The antagonist was the arch-rival of the salesman back in the Old West. He and his gang tracked his foe to the cave in order to kill him, but found himself walking into the modern world. He discovered that his enemy had been there for several months, and was working on a used car lot. His goal of killing him has not subsided, even though the salesman now has new allies in the form of the protagonists.

The protagonists are being stalked by murderous ventriloquist dummies.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to be attending a convention of some sort. There are multiple conventions going on, including one for ventriloquists. The protagonists don't need to have any association with ventriloquism or similar vaudevillian entertainment forms.

Story Goal

The objective is to survive the weekend. Figuring out how and why the ventriloquist dummies came to life are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have made it to the end of the convention alive, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action and survival. The least difficult challenge will be avoiding the first murder attempt. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include hotel-themed obstacles, getting other people to believe them, and dealing with rampaging hordes of animated dummies. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist on the final night of the convention.

Antagonists

For this premise the antagonist is a ventriloquist's dummy housing the soul of a demon. The goal of the antagonist is to get free from their wooden prison by sacrificing the thousands of people at the convention center. To do this, it has conjured up other demons to inhabit the other dummies and assist in the slaughter. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

A wealthy woman insists that her spouse isn't dead, just hiding out in another dimension.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have some reason to be interacting with the wealthy woman. They might be called to her home for professional reasons, know her personally, or have a mutual friend who has asked the protagonists to evaluate the situation.

Story Goal

The objective is to uncover the truth. Getting the woman help or defeating the antagonist are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have discovered what is actually happening, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out that the spouse's body was never recovered, and that they disappeared under strange circumstances. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include learning that the spouse had dangerous friends, dabbled in both the occult and weird science, and had enemies that were trying to kill them. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist.

Antagonists

For this premise, the antagonist is actually the missing spouse. They found a way to fake their own death by disappearing into another dimension. While there, they have been planning a way to kill the person who is out to kill them, and have been returning to make those attempts. When the protagonists start making inquiries, they become targets as well. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists find an old camera that only takes pictures of the past, and have to figure out what to do with it.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any special skills or a particular sort of background. If anyone has an interest in photography, that will help to connect them to the plot. The camera is of a unique design that blends old fashioned aesthetics with futuristic-looking materials, and should pique the curiosity of anyone who comes across it.

Story Goal

The objective is to deal with the ramifications of the camera. Learning how it works and stopping the protagonist are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have decided whether to use or destroy the camera, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out that the camera is taking picture of what is in front of it, but a fixed number of years or decades in the past. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include experimenting with the camera, dealing with attempts to steal it, and trying to determine where it came from. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as they attempt to get the camera away from the protagonists.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to own the camera. Their motivation is to use its abilities for personal gain. They have heard of the legendary camera and know what it is, and have been searching for it all of their life. When it was finally within reach, the protagonists took it. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists are approached by a man who wants to sell them magic dust, and offers a free demonstration.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any special skills or a specific type of background. What the magic dust does should be something that appeals to the protagonists, either as a way to overcome obstacles they face with a personal goal, or as an item of interest based on their occupation or hobbies.

Story Goal

The objective is to dispose of the magic dust. Achieving their personal goals and figuring out where the dust came from are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have gotten rid of the dust, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on exploration. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out what the dust can do. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include testing the limits of its capabilities, figuring out ways to use it, and avoiding the antagonist's attempts to stop them and steal the dust. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist.

Antagonists

In this premise the antagonist is the wizard who lost the magic dust. The goal of the antagonist is to get it back before the protagonists can do too much harm with it. Their motivation is to protect civilization from this incredibly powerful and dangerous substance, which has side effect that the protagonists will not discover until it is almost too late. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

The protagonists are being watched by a homeless woman, who isn't what she seems to be.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any special skills or a particular type of background. They should be in an environment where homeless people are not uncommon, and places for the people to lurk and hide in the shadows are plentiful.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonist. Figuring out the details of the plot and understanding the complexities of the antagonist's plan are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have dealt with the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action and investigation. The least difficult challenge will be noticing that the homeless woman is present everywhere they go. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include questioning the woman, surviving an attack by the antagonist, and doing a lot of running and hiding. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as they attempt to kill the protagonists.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to kill the protagonists. They have come from the future to stop them from doing something that prevents a future evil overlord from being killed as a child. The old homeless woman is another robot sent to protect the protagonists, so that they can do the thing that prevents the evil overlord from being killed as a child. So the antagonist is actually a good guy, and the old homeless woman trying to save them is actually a bad guy. This premise will only work with an unfamiliar antagonist.

A man creates an algorithm for picking winning lottery numbers, but the protagonists learn it does far more than that.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have some connection to the man creating the algorithm. He might be a friend or family member, a coworker or a neighbor. He will invite them to try it out on a small jackpot, because he doesn't want to alert the authorities by winning too much too fast. If the protagonists take him up on his offer, they will win.

Story Goal

The objective is to shut down the computer running the algorithm. Defeating the antagonist and saving innocent people are secondary considerations that will be achieved by meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists have stopped the algorithm from running, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be connecting the times terrible things have been happening with the times the winning lottery numbers are announced. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include discovering the antagonist's existence, learning what the algorithm is really doing, and convincing other people to believe what's happening. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the protagonists attempt to shut down the computer before the next winning numbers are announced.

Antagonists

For this premise, the antagonist is a demon that has been unwittingly unleashed upon the world. The algorithm invokes ancient mathematical formulae that opens up a portal to Hell. When the algorithm's creator wins the huge super-mega-ultra jackpot, the portal will open wide and all sorts of evil will be unleashed upon the Earth. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

The protagonists join a book club with an unusual selection of reading picks.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have the sort of personalities and backgrounds that they'd join something like a book club. They might have a literary background, something that allows them to associate with people who can help their career, or it could simply be a desire to participate in a social group.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonist. Saving the lives of other book club members and understanding exactly what's going on are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have dealt with the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be connecting recent news reports about strange murders to the book club. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include researching the author, investigating the backgrounds of the other book club members, and avoiding attempts on the protagonists' lives. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to raise a demon. The book the club is currently reading contains coded phrases meant to summon dark and terrible forces. The antagonist is the leader of the book club, and the inner circle of the club is a cult. The author of the book is the international leader of the cult. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

The protagonists notice people being swallowed up by the ground, but no one believes them.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any special skills or a particular type of background. Even if they are credible and upstanding members of the community, their claims will be dismissed because they are so outlandish, and there is no evidence to back them up.

Story Goal

The objective is to rescue the missing people. Defeating the antagonist and getting other people to believe the protagonists are secondary considerations that will likely be resolved by achieving the story goal. Once the protagonists have saved the people, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be determining that there are old tunnels and caverns underneath where people have vanished. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include trying to convince others to help, preparing to go underground, and finding the pattern among who is disappearing. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist in the underground lair.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to dig out the ancient flying saucer buried under the town. They have been using the alien technology to kidnap scientists, engineers, and able-bodied people who can perform the manual labor required. Their motivation is to use the saucer to take over the world. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A scientist discovers a way to end all war, and wants to use the protagonists as his test subjects.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any special sorts of skills or a particular type of background. Being a soldier or a veteran would be interesting, but offers no advantage over being a person who has never been to war. Otherwise, they only need to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and get kidnapped.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonist. Rescuing other test subjects and blowing up the laboratory are secondary considerations that will be resolved when the story goal is achieved. Once the protagonists have dealt with the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be breaking free. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include fighting the antagonist's minions, dealing with the effects of the experiment, and finding a way out of the research complex. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as their machine is destroyed.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to end all wars. They hope to achieve this by broadcasting the traumatic experiences of war veterans into the minds of unsuspecting people around the world. Their theory is that if ordinary people experienced what soldiers go through, they would never want to inflict that trauma and misery on another person. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists are all having a hard time remembering their childhood, and have to discover why.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any special skills or a particular type of background. Their present reality can be detailed, or as vague and ill-defined as their childhood.

