

THE PORCH

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Stephenson, Al. *RESIDENTS AND FRIENDS ON THE FRONT PORCH OF A RENTED HOUSE ON UNICOI STREET IN HELEN, GEORGIA*. Digital image. *Wikimedia Commons*. The Wikimedia Project, n.d. Web. 7 Sept. 2016.

Concept: Friends gather on a porch in a small Southern town near the end of the summer after their High School graduation. Each one of them has a burning question that they can't ask.

Players: 3-8

Facilitator: 1

Time to play: At least 1 hour

Needed to play: A room with a dimmer switch (or a porch at sunset!), 1 notecard per player, 1d12, pens

Optional: Iced tea and cups, nametags, noise generator (suggested: <http://bit.ly/2c76dab> or <http://bit.ly/2c75uG6>)

Playspace Setup: If using a room with a dimmer switch, dim the lights to about the level of an August sunset. If using any of the optional props, put on the noise generator just loud enough to be clearly audible without being distracting, and set out the iced tea in glasses, with just enough to refill. Ask players to sit in a vaguely semi-circular formation. They can move around at any time and sit next to other players during character creation as their characters' personalities slowly develop.

How to Play: Decide on the name of your town and any specifics. Some examples:

- Ridge Creek, a town in the Appalachian foothills with a massive, derelict banquet hall
- Church Point, a lake town with a white clapboard Baptist church dating from the Westward Expansion
- Bluefield, a town attached to a USAF base
- Falling Spring, a small farming town in a drought
- Mount Hope, a coastal town with a historic high school
- Goshen, a swamp town with an old post office and a famous university football coach
- Altoona, a dying mining town

Each player takes a notecard and writes down the following:

- a name
- A gender presentation
- a small town high school trope (i.e. beloved quarterback, stifled artist, preppy student council representative, etc.).

Players should determine how their characters know each other and are friends, or at least friendly (cousins, school club, Breakfast Club scenario earlier in high school, etc.)

The facilitator should roll the d12 for each of the players to determine their guiding question (see next page). The player should then write down their question, and then either pick a concept from their question's list or come up with their own. They may not at any point directly ask their question *UNLESS*:

- Once per game, a player can choose to Wish On A Star. They may do this simply by raising their hand and declaring that they are doing so to the facilitator. Wishing On A Star allows a player to do any of the following things:
 - ask another player their question directly
 - ask another player what their question is
 - affect an inanimate object (for example: a player could knock another player's drink out of their hand, but could not place player A's hand on player B's head, or on player A's head, for that matter).

Otherwise, the players' characters are graduated high schoolers on their way to adulthood, hanging out on a porch one August evening. Play for one hour, or until you run out of iced tea.

Debrief: Once the facilitator calls game, the players should return to their semicircle. This time, they should be seated next to the people they felt closest to during game, if possible. Have everyone take three deep breaths and then ask the following questions around the semicircle:

- Were your questions answered to your character's satisfaction? How?
- If not, how did your character feel about that?
- How will your character remember this?
- What was something you, as a player, enjoyed?
- How would you play differently next time?

Questions (Concepts)

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| 1. Will you miss me when I'm gone? (going to college, going to prison, dying, moving to the city) | 7. Why do you want to go? (staying in the small town by choice, can't see a way out, tied down by obligation) |
| 2. Do you think about me at night? (crush, overwhelming loneliness, stifled in the small town) | 8. Do you know I think about you? (loneliness, intrusive thoughts, crushing boredom turns to daydreams) |
| 3. What do you do when we're apart? (obsessed with family, anxious, possessive of relationships) | 9. How do you feel when we're together? (anxious, autism spectrum, unwilling empathy deficit, sees everyone as a threat) |
| 4. What do you think of me when I'm not smiling? (depressed and trying to hide it, toxic family, stressed by college applications) | 10. What's behind your smile? (scared of intimacy, abuse survivor, emotional blindness) |
| 5. When will you give up on me? (crush, giving up on everyone else, distrustful of others, transitioning) | 11. How do you deal with it all? (giving up on everyone else, stressed out, addict) |
| 6. Am I a monster? (see any of the above) | 12. Are you a monster? (see any of the above) |