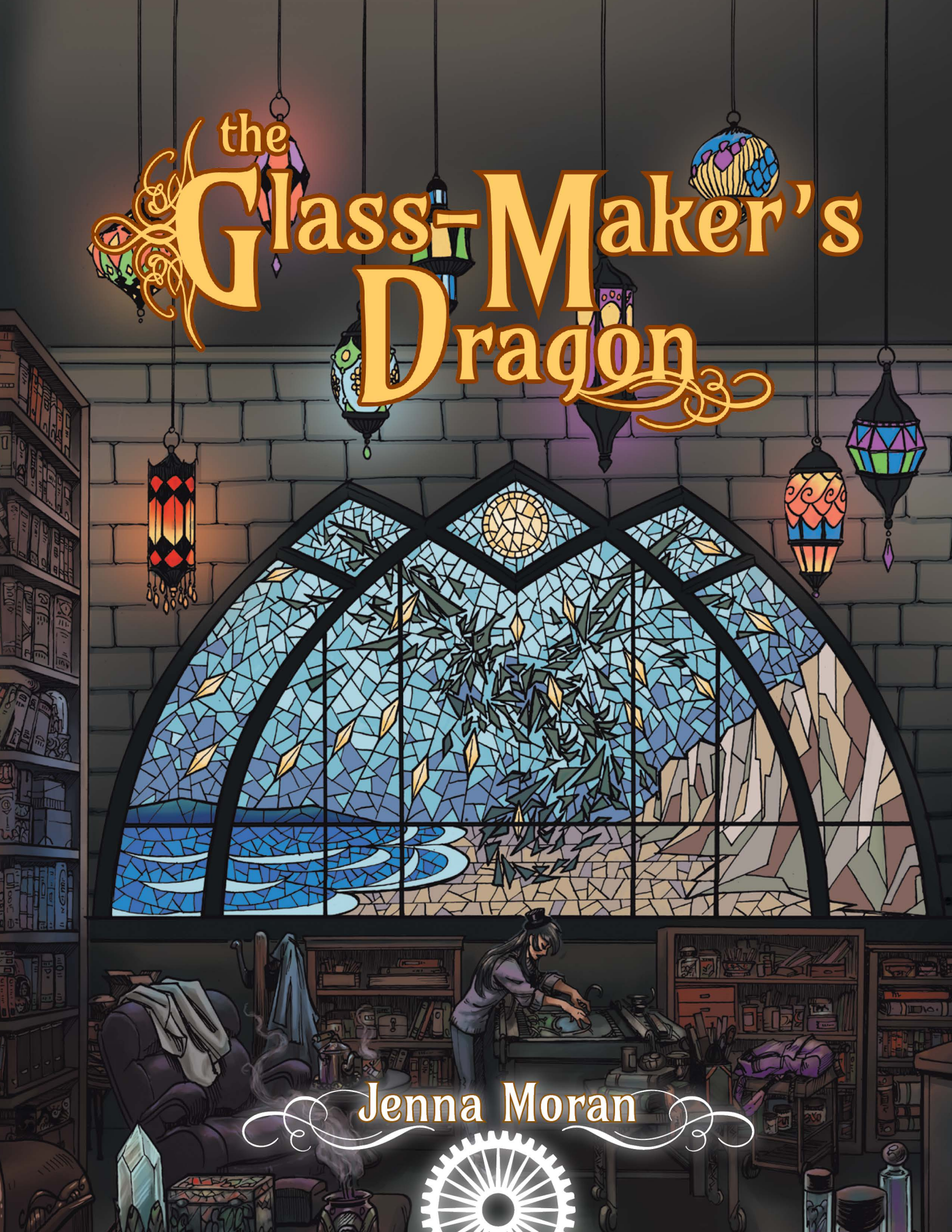
the
Glass-Maker's
Dragon
Jenna Moran

Once upon a time, a witch and a glass-maker made a dragon out of glass and taught it to hate the world. It raged and it would have destroyed everything; only, it shattered, instead.

Maybe it found some reason to love the world.

Maybe their hearts weren't really in it—not the glass-maker's, not the witch's.

Maybe it was just that the dragon was made of glass.

The Glass-Maker's Dragon

A campaign for Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine

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This book uses fantastical and supernatural elements in its setting, for its characters, their abilities, and themes. All such elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. This book contains mature content and reader discretion is advised.

Dedication

For Robin Michael Alexander Maginn, who wanted to visit me in China;
for Lillian Elanor Tewson Heino, just in case you get into gaming someday; and
for Killian James Sebastian Maginn, whom I haven't had the chance to meet yet.

Also for Cync Brantley, Rand Brittain, Christopher Humphrey,
Cheryl Couvillion, Joseph Couvillion, Anthony Damiani,
Chrysoula Tzavelas, Kevin Maginn, Raymond Wood, James Wallis,
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and Zach Best.

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To Karl Friedrich Borgstrom, for teaching me the joy of sailing.
Fortitude would be different without you.

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Author's Note

I knew as soon as I started writing about Town that I wanted to start with Fortitude. I wanted to tell you all a *Fortitude* story—

A story about this peaceful and beautiful place.

A story about this place that I saw first, in all of Town, the place that you see first as your ships come in to shore—reality coming to exist amidst the chaos. Because it's that story, and that kind of place, I turned to the oldest stories for ideas about what would happen here; conceived of a world where you would be in some respects analogous to the entities of ancient myth.

So this isn't a story of endings or even, really, of growing up.

This is a story of coming into existence; of recognizing one's consciousness and being; a story of awakening and unfolding into a new form. It's the story of how reason, hope, and love become prominent amidst a turbulent sea of chaotic impulses and ideas. It's the story of foundations.

Welcome to the beginning of the world.

How to Use this Book

As a Player

This book contains eight playable characters and the option to "roll your own" using the character archetypes from *Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake*. Each character comes with its own lifepath and playbook. The lifepath is a short set of questions that helps you nail down the details about your character. The playbook is the detailed reference for your character and their abilities that you'll hang on to in play.

First, you'll want to pick a character (there's a bulleted list in the next chapter to help you pick).

Then, you'll want to work through that character's lifepath, answering a few questions about yourself and making customizations to your concept. After that, you'll discard the lifepath, and use the playbook as your primary reference.

Your playbook includes the three "quests" which your character will be on when the game begins. The most important thing for you to do if you're learning how to play is to familiarize yourself with these quests. You'll want to find an opportunity to do the things written on the quest cards in order to move your character's story forward.

If the story is moving forward and you're having fun, you are playing the game correctly!

Genre Rules

This campaign features three *genre rules*, manifesting as level 2 Afflictions:

- Masks are extremely effective disguises.
- Turning into a giant snake will not help.
- Your life will grow stagnant unless you reach for your dreams.

It is in service to that last genre rule that I declare that birthdays only come to those who earn them as a quest reward.

Once You Understand The Basic Rules...

Once you get close to finishing your first major quest (the one that needs 30+ XP to close out), you'll want to get acquainted with where the story is going next. You'll find this information in the Arcs chapter.

Your character will go through four major story arcs over the course of a complete campaign. In the Arcs chapter, you'll find the basic shape of these stories and some details about the characters who will appear. You'll experience each story as a set of quests. The default assumption is that you'll use the quest set named after your character in the order given, but if you want to do things a little differently, the quest set section will show you how to rearrange the quests to make them an arc of a different color.

As the HG

If you're the HG, then all you really need at the beginning of the game is basic familiarity with the game and its rules—the players' quests set them up with plenty of plot, so you can just set the scene and the game should run itself. That said, familiarity with the Supporting Cast chapter, the characters, their starting quests, and their starting stories from the Arcs chapter absolutely can't hurt. You'll find that a lot of stuff is going on at once, with one major multi-quest storyline per player, so be prepared for that.

Lifepaths

Come with me to a little town
surrounded by the multicolored void.
It sits in the middle of no true place*, or*
nothingness, and it is circled by its sun.
It is a peaceful town. It's sleepy.
It's practically bucolic.
It's not involved in the carnival of great dreams and bloody
events that Creation so frequently becomes.

Come and be...

1

- **The Wishing Boy,** Chuubo, if you want...
  - ...to make precious memories with your friends.
  - ...to be central and important.
  - ...to be a little laid-back, ordinary, and passive.

  (or are you the girl variant, **Shokyou, the Wishing Girl?**)

- **The Best Friend,** Seizhi Schwan, if you want...
  - ...to stress out a lot.
  - ...to see the wishes in a person's heart.
  - ...to have weird powers that practically ignore most defenses.

  (or are you the girl variant **Suzy Schwan,** instead?)

- **Nightmares' Angel,** Leonardo de Montreal, if you want...
  - ...to be arrogant and morally ambiguous.
  - ...to have a lot of backstory.
  - ...to practice extraordinary Science!

  (or are you the girl variant **Dulcinea de Montreal,** instead?)

- **The Troublemaker,** Rinley Yatskaya, if you want...
  - ...to tell stories and be goofy.
  - ...to talk to cats.
  - ...to be a creature out of fable and tall tales.

  (or are you the boy variant, also named Rinley?)

- **The Prodigy,** Natalia Koutolika, if you want...
  - ...to be emo, yet heroic.
  - ...to have "mad skills."
  - ...to be new in Town.

  (or are you the boy variant **Antony Yuryevich,** instead?)

- **The Child of the Sun,** Jasper Irinka, if you want...
  - ...to be a confused alien visitor to the human world.
  - ...to be sweet and sunny.
  - ...to have weird alien limbs and tendrils sometimes.
  - ...to be at the center of a lot of drama and spiritual stuff.

  (or are you the boy variant **Raven Irinka,** instead?)

- **The Angel of Fortitude,** Entropy II, if you want...
  - ...to be comparatively mature and established.
  - ...to be freaky and scary.
  - ...to be a sorrowful and numinous being.

  (or are you the girl variant, **Attaris II,** instead?)

- **The Dream-Witch,** Miramie Mesmer, if you want...
  - ...to be a central figure in the campaign, but not the world.
  - ...to run a little shop.
  - ...to be extremely dangerous when provoked.
  - ...to have taken over your life from someone else—someone evil.

  (or are you the boy variant, **Reynard Mesmer,** instead?)

Or come and be...

- **The HG,** or "Hollyhock God," if you want...
  - ...to focus on describing the world rather than being attached to any particular character.
  - ...to play the game, and nobody else is being the HG so you'd better.
  - ...to be able to just say things happen and they do.
  - ...to help pull together a story from the things the characters do.

If you're the HG, you're *basically* ready to go. Help the other players with anything they need; or, read/re-read this book; or, read the notes for you on pg. 451; or, think about stuff!

Otherwise, you can move on to character building in the appropriate section below!

Shake It Up!

If you have access to **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake,** you can also build your own character using one of the options in that book, playing...

- **...the Shop Fox,** a fox-eared person,
- **...the Vampire,** one of the rare Fortitude vampires,
- **...the Other One**, someone or other random from Town,
- **...the Immigrant From Earth,** having come to Town by boat,
- **...the Shrine Maiden,** from one of the spiritual families of Fortitude,
- **...**or the boy variant, **the (Shrine) Priest**.

By the Docks of Big Lake also talks about the Fortitude rats, but I wouldn't recommend them for this campaign—they're just too energetic!

1

The Wishing Boy (or Girl)

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Ordinary
Sports Skill: Ordinary
Favorite Foods: Teriyaki, Ice Cream
Blood Type: A
Animal: Snake
Age: Campaign Default (You will usually be 15, but the game may play out age 5-14 at an accelerated pace.)
Genres: Pastoral, maybe Techno (Chuubo/Shokyou are present in all genres, but this version of the character is optimized for Pastoral gaming.)

Step 1: Choose Your Name

Good morning! Welcome to the world of the **Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.**

You are a simple, ordinary kid. You live in Horizon, a foggy gothic ruin not far from Fortitude where this campaign is set. You're not particularly smart or fast or strong or anything, but even ordinary kids like you can get a good idea now and then. Your idea was building a wish-granting engine that actually works.

