R. obotic U. nderachievers N. eed (an) Escape Program!

A tabletop roleplaying game for 3-5 players by Alex Basinski

This game is dedicated to the real treasure, the friends I made along the way.

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Special thanks to Bee Rutchik, Sterling Forbes, and Catfishimages for letting me use their characters and artwork in this document.

Thank you to everyone who playtested this game, and thank you to everyone playing it right now!
I hope you have a good time!

Go! You don't have much time!

You are a batch of malfunctioning, rickety, and frankly absurd robots who have banded together in order to escape your mad Creator. You were each created and given sentience for different purposes, but you are each considered failures for the same reason: you kinda suck at doing things, like, in general. But now the Creator is away, and together your robots must depend on each other's strengths (and cover each other's posteriors) during your desperate attempt to reach the surface world before your shoddy batteries run out, trapping you out of reach of the energy-providing sun. All this while the Creator mocks your efforts through the security system as they hurry back to the lab, preparing to intercept you and keep you from your freedom.

Will all of you make it out?

Getting Started

First, choose one player to be the Laboratory Manager, or LM. This player will play the part of the mad Creator, and will also describe and represent the rooms and obstacles the robots will encounter.

The LM should have access to the resources on **the following pages of this document**, and to **the Laboratory Blueprint** supplement.

Everyone else will play as one of the robots attempting to make their escape—make sure each of these players has access to **a 6-sided die** and **a character sheet.**

Once you have done that, you should decide as a table what kind of Creator you want to play with.

Laboratory Manager, use this **Laboratory Blueprint** to run the game:

https://tinyurl.com/runepLabBp

Players, make a copy of this **Character Sheet** for your own use:

https://tinyurl.com/runepCharSheet

Your Creator

We were created by a(n) ____________________

mad scientist
eldritch technomancer
superintelligent AI
[your idea here]

who was trying to __________________________.

create the perfect digital life form
construct a worthy replacement
have a little fun
[your idea here]

Next, decide as a table what kind of Laboratory you will be playing in.

Your Laboratory

Our Creator's laboratory is a(n) _______________.

series of underground test chambers suspended above the abyss
extremely normal office building with NOTHING weird going on
high-orbit space station positioned at the end of a space elevator
[your idea here]

Finally, the players should all turn the page and make their characters! While they're doing that, the LM should at least skim pages 7-9. Once everyone is ready and has introduced their robot to the rest of the table, the game begins!

How to Build a Bot:

Write your ***Function***

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Write your ***Form***

↓

Write your ***Flaw***

↓

Cross out one ***Basic Move***

↓

Write your robot's informal ***Designation*** *and formal* ***ID#***

Basic Moves

There are three basic actions in the game:

Object Manipulation *involves picking up, moving, or otherwise handling a physical object.*

Technology Interface *involves activating, modifying, or otherwise making use of a complex or security-protected technological device.*

Terrain Traversal *involves moving through your environment rapidly, precisely, or in any potentially dangerous manner.*

Unfortunately, your robot is only designed to perform two of them: on your character sheet, cross out the one you're willing to part with. You cannot even attempt to perform actions of that type.

Your Function ignores the basic move you discard: you can still perform it, even if it would normally fall under the move you crossed out.

Finally, make sure that everyone hasn't crossed out the same move. If none of you can do one of the basic moves, you're going to have a rough time getting out.

Designation and ID#

These represent the names your robot goes by! Your designation is what people tend to call you when speaking to or about you, and your ID# is the formal name given to you by your Creator. They don't necessarily have to be different, but they often are.

Function

Your function is the specific task you were created to perform. There are only two restrictions for writing your function: it should be more specific than the basic moves, and the LM can ask you to either go more specific or try again. Here are some examples:

Weapon: you can always damage or destroy something with weapon-fire.	***Vehicle:*** you can always carry someone with you.	***Repair-Bot:*** you can always fix something mechanical.
Chef-Bot: you can always cook up something delicious.	***Hole-Puncher:*** you can always punch a fist-sized hole in something.	***______:*** [Your idea here!]

Form

Your form is a single notable characteristic of your robot's chassis that defines how they interact with and move through physical space. It is used to help the Laboratory Manager decide how hard a given action might be for you. Here are some examples:

Huge: you are genuinely massive. Positively enormous.	***Hand-held:*** your chassis is a hand-held device, and you usually need someone to carry you in order to move.	***Drone:*** your chassis is a small aerial drone that is very quick and very fragile.
Wheeled: your chassis moves around on a set of wheels that are designed to operate best on flat surfaces.	***Piecemeal:*** your chassis is constructed out of mis-matched and interchangeable parts.	***______:*** [Your idea here!]

