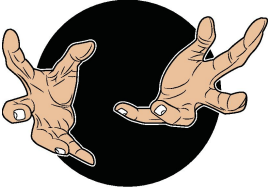


Scattered: A Multiversal Adventure



A socially-distanced, campaign-style
multimedia freeform larp
for 3-10+ players
by Chance J. Feldstein and Matthew Valentine



Stranded and lost in vast, unfamiliar new worlds, how will you escape and become whole again?

Scattered is a game about exploration, separation from those we care about, and achieving communal success despite that separation. It incorporates live video chat (with optional text chat “thought bubbles”) for group roleplay, travelogue-based world creation, and sending postal mail for mutual support. This game could be playable for many weeks or months, depending on the challenge level and cycle length chosen by your group. It will generate up to as many worlds as the number of players, worlds that will feel complex and “lived-in” by the game’s end. Perhaps you’ll later use the worlds you create together to run other games, write fiction, inspire new costume and makeup ideas, or for whatever other projects you might imagine.

Supplies

An electronic device capable of video chat
A printer, pen, or pencil
Paper
Envelopes and stamps

A note card
(Optional) A green screen or blank wall for
virtual backgrounds
(Optional) Costuming, makeup, and props

Safety Mechanics

To set expectations, all players who are able should read at least the first 4 pages of this game before playing. The game uses this **Consent Checklist** (<https://rb.gy/slulhay>) to pre-determine what’s appropriate for video calls and letters. Use **X-Card** (<https://rb.gy/zrqcck>) for unexpected situations. You’ll need your own. If needed, players may disable their audio or video, disconnect from a video call, or leave the game entirely. Suggestions for an optional **Debrief** phase, to be run after each video chat session, appear on page 5.

Game Cycles

A **game cycle** models how often the worlds come into alignment, briefly allowing in-character video chat. Choose a cycle length from 1 to 4 weeks, based on everyone’s availability. Each cycle contains three **phases**:

1. **Travels and Adventures** (travelogue) phase. At least 3 days; 1 week recommended.
2. **Multiversal Syzygy** (video chat) phase. 1-3 hours recommended. Choose a day and time.
3. **Mail From Beyond** (letter-writing) phase. At least 3 days; 1 week recommended.

When all three phases are complete, begin a new game cycle. Gameplay continues until all characters overcome their **challenges** (page 2) and have access to a **portal** (page 4). Your final **Multiversal Syzygy** is called the **Portal Activation** phase. It usually concludes the game (page 4).

The Chronicler

Choose one player to take notes and organize them, for everyone’s easy reference later. Their first task is to create a list of **safe**, **conditional**, and **prohibited** topics from the consent checklists. The rest of the information they compile will be details about each world. Use a wiki, Google document / spreadsheet, or other

shared document platform. If it feels like too much work for one player, you could all take turns as Chronicler, or let the Chronicler focus solely on compiling information, rather than making a world of their own.

Character Creation, Part 1: Group Construction

Option 1 (Dis-integration): Select a character well-known to all players, or with qualities players can all relate to. Together, list some of their defining characteristics while the Chronicler takes notes. A mysterious force has split this starting character into component parts, exiling each one in a different world. Each player chooses one as the core of their character. Since each character is part of the original whole, and must now survive on their own for a while, their gender and appearance may differ from those of the original character. They may also choose a new name, if desired.

Example: Your group splits Indiana Jones into his Profit Motive, his Sense of Adventure, his Inner Romantic, his Love of History / Artifacts, his Fear of Snakes, his Combat Experience, and his Extreme Risk-Taking. Each of these could be someone's character.

Option 2 (Separation): Characters are members of the same family, group of friends, workplace, etc., exiled to different worlds as above. Some groups may enjoy basing their characters on an existing personality type system like the Enneagram (<https://rb.gy/yexukc>), Myers-Briggs (<https://rb.gy/lyz9xn>), or astrological sun signs.

Character Creation, Part 2: Challenge Level

Characters begin with 1 to 3 **challenges** preventing their escape. This number is your group's **challenge level**. A higher challenge level makes your game longer, and lets you help each other less. Only one of each character's challenges (at most) may be resolved per game cycle. You don't need to know all your character's challenges right now, but you should have some information on the first one by the end of the first game cycle.