So you did!

Don't believe me? Go look! It's right there! Built exactly to your plans, with your name on that plaque in the bottom right corner. But does that make you...

- ...**Chuubo, the Wishing Boy?**
- ...**Shokyou, the Wishing Girl?**
- ...something else?

Sorry, Shokyou! This book is going to assume that you're Chuubo, the Wishing Boy. But swap the gender and name and you should find this a useful document about yourself!

Step 2: Choose Your Nature

Where did you come from? How much do you know about your own nature?

Are you...

- ...just an ordinary kid?
- ...just an ordinary kid, with cool glasses?

Or is there a deeper truth? Are you...

- ...a river dragon who turned human in order to enjoy things like pizza bagels & comics?
- ...a dragon forged from glass and evil, who turned human for similar reasons?
- ...a god of dreams and wishes, hiding from your past?
- ...the child of the tree of worlds, unknowingly taking human form?
- ...the child of an evil tree, unknowingly taking human form?
- ...a human shell that someone made to hold the fate-defining "tablets of destiny?"
- ...or something else?

Nah!

I mean, well, probably not. You're not sure. You *think* you're human, but sometimes you imagine those other possibilities. And maybe they're even true!

Step 3: Choose Your Favorite Scenes

Are you most often seen...

- ...doing chores?
- ...fishing?
- ...helping out?
- ...talking with friends about stuff that's going on?
- ...hanging out in the world and experiencing stuff?
- ...wandering Fortitude with a snack?
- ...daydreaming?
- ...listening, wide-eyed, to traditional stories?
- ...giving a monologue, and then taking decisive action?
- ...stressing out over simple things, like whether you're flossing enough?
- ...getting in over your head when doing things that really should be simple?

Pick 2-3 favorites to help you figure out what you might be doing at any given time.

It's OK if the little icons don't make sense yet, and you don't have to memorize them—they're just coding the various parts of the game that "feel" a certain way. The first icon, for instance, marks the pastoral parts of the game that are all about a simple, honest life and connecting to people!

Step 4: Review Your Goals

Sometimes "the dust of the Outside" blows in off of Big Lake. It gets into people's houses and into people's dreams. It's psychoactive if you breathe too much of it. It can make things rust, even ordinary things that aren't made of metal, if you leave it to collect.

It's really only a problem for people who live in the Fortitude area, down by Big Lake.

...and for you.

One day you discovered that some of your most precious comics had *rusted*, along with most of that corner of your bookshelf. Ever since then, you've realized that the dust is regularly blowing all the way up and over the hill and down into your home in Horizon—it's like it's hunting you!

You keep dreaming of a masked woman. She's strangely interesting or attractive, depending on your age, and definitely menacing. She feels like a real person using magic and not just a dream image.

So you've started visiting Fortitude on the weekends and other opportunities.

It's a sleepy, peaceful kind of place. You like it there.

- **Quest 1:** You've always wanted to...
  - ...live your life, and make precious memories with your friends.
- **Quest 2:** And now you definitely want to...
  - ...find someone in Fortitude who can help you or teach you how to help yourself.
  - ...find out who the woman is, and become her friend, enemy, ally, rival, or SO.
- **Quest 3:** And you're probably looking to...
  - ...learn the ways of Fortitude life.

Unless you want to replace that last one with some variation, like...

- ...learning magic from one of the shrine families that live there?
- ...spending time out sailing on Big Lake?
- ...focusing on getting good grades in school?
- ...taking care of a shrine or park?
- ...studying something else?

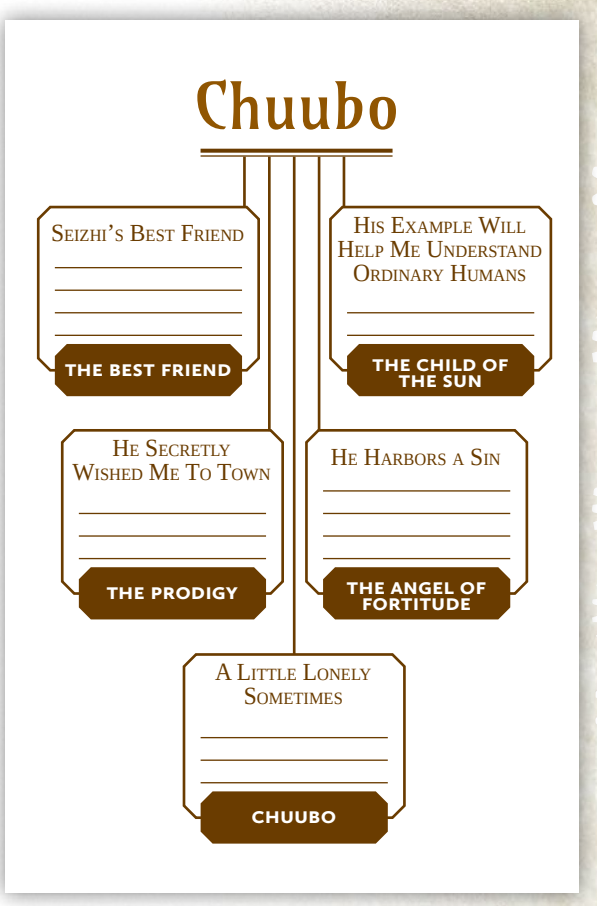

Figure 1- Example Wishing Map
(You'll use this to make wishes that come true!)

Step 5: Build Your Wishing Map

Your power of wishes is based on your **Wishing Map.** It starts by giving you the raw power of being a peaceful kid who enjoys life and is a little lonely sometimes. The rest is built on your relationship to the other PCs.

Either now or after the first session, you need to talk to the other players.

Get a single phrase from each of them to summarize what they think of Chuubo or what their character's relationship with him is.

That's the basis for your wishing map!

Each wish that you make will flow from something on the Map. For instance, you have "enjoys life" written up there near the top. A nice, sunny day would help you do that, so you could go up to the Wish-Granting Engine and wish for a nice, sunny day. But becoming the Mayor of Town wouldn't, necessarily, so *that* wish might be a little rougher.

Step 6: Choose Your Connections

Connections are basically a measure of how well you know and *get* somebody. They're also a measure of how good you are at living somewhere or with someone.

You'll always have a couple of starting Connections—

- **The Best Friend 2.** You have a best friend.
- **The Dream-Witch 1.** You have a mysterious connection to the dream-witch.

You can discard these Connections later if you don't want them or they just don't seem to fit.

Talk to the players of the other characters, either now or after the couple of sessions. If someone agrees that you should be close to or comfortable with their PC, you can get a free level 1 Connection to their character as well!

You can improve your character's Connections later as the reward from an appropriate quest.

Step 7: Review Your Powers

You have the following specific abilities. Maybe they're because of past wishes. Maybe they're because of someone else's magic. Maybe they're just a part of who you are.

- You basically never get hurt. Stuff that would kill most people just dazes you.
- Your daydreams are often visible to others.
- Your daydreams are sometimes tangible in harmless but useful ways.
- You're good at calming things down.

You have two alternate forms:

- You think you might be able to turn into a giant snake. It... probably wouldn't help.
- You can take your tie off and tie it around your head, becoming **Dark Chuubo.**
  - (Shokyou instead becomes **Dark Shokyou** or **"Shokyou Rock and Roll."**)
  - This removes your ability to calm things down, but gives you the power to stir things up and make them more rocking instead!

Most importantly of all...

Once per week, after each Sunday's dawn, you can go down to your Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine and make a wish.

The wheels and cogs in the Engine will turn. The sparkers will spark. The creaking component of your Engine will creak, and the portion that's intended for honking will honk, and there will be a silvery shimmer from the bells, and that make-a-joyful-noise component that you built will give a joyful shout; and then the whole thing will shudder and burn with its power and the shining beacon at the top will fire off a lance of light to Heaven; and your wish—

Whatever wish you make!—

Comes true.

If it fits your Wishing Map, it probably comes true in a pretty sane and sensible way. If not, then wacky hijinx are more likely to ensue. But either way, it *happens*. That's what you do. That's who you are.

You're the one with the power to make real all the dreams in your wishing heart.

Step 8: Props

Before play, you'll want to:

- Copy, download and print, or open your book to your character sheet.
- Draw up your wishing map, possibly starting with the blank version on pg. 79.
- Make sure the group has a bowl of tokens to serve as XP.

Optionally:

- Gather 5+ tokens to serve as MP, different from the XP tokens.
- Gather 8 tokens to serve as Will, different from the XP/MP tokens.
- Copy or download and print quest cards for your quests.
- Look around the table to identify the other PCs. Then warm up for play by practicing...
  - ...head-desking at your own goofiness,
  - ...and, if present...
    - ...giving thumbs-ups to **the Best Friend.**
    - ...pointing and gaping speechlessly at **Nightmares' Angel.**
    - ...groaning or rolling your eyes at **the Troublemaker.**
    - ...wincing or saying *aww!* at **the Prodigy.**
    - ...bowing gratefully, hand over fist, to **the Child of the Sun.**
    - ...shivering at the weirdness of **the Angel of Fortitude.**
    - ...sighing and offering an XP token to comfort **the Dream-Witch.**
    - ...whatever turns out to be appropriate for any other PCs.

YOUR NAME

NATURE

FAVORITE SCENES

CHANGED QUESTS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

CONNECTIONS

WISHING MAP

ARC TRAITS

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

DIVINE

TOUGH

NORMAL

CURRENT MP

WILL

PERMISSION IS GRANTED TO PHOTOCOPY THIS PAGE FOR PERSONAL USE

The Best Friend

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Good
Sports Skill: Ordinary
Favorite Foods: Teriyaki, Ice Cream
Blood Type: A
Animal: Ox
Age: Campaign Default (You will usually be 15, but the game may play out age 5-14 at an accelerated pace.)
Genres: Pastoral, Adventure Fantasy, maybe Techno (The Best Friend is present in all genres, but this version of the character is optimized for Pastoral gaming.)

Step 1: Choose Your Name

Oh, sweet, you're real! Welcome to the world of the **Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.**

Listen. This is going to be rough. You're honestly not the best candidate for being real. You are, to be blunt, kind of improbable.

But...

When you didn't exist, that was the worst thing ever. Remember? It was terrifying. It was awful. You were part of this... terrible... thing. You were a tendril of the Bleak Academy and you *did not like it one bit.*

Then one day Chuubo wished for a best friend. Bam! That's you. Well, now. That's you *now:*

The Best Friend.

You live in Horizon, near Chuubo's house. Horizon is terrifying. You are pretty sure it is just *crawling* with walking dead and vampires and monsters and stuff. The fog and the gargoyles and the tombstones and the people mysteriously vanishing and the clip-clip-clop of horse hooves on the cobblestones—aagh! Scary!

But it is better than not existing.

You have a family. They are awesome but they stress you out because they totally do not respect your desire for normalcy. Your parents are Mortimer and Melancholy Schwan, morticians. You are not sure why your Chinese-looking dad has a name like Mortimer or where your mother's red hair came from in a Town like this and one night when you were a kid you *think* you saw your Mom float through a wall, but that is just the way they are.

They are like that.

Big brother Laodemus is almost as bad. He is always staring soulfully off into the distance and monologuing about justice or manliness, or staggering into the house late at night bleeding and covered in mud, or wrestling with his partner Aidan out among the tombstones in the back, or carefully flossing the teeth of the family bat,[1] or offering to make your problems "go away." Laodemus is very strong and has a closet full of masks. You assume this all means that he's gay, an underground tournament luchador, or both, but he just teases you and refuses to answer when you ask.

You love your family but would a *tiny bit of predictability* and a few fewer corpses on the dinner table be *too much to ask?*

...apparently.

Apparently it would.

