

# Story Prompts/Samples

by Madison Figg

## **Gagarin City - Action, Sci-Fi:**

"We had a deal,"

The low pitch of Astra's voice blended in with the menial chatter of the dimly-lit establishment, her salacious body-language disguising the gravity of the situation at hand with a subtle motion. Brushing a few soft fingers against her companion's arm with a smile, she paused at his wrist, warm eyes flicking upwards in a wordless taunt.

"Y-you don't understand--" the man seethed, shaking off her grasp to lean into the rickety table with palpable paranoia. Reaching for an almost emptied glass of firewater, his head tilted away from a few passing patrons with an uncomfortable sound of displeasure. "*They'll know.*"

A pregnant pause fell between them before he continued with added fervour, "If I speak, I'll be dead the second the mist lifts."

'And?' she caught herself thinking, irritation further dissolving her patience as she leaned back into the chair with a soft exhale. It had taken weeks of scrupulous planning to line up this rendezvous - a keen act of persistence that Astra had begrudgingly applied against her better judgement.

This whole arrangement had been aberrant from the beginning. Starting with an anonymous encrypted message a few months prior, one that had contained a generous up-front payment that had been difficult to ignore. Tactile incentive, while appreciated, generally had little to no weight in the woman's eyes when determining whether to accept a contract. What mattered were gained connections and information - the fodder and instruments that were a means to an end on this forsaken landscape. And in this case, the upwards of six-figure number presented for completing the objective was undeniably monumental. The final component needed for what she'd been working all these years to accomplish.

It was the same underlying motivation that drove the majority of denizens of this dystopian metropolis; securing a means of passage and ditching this living nightmare like a bat out of hell. An act that was easier said than done considering the current state of the cities defences and politics - but the contagious paranoia only seemed to push more individuals into hastily attempted coups. Propelling the missing body count into higher numbers each day which only proved the predictability of human desperation. Locked in behind walls, scratching to get out.

Lifting a pre-rolled smoke to her curved lips, Astra used the pretence of reaching for a lighter to subtly scan the ramshackle space around them. She was intimately familiar with Wagner's bar and its usual patrons, having provided several of them with various unsanctioned items. That included the surly barkeep who, as restitution, graciously allowed the brunette to use

the establishment to conduct her business. Even throwing in a few free drinks here and there for loosening customers purse-strings with a little harmless flirting when it fancied her. The crowd tonight, however, held a different air of dissonance - the regulars now surrounded by a myriad of personalities of different allegiances and lifestyles.

The rotations of the ever shifting toxic mist were becoming increasingly unpredictable, making it commonplace to end up sequestered in some corner of the Gorge district for extended periods of time. This typically wasn't an issue provided Astra had been on a bender, but in light of what was at stake tonight the added company was working against her.

Deciding to finally push the issue after hours of uncertainty, she stood upright and moved around behind the informant in an attempt to draw less attention. Lowering her mouth to his tattooed ear as she slipped by him in search of another drink, the woman allowed a tint of malice to skew her words.

"My client is paying me for intel... what makes you assume your name alone wouldn't suffice?"

Not stopping to check if the statement had inflicted the desired effect, she moved listlessly past a huddled group of maintenance workers speaking in hushed voices. Savouring the taste of the tobacco on her tongue with a long pull, she lifted her eyebrows at the barkeep with a nod to signal another round in a soundless interaction.

At a glance, she could have passed as a hired mercenary or a defector. The deep grey shade of the long-sleeved utility suit stopped her from standing out, and the added tactical straps and belt kept undesirables at a distance. Pushing the dangling mask at her side out of the way, an elbow found purchase against the nominal counter-top as the smoke bellowed out of her lungs into the muggy recycled air.

As a series of shots was presented in front of her, Astra smiled in thanks before throwing one back with the ease of consistent practice. Now - to wait.

#### **Chaos Magic - Fantasy, Thriller:**

There was that smell again - a subtle waft of burning ozone followed by a muted crackling, the air shifting to animate in invisible obstreperous bursts. A female figure instinctively crouched down against an expanse of knarred bark, her dirtied fingertips darting backwards to hover over the lip of a scuffed leather quiver.

Ayra paused, and for a moment there was undisturbed silence. Nothing but the sound of her own shallow inhales to fill the void as it stretched, heart pounding. Her lanky figure appeared leaden in its detailed armour, muscles straining to remain motionless in her defensive position. Dark brown hair was pulled back into a practical bun which now appeared to be tattered, forcing thin wisps to stick to her pale freckled forehead and neck. An elegant sapphire cloak covered her shoulders, lessened only by a handful of jagged tears which revealed the dark leather straps of her armour beneath. Attached to each of her hips were

matching daggers, sheathed in intricately embroidered material which featured silver and azure thread. Crystal blue irises skimmed the foliage with a controlled anxiety, years of training forcing her to maintain control despite an impending sense of danger.

Up above, distant tendrils of sunlight filtered down through the layered canopies, casting speckled shadows across the damp grass in a hypnotic waltz. It was then - without warning - that a small burst of energy exploded up ahead, depositing a figure on the plush ground with a dull thud. Small particles of dirt flew upwards as the body remained in a hunched position, strained heavy breathing audible as arcane energy radiated in waves of palpable heat. It had only been a mere few minutes before that she had arrived in a similar fashion, running through the dark forest in furious bounds one moment before finding herself here the next.