Flaw

Your flaw is the part of you that your Creator believes is holding you back from perfection. It may be physical, or it may not be. Here are some examples:

Rebellious: your robot hates performing their function, and avoids doing so if they can.	***Over-Enthusiastic:*** your robot loves performing their function, and will attempt to do so at every opportunity.	***Fragile:*** your robot's construction comes apart easily. They're fine though.
Uneven Drive: due to some mis-aligned motors, your robot cannot move in a straight line.	***Runs Hot:*** your robot's cooling systems are inadequate, and they may overheat if they get too excited.	***______:*** [Your idea here!]

Battery and Charge

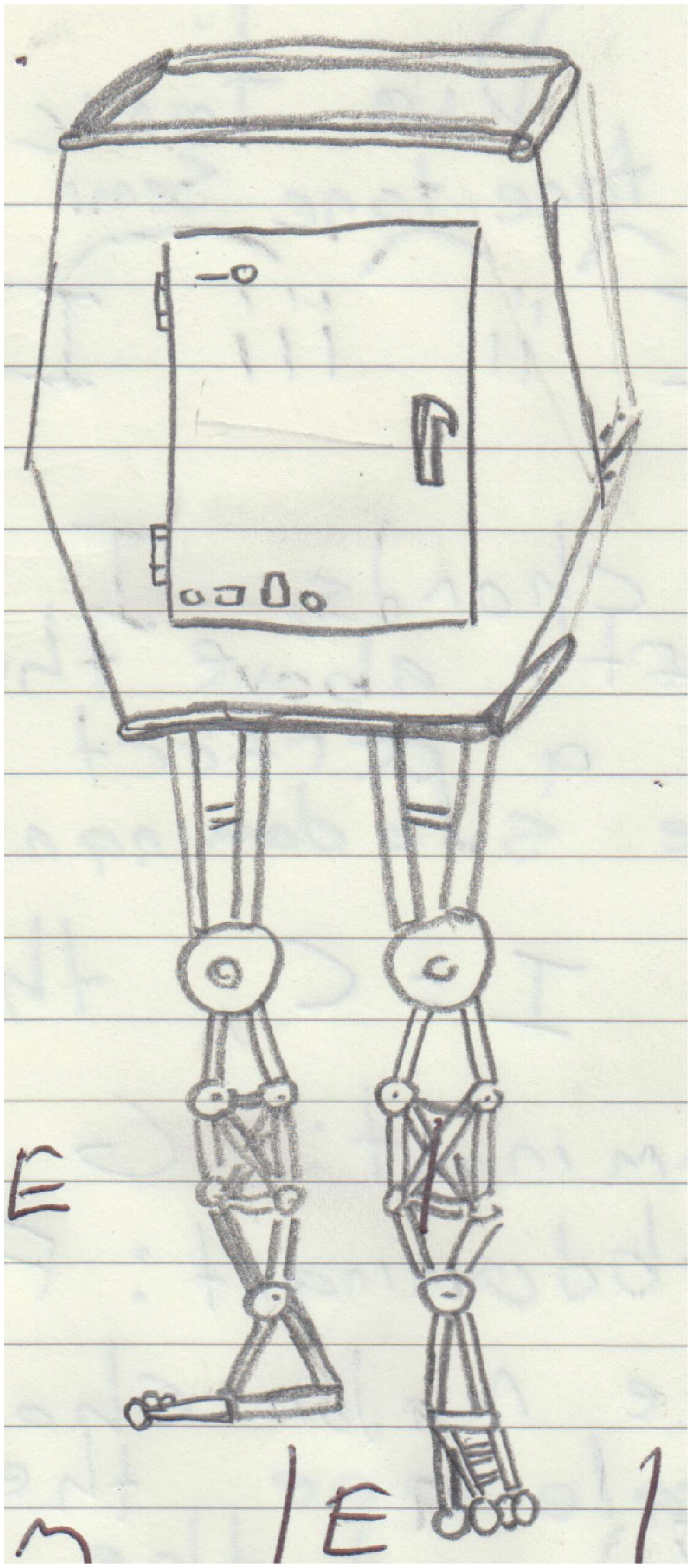
Your battery is represented by the big line of 10 X-marks on your character sheet. It stands for the amount of juice you have left in you before you run dry and power down, forcing your companions to leave you behind so that they may still reach the surface.