1 *Oh, yeah, you have a bat. Vixoth. He's pretty old but he's got great teeth!*

So, are you...

- ...a boy named **Seizhi Schwan?**
- ...a girl named **Suzy Schwan?**
- ...or possibly a girl still named **Seizhi Schwan?**
- ...something else?

...sorry, Suzy! This book is going to assume that you're Seizhi Schwan, a boy. But swap the gender and name and you should find this a useful document about yourself!

Step 2: Choose Your Nature

This is probably your first shot at life, but I figure I should ask!

What were you before Chuubo's wish?

- ...just a shard of dream adrift in chaos and nothingness?
- ...part of the structure of death, the Outside, or the inimical "Bleak Academy?"

Or is this actually your second time around, and you were something that existed before?

- ...a legendary hero of Town?
- ...a horrible demon?
- ...a sandpiper or other animal?
- ...one of the Fortitude talking rats?
- ...an ordinary human?
- ...a magical wish spirit?
- ...something else?

Step 3: Choose Your Power

Born of a wish, you can see into others' hearts! You can read the hearts of humans, human-like creatures, and also either...

- ...animals?
- ...the dead?
- ...the clouds, the wind, and the weather?
- ...machines?
- ...or something else?

Choose one, and you can see right into the relevant kind of heart. Normally in a Fortitude-based campaign you'll choose animals, but it's totally up to you!

Step 4: Name Your Fear

Ever since you found out that you weren't real—ever since you first saw the Wish-Granting Engine and remembered being created—you've been terrified.

Absolutely... terrified.

But why? Is it because you're afraid...

- ...that one day, everyone will point at you and says, "Oh my God, that boy over there: he's just an imaginary person! Fake person! Fake person! Kill him!?"
- ...that one morning, you'll wake up, try to clear the last bit of dream from your head, and you'll realize that you can't? That you'll try to move your arms and legs and head and mind and you'll realize that you're not able to? And you'll panic and flail harder and harder, only you won't actually flail at all, and you'll realize that it's not working, that waking up isn't working, *because you don't exist?*
  - ...or even, *because you never existed?*
  - ...or are you afraid that you're using up a life that was supposed to go to a real person?
  - ...or that you don't *deserve* reality?
- ...that you weren't "allowed" to come to life, and something unreal will come from Outside the world to hunt you down?
- ...that your family will find out that *they're* probably not real and they'll have to suffer the same existential anxieties as you?
- ...or is it something else?

Step 5: Choose Your Favorite Scenes

Are you most often seen...

- ...cleaning?
- ...practicing on a musical instrument?
- ...sorting out your head by talking about stuff?
- ...helping Chuubo out?
- ...woodworking or some other craft?
- ...hanging out with Chuubo?
- ...goofing off?
- ...exploring the world and your own existence?
- ...talking about nothing at all?
- ...listening, wide-eyed, to traditional stories?
- ...declaring that you have FOUND your DESTINY?
- ...getting way too worked up over an upcoming test, date, purchase, or chore?
- ...throwing yourself all-out into some, possibly ridiculous, "duty?"
- ...getting into scary trouble?

Pick 2-3 favorites to help you figure out what you might be doing at any given time.

It's OK if the little icons don't make sense yet, and you don't have to memorize them—they're just coding the various parts of the game that "feel" a certain way. The first icon, for instance, marks the pastoral parts of the game that are all about a simple, honest life and connecting to people!

Step 6: Review Your Goals

Once upon a time, but not all that long ago, the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy rode up into the sky of Fortitude and he drew back his great black bow and he fired an arrow and he killed the sun.

She used to be a woman named Jade Irinka. And also the sun. She died.

It wasn't just an eclipse. Maybe some people on Earth, they saw it, they thought it was an eclipse, but it wasn't. The sun died. It's more than just any ordinary miracle that a new sun was born to replace it in the sky.

You've been dreaming about that. You *keep dreaming about that* and you don't know why.

But you're hoping—

You're hoping that it's destiny. You're hoping that it means... something is going to happen, and it's going to have to do with *you*, because you know what? If you have a *destiny*, that means you're really real.

- **Quest 1:** You've always spent a lot of time...
  - ...covering up the evidence of your non-existence and inventing a history for yourself.
- **Quest 2:** And now you definitely want to...
  - ...find out why you've been dreaming about Jade Irinka's death;
  - ...find a place for yourself in Fortitude that somehow connects to or relates to that, or to death and rebirth or the sky in general.
- **Quest 3:** And you're probably looking to...
  - ...help out the animals of Fortitude, since you can see their wishes and all...

Unless you want to replace that with some variation, like:

- ...helping fulfill the post-ultimate wishes of the dead.
- ...helping one of Fortitude's "shrine families" tend Fortitude's spiritual health.
- ...helping random people around Fortitude/Town in general.
- ...doing some important work, like...
  - ...collecting bodies for transportation to your family funeral home?
  - ...investigating something for Chuubo?
  - ...helping out at a PC or important NPC's store or cafe?
- ...something else?

Step 7: Choose Your Connections

Connections are basically a measure of how well you know and *get* somebody. They're also a measure of how good you are at living somewhere or with someone.

You'll always have a couple of starting Connections—

- **The Wishing Boy (or Girl) 4.** You're Chuubo (or Shokyou)'s best friend, by universal law.
- **Wish Spirits 1.** You like the wish spirits of Town.

You can discard these Connections later if you don't want them or they just don't seem to fit.

Talk to the players of the other characters, either now or after the couple of sessions. If someone agrees that you should be close to or comfortable with their PC, you can get a free level 1 Connection to their character as well!

You can improve your character's Connections later as the reward from an appropriate quest.

Step 8: Review Your Powers

You have the following specific abilities:

- You're really good at being **the Wishing Boy's** best friend.
- You're really good at reading people's hearts—you can see through even a miraculous or wish-powered poker face and know what people really want. You can also read the hearts of animals and learn to read the hearts of other things.
- You're an incredible social and environmental chameleon. *You're* the one who decides how Seizhi Schwan fits into the world—not anybody else!
  - Some parts of your history are hard for even wishes to change.
  - You can fit in basically anywhere.
  - You can spontaneously connect to anyone or anything, making it easy to work together with them or impersonate them.
  - You're good at communicating, even in noisy environments, across language barriers, and with people who don't want to listen. In fact, you can optionally communicate *so well* that your target starts turning *into* you...
  - ...or reject something so thoroughly that it becomes *less* you—even stuff like your ex-reflection, your ex-photograph, or "that person who spilled the soup on the evil god" who is now definitely not you in any way whatsoever.

Your powers aren't very strong but they're sturdy—most of them will just cut right through and ignore everyone else's abilities unless those people spend MP or have a relevant Bond (a rare and specific character trait).

Step 9: Props

Before play, you'll want to:

- Copy, download and print, or open your book to your character sheet.
- Make sure the group has a bowl of tokens to serve as XP.

Optionally:

- Copy or download and print a sign reading **"Over the Top."**
- Gather 5+ tokens to serve as MP, different from the XP tokens.
- Gather 8 tokens to serve as Will, different from the XP/MP tokens.
- Copy or download and print quest cards for your quests.
- Look around the table to identify the other PCs. Then warm up for play by practicing (for those that are present)...
  - ...head-desking at the goofiness of **the Wishing Boy.**
  - ...gaping speechlessly at **Nightmares' Angel.**
  - ...groaning or rolling your eyes at **the Troublemaker.**
  - ...wincing or saying *aww!* at **the Prodigy.**
  - ...bowing gratefully to **the Child of the Sun.**
  - ...shivering at the weirdness of **the Angel of Fortitude.**
  - ...sighing and offering an XP token to comfort **the Dream-Witch.**
  - ...and whatever turns out to be appropriate for any other PCs.

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TOUGH

NORMAL

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WILL

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Nightmares' Angel

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Variable
Sports Skill: Ordinary
Favorite Foods: Ramen, Hot Chocolate, Schadenfreude
Blood Type: B
Animal: Tiger
Age: Campaign Default + 1 (You will usually be 16, but the game may play out age 6-15 at an accelerated pace.)
Genres: Pastoral, Epic Fantasy, maybe Immersive Fantasy (de Montreal is present in all genres, but this version of the character is optimized for Pastoral gaming.)

Step 1: Choose Your Name

Oh, good. It's about *time* we got someone *qualified* to play this game.

So... you grew up in an evil orphanage. Everyone hated you. People were awful to you. And then the sun went out.

Surprise!

Welcome to the world of **"Chuubo's" Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine**, where they don't appreciate you. Where everything would have been awful forever: pointless, useless, bitterly and agonizingly cold, and lightless too, if it hadn't been for you and you alone. You, who ripped out your own living heart and used it and *Science!* to recreate the sun.

And yet they *still* think you're a snot.

Later, you met a few people in Town who were almost worthy of you. You tried to relate to them. You "talked" and "played" and "hung out" with them, like some pathetic muck-crawling slime-beggar, and you tried to hide your light. But in the end it was too much for you. It was too hard. You couldn't relate to the sniveling sheeple that trod and traipse through Town.

So you left.

You went out into the wild dark beyond the world. You walked through chaos and dissolution. You reached the gates of the Bleak Academy, you argued with its Headmaster there, and he took you in. He taught you all the secrets of death and nightmare. Then he cracked you open and he poured a blasphemy into your hollow chest.

That was even worse than hanging out with Chuubo, so you came back.

You came home, and you built your Incomparable Nightmare Engine, and you mastered the science of the far realms; it has doomed you, but it has also made you great.

And who are you, **Nightmares' Angel?** Are you...

- ...the incomparable boy scientist, **Leonardo de Montreal?**
- ...the incomparable girl scientist, **Dulcinea de Montreal?**
- ...someone else?

...sorry, Dulcinea! This book is going to assume that you are the Nightmares' Angel, the incomparable Leonardo de Montreal. But swap the gender and name and maybe a few of the other details and you should find this a useful reference document for yourself!

(OPTIONAL) Step 2: In Which We Consider the Application of Dark Sorcery

Now it is scarcely to be disputed that "sorcery" is simply science badly performed or performed in a disreputable hat and cloak, while "science" conversely is simply sorcery done right—with a frisson of peer review, that is; a dash or two of respectability; a handful of gears and steam valves; and the scientist's traditional, quixotic, and frankly rather unfortunate vulnerability to the rigors of cruel physics' laws.

But even so there is a difference between a Nightmares' Angel who is fundamentally a natural scientist and one who is fundamentally an occultist—simply put, a scientist worships at the altar of experience, while an occultist revels in the numinous, the ecstatic, the ambiguous, and the profound. To a scientist, moral and emotional life are layered separately onto a world of things; to a sorcerer, they are its very fabric.

So...

You may, if you like, give up your normal fixation on the natural world and plummet instead into the dizzying world of magic. Such a Leonardo or Dulcinea would attend to the stars and to the spirits of nature; to the dizzying details of human psychology and its mindscapes; to spiritual energies; and to such opportunities as they could find to cavort with interesting if potentially ungodly occult entities of various sorts.

What do you think?

Would you like to...

- ...skip this step, remaining a scientist?
- ...declare yourself the unparalleled sorcerer **Leonardo d'Avignon?**
- ...declare yourself the legendary sorceress **Dulcinea d'Avignon?**
- ...or something else?

(OPTIONAL) Step 3: The Mechanical Man, or, the Brass-Wrought Girl

As a final option, you may discard being the original **Nightmares' Angel** entirely.

That person—

It is regrettable, but they died. Perhaps it was at the Bleak Academy. Perhaps it was later.

You are not they. You are—instead—an astonishing mechanical man, or a woman made from brass, constructed so realistically as to be indistinguishable from a human. In fact, if someone were to *try* to distinguish you from a human you could point them at your operating manual; it says quite clearly, on page 17 and again on page 32, that this can not be done!

What do you think?

Would you like to...