All Arya remembered was waking up to screams, her convoy fearfully scrambling around her in an attempt to flee from something. She had frantically turned to follow when she saw it. The eyes. Impish orange orbs that ignited in the dark, its disembodied form sending out clamouring flames in a chaotic display---

“Friend or foe?” she heard finally as the figure stood, revealing himself to be a towering man with unusual facial features. In the time it took for him to recover, she had grabbed an arrow, holding it taut against the bowstring with a concentrated expression. His attire was elaborate, fitted pieces forming a blend of red and yellow elements that couldn’t be mistaken for any other allegiance. The Altray Coven. Those whom her own faction vehemently opposed.

“Neither,” she yelled back gruffly with effort, not budging from her locked position while staring down the sight. He could just be an illusion or a malevolent creature playing a trick on her. Where had everyone else from her caravan gone?

#### **Spacetime Setup - *Sci-fi, Action:***

Another day on this unadulterated vessel, another goddamn headache. Ryn Osaka rushed furiously down one of the ship's passageways, her face locked in a serious expression. Against her shoulder a heavy strap carrying an array of tools bounced - almost throwing her off balance with each expedient stride.

Moving briskly along the dimly lit hallways, the aged metal seemed to glint ominously - a calculated smile that was a shadow of its former glory: The Marie-Celeste, a vessel once ahead of its time now patched together scrap run by single minded brutes. The crew had its charms. They were hot-headed, but willing to get shit done when it benefited them.

It had been a few weeks since she'd arrived aboard, and upon arriving for her next shift the following morning, the reporting officer had rancorously passed over a set of new assignments. One's that required actual skill and came with a few more heightened responsibilities. It wasn't much, but any additional mental stimulation was a godsend after doing menial tasks for the past several days.

It had come across her mind that the new tasks she had been assigned came with a handful of aspects that her begrudging officer might have considered difficult for her to deal with.

Perhaps expecting to see her struggle. The supplemented set of equipment she now had to carry was almost double the weight, and often the repairs she needed to complete ended up on opposite sides of the ship. It was a mad dash to complete each objective on time, and for the sake of that one measly recommendation she hoped to achieve at the end of this post, Ryn pushed herself even harder.

Coming upon a set of sealed doors, Ryn reached for the panel and entered a four-digit code before watching the metal hiss open and grant her access. While working on a particularly tricky reset procedure on one of the auxiliary pumps that had been out of commission, she had gotten hailed about an emergency repair. It sounded like an electrical malfunction, or at least a power glitch of some kind that had spread into the maintenance hallways a few levels below the Captain's deck. The fourth case of a similar nature that she'd heard of since joining the crew, but unfortunately hadn't been able to check any of them out for herself.

The *Marie-Celeste* was ancient - and it wouldn't be surprising if the whole thing had started to break apart around them. Years of constant upkeep wasn't ideal, and would definitely lead to damages overtime. Especially if the majority of the workers liked to cut corners.

Moving through the doorway, she paused for a second to orient herself in the proper direction. It wasn't an area that had a heavy flow of people, as the space was generally reserved for the cleaning crew and other menial workers in need of supplies or items out of storage. At least in this wing it wasn't as huge of an issue as the others were previously, but these types of malfunctions could easily spread further in the ship and cause a lot more problems if it wasn't fixed.

Catching a set of flickering bulbs and a dimmed corner branching off the hallway to the left, Ryn took off quickly, eager to get this out of the way. Brandishing a flashlight into the palm of her hand she prepared to scan the exterior wall while moving forward towards the specified location. As she did, finger hovering over the push button for the beam of light, a low sound reached her ears from up ahead.

Voices. Whispers and small thuds, metal on metal - sliding together and clicking into place. Pausing instantly Ryn felt her breath catch in the back of her throat, a feeling of confusion muddying her thoughts. Who would have beaten her to the job? The brunette tried to quietly retreat - turning on her heel to head back the way she came. But before she could make it farther than a few steps a loud voice rang out from behind her - terse and thick with apparent amusement.

"Well... what do we have here?" Slowly rotating to face the figure, she could see the façade of a domineering man a few feet away. His tousled black hair blended in with smudges of grease across his forehead, a similar set of tools held in a case by his side. The man didn't look particularly familiar, but Ryn was sure she'd seen him around, perhaps at the mess hall.

"Came down for the job..." She began, gesturing in the direction he'd appeared from. "Looks like ya beat me to it, I'll leave." Following up with a nod as she attempted to head towards the exit, only to find herself stopped as a strong hand wrapped around her wrist and held her in place.

"Your job ain't over just yet," He snapped maliciously as she whipped around bewildered, a crooked grin consuming his face as she felt something hit her head and the word began to fade... "I've been waiting..."

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Ryn didn't know how much time had passed... the world seemed to warp around her as she struggled to open her eyes. She could feel cold metal beneath her body, the ground, where she now laid face against her toppled over work-bag. *What...?*

Struggling to lift herself, she bucked and collapsed again in a heaving bout of vertigo. Groaning she flipped onto her back - mind pressing to remember what had happened beyond the faded details. Even the man's face seemed blurred in her mind's eye, the initial shock morphing into a haze of darkness that revealed nothing.

Squinting sideways and up, Ryn felt a small wave of nausea as her eyes landed on the wall, the already present sense of dread spreading further into her veins. A panel sat partially open, bits and pieces of frayed material poking out from the interior. Destroyed.