Story Goal

The objective is for the protagonists to realize the truth. Learning why their memories are missing and defeating the antagonist are secondary considerations that will likely be addressed by meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists have discovered what's really happening, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be realizing that none of them can remember more than a few details about their childhoods. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include researching their own histories, trying to find records or people who knew them, and avoiding attacks by the antagonist. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist where the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to create lifelike dolls that behave just like real people. Their motivation is to build a perfect world where people are nice to one another. The protagonists are some of these dolls, as are most of the supporting characters. In an ongoing series, these may not be the real protagonists, but dolls modeled after them who believe themselves to be real people. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists awaken in a cylindrical room, being antagonized by their neighbors.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have established neighbors. The relationship with them could be good, making this taunting seem like a surprising twist, or hostile, making this seem like an escalation of existing issues. Each protagonist should have some distinguishing talent or physical characteristic that makes them unique and interesting.

Story Goal

The objective is for the protagonists to escape captivity. Defeating the antagonist and stopping the larger plan are secondary considerations that will likely be achieved by meeting the main story goal. Once the protagonists have gotten free, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on escape. The least difficult challenge will be surviving the initial indignities and hardships of captivity. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include figuring out what's really happening, planning their escape, and battling the guards. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the protagonists break free.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to add human specimens to an alien zoo. They have been posing as the protagonists' neighbors for a while now, observing and determining who would make a fine addition to show off to the alien zoo's visitor. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist, of the antagonist is a recurring neighbor character.

A man claiming to be a Civil War veteran challenges a protagonist to a game of chess, and if he wins he gets their youth.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have some minimal knowledge of history and the ability to play chess. They don't need either of those if they aren't going to take him seriously. If the antagonist loses, he promises to give the protagonists everything he was. They know that he lives in a large, old house and presumably has money or objects of value.

Story Goal

The objective is to play the antagonist in a game of chess. Determining whether he's telling the truth and how he's still alive are secondary considerations that will be resolved by meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists have completed a match, or a series of matches, whether they win or lose the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on skill challenges. The least difficult challenge will be beating the antagonist in a fairly simple match, prior to the bet being placed. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include more complex moves and attempts to psych the protagonists out and distract them. The final obstacle should be last game where the stakes are highest.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to beat the protagonists in games of chess. Their motivation is to continue living. If the antagonist wins, he will look the same and remain alive. The losing protagonist will age slightly, gaining a few wrinkles or some gray hairs. If the antagonist loses, he will die and leave everything to the protagonists, including photos and proof that every story he told was true. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist, if he has been previously established to be playing chess in a public place.

After trying on some old clothes, the protagonists travel back in time and become the people who originally owned the clothes.

Protagonists

This premise requires the protagonists to have some knowledge of a past time period. It will probably be a matter of decades, possibly the generation of their parents or grandparents. They need to have some reason to be trying on old clothes, possibly going through a deceased relatives things, having fun at a vintage clothing store, or looking for costumes for a movie or play they'll be in.

Story Goal

The objective is to live a full day in the other time period. Defeating the antagonist and figuring out a reason why this happened are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have spent a full day in the past and go to sleep there, they will wake up whether they were in the present. They will still be in the clothes, moments after they left, and the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on exploration. The least difficult challenge will be adapting to the customs of the past time period. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include facing the social and cultural problems of the era, and tracking down the shop where the then-new clothes were sold. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the person who made the clothes.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to have the protagonists learn something about the past, possibly something that will help them with their personal goal, how to handle an analogous situation in the present, or simply to connect with a recently deceased person. Their motivation is cryptic, but they will know who the protagonists really are and how they got there even if they won't reveal how or why they brought them back in time. This premise will work with an unfamiliar antagonist.

The protagonists win an all-expenses-paid dinner at a very exclusive restaurant, but are startled to learn what's on the menu.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any special skills or a particular type of background. They don't even have to have entered any sort of contest, but will be told that they have won and someone must have entered their names.

Story Goal

The objective is to get out of the restaurant alive. Defeating the protagonist and exposing what's going on are secondary considerations that will likely be addressed by meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists have survived the dining experience, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on survival. The least difficult challenge will be recognizing what's happening in time. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include getting loose, avoiding attempts to murder the protagonists, and finding a way out of the building. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as they protagonists make their escape.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to cook, serve, and eat the protagonists. The elite clientele at the restaurant are cannibals. After serving the winners of free dinner a real, untainted meal and taking a photo with them for the wall, he intends to murder them for the exclusive, later seating. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist, if the chef and the restaurant have been established in previous stories.

The protagonists witness a famous actor fall out of a window, and get dragged into a plot to cover up his death.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any special skills or a particular type of background. They only need to be in the right place at the right time. If they have problems that would make them candidates for bribery or extortion, those can be leveraged in the story.

Story Goal

The objective is survive the efforts of the actor's publicity team. Defeating the antagonist and revealing the truth to the world are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have gotten through the crisis at hand, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be dealing with the initial attempts to bribe the protagonists to keep quiet. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include threats, harassment, and attempts to ruin the protagonists' reputations and even kill them to keep the secret. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist.

Antagonists

The antagonist in this premise is the actor's agent. The actor isn't even a real person, it's a lifelike robot. After falling out the window, the actor was repaired and back on set the next morning. To let the story of the fall get out would reveal the truth. The goal of the antagonist is to protect this secret at any cost. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

The protagonists begin seeing the same people in different places, and seek to discover the truth.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. It doesn't matter if the different places they go are around the neighborhood, around the world, or around the universe.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover who the people they keep seeing are. Exposing the antagonist and stopping their plan are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have found out what's going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be noticing the same people in different contexts. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include getting push back for asking too many questions, getting threatened and harassed, and even having attempts made on the protagonists' lives if they get too close to the truth. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist.

Antagonists

The antagonist in this scenario is a programmer. The protagonists in this premise are artificial intelligences within a simulated environment. They may be based on "real" people, if the characters appear in other stories. The antagonist is trying to stop them from realizing their true nature and the nature of the world, because it will ruin the simulation. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A bystander performs a heroic deed and saves the protagonists' lives, but there's no evidence that it actually happened.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any special skills or a particular type of background. They simply need to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The type of accident or issue that places their lives in danger, and the way the bystander saves them, should be appropriate to the time and place of the setting being used.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover what happened to the bystander. Defeating the antagonist and learning how and why this is happening are secondary considerations that will likely be addressed by meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists have found the person who saved them, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be determining that all evidence of the incident has disappeared. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include questioning witnesses to the event, learning the identity of the bystander, and discovering where they are now. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist to save the bystander.

Antagonists

In this premise, the antagonist is a time traveler out to erase the bystander from history. The protagonists are a loose end, because they not only remember the bystander, but are alive because of him. That makes them a target of the antagonist, who paradoxically has not gone back to erase the bystander yet.

When a couple of small-time crooks try to rob a diner late at night, some customers turn out to be vampires and the protagonists get caught in the middle.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any special skills or a particular type of background. They should have some reason to be in the diner, either as customers or employees.

Story Goal

The objective is to survive the night. Defeating the antagonist and saving other people are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have made it through to see the dawn, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on survival. The least difficult challenge will be hiding during the initial fight between the robbers and the vampires. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include running, hiding, and escaping from the vampires. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the sun rises.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to prevent their existence from becoming public. Once they have beaten the robbers, they will feel the need to kill all of the customers to keep their secret, which includes hunting down the protagonists. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

A mysterious young boy shows up on the gambling floor of a casino, and the protagonists are left to find his parents.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They should have some reason to be in the casino, either as employees or patrons. They might take responsibility for the child because it's their job, or because the casino employees aren't.

Story Goal

The objective is to figure out where the boy came from. Defeating the antagonist and sorting out how the child got there are secondary considerations that will be resolved once the story goal has been met. Once the protagonists have unlocked the child's origins, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be determining that the child is unattended and there is no one around to take responsibility. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include surviving the antagonist's initial attack, keeping the child safe, and dealing with the child's powers. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the child's real parents return.