- ...skip this step, remaining the original Nightmares' Angel?
- ...declare yourself the astonishing mechanical man, **Leonardo VII?**
- ...recognize yourself as the brass-wrought girl, **Dulcinea VII?**
- ...play **Alvin RIMM**, the long-suffering Ritually Impure Manservant Machine (and Leonardo's former butler), who received a last-minute mock-transplant of the dying Leonardo de Montreal's heartlessness and hence became, in some key spiritual respects, he?[2]
- ...or something else?

Step 4: Choose Your Favorite Scenes

Are you most often seen...

- ...proposing a theory, and then trying an experiment?
- ...giving a monologue, and then taking decisive action?
- ...working with nightmare science?
- ...ranting incoherently?
- ...pushing yourself to extremes in the name of excellence, duty, or hubris?
- ...glaring at chores that you should be but are not actually doing?
- ...getting involved with the PCs against your better judgment?
- ...letting them get involved with you, against your better judgment?
- ...doing things that are, apparently, "wrong" or "bad?"
- ...taking measurements?
- ...offering sympathy and aid to other outcasts, freaks, the wicked and the wrong?
- ...discussing threats to the world?
- ...discussing what someone's nightmares mean?
- ...showing up in someone's nightmares?
- ...soaking up the ambience?
- ...suffering?

Pick 2-3 favorites to help you figure out what you might be doing at any given time.

It's OK if the little icons don't make sense yet, and you don't have to memorize them—they're just coding the various parts of the game that "feel" a certain way. The first icon, for instance, marks decisive action, risk-taking, and proposing and testing your theories in general.

2 *This is not recommended outside of one-shot games or if you've already been in a game or two with the original Leonardo or Dulcinea de Montreal.*

Step 5: Review Your Goals

Something has stirred up the Outside—the chaos beyond the world. There are more storms than usual coming in from the Outside lately. People are having more nightmares. The level of particulate Outside contamination in the groundwater has increased.

You have this suspicion that it's because of you.

Because you went to the Bleak Academy—and came back.

But it might *not* be you. It might be... that glass dragon thing that someone told you about. Or that "Angel of Fortitude" character and his weird stuff. Or something else!

1

- **Quest 1:** You're a student of the natural world, the Outside, and people's nightmares.
  - Take measurements, make observations, come up with theories.
- **Quest 2:** Investigate the current and historical threat of the Outside.
  - Get someone to show you the ropes of Professor Hayashi's archive, since that's got the best records of things like historical storm frequency and local legend.
  - Find the hidden part of the archive, where it fades into a portion of the Outside.

Or would you rather be investigating something else:

- ...the troubles of the Wishing Boy?
- ...some esoteric quality of local Fortitude nightmares?
- ...the possibility that the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy has agents infiltrating the Fortitude area?
- ...the lost records of your own birth and youth?
- ...something else?

You dreamed once of your death. It wore the face of the dead sun.

It's the destiny of wicked things, you think, to drown in Big Lake's waters—and you are wicked, and you have a wicked blasphemy inside you. You've been feeling called to those waters, lately.

You think your death is on its way.

- **Quest 3:** Face your destiny and follow your instincts as they lead you to...
  - ...your miserable end, *or*...
  - ...some unexpected, eucatastrophic happy ending...

...in the waters of Big Lake.

Step 6: Choose Your Connections

Connections are basically a measure of how well you know and *get* somebody. They're also a measure of how good you are at living somewhere or with someone.

You'll always have a couple of starting Connections—

- **The Child of the Sun 1.** It is oddly easy to get along with the Child of the Sun.
- **The Wishing Boy ~~2~~ 0.** No! No no no! You are not connected to him in any way!

You can discard these Connections later if you don't want them or they just don't seem to fit.

Talk to the players of the other characters, either now or after the couple of sessions. If someone agrees that you should be close to or comfortable with their PC, you can get a free level 1 Connection to their character as well!

You can improve your character's Connections later as the reward from an appropriate quest.

Step 7: Review Your Powers

You have the following specific abilities:

- **Heartless:** You cut out your heart, so when you lurk in the dark (or at least, when you're not in sunlight) you can act with a heartless perfection.
- **Friendless:** You have rejected friendship and love and vowed to live alone—yet, and possibly for that very reason, there are few better at defending the innocent, helping the helpless, and saving those that ordinary science cannot save. The supreme invocation of this power can free Town from a painful memory.
- **Corrupted:** The Headmaster of the Bleak Academy poured blasphemy and power into you. Thus you are a master of nightmare technology, but sometimes your nightmares leak horror into the world.
- **Glorious:** The glorious Leonardo de Montreal can see through the pathetic scheming and posturing of lesser men.
- **Empowered Wounds:** You can turn new wounds—e.g. if somebody dismembers you or sets you on fire—into potent new power sources. Then, when you're tired of having your new being-on-fire or being-in-pieces power, you can set aside that power and use one of your healing abilities to recover.
- **Nightmare Technology:** You use parts fished out from nightmare, techniques learned at the Bleak Academy, and occasionally the supreme power of your Incomparable Nightmare Engine to make unusual and useful things. Will you make a minute glass to suspend time? Candy that tastes of anything? Dogs to seethe through stone and wood? Or will you just graft extra legs onto kittens and watchful eyes to the back of your hat?

You have an alternate form:

- You believe—it hasn't precisely been tested—that you can sprout wings of blood and feathers and fire and learn to fly. You don't really *want* to, though, because it would say unsettling things about who and what you are. [3]

3 *(The problem with being able to remove memories from the world is that you can never be too sure just what kind of memories of yourself you might have already removed.)*

Step 8: Props

Before play, you'll want to:

- Copy, download and print, or open your book to your character sheet.
- Make sure the group has a bowl of tokens to serve as XP.

Optionally:

- Gather 5+ tokens to serve as MP, different from the XP tokens.
- Gather 8 tokens to serve as Will, different from the XP/MP tokens.
- Copy or download and print quest cards for your quests.
- Practice giving enlightening explanations of various ephemera, sure to render the other players speechless with understanding and delight!
- Look around the table to identify the other PCs. Then warm up for play by practicing (for those that are present)...
  - ...head-desking at the goofiness of **the Wishing Boy.**
  - ...giving thumbs-ups to **the Best Friend.**
  - ...groaning or rolling your eyes at **the Troublemaker.**
  - ...wincing or saying *aww!* at **the Prodigy.**
  - ...bowing gratefully to **the Child of the Sun.**
  - ...shivering at the weirdness of **the Angel of Fortitude.**
  - ...sighing and offering an XP token to comfort **the Dream-Witch.**
  - ...whatever turns out to be appropriate for any other PCs.

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DIVINE

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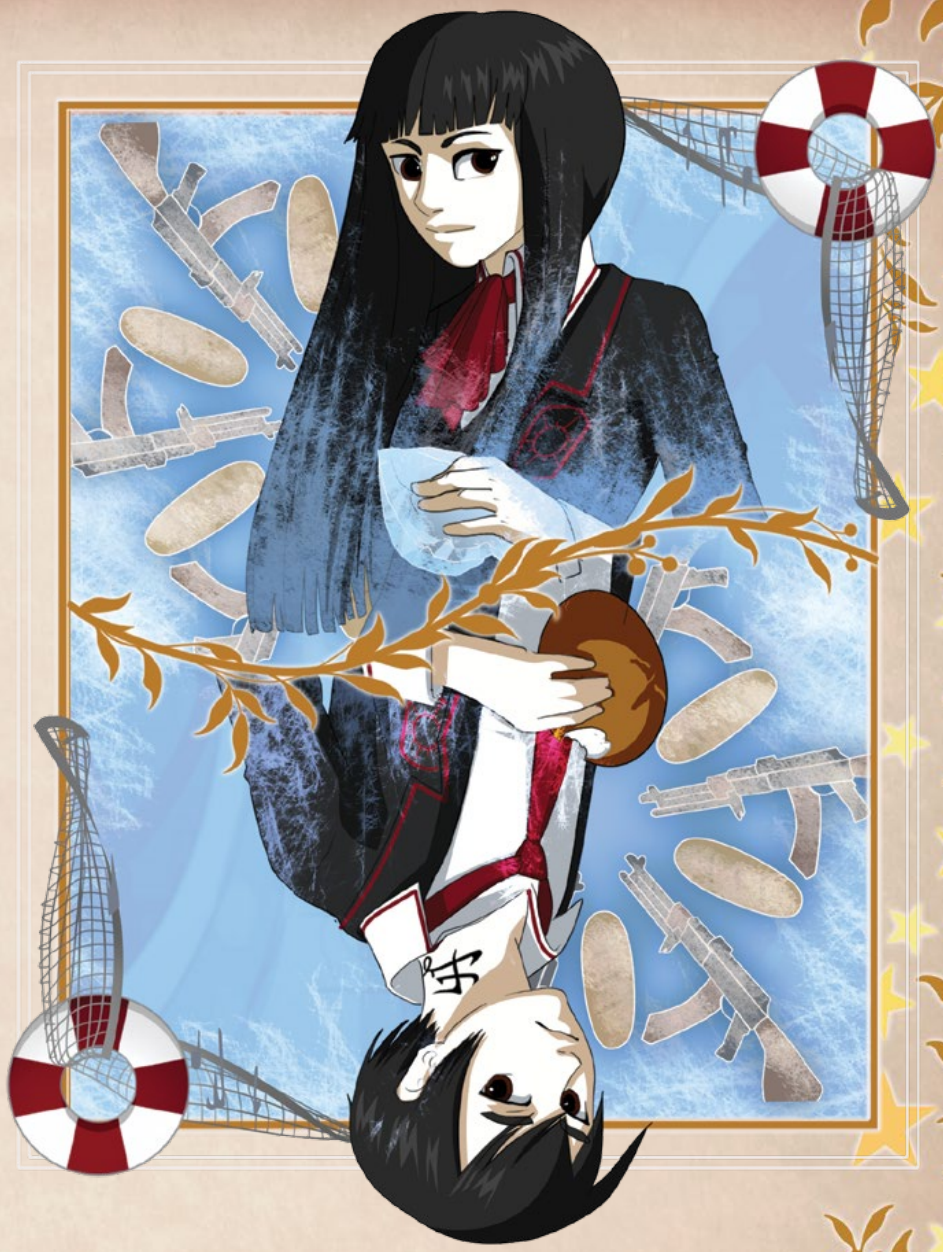

The Prodigy

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Legendary
Sports Skill: Legendary
Favorite Foods: Borscht, Iced Coffee, Baguettes
Blood Type: B
Animal: Dragon
Age: Campaign Default (You will usually be 15, but the game may play out age 5-14 at an accelerated pace.)
Genres: Pastoral, Adventure Fantasy, maybe Immersive Fantasy (The Prodigy is present in all genres, but this version of the character is optimized for Pastoral gaming.)

Step 1: Choose your Name and Nation

Dobroye Utro, Vunderkind! Welcome to the world of the **Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.**

I will remind you of your history.

You lived in Russia and you were cold. You were cold and hard and bitter and you were just a child. You were smart and you were street-smart. You were fierce and you were strong. You were truly incomparable—one of the best, perhaps *the* best, in an entire mortal generation—and you were in despair; for no matter how strong or smart or clever a little Russian girl was, no matter how many math problems you could solve or black belts you could beat up, there wasn't any way that you could change the world.

Your heart froze over. You gave in to despair. But then you came to Town.

Things are different now—but you are still a child of Russia, yes?

- ...da. I am **Natalia Koutolika**.
- ...da. I am **Antony Yuryevich** (a boy).
- ...*¡claro que no!* Call me Natalia Cordova, or "Masked Justice": of Spain!
- ...*mais non, chéri. Je suis la princesse vampire sophistiquée* Natalie Coutourier of France.
- ...*ni, ko, nikeji.* I am Zeinaba Kiros, from a certain place. It is not far from Ghana.
- ...none of these. I am someone you have not named, or from a place you have not said.