Examples:

Challenge level 1 (Genre: High Fantasy) - You are imprisoned in a high tower, with access to basic necessities and a magic mirror. Somewhere in the tower are shoes that allow walking to other worlds, but you'll need to get out of this room first (Challenge 1).

Challenge level 2 (Genre: Cyberpunk) - Someone has transferred your consciousness into a robot body whose power source won't work outside this world (Challenge 1). Once back in your body, you'll need a Westfield Robotics keycard with top-level security clearance to get to their interdimensional teleporter (Challenge 2).

Challenge level 3 (Genre: Cosmic Horror) - First, break into the ancient, ghoulish-infested temple of Kra'thul the Pestilent One and retrieve the jeweled Eye of Kra'thul (Challenge 1). Then journey to Kra'thul's original temple, on a far continent whose inhabitants are cannibals (Challenge 2). Deep in its catacombs, defeat the high priest and fit the Eye into his Dread Staff, to open the portal away from this dreadful place (Challenge 3).

Phase 1: Travels and Adventures - 3 days minimum (1 week+ recommended)

Explore and get your bearings. See who you can meet, and what there is to do. Figure out an escape plan.

We suggest writing entries in an in-character personal journal or travelogue for this phase, but use whatever format(s) feel natural and fun for you. These might also include audio or video recordings, drawings, or a Minecraft world. Some players may need to set daily or weekly reminders for this phase.

When your character encounters important **non-player characters (NPCs)**, cultures, or places, write short descriptions of them and send these to the Chronicler. If your group isn't using the optional rule *NPC Letters*

(page 4), single-sentence descriptions may be enough. Some players may need to set daily or weekly appointments / reminders for this phase.

For your first **Travels and Adventures** phase, it may help to pick a genre for your world, such as “high fantasy”, “cyberpunk”, “cosmic horror”, “noir thriller”, etc. Or start with a real-world historical event, change the outcome, and extrapolate a divergent timeline from there (“alternate history”). We suspect this option will work best when all players choose it.

Some players may wish to create a world thematically tailored to who their character is. Others may want their character mismatched to their world, or may create their world and character independently. If desired, you may create your world solo, or together with one or two other players. Players who create a world together must end the first **Travels and Adventures** phase with their characters in different parts of their world, with different first obstacles (page 4).

The following questions will be critical for your first **Travels and Adventures** phase, and should be useful for all of them. Additional prompts appear in the **Appendix** (page 6).

What are your ideals, principles, and goals? What is your personal philosophy of life?

What makes you angry? Sad? Afraid? Hopeful?

What are some things you can do, that many people can't? What can't you do, that others can?

How have you changed since arriving? Do you have any new abilities? If so, how do they seem to work?

How does this place make your character feel lost / discarded / lonely? Or excited / energized / curious?

What is strange, surprising, or terrifying about this world? What about this world reminds you of home?

Where have you been, so far? Who there has been friendly or unfriendly, harmful or intriguing?

What cultures, species, tribes, towns, cities, or countries have you encountered so far? How did they seem?

What important things are legal or illegal, praiseworthy or taboo for each of them, if you know?

What kinds of magic / other powers (psi, faith, species traits) exist here? What kind of technology is available?

Do different species, countries, socioeconomic classes, etc. differ in access to powers / tech / resources?

The only other constraints on your world are these:

(1) Somewhere in your first **Travels and Adventures** phase, your character must gain access to an interdimensional communication device (magic mirror, dimensional viewscreen, multiversal spectacles, etc.).

(2) There must be at least one good reason you can't escape from this world yet (page 2).

(3) Escape must be possible, via one or more portals (page 4).

Phase 2: Multiversal Syzygy - 1 hour minimum (3 hours recommended maximum)

For just a few hours, cosmic forces converge, allowing direct communication (and telepathy?) between worlds.