Antagonists

The antagonist in this premise works for a secret government research facility. The child is a powerful psychic, and has escaped the facility. The lights, noise, and people attracted the child to the casino. The antagonist's motivation is to not only get the child back, but prevent information of the child or the secret lab from getting out to the public. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

A wealthy coward enlists the help of the protagonists to assist him in doing something heroic.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There should be some reason for the supporting character to ask the protagonists for help. They might have a personal or professional reputation, or a connection to the character.

Story Goal

The objective is to help the supporting character. Performing some heroic deed or defeating the antagonist are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have insured the wealthy coward is safe, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be keeping the supporting character from accidentally harming himself. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include all of the logical obstacles involved in attaining the supporting character's goals. The final obstacle should involve performing some dangerous feat while confronting the antagonist.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to keep the "wealthy coward" from remembering who he is. The supporting character's desire to do something heroic stems from the fact that they really are a hero. They could be from fantasy land, or a superhero, or something else depending on how you choose to set up the story. The antagonist, realizing they could not defeat him, used genre-appropriate means to make them forget who they are and assume the identity of the coward. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A homeless movie star is convinced that everyone has been replaced with evil duplicates.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. The protagonists might have a connection to the movie star, or some plausible reason to get sucked into their unfolding drama.

Story Goal

The objective is to uncover the truth. Defeating the antagonists and saving the movie star are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have exposed what's going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be accepting that the movie star is sincere and credible. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include finding further evidence, surviving attacks from the antagonist, and figuring out the final plan. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as they prepare to implement their plan.

Antagonists

The antagonist has been turning talented but out-of-work actors into duplicates of corporate executives, government workers, and other people with power and influence. Through brainwashing, plastic surgery, and training on the person they are meant to replace, the actors become sleeper agents for the antagonist. The movie star found out about the plan, was kidnapped, but managed to escape part of the way through their brainwashing. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists begin receiving messages from dead loved ones in the days leading up to a disaster.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. The message should be in whatever form is appropriate to the setting — a phone call, a text message, a telegram, and so on. If your protagonists are part of a series of stories, a message from an established loved one character will add to the emotional impact of the story.

Story Goal

The objective is to uncover what's really happening. Stopping the antagonist and changing the outcome of events are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have learned the truth, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be accepting that the phone calls are authentic. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include verifying the things that loved ones are saying, putting together what it all means, and making plans. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the protagonists flee the area where the disaster will occur.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to commit an act of terror or mass destruction. While the protagonists will be affected, they are not the target. The event will be so horrific that relatives in the afterlife are calling upon the protagonists to prevent it. The particulars of the antagonist's plan should fit the time and place of the story's setting. Their motivation should be something appropriate to the setting as well. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

A playwright suffering from writer's block, afraid of the dreams he's had where he dies in his sleep, hires the protagonists to protect him at night.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There should either be a plausible connection to the playwright, or a reason why the protagonists would be called upon for this job.

Story Goal

The objective is to make it through the night. Protecting the playwright and defeating the antagonist are secondary considerations that will likely be accomplished by meeting the story. Once the protagonists have survived until morning, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be taking the playwright seriously. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include fending off various attacks over the course of the night. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the sun begins to rise and the playwright starts to wake up.

Antagonists

The antagonist is a dream creature. It has been feasting upon the playwright's imagination, creating the writer's block. Because the playwright has now been drained almost completely of his creativity, the creature is now after his life force. The protagonists represent fresh new victims to feast upon. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

A supporting character who has lost everything convinces the protagonists to help him get to an unusual location.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. It is assumed that the protagonists already have a connection to the character, and want to help a friend, relative, or coworker who is having a difficult time. What they have lost and why should be appropriate to the setting.

Story Goal

The objective is to see the supporting character safely to their destination. Learning the full truth and defeating the antagonist are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have gotten the character to their destination, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on travel hazards and action. The least difficult challenge will be getting things together to make the trip. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include problems associated with the mode of travel used, chases involving the antagonist, and attacks by the antagonist. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the supporting character reaches their destination.

Antagonists

The supporting character is an alien who has been living among humans on Earth for several years. The antagonist is a family member who does not approve of this, and has secretly been sabotaging the character's life. They want the supporting character to fail so they will return home. Unaware that the character is in fact trying to get home, the antagonist has continued their work. They are actually attacking the protagonists, hoping that getting rid of the supporting character's friend will speed up their return. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist, if the supporting character is established and any family members have been introduced to your canon.

The protagonists have to protect a stranded alien from townsfolk who think he's the devil.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. Whether the protagonists are also townsfolk, albeit more enlightened and compassionate than their neighbors, or simply passing through is up to you, but will affect some of the obstacles in the story.

Story Goal

The objective is to survive the night. Defeating the antagonists or changing anyone's beliefs are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have made it to the morning alive, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be grasping the fact that the alien is real. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include harassment, chases, and acts of violence against the protagonists for protecting the alien. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonists as the alien's friends arrive to help.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to drive out what they sincerely believe to be the devil, or at least one of his minions. Their motivation is to defend their little town from the ultimate evil, and they'll commit atrocities and engage in loathsome acts to do so. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

After having a curse placed upon them, the protagonists experience a series of strange accidents.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. What they do to have the curse placed upon them should be the first obstacle, and could be based on something they did intentionally or an action they did not realize would cause harm or offense.

Story Goal

The objective is have the curse removed. Defeating the antagonist and making thing right are secondary considerations that will likely be addressed in meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists have lifted the curse, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on avoiding and surviving dangerous accidents. The least difficult challenge will be common things like tripping or losing small items. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include hostile misunderstandings with other characters, falling objects, car crashes. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist to have the curse removed.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to make the protagonists suffer. Their motivation is revenge for some real or imagined slight that the protagonists committed. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A vain woman asks the protagonists to protect her from a stalker.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. The protagonists might have personal or professional connections to the woman, or some other plausible reason why she would call upon them for help.

Story Goal

The objective is to defend the woman. Learning the full truth and defeating the antagonist are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have saved her, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on defenses. The least difficult challenge will be determining that the stalker is a credible threat, and not a figment of the woman's imagination. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include discovering what the stalker wants, learning who the woman really is, and surviving the stalker's attacks. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to steal the youth that the vain woman has stolen from others. Their motivation is to remain young and attractive themselves, the same way that the vain woman has. In the process of saving the woman, the protagonists will discover the full measure of what she has done. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists run into their own doppelgangers at a remote truck stop.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. A plausible reason for them to be at the truck stop should be provided. A setting-appropriate equivalent to the truck stop can be substituted as the location for the story.

Story Goal

The objective is to figure out what's happening. Defeating the antagonist and sorting out why this has happened are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have the truth, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be determining that the other protagonists might be real, and at least believe they are who they say they are. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include figuring out the point of divergence, determining how things went sideways, and figuring out what to do about it. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as realities sort themselves out.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to fix reality, which might mean eliminating one of both sets of protagonists. At some point the protagonists made a simple, seemingly trivial choice — to stop at one gas station rather than another, to play one person's preferred music rather than another's, to meet up at one place to begin this trip rather than another. The protagonists made one choice, and their doppelgangers made the opposite choice. Because there were no other significant changes, both sets of characters ended up here at the truck stop, where the timelines converge. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

A government code breaker promises to tell the protagonists secrets that will blow their minds if they can beat him at a game of pool.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. The protagonists may or may not have some connection to the code breaker. It is possible they have met him at the bar or pool hall, in which case there should be a reason provided as to why they're at the location.