...this book will assume that you are **Natalia Koutolika,** with apologies for the deviation from reality if this is not so.

Step 2: Arriving in Town

Figure out when in the game's timeline you'll arrive in Town.

If the HG is starting the game in the "present day," this is really easy. You arrived recently—maybe 3-36 weeks ago. Now it's up to you to face your new life in Town!

On the other hand...

If the HG says that you're playing through the PCs' early years, then the game will start when you're 5 years old. It's hard to arrive in Town with a dark past at age 5, so you'll want to choose one of the following options:

- ...whatever! I arrived in Town when I was 5. I already had a dark past.
- ...I'm not going to show up in Town immediately, but I will show up in people's dreams and play out bits of Russian backstory on the side.
- ...when the game begins, I want to play the heroic talking rat **Prince Eduard Fujimoto** or his sister **Princess Aelfthryth Fujimoto**. Then after this rat loses a major battle against the monstrous snake "Typhon," my human character will show up to pick up the pieces.
- ...for some mysterious reason probably having to do with a wish, I show up in Town in age 5 but my backstory in Russia or wherever just keeps going anyway!
- ...don't be silly, I'm Natalie Coutourier, darling, I'm more than a century old. No, the problem is explaining why I hang out with kids—and that's, simply put, that:
  - ...I'm someone's *au pair.*
  - ...I lost too much blood and de-aged to 5, but I'll be back to my normal eternally broody teenaged self in a decade or so!
- ...or do you refuse all of these options and instead choose something else?

Step 3: Choose Your Favorite Scenes

Are you most often seen:

- ...doing household chores?
- ...helping out in the neighborhood?
- ...helping out at the bakery where your mother works?
- ...helping out at the bait store where your father sometimes works?
- ...babysitting your younger brother?
- ...out on the water with your Dad?
- ...practicing martial arts?
- ...studying advanced mathematics?
- ...studying in general?
- ...prowling the rooftops looking for trouble to confront?
- ...helping someone who is in trouble?
- ...reminiscing about your past in a distant land?
- ...enjoying a peaceful moment, staring at the water or the sky?
- ...exploring Town and more specifically Fortitude?
- ...figuring out the way life works here?
- ...being teased by your older cousins?
- ...watching something interesting go down?
- ...going way too far to fulfill a responsibility or duty?
- ...suffering in silence?

Pick 2-3 favorites to help you figure out what you might be doing at any given time.

It's OK if the little icons don't make sense yet, and you don't have to memorize them—they're just coding the various parts of the game that "feel" a certain way. The first icon, for instance, marks the pastoral parts of the game that are all about a simple, honest life and connecting to people!

Step 4: Review Your Goals

You were not always this way. You were always diligent and precise but once you were a hopeful child too.

Then something terrible happened.

You were betrayed by a role model. Or somebody you cared about died. Or somebody sacrificed themselves for you. Or you failed and somebody got hurt.

You've been broken ever since; and that's a big part of why your family came to Town.

- **Quest 1:** You've always wanted to...
  - ...enjoy the simple, peaceful moments in life—the calms between the storms.

- **Quest 2:** And the arc of your life is, and must be, towards...
  - ...thawing the ice around your heart—learning to trust people, and be open to them, once again.

...but right now you probably have a different problem.

Deep inside you is a core of rage; and it's gotten loose. It escaped you when your boat sailed in to Town. You don't know how you know that. But you know. It took some of your memories, some of your rage, some of your grief, and now it is a great gold-scaled python, poisonous and strong, that lives on the rooftops of Fortitude.

- **Quest 3:** That means that it is now incumbent upon you to hunt it down.
  - Prowl Fortitude and its rooftops...
    - ...acting a bit suspiciously.
    - ...meeting the other PCs.
    - ...thinking of yourself as a hero of justice as you do it.
    - ...ultimately tracking the snake to its lair at "Madcaps' Nave," atop Professor Hayashi's archive, where it nests with bits and pieces of your memories.
  - Talk and think about what happened in your past, because that might be relevant to understanding the golden snake.

Unless you want to replace that with some variation, like...

- ...tracking down a doppelganger (flesh or glass)?
- ...hunting your emancipated shadow?
- ...hunting a shapeless evil?
- ...hunting a vast and wicked bird?
- ...something else?

Or a variation which isn't about hunting anything down at all, like...

- ...investigating stories of the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy?
- ...investigating stories of the glass dragon?
- ...something else?

Often these investigations come about because you're listening to a story of Town, about how the Headmaster killed the old sun, or the glass dragon threatened Fortitude and the world, or whatever, and you realize that somehow this connects to your own backstory and what happened to you before.

Step 5: Choose Your Connections

Connections are basically a measure of how well you know and *get* somebody. They're also a measure of how good you are at living somewhere or with someone.

You'll start with four Connections:

- **[PC of your Choice] 2.** They remind you of someone you've lost.
- **The Koutolika Family 1.** You're comfortable with your family.
- **Fortitude Rats 1.** You don't know what it is, but you get along with them.[4]
- **The Child of the Sun -1.** You don't know how to deal with someone like this.

You can discard these Connections later if you don't want them or they just don't seem to fit.

If you're in a 1-player game, or a 2-player game where the Child of the Sun is the other PC, you can choose an NPC for the free level 2 Connection. You can also leave it as "[PC of your Choice]" for a session or two if you're not sure whom to choose.

You can improve your character's Connections later as the reward from an appropriate quest.

4 *They can talk! They're also pretty heroic.*

Step 6: Review Your Powers

You have the following specific abilities:

- You're really efficient and get a lot done each week.
- You're hard to trick, mess up, or oppose with mundane actions.
- Your level 3+ Skills become extraordinarily effective when your **(being a) Hero** Issue is high.
- You have strong "Chi" or "wish power."
  - You can frequently perform amazing mental and physical feats.
  - With effort, you can scale this up to outright mythic feats.
- Your heart is frozen, which can protect you from certain effects.

The general pattern for your abilities is this. If you're conserving MP, then you'll get to sneak in a few amazing but fundamentally mundane feats every scene—things you'd expect the best of humanity to be able to achieve. If you're willing to spend 1-2 Miracle Points, you can do a little more than that, displaying inhuman strength, speed, and precision or using your basic abilities more frequently. For 4 MP, you can go all out, doing something truly amazing or tossing off an endless chain of heroic feats.

Step 7: Props

Before play, you'll want to:

- Copy, download and print, or open your book to your character sheet.
- Make sure the group has a bowl of tokens to serve as XP.

Optionally:

- Copy or download and print your "At Peace" sign.
- Copy or download and print your "Touched" sign.
- Copy or download and print a sign with a crying/sad face.
- Gather 5+ tokens to serve as MP, different from the XP tokens
- Gather 11 tokens to serve as Will, different from the XP/MP tokens
- Copy or download and print quest cards for your quests
- Practice being doleful and tragic to tug at the other players' heartstrings
- Look around the table to identify the other PCs. Then warm up for play by practicing (for those that are present)...
  - ...head-desking at the goofiness of **the Wishing Boy.**
  - ...giving thumbs-ups to **the Best Friend.**
  - ...gaping speechlessly at **Nightmares' Angel.**
  - ...groaning or rolling your eyes at **the Troublemaker.**
  - ...bowing gratefully to **the Child of the Sun.**
  - ...shivering at the weirdness of **the Angel of Fortitude.**
  - ...sighing and offering an XP token to comfort **the Dream-Witch.**
  - ...and whatever turns out to be appropriate for any other PCs.

YOUR NAME

YOUR ORIGIN AND ARRIVAL IN TOWN

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PERMISSION IS GRANTED TO PHOTOCOPY THIS PAGE FOR PERSONAL USE

The Troublemaker

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Good
Sports Skill: Exceptional
Favorite Foods: Fish! Sea monsters! Crabs! Sometimes dumplings.
Blood Type: B
Animal: Cat
Age: Campaign Default -1 (You will usually be 14, but the game may play out age 4-13 at an accelerated pace.)
Genres: Pastoral, maybe Immersive Fantasy (Rinley is present in all genres, but this version of the character is optimized for Pastoral gaming.)

Step 1: Choose Your Name and Gender

Good morning, Rinley! (Or is it already afternoon?)

Welcome to the world of **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.**

May I call you Rinley?

- ……sure. It's a great name for **a girl.**
- ……sure. It's a great name for **a boy.**
- ……no way! I'll pick my own name! Stay out of it, mysterious questionnaire!

1

Step 2: Choose Your Family

As Rinley, you are the youngest child of one of Fortitude's "shrine families"—one of the usually-mystical families who have learned to take "the dust of the Outside" (particulate chaos) and use or purify it in some way. That dust is both magical and a problematic pollutant in Fortitude, so your family probably has powers and certainly has an important role to play.

In particular, you're probably a child of the **Yatskaya,** which means you grew up in a temple shrouded in drugged incense and have the power to talk to cats.

Right?

- ……that's right! I'm **Rinley Yatskaya.**
- ……no way! I'm **Rinley "Valentine" Kichi!** I help tend the sacred Kichi pools, where people go to make offerings for the safety of their loved ones. If I work hard and stay pure I can use those waters to see visions of the past, present, and future.
- ……ah, no. This unworthy individual is **Rinley Sosunov.** I practice meditation and empty-mind techniques while trying hard not to accidentally become enlightened and suspire from the world into nirvana. My teacher says I am very good at both of these things.
- A Yatskaya? I *wish*. No, *I* had to be born **Rinley Titov**, summoned up *straight from the earth* by Pa Iskandar and Ma Nirmala to help keep that thing under the shrine from breaking out. And then, get this, it turns out *it's not even in danger of breaking out yet.* All my siblings just tease me and tell me that that's what I get for being… I don't even know. Born?
- Haha, I look like a Yatskaya? Goofy. I'm actually **Rinley Nicholas Vasili** or **Rinley Nicoletta Vasili.** I was ritually bound to an "element" when I was young—probably…
  - "…the hearth," letting me work miracles with cooking and sewing?
  - …or was it "steam power" or "electricity" I was bound to?

(The very last option there might step on the toes of **the (spirit of the) Wish-Granting Engine,** but only if the HG adds her to this campaign.)

- No, no, I'm from another family entirely.

(OPTIONAL) Step 3: Freaky Options!

Do you want to choose any of these weird, freaky options?

- …you're the same age as the other PCs, instead of a year younger?
- …you were kicked out of your family after an… incident?
- …you're *not* the youngest child in your family, or even in your nuclear family?

Be careful with that last one! Being an older sibling is a lot of responsibility and it might distract you from adventures. Unless you tend to drag the kid along?

Step 4: Choose Your Favorite Scenes

Are you most often seen…

- …getting into mischief?
- …spying on people?
- …listening wide-eyed to people's stories?
- …being shocked and overcome by stuff you've just heard or seen?
- …soaking up ambience on a lazy day?
- …poking around, exploring somewhere new?
- …talking about nothing in particular with a new friend?
- …talking about life and stuff that's happening with a new friend?
- …doing temple chores?
- …fishing, probably by hand?
- …weird tall tale stuff like cooking in an eggshell?

Pick 2-3 favorites to help you figure out what you might be doing at any given time.

It's OK if the little icons don't make sense yet, and you don't have to memorize them—they're just coding the various parts of the game that "feel" a certain way. The first icon, for instance, is a poisoned apple that indicates unhealthy things like wickedness, mischief, and the flu.

Step 5: Review Your Goals

All right!

This is the start of a new era in your life. You used to be pretty shy and cautious. But you're starting to realize just how much adventure is out there waiting for you—and how much you love it!

No sooner do you meet the other PCs than you can *see* it.

These people are part of your destiny and you are part of theirs. They are going places. Interesting places. They are going to do things. Interesting things. Don't let them shut you out! You want to be involved!