1. Connect to your chosen video conferencing service (Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, etc.), at the chosen day and time. If desired, set a virtual background, to show where your character is right now. You may use costumes, makeup, and props that fit the world you're in, or the one you're from, or both.
2. Role-play with each other, until the group is ready to stop. A few conversation starters:
How were you all separated? Who is responsible? Have your characters missed each other? What do they want to share? What are they reluctant to share? How will everyone cope with their new circumstances? How can they help each other overcome challenges and escape?
3. If you want other characters to know what your character is thinking, type it in the text chat area of your conferencing service. For out-of-character questions or concerns, put what you type in [brackets].

Phase 3: Mail From Beyond - 3 days minimum (1 week+ recommended)

Aid other characters by sending words of encouragement or an object they need.

If you choose, you may send (at most) one letter to each other character, once per game cycle. Somehow, these letters always reach their intended recipient, even if the sender doesn't know their location. Letters may include anything your character wants to say, within the parameters of your group's compiled consent surveys. For the foreseeable future, please disinfect all mailed items before sending, and before and after opening.

You may underline a few personality traits or abilities (e.g. courage, wit, combat training, spell-casting), lending them to the recipient until the end of the next **Travels and Adventures** phase after your letter arrives. The letter must include one or more stories about how each of those traits / abilities helped you in your new world. Be prepared to roleplay how your character feels without some of their strengths, until they are returned.

Hand-write your letters, or print them in a script font, if your world has no way to type. Letters sent from a high-tech world to another high-tech world may be in video, audio, document, image, or QR code format on a mailed memory card, flash drive, or CD / DVD (whichever the recipient can open). For players concerned about revealing their physical address, either send letters to the Chronicler for re-routing, or use email.

Challenge level 1: One personality trait or ability, per sheet of paper filled. Maximum of 3 per letter.

Challenge level 2: One personality trait or ability, per sheet of paper filled. Maximum of 2 per letter.

Challenge level 3: One personality trait or ability per letter, regardless of length.

NPC Letters (Optional): If invited to do so, you may write letters from the POV of another player's NPCs, using information from the Chronicler, in any format that fits their world. Maximum once per NPC, per game cycle.

Portals and Game Conclusion

Once your character has access to a portal, they may now visit other worlds (if invited), may send packages to other characters, and may send letters outside the **Mail From Beyond** phase. A package may be either a boxed item in its original packaging, or an envelope containing a photo or drawing of something more elaborate. You may send up to one package to each other character, once per game (**not** per game session).

At challenge level 2, you may only send a package to characters whose first challenge is already completed. At challenge level 3, you may only send a package to characters currently in the same world as your character. (No modifications for challenge level 1.)

When all characters have access to a portal, your next **Multiversal Syzygy** is the last one: the **Portal Activation** phase. How will you end your game? Choose an ending from the ones below, or create your own:

1. *Integration Ending:* The sundered parts of the original person reintegrate, in the original world. Together, spend a few minutes narrating what that person does next.
2. *Reunion Ending:* The group of friends make it back to the real world and resume their lives, perhaps in a changed way. Each player spends a few minutes narrating what their character does next.
3. *Epic Ending:* The group confronts the mysterious force that separated them, and must find a way to defeat it. Let your Chronicler (or another player who wants to) invent and portray the Big Villain here, using your group's shared information. Who are they? What do they want? What device(s) or ritual(s) will you need to defeat them? Figure it out, roleplay it, and then choose one of the other endings.
4. *Wanderlust Ending:* Either type of group decides to stay and further explore one or more of the worlds.
5. *Heroic Ending:* A new crisis threatens one or more worlds, and you'll have to play more to solve it.

Debrief Phase (Optional) - 15 to 30 minutes recommended

At the end of each **Multiversal Syzygy** phase, players may stick around for a little while to disengage from their characters, and process some of their feelings out-of-character. Debrief is optional, so no player should feel obligated to stay for it. Discuss a few of the questions below, until the assembled group is ready to be done.

- Why did you create the character you did?
- How did you decide what you wanted your world to be like?
- How has your character and/or world changed recently?
- What did you learn about yourself, the other players, or anything else?
- What feelings did the game bring up for you?
- What was an intense part of the game for you? How do you feel about it now?
- Did you have any favorite moments?
- Would you like to acknowledge or thank anyone for recent good role-playing?
- Would you do anything differently, in retrospect?
- What simple things could other players do to make the game more fun for you?