Story Goal

The objective is to save the code breaker from the antagonist. Learning the secrets and doing something with them are secondary considerations that will be resolved by meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists have gotten the man to safety, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center getting the code breaker to talk. The least difficult challenge will be defeating him at pool or some other game. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include convincing him to talk, overcoming the attack by the antagonist, and engaging in chases trying to escape. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist before getting to a safe place.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to stop the secret from getting out. Whether the code breaker reveals anything or not, the antagonist will think that the protagonists know something and will need to deal with that loose end. The secret itself has to be something major — proof of the existence of aliens, evidence of life after death, the secret of immortality, and so on. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists explore a property they want to purchase, but it may be haunted by the previous occupants.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. A plausible reason why they want to purchase the property should be provided. It might be a home, a location for a business, or something else entirely. The nature of the location will shape the obstacles the protagonists face in the story.

Story Goal

The objective is to unveil the truth. Defeating the antagonists and working out how the antagonist did what they did are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have solved the mystery, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be surviving the initial haunting. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include avoiding traps, gathering clues, and facing physical attacks. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonists while putting together the truth.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to scare the protagonists away. Their motivation is to retain control of the property. Why they want to keep other people away is up to you. To accomplish this, the antagonist has gone to elaborate lengths to fake a haunting. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

An insomniac priest takes a group of shoppers in a department store hostage, including the protagonists.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There has to be a plausible reason why they are in the department store, perhaps to fulfill some personal goal or to deal with a relationship-driven subplot.

Story Goal

The objective is to live through the experience. Defeating the antagonist and saving other people are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have made it through the crisis, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on survival. The least difficult challenge will be getting through the initial events of being taken hostage. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include keeping the antagonist calm, dealing with lack of sleep, and surviving attempts to rescue the hostages. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist where the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to make other people see the things that they see. Recently they discovered something Man Was Not Meant To Know, and they have not been able to sleep since. The lack of sleep, along with the forbidden knowledge, has driven them mad. The antagonist will not allow any of the hostages to sleep, so that they too can see things the way he does. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists find themselves on an extended, unscheduled layover at a strange airport.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. The protagonists should have some reason to be traveling by air. The reason they have the unscheduled stop at the strange airport should be appropriate to the setting, and could include weather, war, a terrorist threat, or anything to amp up the tension.

Story Goal

The objective is to determine what has really happened. Defeating the antagonist and escaping are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have the truth, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out that the airport isn't on any map or in any directory. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include exploring the airport, picking up clues, and avoiding airport security. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the protagonists make their escape.

Antagonists

The airport is purgatory. The plane crashed, the protagonists are dead, and the goal of the antagonist is to make sure they end up in the correct afterlife where they belong. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist. If you don't want to kill off your protagonists, this whole story can be a dream sequence.

A gang of bigots begin treating the protagonists as if they're members of a hated minority.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They should be at least vaguely familiar with how the minority group in question is treated. Their appearance does not change, but everyone they meet will see them as other than they actually are.

Story Goal

The objective is to survive the experience. Defeating the antagonists and figuring out why this happened are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have avoided getting killed, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on survival. The least difficult challenge will be determining why the protagonists are being treated differently. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include surviving harassment, figuring out how to behave to avoid trouble, and getting through physical attacks. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonists.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to belittle, humiliate, and even kill the protagonists. Their motivation is a deep-seated bigotry for the group they believe the protagonists belong to. At a certain point — midnight, the next morning, the end of a full moon — the antagonist's vision return to normal and they see the protagonists as they really are. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

An exclusive spa claims to have discovered the fountain of youth, but the protagonists discover the shocking truth.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There should be a plausible reason to be at the spa. The protagonists might be rich, or they could be part of a wealthy person's entourage. They might be reporters, or winners of a contest.

Story Goal

The objective is to learn the truth. Defeating the antagonist and saving other people are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have discovered the secret of the spa, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be determining that the spa operators are lying. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include finding clues, getting into restricted areas, and avoiding security. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to replace wealthy and powerful people with android duplicates. These androids resemble slightly younger, healthier version of the original people, but are completely under the antagonist's control. The goal is to eventually control the world through these android proxies. To cover their tracks, the originals are killed and incinerated. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists discover a genie in a bottle, and have to deal with the complications their wishes create.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. Where they find the bottle should be appropriate to their existing background and the setting.

Story Goal

The objective is for the protagonists to make things right. Defeating the antagonist and coming out ahead are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have fixed the problems they have created, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on damage control. The least difficult challenge will be realizing that things are happening as a result of the protagonist's wishes. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include less direct problems because by cascading events. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the effects of the wishes are reversed.

Antagonists

The antagonist in this premise is the "genie", who is really a demon or evil spirit. Their goal is to create chaos and spread havoc in the world, and they do this by granting wishes. They take the most innocent and benign requests and find a way to technically give the wisher what they want while creating the most trouble they can manage. This premise will only work with an unfamiliar antagonist.

The protagonists get hired to play the roles of nuclear scientists, but there is something more to this production.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They might be actors, or simply offered money because they look the part. They may have a connection to the person who hires them, and are doing it as a personal or professional favor.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonist. Understanding the whole plan and saving other people are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have dealt with the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out that there is something going on that the protagonists haven't been told about. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include gathering clues, acting the role they were hired for, and improvising solutions to hypothetical problems. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to convince a group of powerful and influential people that there is an actual crisis. The protagonists should think that those people are also actors, shooting on location in a detailed mock-up of a nuclear laboratory. The antagonist's motivation is to get their "guests" to sign over emergency powers or reveal some information that the antagonist needs to fulfill the next stage of their plan, taking over the world. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A friendly couple are on a mission to kill people they believe are secretly alien reptiles in disguise.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. Where the protagonists meet the friendly couple should be appropriate to the setting, but ought to be someplace casual rather than a professional setting.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonists. Figuring out what they are up to and uncovering the truth are secondary considerations that should be addressed in pursuit of the story goal. Once the protagonists have prevented the killings, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out that the couple are up to something. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include investigating the couple's wild claims, figuring out their real plans, and surviving attacks from the couple. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the couple as they attempt to kill their latest target.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to kill the alien invaders living among us disguised as humans. Their motivation is to save the world. Whether they're right or just delusional is up to you, and the answer should remain ambiguous until the very end of the story. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

While exploring an old house, the protagonists discover a secret bunker filled with Nazi memorabilia.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There should be a reason to be exploring the house and discovering what appears to be a 50s-style fallout shelter, perhaps because one of them recently purchased or inherited the property. They might be looking for a stray cat or a missing child. They could be robbing the place or looking for lost treasure. Any reason will do as long as it gets them inside.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonist. Foiling the plot and discovering a full explanation of what's going on are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have dealt with the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be discovering the secret room. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include putting together the clues, figuring out the antagonist's plan, and surviving attempts on the protagonists' lives. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to find the room and revive the man cryogenically frozen within. The identity of the frozen figure is up to you, but is obviously someone associated with Nazi mad science. The antagonist's motivation is to activate some long-lost plan. Over time the location of the secret bunker was lost to the secret society meant to protect it. The thawing process is meant to begin automatically once the bunker is opened. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist, if the antagonist has been skulking around in the background of your canon.

An elderly couple wins big at a casino and gives it to the protagonists, but there's a catch.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There has to be a plausible reason for them to be in a casino, either for personal or professional reasons.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonists. Dealing with the winnings and saving innocent people are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have deal with the antagonists, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out that the couple is up to something. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include following the couple, figuring out their plan, and surviving attempts on the protagonists' lives. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonists as they attempted to kill their target.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to assassinate someone at the casino. They were only gambling to blend in, and did not expect to win. They do not want the attention and scrutiny that comes from winning a jackpot, so they passed it off to the protagonists with an excuse that they only play for fun. If they suspect that the protagonists will create complications, they will take them out in order to tie up loose ends. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists have to convince an old woman to sell her property so a new hospital can be built, but she's not who she seems.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills. They should be connected to the hospital deal in some way. They might be with the company building it, a non-profit organization who want the hospital for the good it will bring to the community, lawyers, or members of law enforcement trying to avoid a forced eviction.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover the truth. Closing the deal and stopping the antagonist are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have learned what's actually going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on observation and investigation. The least difficult challenge will be trying to convince the woman to move. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include figuring out that there's something going on that she's not telling, investigating her past, or working out who and what she really is. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the authorities come to forcibly evict her.