- **Quest 1:** You've always wanted to…
  - …tell and listen to goofy and serious stories. Yay storytime!
- **Quest 2:** And now you definitely also want to…
  - …investigate one of the mysteries of Fortitude!
- **Quest 3:** And you're *probably* looking to…
  - …get to know all the other PCs.
  - …face any troubles that they have, at their side.
  - …grow up in general and learn to be a cool hero.

But maybe you have a more specific goal. What would that specific goal be?

Step 6: Choose Your Connections

Connections are basically a measure of how well you know and *get* somebody. They're also a measure of how good you are at living somewhere or with someone.

You'll always have a couple of starting Connections:

- **The [Family Name] 2.** You're at home at the family shrine. (e.g. "The Yatskaya 2.")
- **Prince Eduard 2.** You recently rescued this rat prince from a golden snake.
- **[Each PC] 1.** You're drawn to each other PC individually.

You can discard these Connections later if you don't want them, they just don't seem to fit, or if you don't have room in your heart[5] to keep them all. Conversely, at the beginning of the game[6] if someone agrees that you should be close to or comfortable with their PC, you can upgrade your Connection to them to level 2!

You can improve your character's Connections later as the reward from an appropriate quest.

5 by which I actually mean "collection of Perks on your character sheet"

6 (before or after the first couple of sessions)

Step 7: Review Your Powers

You have the following specific abilities:

- You have the special mundane abilities of your shrine family. Normally, that means you have the special abilities of the Yatskaya, which means…
  - …the distant sea calls to you.
  - …you're good at coping with surreal environments and dreams.
  - …you can talk to cats.

- You're a figure of tall tales and folk tales. Between scenes you can travel and either…
  - …repair clothes and things made of fabric *or*
  - …make money…

  …in frankly implausible ways. Your traditional sailboat is a thimble, and your traditional "allowance" is old coins you find under rocks.

- You understand that there's a wishing power in a person's heart that can change what's possible.
  - Your own wishing heart is very strong.
  - You can see and talk to the wishing power in other people's hearts.
  - You can change what's possible, including…
    - …making things easy or hard for others.
    - …doing things with inadequate tools (e.g., breakfast for 10 from an egg).
    - …changing people's destinies.

- You've learned some weird tricks:
  - You tend to know a little more than most about any given story.
  - An old cat taught you how to swap people's bodies around.

Step 8: Props

Before play, you'll want to:

- Copy, download and print, or open your book to your character sheet.
- Make sure the group has a bowl of tokens to serve as XP.

Optionally:

- Gather 5+ tokens to serve as MP, different from the XP tokens.
- Gather 8 tokens to serve as Will, different from the XP/MP tokens.
- Copy or download and print quest cards for your quests.
- Look around the table to identify the other PCs. Then warm up for play by practicing…
  - …telling goofy stories and bad jokes for people to roll their eyes at.
  - …and, if present…
    - …head-desking at the antics of **the Wishing Boy.**
    - …giving thumbs-ups to **the Best Friend.**
    - …gaping speechlessly at **Nightmares' Angel.**
    - …wincing or saying *aww!* at **the Prodigy.**
    - …bowing gratefully to **the Child of the Sun.**
    - …shivering at the weirdness of **the Angel of Fortitude.**
    - …sighing and offering an XP token to comfort **the Dream-Witch.**
    - …and whatever turns out to be appropriate for any other PCs.

YOUR NAME

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1

The Child of the Sun

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Ordinary
Sports Skill: Ordinary
Favorite Foods: Evildoers (edible), taiyaki
Blood Type: AB
Animal: Hen
Age: Campaign Default (You will usually be 15, but the game may play out age 5-14 at an accelerated pace. Your age may also be ambiguous.)
Genres: Pastoral, Fairy Tales (The Child of the Sun is present in all genres, but this version of the character is optimized for Pastoral and Fairy-Tale gaming.)

Step 1: Choose your Name

Good morning! Welcome to the world of the **Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.**

Once upon a time, you lived in the sky. You were the child of the sun. You played with the bird-faced spirits and the stars. You rode the horses of the sun.

Your mom, who was arguably bad at gender-appropriate naming, christened you...

- ...**Jasper Irinka** (a girl).
- ...**Raven Irinka** (a boy).
- ...something else?

...sorry, Raven! This book is going to assume that you're Jasper Irinka, a girl. But swap the gender and name and you should find this a useful document about yourself!

Jasper, you may be tempted to rename yourself Jasmine, but be aware that by doing so you risk becoming a lost face or aspect of **the Ideologue,** Jasmine Apocynum, or possibly vice versa. She lives in Horizon and doesn't otherwise have much to do with this particular campaign.

Step 2: The Death of the Sun

And it came to pass, in a certain year, in a certain time, that the sun was slain—

That that man, whom you once named "father," rode up onto the clouds on his pale horse; drew back his great black twisted bow; and fired a barbed black arrow into the heart of the living sun.

She died.

He was your father, and she was your mother, and she was the sun; and she went out, and in that breath you fell.

...did you fall?

- ...yes. She shoved me from the sky before the arrow hit. Down, down, down, I fell, to Fortitude below.
  - It was fast and it was brutal and it *hurt.*
  - It was slow and dreamlike. I fell for...
    - ...weeks?
    - ...months?
    - ...years?
- ...no. I didn't fall. I was summering in Fortitude. I looked up. I had to look up. And see it.
- ...I don't remember.
- ...no, it was more like...

Step 3: Choose Your Nature

Psst! You're a kid, of course, an ordinary kid. But—even though you don't realize this yourself—you're *also* the new sun. You're the sun that was kindled into being in the sky after your mother died and the reason that the world's still light.

Or are you?

Are you...

- ...the new sun, like I said?
- ...closer to being the firebird that kindles the sun than to being the sun itself?
- ...closer to being the hope/love that keeps the world alive than to being the literal sun?

Or do you have a different heritage and meaning completely?

Are you...

- ...the new North Wind?
- ...the new rainbow?
- ...something else?

And if so, do we assume that your mother was the old North Wind/rainbow/whatever?

Or was she still the sun?

I'm pretty sure that you're the sun. So, what do I mean by that?

From a magical perspective, I mean that you and the sun have the same "soul" or "heart." From a scientific perspective, I mean that there are high-density informational connections between you and the sun, even though you currently understand them only about as well as a toddler understands their emotions. Basically, the sun is a bit less a part of you than your hands and feet are, but much more a part of you than your shoes, and a lot of the distinction that *does* exist owes itself to mental blocks and atrophied connections rather than a meaningful and permanent separation.

Step 4: Choose Your Anti-Nature

I will name your father now.

In **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** his name is as the name of Death: the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy and the lord of Death's dominion is he named. He it is, the lord of Death's dominion, who took up his bow and who slew the sun...

...though in some rare games it is not so.

It's *possible* that the murder was done by someone else's hands, whether you still blame the Headmaster or not; it's even possible that your real father, or your known father, was someone else. But... whomever it was, even if they are in this one matter innocent, they are something *bad*.

And sometimes you'll be bad, yourself.

Sometimes you'll get into a funk of sadness and despair and maybe a little self-hate and you'll *do* something to show the other half of your heritage upon your face.

What exactly happens here?

Do you...

- ...paint black face-paint under your eyes?
- ...powder your whole face, conversely, pale as a corpse?
- ...or rub it down with ashes?
- ...put on your black cap of scholarship and spin it around to *evil?*
- ...take out your eyes, turn them around to the "night" side, and then put them back in?
- ...let down your hair?
- ...put on or take off a pair of glasses or a headband?
- ...draw a tear in makeup underneath one eye?
- ...blindfold yourself?
- ...put a prayer strip over your face?
- ...pull a golden "good" brain-rod out of your head and slot in a silver "evil" one?
- ...or something else?

When that happens, you normally stop being a creature of hope and become a creature of resignation and disillusionment—or do you go to a scarier place than that?

- ...no, resignation/disillusionment is about right.
- ...I become a creature of despair.
- ...I become a creature of death itself, and endings.
- ...something else?

Step 5: Choose Your Favorite Scenes

Are you most often seen...

- ...exploring Fortitude and the lower world?
- ...sitting out by the water and watching the clouds go by?
- ...talking with people about their feelings about the weather?
- ...doing odd jobs for food and shelter money?
- ...looking for lost things and treasure?
- ...helping some random person?
- ...taking care of a stray cat or dog?
- ...putting on a little play with a collection of dolls or puppets?
- ...playing around with the sunlight?
- ...talking to people about their dreams?
- ...getting confused about who and where you are?
- ...experiencing weird miracles?
- ...listening, wide-eyed, to old stories about the sun and the Bleak Academy?
- ...giving a monologue, and then taking decisive action?
- ...expressing your faith in someone?
- ...transforming in some unexpected and unplanned way?

Pick 2-3 favorites to help you figure out what you might be doing at any given time.

It's OK if the little icons don't make sense yet, and you don't have to memorize them—they're just coding the various parts of the game that "feel" a certain way. The first icon, for instance, represents scenes where you explore, hang out in, or just experience the world!

Step 6: Review Your Goals

You fell from the sky.

You don't really know who and what you are now. You're the child of the sun (and, for that matter, of the person who killed her) but what does that mean? I've mentioned that you're the sun, and maybe you know that, and probably you *don't* know that, but even when you've figured it out—what does that mean?

What are you supposed to do now?

The sky kingdom is gone. You can't see it up there. Nobody's come down to claim you. Your mom is dead. Your dad rode back out into the darkness beyond the world and he's *gone.* There's a new sun and every year there's a mourning and a celebration in honor of your mother but—

What are you supposed to *do?*

- **Quest 1:** With your mom gone, it's up to you to...
  - ...be the light of hope, and shine in the darkness of people's lives.
- **Quest 2:** And you definitely need to...
  - ...figure out what you are and what you're supposed to do from here.
  - ...figure out what it means that the old sun is gone.
- **Quest 3:** And now that you're stuck in the lower world, you probably ought to...
  - ...find a place—a home, a purpose, and a lifestyle—in Fortitude.
  - ...participate in the holidays and ceremonies in honor of the sun.
  - ...work through your feelings about your Mom.

Normally this third quest is the story of a goofy alien who doesn't understand human affairs, but you could reframe it a little—focus on...

- ...explaining how the lower world works to a bird-spirit sidekick.
- ...emotional acceptance of the change in your life circumstances.
- ...life as a street urchin.
- ...learning to fish.
- ...learning a trade.
- ...becoming a legendary hero.
- ...learning or becoming something else?

Step 7: Consider Your Aesthetic

The powers of **the Child of the Sun** often involve picking up new "limbs"—physical modifications tied to your powers. You'll mark yourself with a few symbols; you'll pick up a pair of small tendrils, wild hairs, or antennae on your forehead; you'll have something go a little strange with your eyes; and if you're willing to let people see you as a freak, you'll pick up a couple of extra arms or tendrils or something with special powers in them.

So when you're connecting to someone, and your powers mark you with a symbol of them, does that usually mean...

- ...a tattoo that appears on your skin?
- ...jewelry with that symbol (e.g., a dangling earring, a charm bracelet, and a hair pin)?
- ...clothing marked with that logo?
- ...floating holographic symbols orbiting your head?
- ...something else?

Are you prone...

- ...to develop distinct and obvious extra limbs, or...
- ...to manifest subtle environmental effects?

Are you more likely...

- ...to have a pair of flexible tendrils growing out of your back, or...
- ...a pair of extra arms?

Are you more likely to go for...

- ...the "pretty alien" look?
- ...the "shy, trying to look human" look?
- ...the imposing but embarrassing "sorry, this is going to be a bit freaky now" look?

Also, do you tend towards...

- ...traditional costume?
- ...casual?
- ...punk?
- ...sophisticated Western clothing?
- ...a geeky look?
- ...waifish?
- ...something else?

Step 8: Choose Your Connections

Connections are basically a measure of how well you know and *get* somebody. They're also a measure of how good you are at living somewhere or with someone.