Designers' Note:

Chance (they/them) has played, run, and written for both larp and tabletop games. Some of their favorites include *Dark Ages: Vampire*, *Changeling: the Lost*, *Unknown Armies*, *Planescape*, *Paranoia*, *Fiasco*, and *Velvet Noir*. All of Chance's professional and fan game work is at www.alchemicalgaming.com/games. Most of their education is in the social sciences, and their day job is tech support.

Matthew (he/him) has primarily played *Dungeons & Dragons*, and has some experience with the *Marvel Superheroes* tabletop RPG. He has a Ph.D in philosophy, and is a university instructor.

Our goal was to create a game that makes full use of the strengths of video platforms like Zoom and Skype, incorporating journaling and letter-writing to deepen roleplay, with a sense of personal creativity and adventure we hope will evoke some of the most fun elements of a good *D&D* session from both a player's and a DM's perspective. We further hope this game will evoke the excitement of waiting for an important letter or package to arrive, and provide a little additional funding for the U.S. post office. **Scattered** seems like more of a "game system" than a "game" to us, but maybe that's because we both began our role-playing careers with tabletop.

Inspirations: *Identity*, *Inside Out*, *Donnie Darko*, *Spider-Man: Into the Spiderverse*, *The Butterfly Effect*; *Sense8*, *The X-Files*, *Fringe*, *The Magicians*, *Legends of Tomorrow*, *Fushigi Yuugi*, *Star Trek* (especially "City on the Edge of Forever" and "Mirror, Mirror"); *Griffin and Sabine* by Nick Bantock, *1Q84* by Hiroki Murakami; *The Longest Journey*, *Control: Ultimate Edition*, *Minecraft*; *Dungeons & Dragons* (2nd, 3.5, and 5th editions), *Dungeon World*, *Bluebeard's Bride*, *Fiasco*

Special thanks to Inara, Chance's torbie love-muffin kitty, for hanging out with us, being cuddly on our laps, and purring a lot while we wrote this game.

Appendix: Additional Prompts for Travels and Adventures Phase

Biology

Does your world have non-humanoid creatures that can speak? If so, what are they like?
Are there other humans in this world? If not, what's it like being the only one?
What kinds of plants and animals have you seen?
Which ones do people here consider best for eating? What about best for medicine / potion-making?

Cosmology & Metaphysics

Is this world an afterlife (or *the* afterlife) for one or more cultures or species?
Does time, gravity, conservation of energy, etc. work differently here than expected? If so, how?
What else is strange, mysterious, or "impossible" about this world, for you?
How many suns, moons, and important stars does this world have? What stories do people tell about them?

Geography & Climate

What kinds of terrain and weather does your world have?
How much do they vary from region to region?
What are the seasons like here? How long does each last?
What natural resources and types of terrain does each country, tribe, or species control?
What are the most popular modes of travel for rich people? For poor people?

Personal Information & Relationships

How much of the information above has your character even learned yet?
How much of this world has your character seen, in their short time there?
How do you decide what's right or wrong? What do you do when that approach isn't enough?
Do you sympathize with or oppose any of the factions, ideologies, or causes you've encountered?
Do you have a companion, pet, familiar, robot, caravan, party, etc.? If so, how did you meet them?
What rumors have you heard?
What odd events did you witness recently?
What kind of conflicts did you get into recently?
Where are you a hero?
Where are you not wanted?
Have you been invited to join (or infiltrated) any groups discussed below? If so, how did it go?

Sociopolitical Organization

What political entities (countries, city-states, kingdoms, corporations, unions, guilds, etc.) exist?
What government systems do they have, and what groups have influence over those governments?
What are their priorities, and relative strengths and weaknesses?
How would you characterize their relations with each other?
How do they treat their citizens?
Who (if anyone) do they oppress? Is it deliberate?
What religions, philosophies, and ideologies exist here?
How are they related to the political entities above?
How are their relations with each other?
What is expected of members? How many members meet those expectations, and how often?
What currency or currencies are popular, and in what parts of the world?
Describe some momentous or famous historical events from this world.
How do tales of these events differ between cultures, species, countries, or religions?
What historical events are in dispute (some people believe they happened, and others don't)?