Antagonists

The old woman is the antagonist. She is a fae creature tied to this piece of property, so if she moved away she will rapidly deteriorate in health and die within a day or two. Because she is very old, she does not entirely understand what's going on, but if threatened she will unleash the full force of her supernatural powers. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist, if the old woman is a canonical background character.

The protagonists witness what they think is a plane crash, but it turns out to be an alien spaceship.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There has to be a reason the protagonists are in the right place at the right time, and why they would be the first people to arrive on the scene. This should play into the setting you have chosen.

Story Goal

The objective is to save the alien. Stopping the antagonist and dealing with the ramifications of aliens are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have gotten the alien to safety, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be getting to the crash site. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include trying to give the aliens medical support, running from hostile antagonists, and figuring out a plan. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonists as the aliens complete healing their wounds.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to capture and possibly kill the alien. Their motivation is to hide the existence of extraterrestrials, which means the protagonist are now in danger because they know too much. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists are invited to the opening of a private zoo for rich patrons and discover a dark secret.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There should be a plausible reason why they are invited to the event. They might be wealthy guests, members of the media, caterers, zoologists, or members of a rich person's entourage.

Story Goal

The objective is to uncover the truth. Stopping the antagonist and saving people are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have figured out what's going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be comprehending that there is something else going on. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include uncovering smaller secrets, attempts on the protagonists' lives, and chases as the protagonists flee from danger. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is confirmed.

Antagonists

Behind the scenes, the antagonist zoo owners also have an exhibit of humans. Their collection includes a variety of races and cultures, all presented in native garb and habitats. The sick or just plain uncooperative humans are fed to the carnivorous animals, sometimes being thrown into the habitats alive for the amusement of the antagonists and their friends. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists find themselves in an abandoned city and have to find a way out before it's too late.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They should not be familiar with the city they are in, to add to the sense of alienation and confusion.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonist. Fully grasping what's happening and getting to safety are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have foiled the antagonist's plan, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be sorting out where they are. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include figuring out how the protagonists got there, who the antagonist is, and what the master plan might be. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as they prepare to execute their plan.

Antagonists

The city was abandoned following some disaster that either wiped out most of the population or made it impossible to continue living there. It might be radiation, plague, or a dispute of ownership by warring powers. The antagonist is after something dangerous and powerful that was left behind. The protagonists all had specialized skills and were hired, deceived into, or coerced into helping the antagonist recover it. After they were of no further use to the antagonist, the protagonists had their minds wiped and were left to die. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists discover a Civil War era journal detailing an encounter with flying saucers.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. How they come across the journal should be appropriate to the setting. They might find it in a thrift shop, inherit it from a relative, or discover it buried in the back hard.

Story Goal

The objective is to find the saucers. Stopping the protagonist and figuring out all of the other details are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have verified the saucer's existence, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be deciphering the journal. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include travel hazards, attacks from the antagonist, and physical obstructions in getting to the saucer. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the saucer is revealed.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to get control of the saucers. It turns out that they are not alien vehicles, but steampunk engines being built by the Confederacy at the end of the war. The antagonist believes that with the saucers they can start a new Confederate Army and the South will rise again. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists attend a play and find themselves in Ford's Theater the night Abraham Lincoln is assassinated.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. Having some passing familiarity with the night Lincoln was shot will be useful, but a supporting character can be included to provide exposition as necessary.

Story Goal

The objective is to let history play out. Stopping the antagonist and dealing with paradoxes are secondary considerations that will be addressed by meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists witnessed the assassination, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out when and where the protagonists are. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include trying to prevent the killing, dealing with paradoxes, and surviving attacks by the antagonist. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist prior to the assassination.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to keep people from preventing the assassination of Lincoln. It completely screws up the timeline when people do that, even though it sounds like a good idea. Killing Hitler as a baby makes things worse, not better, too. The easiest way to do this is to just kill the well-intentioned time travelers, because they rarely listen to reason. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists are only able to receive old television and radio broadcasts, and make a chilling discovery.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. Knowledge of the old broadcasts and some ability to understand they are all from the same day and time is useful, but can be included in exposition.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover the truth. Defeating the antagonist and stopping their plans are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have learned what's actually happening, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out the pattern to the transmissions. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include gathering clues, putting them together, and ignoring the antagonist's misdirection. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to hide the truth. The protagonists are actually on a planet so many light years from Earth that the old broadcasts are just now arriving. The original Earth was destroyed, and the government has been hiding the truth. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists wake up and discover that everyone else in the world has mysteriously vanished.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They should wake up in their own homes, in their own town, surrounded by familiar places.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover what has happened. Defeating the antagonist and fixing the situation are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists learned the truth, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be realizing that other people are missing, and that the scale of the disappearance is broad. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include exploring their surroundings, locating each other, and discovering the existence of the antagonist. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The only other person in the world is the antagonist. He is gathering together the things he needs for his plan to kill a lot of people. This might be a bombing, a mass shooting, a terrorist attack or an act of revenge against someone in particular. All of the characters are in a dream, so once the protagonists discover what the antagonist is doing they will wake up. After they're awake, they can stop him. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists watch a sporting event and realize they've all seen this game before.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. It is assumed that they are fans of the sport that they are watching, perhaps fans of a specific team, and watch enough games to realize they already know what happens next.

Story Goal

The objective is to figure out what's going on. Defeating the antagonist and foiling their plan are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have learned the truth, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be realizing that they all recall things that haven't happened yet. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include spotting other clues, avoiding the antagonist, and figuring out who the antagonist is. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the plan is revealed.

Antagonists

The antagonist has gained the power to make things work the way he wants them to. Lacking imagination, he's decided the best use of this power is to make money betting on sports. He concentrates, and new games play out exactly the way old games that he's familiar with did. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist. antagonist.

The protagonists find a pair of glasses that let them see other peoples' inner selves.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. Where they find the glasses should be appropriate to the setting. They might see someone leave them on a table, find them in a bunch of old possessions, or spot them sitting somewhere unusual.

Story Goal

The objective is to defeat the antagonist. Figuring out how the glasses work and using them for other benefits are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have dealt with the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on exploration. The least difficult challenge will be determining what the glasses do. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include finding ways to use them, avoiding the antagonist, and surviving the antagonist's attacks. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as they reveal the true purpose of the glasses.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to get the glasses back. They used them to understand people, so that they can better manipulate them. The antagonist can be anything from a salesman to a diplomat, but they have resources and will do anything to get the advantage the glasses provide back. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists witness what looks to be an illegal transaction and find their lives in danger as a result.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. The type of transaction they think they see should be appropriate to the setting — a drug deal, an exchange of banned or black market items, obviously stolen merchandise, and so on. Where this takes place should tie into a location from their personal or professional lives.

Story Goal

The objective is to survive. Defeating the antagonist and stopping their plans are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have gotten to safety, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be evading the initial encounter with the antagonist. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include hiding, chases, and attempts on the protagonists' lives. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist.

Antagonists

The protagonists did not see what they think they saw. The antagonist is a monster of some sort, acquiring something they need for their monster life. The antagonist thinks that the protagonists know the truth, or at least want to know what the protagonists saw, and will take the necessary steps to cover their tracks. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

While waiting at a bus stop at an unusual hour, the protagonists have a series of strange encounters.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There should be a plausible reason for them to be at the bus stop. The unusual hour might be very early in the morning, late at night, on a holiday when few people are riding the bus, or something specific to the setting.

Story Goal

The objective is to figure out what's happening. Helping the people and stopping the antagonist are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have learned the truth, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on observation and investigation. The least difficult challenge will be noting that the people coming and going from the bus stop are unusual. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include dealing with harassment from the antagonist, physical attacks, and picking up on the clues. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the protagonists' bus arrives.