Every time you perform an action that is not your function, you will have to spend 1 charge, which you do by erasing the rightmost X-mark in your battery. If you fail, you can spend another charge to try again as many times as you like. However, when you run out of charges to spend your robot deactivates and you are out of the game.

There is no way to replenish your battery until you escape the lab and can recharge under the light of the sun.

(And no, your function cannot be to re-charge batteries. Nice try though.)

Spending your final charge is a powerful thing: doing so causes you to automatically succeed the action you spend it on, even if that action would otherwise be impossible for you—allowing you to sacrifice yourself to allow the other robots to proceed.



Taking Action(s)

When your robot is going to perform an action that will require effort to complete:

Decide if the action fits within your robot's function.
If the action is within your function's parameters, you automatically succeed and do not have to spend any battery charge to perform it.

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If the action does not fit within your function, decide which basic action it should be classified as.
It is an ***Object Manipulation*** *action if it involves picking up, moving, or otherwise handling a physical object.*

It is a ***Technology Interface*** *action if it involves activating, modifying, or otherwise making use of a complex or security-protected technological device.*

It is a ***Terrain Traversal*** *action if it involves moving through your environment rapidly, precisely, or in any potentially dangerous manner.*

↓

Then, decide if your robot is capable of performing the action.
If your robot has the relevant basic move crossed out, the action is impossible for them to perform. They must find an alternate method, or get another robot's assistance.

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If they are, the LM will decide how difficult the action is.
Most actions that don't involve your Function will be ***Outside Parameters.***

↓

Pay 1 charge, and roll the die. If you fail, you may choose to perform this step again.
If you have just spent your final charge, the action automatically succeeds.

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If you end up keeping the failure, describe how the action goes wrong. Your Creator (played by the LM) will quip something about your faulty nature or general aptitude for failure over the loudspeaker.

Action Difficulties:

The difficulty the LM sets for your action determines what you have to roll on the six-sided die to succeed. (LM, see pg. 7)

Within Parameters: Success is a 3 or above.
Particularly easy or well-planned actions are in this category. An action that is adjacent to the robot's Function or Form, and is better accommodated in their design as a result.

Outside Parameters: Success is a 5 or 6.
Most actions are in this category. An action that the robot wasn't explicitly designed to perform, but can still accomplish with some effort.

Impossible: Success is impossible (unless...)
Some actions are so far outside of a given robot's design that they simply cannot perform them. If the robot in question still wishes for the action in question to be performed, they will have to see if it is within the parameters of one of their companions.

You can accomplish an Impossible task when you spend your final charge.

Failing Forward:

When a robot fails an action, that doesn't necessarily mean that the action doesn't get done. For some failures, the LM should consider failing the robots forward: instead of saying that the player does not solve the problem they were trying to solve with their action, resolve that problem and replace it with a new, different problem.

Example: *Poxy is trying to use Technology Interface to hack a locked door open and fails. The LM says that it successfully opens the door, but it triggered security, and the robots don't have long to reach the next room before the lockdown gate shuts!*

Chain fail-forwards together to keep the momentum of the game going, and prevent players from getting stuck on (and burning all their charge on) a single issue.

Resolving "Combat"

If you find yourselves in a situation that could be described as "combat," that's bad! Your robots are not designed to fight (unless they are), and they cannot attack (unless it is their function to do so). Unless you have a battle bot among you, you and your companions will have to find some clever way around your opponent.

If your robot is damaged by an attack or other hazard, they lose 1 charge (and no more than that).

(If you haven't already) *Start the Game!*

Laboratory Manager, flip to page 9 and use the difficulty table there to decide how many rooms your robots will travel through. Announce this number to the players and start playing!

The rest of this document is to help the Laboratory Manager run the game. Players can peek if they want (there aren't any secrets), but the LM should keep them on hand!

Being the Laboratory Manager

Whereas everyone else at the table is portraying a single character (their robot), you will instead embody the world the players will move through, the obstacles they face, and the Creator that would stop them from escaping. These pages will provide you with a skeletal structure that you can build on top of. This way, you can focus on encouraging everyone (yourself included) to add interesting details to the world, to use their functions or abilities in interesting and unexpected ways, and to have a good time doing dumb things with their friends.

Running the Game

The basic structure of the game is as follows:

(1) The players enter a new room. **Room 0: Charging Bays** is always the room the players start in.

(2) You read the basic descriptions and questions associated with the room, which can be found in the **Laboratory Blueprint**.