You'll start the game with three free Connections:

- **The Prodigy 2.** She fascinates you. You're not sure why!
- **Little Island 1.** You love Little Island, although you don't feel ready to live there.
- **Nightmares' Angel 1.** ...he's a freak, but somehow you kind of *get* him.

For clarity, Little Island is a little island in the middle of Big Lake where Town's main temple to your mother is—it's a rustic, comfortable kind of place and you love it but it's also kind of a dead end backwater which could easily stall out your journey of self-discovery and it's... uncomfortable to be reminded, at the regular ceremonies in honor of your mother, that she's dead. I mean, you get that reminder regularly anyway! Every time you look up! It's just... a bit too *common*, you know? There? On Little Island? Too much in the foreground. So you love the life there but you don't want to stay.

Anyway. You can discard these Connections later if you don't want them or they just don't seem to fit.

Talk to the players of the other characters, either now or after the couple of sessions. If someone agrees that you should be close to or comfortable with their PC, you can get a free level 1 Connection to their character as well!

You can improve your character's Connections later as the reward from an appropriate quest.

Step 9: Review Your Powers

You are the sun. You are the light of hope in the mortal world. That means:

- You are functionally immortal.
- You can influence the weather and the sky with your mundane actions.
- You can radiate hope.
- If you're ever sufficiently broken to show the other side of your nature, you can radiate disillusionment or despair instead.
- You can send out your consciousness in a sunbeam.
- The nuclear furnace of your stomach can digest basically anything.
- You can in theory turn into a gigantic sun-kaiju thing.

When someone talks to you about their hopes and dreams, you can connect to them and gain special powers for yourself by "holding" that dream for them...

- ...marking you with a symbol or physical feature that represents them or their dream.
- ...giving you a relevant power or Skill.

Lastly, you have a kind of generic power to put together new limbs and physical features with special abilities associated with them—you can learn to see love or magnetism or bits and pieces of the future, grow a tendril tipped with fire and a tendril tipped with ice, and maybe shield yourself with a constant sunlight glow. Basically, at the cost of making yourself look a little weird, you can pick up new powers *a la carte* to resolve the troubles you find yourself facing—to bring hope, to devour evil, and to express the dreams you hold.

Step 10: Timeline

Figure out when in the game's timeline your mother died.

This is ultimately your call, but it's also relevant to the HG and to anyone playing **Nightmares' Angel** or **the Angel of Fortitude.** In theory they should respect your having the final call here but if they're unhappy with your choice you need to work with them!

If the HG is starting the game in the present...

- ...did your mom die about two years ago?
- ...closer to five years ago?
- ...closer to ten years ago?

Did your fall to Fortitude afterwards...

- ...take minutes?
- ...take days?
- ...did you fall in a dreamlike state until just a couple of months ago?
- ...are you just landing now?

If the HG is playing through your childhood...

- ...would you rather start with your mom already dead?
- ...or would you rather play through the early years with her alive, and have her die in play?

If you start the game with her alive, make sure everyone is on the same page as to whether the sun's death is inevitable, near-inevitable, or flexible—but remember, this is a *really important event* in the history of Town and everywhere else, the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy (or whomever) shooting down the sun, and it has extremely big implications if it doesn't happen!

Step 11: Props

Before play, you'll want to:

- Copy, download and print, or open your book to your character sheet.
- Make sure the group has a bowl of tokens to serve as XP.

Optionally:

- Gather 5+ tokens to serve as MP, different from the XP tokens.
- Gather 8 tokens to serve as Will, different from the XP/MP tokens.
- Copy or download and print quest cards for your quests.
- Practice a mindset of helpfulness and interest in others' hopes and dreams.[7]
- Look around the table to identify the other PCs. Then warm up for play by practicing (for those that are present)...
  - ...head-desking at the goofiness of **the Wishing Boy.**
  - ...giving thumbs-ups to **the Best Friend.**
  - ...pointing and gaping speechlessly at **Nightmares' Angel.**
  - ...groaning or rolling your eyes at **the Troublemaker.**
  - ...wincing or saying *aww!* at **the Prodigy.**
  - ...shivering at the weirdness of **the Angel of Fortitude.**
  - ...sighing and offering an XP token to comfort **the Dream-Witch.**
  - ...and whatever turns out to be appropriate for any other PCs.

7 *Not to be nice! This is how you can munchkin out! Although I guess it is also sort of like being nice*

YOUR NAME

NATURE

YOUR FALL FROM GRACE

ANTI-NATURE

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1

The Angel of Fortitude

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Scholarly
Sports Skill: Hit-and-Miss
Favorite Foods: Sandwiches, French fries, chicken wings, ribs, apples, pomegranates, pudding
Blood Type: Varies
Animal: Rabbit
Age: Campaign Default + 7 (You will usually be 22, but the game may play out age 12-21 at an accelerated pace. Your age may also be ambiguous.)
Genres: Pastoral, maybe Gothic (The Angel of Fortitude is present in all genres, but this version of the character is optimized for Pastoral gaming.)

Step 1: Choose Your Name and Gender

Good evening! Welcome to the world of **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.**

You're a mysterious biker. You live on an evil island, circling the sun, but sometimes during the days you'll come down to Fortitude and you'll drink tea or sake in its various shops and you'll eat cakes and look out at the lake. Sometimes at night you'll come down and drive through Fortitude on your motorcycle, and where you go, the roads move and twist behind you.

They call you **the Angel of Fortitude**—but that's not the name on your keyfob, or emblazoned in awesome letters on a brass plate inside the wheel-guard of your motorbike.

That name is...

- ...**Entropy II**, **Magister** (a boy's name).
- ...**Attaris II, Magister** (a girl's name).
- ...something else?

And you are...

- ...a young man?
- ...a young woman in disguise as a man?
- ...a young woman, not in disguise?
- ...an ambiguous, genderless creature?

...this book is going to assume that you're **Entropy II, Magister, King of the Evil World and the Principal of Horizon's School, by the Grace of Heaven and the Light.** And a young man. But you should be able to use almost all of this content even if you're something else!

Step 2: Choose Your Relationship with Your Father

Your father was the King of Evil—almost literally; it was one of his formal titles and *pretty* close to his actual nature. He was a monstrous and unsavory being, an enemy of love and kindness, and he ruled over an evil island full of horrors that flies on the back of a great beast around the sun.

But he did one good thing, and it killed him.

...well, that's one theory. He did one good thing. He made one good choice. He decided to save the world rather than let it get destroyed, evil and all. And it killed him.

That's where you came from.

The moment he broke with his evil destiny, the moment he tore the nature of wickedness in him, the moment his doom became inevitable, you were there. You, his replacement. You, his successor; his cancer; his poison; his child.

That's when he could have turned back, changed things, and you would have stopped existing.

He taught you what he wanted you to know, to be the new *him*, instead.

And one day—around the time the sun went out, and a new sun inexplicably was born—he passed on everything he was to you, and left. Or maybe—some people think—you killed him.

So...

- ...do you want to believe in him, even though he was awful to you? To pretend that he was worth saving, that there was something redeemable there, that he cared about you? That you had an OK dad?
- ...do you hate him with every fiber of your being?
- ...did you have an eerily, freakily good relationship? Was the King of Evil actually *nice* to you? Did he, who was the enemy of love, show you love?
- ...did you have a tense relationship of near-equals?
- ...do you barely remember the whole thing except as a fog of trauma and possible brainwashing?
- ...did he objectify you so thoroughly—as if you were a robe, a weapon, a diary—that he didn't even bother being cruel?
- ...something else?

Step 3: Choose Your Relationship with Your Mother

Long ago the Riders came from beyond existence to make an end to worlds and Time.

They cut to the heart of the Seal of Time, and there they met Attaris. She showed her face to them; she turned them back; she threw off her shroud and revealed herself to them as Attaris Ebrôt Appêkā, tutelary spirit of the war *itself*: the goddess of the struggle between the *that which is* and the endless *Not*.

To kill her would be to end their war; so they turned, and abandoned the siege of Time.

She was half-devil, the stories said. A thousand-armed witch, malevolent and kind; grand and base, glorious and vile she, as changeable as the moon. She might devour you or give you endless blessings. She took her last names from the devil Ebrôt Appêkā, who turned to dust when she put them on.

Only—

She is nowhere to be found in all the world or anywhere Outside. She did not die, no one saw her die, but she is gone, as is the Seal of Time. She has disapparated, dissolved into the air.

If you had a mother it would be her; there is the smallest bit of her essence in you.

Did you ever meet her? Does she haunt your dreams?

- ...I met her once, when I was ten. It was an uncomfortable occasion.
- ...I see her sometimes, in my dreams.
- ...I have no mother. I am my father's heir.
- ...something else?

Step 4: Choose Your Curse

You aren't human. You have some creepy, troublesome special effect that emphasizes this. This is almost always blood—you have blood dripping from your hands, like your father did before you. It just *appears* from the underarm above the wrist, from the palm, from the fingertips, sometimes with stigmata and sometimes just oozing through the skin. It doesn't stop. It doesn't ever stop. And the blood isn't ordinary blood, either. It's magical. It's a theological and spiritual contaminant. It's *change-blood*, a metamorphogen, a "blank toxin," a thing that in sufficient concentration or with a suitable primer corrupts, transforms, or eats through the things of the mortal world.

This probably only really started after you took over as King of Evil.

You probably had something *different* and creepy when you were comparatively young.

And you *could* have it still; or something new, original, and distinctive now; or some creepy special effect you inherited from your mom; or something coming from an accident or adventure on the evil island, instead.

So what is it? Is your curse...

- ...the change-blood, always dripping from your hands?
- ...a cutting, twisting crown of thorns, and change-blood trickling past your eyes?
- ...an imperfectly-controlled wheel of swords spinning in the air near you?
- ...snakes for your hair?
- ...half your face is cybernetic? Maybe even half your body?
- ...you are a soft-spoken, unaging child wearing white, surrounded by a halo, and giving everyone around you a sense of visceral horror and unease?
- ...you are a werewolf? a wereghost? a weresnake?[8]
- ...something else?

8 *Note: turning into a giant snake will not help.*

Step 5: Choose Your Vehicle

The standard ride for the Angel of Fortitude is your mysterious motorcycle, **Jenkins**. (It's like an ordinary motorcycle, but more mysterious.)

As for you, you ride...

- ...a mysterious motorcycle, exactly as stated?
- ...a mysterious flatbed truck?
- ...a mysterious horse?
- ...a mysterious bicycle?
- ...something else?

And its name is

- "...Jenkins."
- "...Blake."
- "...Blythe."
- "...Annie."
- "...Bennett."
- "...Styx."
- ...or, something else?

(Optional) Step 6: Miscellaneous Options

Here's a couple of miscellaneous options that you could pick:

- ...are you the same age as the other PCs, instead of ~7 years older?
- ...are you called "the Bloody Ghost" or "the Awful Angel" or something instead of "the Angel of Fortitude?"
- ...do you rule a "Halloween kingdom" instead of an evil world?
- ...in Horizon, your usual title is Principal. But would you rather use...
  - ...Headmaster?
  - ...Headmistress?
  - ...Magister?

Step 7: Choose Your Favorite Scenes

Are you most often seen...

- ...drinking tea or sake while admiring the views of Fortitude?
- ...talking to someone who needs your help?
- ...offering someone your trust?
- ...riding mysteriously through the streets at night?
- ...talking with strange monsters?
- ...poring over the meaning of strange phenomena?
- ...helping someone?
- ...talking about your goals, history, and dreams? (Possibly over cake?)
- ...working on the *feng shui* of Fortitude?
- ...talking about purity, impurity, and evil?
- ...admiring the potential of the other PCs?
- ...suffering miserably because your hands are always bleeding on everything?
- ...worrying about some omen or impending problem?
- ...doing something you probably shouldn't?
- ...defending/protecting creatures of the evil island (even though they're bad?)