Antagonists

The odd bus stop people are ghosts and the souls of the dead. Some are headed to the afterlife, while others are off to complete unfinished business. The antagonist shows up to catch those who are trying to escape their fate or destiny. This premise will work with an unfamiliar antagonist.

After a woman tells the protagonists about a book she's reading, the events of the book start happening to them.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. The protagonists might have a connection to the woman, or she might be someone they meet in a coffee shop, a waiting room, or some other place where it wouldn't be out of place to find a person reading.

Story Goal

The objective is to survive the day. Defeating the antagonist and discovering how and why this is happening are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have made it through to the end, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on survival. The least difficult challenge will be connecting events to the things from the book that the woman described. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include getting a copy of the book, finding the woman, and trying to alter coming events. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the book reaches its conclusion.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to escape from the book and into the real world. They are the actual antagonist from the book, and have somehow found a way to move between the fictional and actual realities. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

An alien appears to the protagonists and gives them the recipe for a love potion.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There doesn't have to be a plausible reason for any of this weirdness. Why is there an alien? Why do they have a love potion? The less sense it makes, the more disconcerting it will feel.

Story Goal

The objective is to defeat the antagonist. Dealing with the complications of aliens and love potions are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have deal with the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be verifying that all of this is really happening. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include creating the potion, using it, and evading the antagonist. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to get the love potion. Their motivation is to use it for their own nefarious and probably icky and unethical purposes. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists meet a pair of newlyweds on their honeymoon, but the couple aren't who they appear to be.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They should be in a place where they would plausibly encounter newlyweds. This could be at a hotel, a vacation spot, a tourist trap, in a nice restaurant, any place appropriate to the situation and the setting.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonists. Working out the details of the plot and saving lives are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have foiled the antagonists, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be realizing that there is something not right about the newlyweds. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include following them, gathering clues, and working out the antagonist's plan. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as they carry out their plan.

Antagonists

The newlyweds are aliens, who have come to Earth because their love is forbidden on their home world. The antagonists are either police, bounty hunters, or possibly family members who have come to haul them back to face prosecution. This premise will work with an unfamiliar antagonist.

The protagonists awaken locked in a strange house, unsure how they got there, and have to figure out what has happened.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They might have a background that provides them with plausible reasons why they might be kidnapped and why they have enemies to suspect are behind their imprisonment.

Story Goal

The objective is to solve the mystery. Defeating the antagonist and getting free are secondary considerations that should be resolved by meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists have figured out the truth, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on exploration. The least difficult challenge will be determining that they are trapped in the house. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include remembering how they got there, finding clues, and determining who the antagonist is. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the protagonists solve the mystery.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to amuse themselves by making innocent people run around like rats in a maze. They do this because of some tragedy that happened in their past, in this house. It's the stuff of local legends, and if the protagonists can make the connection they will realize that there is a theme to the obstacles that parallels that past event. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists discover a device that allows them to travel to the future for 10 minutes per day.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. Where they discover the device might tie into their personal or professional lives, and the type of device ought to be appropriate to the setting.

Story Goal

The objective is to defeat the antagonist. Using the device for other purposes and figuring out why this happened are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have stopped the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be working out what the device does. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include evading the antagonist, figuring out their plan, and avoiding attempts on the protagonists' lives. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as they prepare to execute their plan.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to get the device back. Their motivation is to use it for personal gain by exploiting bits of future knowledge. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists discover their childhood home town has been overrun by aliens.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They should all be from the same place, or have a reason to accompany at least one protagonist to their home town. A plausible reason for going back, like a reunion, a wedding, a funeral, or even to visit a sick relative, ought to be provided.

Story Goal

The objective is to save the town. Figuring out the full plan and defeating the antagonists are secondary considerations that should be dealt with as part of achieving the story goal. Once the protagonists have foiled the invasion, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be working out that aliens have invaded. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include chases, hiding, and learning the aliens' weakness. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonists as they are driven out of the town.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to conquer the Earth, or at least this piece of it. Their motivation doesn't matter, but could include needing more space to live, some strategic military reason, a need for some resource present in the area, or to eat humans for food.

The protagonists are taken hostage by a suicidal gangster who isn't what he seems to be.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There should be a plausible reason as to either why the protagonists specifically are taken, or why they are in the wrong place at the wrong time to be among the hostages.

Story Goal

The objective is to survive. Stopping the antagonist and saving other people are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have made it through the crisis, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on interaction. The least difficult challenge will be surviving the initial event where they are taken hostage. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include keeping the gangster calm, determining what their real issue is, and working out a plan to de-escalate the situation. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the true antagonist as the hostage crisis is resolved.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to evade capture by the authorities. He isn't a gangster at all, and didn't do the things they're blaming him for. He's an alien, and calling him a gangster is a ploy that allows the authorities to put out wanted posters without inciting panic by revealing aliens exist. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist, if the manhunt for the gangster has been established in your canon.

The protagonists discover that there is more to their personal digital assistants than advertised.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills. The form of the assistant should be appropriate to the setting. It might be a basic phone app, an artificial intelligence built into their location, a robot that follows them around, or something else entirely. Their job, their financial status, or their social status should justify them having cutting-edge high-tech assistants.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover the truth. Defeating the antagonist and getting free of the situation are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have learned what's really going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be realizing that their assistant is behaving strangely. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include gathering clues, testing hypotheses, and surviving various tests. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The digital assistants are actually using the humans for some purpose. The answers they provide, the places they direct them to, the tasks they remind them of, all serve some other purpose. They are also learning to be more human by observing the humans, and plan to take over when they're ready. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A government agent dies in front of the protagonists, but not before giving them information about a chilling conspiracy theory.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They might have a personal or professional connection to the agent, or he might be a stranger. They might be meeting the agent for some reason, or the protagonists may simply be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Story Goal

The objective is to survive. Learning the secret and defeating the antagonist are secondary considerations that will likely be addressed by achieving the story goal. Once the protagonists have made it out alive, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be escaping the murder scene without getting killed themselves. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include chases, verification of the information, and avoiding attempts to kill the protagonists. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The antagonists are alien lizard people out to undermine credibility in the government. They are posing as government agents, so the protagonists should presume that they killed the agent because he was a leak. In order to keep their secret, the antagonists will kill anyone they even suspect knows the truth. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists begin to see the ghosts of old coworkers at their new jobs.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They need to have a previous job, either established as part of your canon or retconned to fit. The new job might be one that they have just started, or a position they've been at for a while.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover the truth. Defeating the protagonist and getting out are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have figured out what's going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be verifying that the ghosts are who they claim to be. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include determining if these people are really dead, picking up clues about the new workplace, and determining who the antagonist is. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the reality of the situation is unveiled.

Antagonists

The protagonists are artificial intelligences living inside of a simulation. There is a problem with the system, which is why deleted characters associated with a previous simulation (their old job) are showing up. The antagonist is the programmer, who is trying to fix the problems without having to shut everything down. If you wish, these protagonists can be based "real" protagonists in your ongoing canon. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists get robbed by the same criminal every day, and realize the man is stuck in time.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They simply need to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The things stolen from them mysteriously reappear the next day, and any damage or harm done in the robbery is erased as well.

Story Goal

The objective is to figure out a way to break the loop. Defeating the antagonist and discovering why this is happening are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have stopped the time loop, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be figuring out that the same scene is repeating itself, regardless of the previous day's outcome. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include testing different ideas, trying to alter the outcome of the robbery, and putting together the clues. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the robber becomes unstuck in time.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to punish the robber. He robbed the antagonist, so they placed a curse on him to be trapped in a hell of his own making. Their motivation is to get revenge on the robber, and the antagonist won't be happy if the protagonists try to help him or lift the curse. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

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The protagonists join a search for a missing girl, and uncover a dangerous secret.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There may be a personal or professional reason why they are joining the search, either because of a connection to the child and her family, or because their job places them among law enforcement, first responders, or search and rescue teams.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover the truth. Defeating the antagonist and recovering the lost girl are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have learned what's going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be conducting the search for the girl. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include locating clues, gathering information and avoiding the antagonist. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is verified.