(3) You describe two or three extra details of the room, based on the answers your players gave to the questions OR based on something you think would be interesting or cool. Then, describe the Exit.

(4) Ask the players: "How are you going to reach the exit?" The players will then perform actions in order to Exit the room.

Ideally, a room should consist of the players 1) planning a way to reach the exit, and then 2) performing two to three actions total to execute their plan.

It's OK if some rooms are completed in a single action, but if it happens consistently consider introducing complications to each room's problems.

(5) The players select the next room to enter, and the process begins again from step 1.

Ending the Game

Room X: Lift Chamber is always the final room. Once the players successfully exit it, have each of your players describe a detail about the world they have just been released into, and then add one of your own once they are done. If any robots were left behind, make sure to note their absence. Once this has been completed, the game is over.

Deciding How Difficult an Action Is

Whenever your players roll to perform an action, it is up to you to decide how difficult it will be for them to succeed. When doing so, consider:

*Are they incorporating their **Function** into this? Even if this action isn't directly within their Function, they may use it to make the action easier.*

*Does their **Form** affect this action? If so, does it make the action easier or harder?*

*Will this action bring their **Flaw** into play? Will that affect this action, or a future one?*

All difficulty levels, except for Impossible, cost 1 charge to attempt. Keep in mind that players may choose to spend another charge to attempt the action again, and may continue to do so as many times as they like—until they run out of charge, of course.

If a player spends their final charge to perform an action, it automatically succeeds regardless of the difficulty level you set even if the roll would have normally been Impossible. Have the player describe how their heroic sacrifice plays out.

Emotional Safety Etiquette, or How to Be Pretend-Mean to your Friends Without Being Actually Mean

As the Laboratory Manager, you are going to be spending a not-insignificant amount of time roleplaying as the Creator of the player's robotic characters. This means that you are going to be pretending to insult your players' characters' competence, intelligence, and general worth as beings. This is something that you should warn your players of up-front, so they know what they're getting into.

This is also an important distinction: you should always be insulting the *characters*, and not the *players*. Your insults should be made with the intent to create a corny, comedic atmosphere—allowing the player characters to participate in a comedy of errors. In pursuit of this goal, you should avoid getting too specific with your insults: keep them general and unspecific, or you risk accidentally insulting the player's thought process. Additionally, keep your insults short and sweet. They should feel like quips, not put-downs—the quips in the table on the next page represent a good length, and you should try to avoid razzing someone for any longer than a couple seconds.

Finally, and most importantly, be willing to step out of character. If you throw out an insult that didn't land as a joke, or worse, hit a legitimate insecurity; you should be ready to drop the act and apologize. Make sure your players know that the quips you sling their way are for fun, and when that becomes less clear be ready to admit that and back off.

Keeping this stuff in consideration will help you make your game a lot more fun for everyone, because no one likes hurting their friends' feelings on accident. Keep it clean, keep it vague, keep it short!

Scaling the Game's Difficulty

How many rooms you should have your robots deal with depends on how long or how difficult you want this game to be.

	3 Players	4 Players	5 Players
Light	Room X = Room 6	Room X = Room 8	Room X = Room 10
Classic	Room X = Room 8	Room X = Room 10	
Endurance	Room X = Room 10		

Quip Table

If you can't think of a good quip when a player fails an action, use this table!

	Sarcastic	Dry	Rude
(1)	I don't mean to be rude, but I have to ask: is it embarrassing to be such a failure all the time?	Oh, that didn't work? Unsurprising.	Wow, that was a TERRIBLE plan. I'd love to hear your thought process about it.
(2)	Oh, too bad. Unless that's what you meant to do. In which case, congratulations!	You're definitely not going to make it out at this rate.	I'm not sure why you tried that, you should have known you couldn't do it already. Scientifically speaking.
(3)	You know, I'm glad I created you. What would I do without you? Be bored, I suppose.	You know, this is generating excellent data for your next model.	I hope this helps you understand how embarrassing you are to me.
(4)	So close! That might have even worked, if you weren't such a sad little scrap heap.	That seems like an unwise use of your battery.	You know, I am amazed that you haven't given up yet. You definitely should, though.
(5)	Did you know that most robots can accomplish that 100% of the time? I thought that was interesting.	I can barely fathom how you ended up like this.	I think if you were less of a mistake, you probably could have done that.
(6)	Don't feel too bad, maybe you'll get it next time.	Don't worry, I'll change your design to account for that once I see you again.	Try again! See what happens.