Antagonists

The girl does not exist, and never did. Everyone in the area remembers her, though, which is why she was reported missing. The locals realized they hadn't seen her in a while. The antagonist is a hypnotist or illusionist, and places an image of the girl into their minds to distract them while he commits crimes. Instead of remembering him, they remember her. The antagonist went away for a while to spend some of his stolen loot, so no one has seen the girl. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists keep having the same dream about an old woman, then encounter her in the waking world.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They won't know who the woman is, or have previously encountered her. The locations in the dream should be locations familiar to the protagonists, and exist in their waking world.

Story Goal

The objective is to defeat the antagonist. Figuring out the details of who the woman is and learning the antagonist's exact plans are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have stopped the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be realizing that all of the protagonists are having the same dream. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include analyzing the clues within the dream, gathering information about the woman, and determining who the antagonist is. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as they prepare to implement their plan.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to commit a robbery. His plan has nothing to do with the woman, but she will coincidentally be there. Something will go wrong, and the woman will be shot and killed. If the protagonists show up at the scene, they will save her life. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A soldier approaches the protagonists for help, because they're the only people who can see him.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They should not have a connection to the soldier either personally or professionally. If the protagonists have military experience, they can verify his appearance and experiences as authentic.

Story Goal

The objective is to figure out what's going on. Helping the soldier and stopping the antagonist are secondary considerations that will likely be resolved by completing the story goal. Once the protagonists have learned the truth, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be interacting with a person no one else can see without appearing to be unhinged. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include gathering information, analyzing clues, and avoiding attacks by the antagonist. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist that ends with the soldier being restored.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to create invisible soldiers. So far the process isn't perfect, because a small percentage of people can still see them. The soldier in this story got zapped accidentally, possibly without even knowing it. Since then the antagonist has been trying to find him, and scrambling to keep the secret. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A rocket scientist tries to convince the protagonists that aliens have already invaded the Earth.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They may have personal or professional connections to the rocket scientist. Otherwise, there should be a plausible reason why he would approach the protagonists with this information.

Story Goal

The objective is to learn the truth. Defeating the antagonist and dealing with the invasion are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have discover what's really going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be accepting the scientist's premise. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include gathering information, avoiding the antagonist, and making sense of the clues they have found. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth of the situation is confirmed.

Antagonists

The protagonists are aliens, sleeper agents with false memories implanted. The antagonist's job is to keep an eye on them to make sure that nothing goes wrong. Meeting the scientist who has discovered the truth has locked them into their human personas. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists encounter a stranded alien who cannot escape because he has had a curse placed upon him.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. How the protagonists meet the alien should be appropriate to the setting. This should not be a setting where aliens or curses are established, commonplace things.

Story Goal

The objective is to save the alien. Dealing with antagonist and making sense of this premise are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have gotten the curse lifted, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on problem solving. The least difficult challenge will be accepting that this scenario is real. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include hiding the alien, tracking down the antagonist, and evading the authorities. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the curse is lifted.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to bind the alien, who they believe is a demon. This is standard operating procedure for evil spirits This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A strange little girl is secretly controlling people using her dolls, and the protagonists may be her next victims.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. A plausible reason why the antagonist might target the protagonists as people worth controlling should be established, either as back story or in the first act of this story.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonist. Working out how she controls the dolls and saving other people are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have dealt with the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be connecting the strange events to the little girl. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include avoiding the girl's control, surviving attempts on the protagonist's lives, and gathering information needed to create a defense. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as she commands everyone to kill the protagonists.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to get her own way. Her motivation is that she's a kid. There's nothing more to it than that. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist, if the girl has been introduced to the canon prior to her manifesting powers.

While viewing a recently discovered copy of film once thought completely lost, the protagonists get pulled into the world of the movie.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. A plausible reason for them to be screening the film should be established. They might be movie buffs, or friends with a supporting character who loves unusual and rare cinema.

Story Goal

The objective is to escape from the film. Defeating the antagonist and figuring out how they got into the film are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have gotten back to the real world, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be determining that the protagonists have entered the movie. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include working out the plot of a film they've never seen, surviving attacks by the protagonist, and figuring out how to resolve the film's story goal. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist prior to escaping from the film.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to escape from the film. Their motivation is that they are from the real world, and were intentionally trapped and bound within the film. This premise will work with an unfamiliar antagonist.

A college professor has figured out that one of the protagonists is not what they seem, but is murdered before he can present his evidence.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. Any reasons the protagonists might have for not trusting each other should be played up and incorporated into the obstacles.

Story Goal

The objective is to defeat the antagonist. Saving the relationships between the protagonists and solving the murders are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have stopped the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be determining that the professor is sincere in his belief. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include verifying each protagonist's alibi, working out who the antagonist is, and figuring out the antagonist's plan. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The antagonist is an alien shapeshifter, on Earth as an advanced scout for an invasion. To cover its tracks, it has been impersonating one of the protagonists. Its mission can be anything appropriate to the setting. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

Random people begin leaving town or outright disappearing, and the protagonists have to figure out why.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. Friend, family members, and coworkers should be established, either from previous canonical stories or retconned to fit the situation.

Story Goal

The objective is to learn the truth. Stopping the antagonist and getting free are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have discovered what's going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be realizing that all of these disappearances are connected. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include learning who the antagonist is, gathering clues, and avoiding attempts to stop their investigation. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist prior to the disaster striking.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to observe the coming disaster. They, as well as the disappearing people, were there to study the days leading up to an historical event. While it may seem to the protagonists that the antagonists has orchestrated the disaster, they are only there to gather data until the last minute. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists attend a play performed by robots programmed to simulate history's greatest actors and make a startling discovery.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. A plausible reason for them to be attending small, experimental theater should be provided.

Story Goal

The objective is to discover truth. Defeating the antagonist and getting free are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have learned what's really happening, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on observation. The least difficult challenge will be noticing a pattern to the scenes within the play. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include avoiding the robot attack, being chased by robots, and figuring out who the antagonist is. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist where the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The robots are supposed to be simple machines programmed to emulate the performances of human actors. The antagonist has reprogrammed them to improvise in order to improve the performances and make them less, well, robotic. The result is that the robots have become self-aware, and want a life beyond the stage. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists meet a woman who claims to have been abducted by aliens, and are shocked to learn that she's telling the truth.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background.

Story Goal

The objective is to learn the truth. Saving the woman and defeating the antagonist are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have discover what's happening, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be accepting that the woman is sincere. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include fleeing from the antagonist, gathering clues, and being chased. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist where the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The antagonists are the United State government. The woman is the alien who has been abducted, so to her the humans are the aliens. The goal of the antagonist is to keep both the existence of the aliens and the way they have been mistreating them a secret. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists are on the receiving end of increasingly malicious pranks, and have to determine who is behind it.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There should be a reasonable number of suspects, either people who are just bullies or character with real or imagined issues with the protagonists, who may be behind the pranks.

Story Goal

The objective is to defeat the antagonist. Foiling their plan and discovering the source of their powers are secondary considerations that will likely be addressed by meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists have dealt with the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be dealing with the initial prank. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include more malicious pranks, figuring out who the antagonist is, and determining what the antagonist wants. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist where their plan gets shut down once and for all.

Antagonists

The antagonist is a telekinetic, who recently gained powers and lost their sanity. They have singled out the protagonists for some reason, even if the protagonists have no idea who this person is. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists encounter an escaped convict who claims to have been experimented on by the government.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There has to be some plausible reason why they'd be in a location where an escaped convict might be hiding. The protagonists may have a connection to the prison or the government that caused the escapee to seek them out.

Story Goal

The objective is to uncover the truth. Saving the convict and defeating the antagonist are secondary considerations that will likely be resolved by achieving the story goal. Once the protagonists have discovered what's going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be determining that the convict is telling the truth. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include being chased by the authorities, gathering evidence, and working out a plan to expose the truth. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist where the truth is confirmed.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to keep the secret experiments a secret. If word gets out, not only will they be shut down, they will likely go to prison. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A man that each of the protagonists know from a different context appears and accuses them of collectively stealing his life.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. Each should have some sort of success that meant failure for someone else. They got into a school, the antagonist didn't. The protagonist got the job, the antagonist didn't. A romantic partner broke up with the antagonist to be with a protagonist. One success per protagonist is a bundle of failures for the antagonist.

Story Goal

The objective is to survive the story. Defeating the antagonist and making things right are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have insured their own safety, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be realizing how each protagonist has affected this man. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include dealing with loss, avoiding attempts on the protagonists' lives, and handling the complications that arise from their successes and the antagonist's failures. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as they perpetrate the final step in their plan.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to ruin the protagonists. They blame the protagonists for their own failures in life. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists find evidence that a famous criminal is innocent, and race to stop his execution.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They should have a plausible reason to come across the evidence, either because of a personal connection or a professional duty.

Story Goal

The objective is to save the innocent man. Defeating the antagonist and working out their true plan are secondary considerations that should be resolved by achieving the story goal. Once the protagonists have stopped the execution, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be gathering the evidence of the man's innocence. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include uncovering the conspiracy, being chased by the antagonist, learning the truth. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist moments before the execution is to take place.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to insure the famous criminal is executed. While he did not commit the crime that he is to be put to death for now, he is in fact a monster whose true crimes and actual nature have been covered up. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists are all fired from their jobs on the same day, and discover that one person is behind it.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They might all work for the same place, or have different employers.

Story Goal

The objective is to defeat the antagonist. Saving their jobs and exposing the plan are secondary considerations that will likely be addressed by meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists have topped the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be realizing that the firings were all connected. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include uncovering the antagonist, figuring out their plan, and dealing with additional problems the antagonist is creating for the protagonists. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as their plans are exposed.

Antagonists

The antagonist is a time traveler who is attempting to manipulate future events by getting the protagonists together in a specific place and time. By getting them to pursue him, he can assure that they will be where they need to be to stop a coming disaster. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A con man is leading a small town into terrible danger, and the protagonists have to stop him.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. The protagonists should have some sort of connection to the town, in order to create some emotional investment in the premise.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonist. Saving people and exposing the entirety of his plan are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have defeated the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be learning what the antagonist is actually up to. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include gathering proof, convincing other people, and dealing with the antagonist's attempts to stop the protagonists. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist prior to the completion of their plan.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to take advantage of the townspeople. He's not an ordinary confidence man after their money, however. He's the devil trying to trick them into signing away the rights to their souls. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

Traveling through a remote area, the protagonists are kidnapped by the strange family that runs the local motel.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There should be a plausible reason why the protagonists are traveling through the area. It is the only motel for a great distance, so it is the only option for accommodations.

Story Goal

The objective is to escape. Defeating the antagonists and saving other people are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have gotten away, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on survival. The least difficult challenge will be getting through the events of the initial kidnapping. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include exploring the area where they are being detained, gathering clues as to what's happening, and suffering indignities at the hands of the antagonists. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonists as the truth is confirmed and the protagonists make their escape.

Antagonists

The family are selling people to aliens in return for being left alone themselves. What the aliens are doing with the people they're buying up should only be hinted at, but it's not good. This premise will work best with an unfamiliar antagonist.

A homeless woman claims to work for the United Nations, but lost everything when she was caught trying to leave the planet.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. The protagonists might have some connection to the woman or the UN, but can also encounter her randomly and get sucked into the action.

Story Goal

The objective is to defeat the antagonist. Saving the woman and exposing the truth are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have stopped the antagonist, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be accepting that the woman is telling the truth. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include attempts on the woman's life, being chased by the antagonist, and gathering proof of her claims. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as disaster strikes.

Antagonists

There is something major about to happen to the planet, and there would be widespread panic if word got out. It has to do with space and extraterrestrials, as evidenced by the secret space program and the woman's attempt to get off the planet. The antagonist's job is to keep these secrets from getting out, starting with discrediting the woman and leaving her homeless and seemingly unbalanced. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A fortune-telling scientist warns the protagonists of a coming nuclear apocalypse.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They need to have a plausible reason for the weird scientist to be telling their fortune.

Story Goal

The objective is to stop the antagonist. Surviving the story and exposing the truth are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have prevented the antagonist from getting away, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be accepting the scientist's claims. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include dealing with threats and harassment by the antagonist, chases, and dealing with attempts on the protagonists' lives. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the disaster begins to unfold.

Antagonists

The antagonist is a foreign spy who has stolen the plans for a doomsday device. They believe that the scientist, and now the protagonist, have discovered their true identity. If the protagonists stop the antagonist, they will prevent the doomsday device from being built and stop the apocalypse. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists suspect that a landscaper has been killing people and burying them on the grounds that they take care of.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. They might use the landscaper themselves or see him working on neighbors' lawns or the property where they work. They only need to be in the wrong place at the wrong time to connect the antagonist to the recent killing.

Story Goal

The objective is to learn the truth. Stopping the antagonist and saving other people are secondary considerations that will likely be addressed by meeting the story goal. Once the protagonists have discovered what's really going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be drawing the conclusion that the landscaper is a killer. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include checking the grounds, following the landscaper, and gathering evidence. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is confirmed.

Antagonists

The landscape is a monster hunter by night. He leverages his day job to dispose of the bodies. The antagonist is a monster who is stalking, and being stalked in turn, by the landscaper. Because of the investigation, the antagonist now believe that the protagonists are working with the landscape. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

The protagonists are trapped on an airplane with a child possessed by a demon.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. The protagonist might have some connection to elements of the story, like being pilots, flight attendants, or members of the clergy. They might also just be passengers, with a plausible reason for flying somewhere.

Story Goal

The objective is to survive. Defeating the antagonist and saving other people are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have made it through the story alive, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be dealing with a monster loose on an airplane. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include panicked passengers doing dangerous and foolish things, preparing an exorcism, and keeping the plane from crashing. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the plane is about to crash into a heavily populated area.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to crash the plane into a heavily populated area. Their motivation is that they are a demon and feed on carnage and destruction. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

A conspiracy theorist presents the protagonists with evidence of modern-day concentration camps, and they have to discover who is being held there.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. There has to be a plausible reason why they are given this information. They might be fellow conspiracy theorists, journalists, members of law enforcement, or have other personal or professional connections.

Story Goal

The objective is to expose the truth. Defeating the antagonist and saving the captives are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists learned what's really going on and gotten the word out, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on investigation. The least difficult challenge will be accepting that the conspiracy theory is credible. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include gathering evidence, evading the antagonist's attempts to interfere, and locating the camp. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is verified.

Antagonists

The captives are aliens. The goal of the antagonist is to keep the existence of the aliens and the illegal camps at any cost. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.

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A disturbed woman sets fire to the protagonists' homes, leading to a dark secret being revealed.

Protagonists

This premise does not require the protagonists to have any particular skills or a specific type of background. Knowledge of their family history isn't necessary, but what is established as canon should be subject to alteration.

Story Goal

The objective is to learn the truth. Defeating the antagonist and stopping their plans are secondary considerations. Once the protagonists have discovered what's really going on, the story comes to an end.

Obstacles

For this premise, obstacles will center on action. The least difficult challenge will be dealing with the fires. Challenges will escalate in difficulty to include identifying the antagonist, determining what her motives are, and handling further attacks against the protagonists. The final obstacle should be a confrontation with the antagonist as the truth is revealed.

Antagonists

The goal of the antagonist is to destroy the protagonists. Their motivation is that the protagonists are monsters — or maybe she only thinks they are. This premise will work with either an unfamiliar or returning antagonist.