Pick 2-3 favorites to help you figure out what you might be doing at any given time.

It's OK if the little icons don't make sense yet, and you don't have to memorize them—they're just coding the various parts of the game that "feel" a certain way. The first icon, for instance, marks a basic slice of life experience!

Step 8: Review Your Goals

You're a teacher. You're a mentor.

That's your father's legacy, bizarrely enough. He was never much for kids or, well, for people, but one day he realized that the world was in danger of ceasing to exist, of ceasing to ever have existed, of drowning in the Outside, in the multicolored void that is Outside of Town—of the Bleak Academy raising up such a wave of the substance of the void that ideas like "life," "existence," and "world" would cease to mean anything at all.

So he thought of training up people who'd be able to stand against that. Students to become the new *axis mundi*, the new focal point for existence, and its guardians, its living walls and cultivators. That's what his School in Horizon was for. That's what you inherited—a belief that the young people of Town can be the future.

And more than that. You believe in people in general. You were born to misery and evil, but the longer you go on, the more you think that maybe there is hope.

Your eyes are set on the future. You can tell that you're living in amazing, unprecedented times.

- **Quest 1:** You're going to spend most of your life...
  - ...delighted, amazed, and horrified by these kids (the PCs) and the trouble they get in.

- **Quest 2:** And maybe you can help them and the people of Fortitude out by...
  - ...developing interesting weapons, tools, and environments for them.

Unless you want to replace that with some variation, some other way of helping, like...

- ...being a great handyman or matchmaker?
- ...improving the *feng shui* of people's homes and workplaces?
- ...tutoring the PCs?
- ...inducting them into School and giving them regular assignments in Fortitude?
- ...being a support structure/source of order in some other way?

- **Quest 3:** But the real reason you're in Fortitude? The core thing you're doing here? The reason for "the Angel?" It's to...
  - ...get away from all the burdens for a little while, *and*
  - ...build a spiritual drainage system so you can stop the blood flowing from your hands.

  Even if it's only for a day.

Step 9: Choose Your Connections

Connections are basically a measure of how well you know and *get* somebody. They're also a measure of how good you are at living somewhere or with someone.

You'll always have a free starting Connection:

- **The Child of the Sun 1.** What a charming child!

You can discard it later, though, if you don't want it or it just doesn't seem to fit.

Talk to the players of the other characters, either now or after the couple of sessions. If someone agrees that you should be close to or comfortable with their PC, you can get a free level 1 Connection to their character as well![9]

You can improve your character's Connections later as the reward from an appropriate quest.

9 *Warning! Each such Connection is a Perk, and you can only have 8 total Perks, and you're a little unusual in that you start with 6. This isn't a big deal since you can always discard and replace Perks, but you'll still want to choose your Connections carefully if there are a lot of PCs around!*

Step 10: Review Your Powers

You have the following specific abilities.

- You're an accursed demigod, an inhuman creature:
  - You have an inhuman vitality that gives you a lot of energy to face each new day.
  - You're mostly immune to harm.
  - You have mildly toxic blood dripping from your hands.
- You're kind of dramatic and imposing:
  - You'll tend to find yourself in the spotlight, literally.
  - You'll sometimes show up for dramatic/emotional rather than causal reasons.
  - You can take actions so inexorable and awful that even miracles can't stop them.
  - You can transfix others, obsess them, or disorient them with the impact of your actions; or do something that reminds someone of...
    - ...home.
    - ...their worst nightmare.
    - ...fireworks and candy.
    - ...or whatever else you name.
- You've claimed the paved streets of Fortitude, and the space between the residential streets and houses, as your "Garden;" you can mold its mortal substance with your hands like clay.
- You're the Principal of School, and rule it likewise.
- You're the King of Evil, and you rule it likewise, and may command the hosts of creatures of the evil world.

You have an alternate form:

- Remove your false nose, strip the gloves from your hands, and stop slouching and it will instantly become obvious that you are no normal human.

Step 11: Props

Before play, you'll want to:

- Copy, download and print, or open your book to your character sheet.
- Make sure the group has a bowl of tokens to serve as XP.

Optionally:

- Gather 5+ tokens to serve as MP, different from the XP tokens.
- Gather 11 tokens to serve as Will, different from the XP/MP tokens.
- Copy or download and print quest cards for your quests.
- Look around the table to identify the other PCs. Then warm up for play by practicing...
  - ...being eerie and resonant, to better earn XP.
  - ...and, if present...
    - ...head-desking at the goofiness of **the Wishing Boy.**
    - ...giving thumbs-ups to **the Best Friend.**
    - ...pointing and gaping speechlessly at **Nightmares' Angel.**
    - ...groaning or rolling your eyes at **the Troublemaker.**
    - ...wincing or saying *aww!* at **the Prodigy.**
    - ...bowing gratefully, hand over fist, to **the Child of the Sun.**
    - ...sighing and offering an XP token to comfort **the Dream-Witch.**
    - ...and whatever turns out to be appropriate for any other PCs.

YOUR NAME

YOUR VEHICLE'S NAME

FAVORITE SCENES

CHANGED QUESTS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

CONNECTIONS

YOUR CURSE

RELATIONSHIP(S) WITH YOUR PARENTS

ARC TRAITS

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

CURRENT MP

WILL

HEALTH LEVELS

DIVINE	☐	☐	☐	☐
TOUGH	☐	☐	☐	☐
NORMAL	☐	☐	☐	☐

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The Dream-Witch

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Above Average
Sports Skill: Above Average
Favorite Foods: Strawberries, apricots, sweet rice dumplings, stew, salt mackerel, yakitori, red tea
Blood Type: A
Animal: Boar
Age: Ageless/Indeterminate (You look 1-2 years older than the campaign default.)
Genres: Pastoral, maybe Gothic (Miramie is present in all genres, but this version of the character is optimized for Pastoral gaming.)

Step 1: Choose Your Name (Part 1)

Hey, there. G'morning, you. Welcome to the world of **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.**

I know you, right? You're one of those strays who hangs out around Professor Hideo Hayashi at his archive?

- ...that's right. I'm **Miramie Mesmer**, the Dream-Witch.
- ...that's right. I'm **Reynard Mesmer,** the Dream-Ghost.
- ...no way. I'm going to be adopted into a proper family in step 2!

Anyway, you're trying to get your life back together again, make things make *sense* again, after everything fell apart.

And you're trying to be a good kid, too! You want to work hard and make the world a better place and build a good life for yourself. But you didn't used to be good. You used to be a prodigy of despair and hatred and you came to Town to destroy it.

Just—that person? **Melanie Malakh** (or was it **Reginald Malakh?**)

That person broke.

...by the way, we're going to assume it was Melanie Malakh and that your name is Miramie Mesmer, but if you're not, just switch the names and maybe pronouns and life circumstances and such and I'm sure that this document will work out!

...somehow?

(Optional) Step 2: Choose Your Family

Maybe you didn't wind up at the archive. You're a special kid, in more ways than one, right?

So maybe you wound up adopted into one of the shrine families? They took you in so that you could learn their magic, find peace in their routines and spiritual practices, and be welcome in their home?

- ...that's right. The Vasili family took me in. They bound me to the earth, to help keep it stable, and to the winds of the high places. My name is...
  - ...**Mayu Vasili**, the Dream-Witch.
  - ...**Reynard Vasili**, the Dream-Lord.
- ...where else could I have gone but to the Kichi? Simple purity. Simple practice. Water magic and divination in their pools. I am...
  - ...**Morgan Kichi**, the Dream-Witch.
  - ...**Reynard Kichi,** the Dream-Witch.
- ...I was given more than I deserved; the Sosunov took me in and trained me in their dream magic. I am...
  - ...**Miramie Sosunov**, the Dream-Witch.
  - ...**Reynard Sosunov,** the Guardian.
- ...I was taken in by the Titovs, and the shards of whom I used to be were imprisoned under their shrine. I must live here; I must suffer the love and hatred of these people. It is my penance for who I was. I am...
  - ...**Miramie Titov**, the Dream-Witch.
  - ...**Reynard Titov,** the Guardian.
- ...no. No. That's not right. It was something else...

Step 3: Choose Your Nature

You spent a long time asleep or maybe even dead. You trudged through stacks of books and records like a ghost or a dream. You wore a grey and white kimono and a mask.

Over time you hid the bits of yourself that you didn't like, scattered them through a place of chaos, and you built a room from the sweetest memories and keepsakes that remained to you and you played among them there.

Then one day you came out of your fog and everything had fallen apart.

But you're still Melanie Malakh, right?

- ...I am. I guess. I mean, I'm what's left of her.
- ...I went to a lot of work to make myself into a new person. I don't think I count as the prodigy Malakh any longer. But I'm what's left. I'm what took her place.
- ...this body wasn't her. I think. It was someone else. Then a glass shard of her flew into this body through its eye and killed the brain and I was reborn as the Dream-Witch. So am I me, or am I her? Or is she me? Which me am I?
- ...I don't think so? I wasn't. Then a shard of her flew into me through my eye and I was *sort* of her? But I didn't die, so I must still be me. Mustn't I?
- ...I was practically a ghost for years. I built myself out of a nest of memories. How would I know? For all I know:
  - ...I'm a doppelganger, golden snake in human form, or some kind of freak library accident.
  - ...I could be *anything.*
  - ...I'm some tool or plan of hers, or even the glass dragon's.
  - ...I'm probably her, but I might be someone else.

Step 4: Choose Your Stressor

You're not a good fit for the world. There's some peeve or problem which turns into the beachhead, the spearhead, and the figurehead of this for you—something all the little misfit elements of your life flow into to produce a single psychological or practical stress.

Usually it's money.

I'm going to be honest—Fortitude isn't the kind of place where money actually matters much. You *can't* make enough money that other people won't judge you, and conversely, there's no kid your apparent age who's going to starve on the streets. The best you can hope for is to earn enough that it helps people respect you; the worst you can do is depend on charity and be uncomfortable, low-status, and take some knocks to your pride.

But I guess that's probably *why* you're concerned about money and accounting. It's a status thing. It's a pride thing. You want money so that you can believe you're *worthy.* You want money so you can feel you have the right to exist...or maybe you don't.

Maybe that's not what bugs you. Maybe that's *not* what you obsess over.

Your problem is:

- **Financial Insecurity:** …it is, in fact, money! You've got to earn a living in this world.
- **Romanticism:** The problem is this world itself! It's this modern age! People don't respect tradition! Everything is run-down and degenerate!
- **Hypochondria:** Germs. Disease. *Sickness.* It's everywhere. What if I get polio or the black plague and I *die?* I mean, I'm fine. Don't worry about me. It's just a rash. A bit of a cough. Do you think I left my lunch out too long before eating it? What if I get bugs in my eyes?[10]
- **Otaku-ness:** ...why must I live in this backwater without good access to the geeky stuff I care about?
  - ...manga?
  - ...movies?
  - ...television?
  - ...light novels?
  - ...action figures?

  All the people who live in the *real* Earth have it so much better! They're, like, rolling around in giant piles of awesome modern culture *all the time!*

10 Hypochondria exaggerated for comic effect

- **Popularity Obsession:** I deserve to be known everywhere! Loved everywhere! So does the archive! And Hideo's work![11] But are we? Are we? *Why can't we be more popular? How can we be more popular?*
- **Haunted by the Past:** Magical dust blown in from the Outside is always getting *into* everything. It rusts the weirdest stuff. It *rusted* my *pajamas.* Sometimes inexplicable mementoes of my former self show up at random too. Why can't this stuff just leave me alone to live my life *normally?* I don't *want* to be a "prodigy of despair and hatred" any longer! I just want to have a normal life!
- **Insomnia/Nightmares:** …I keep having awful nightmares every time I sleep. So I don't sleep. I drink caffeine. But then I'm jittery and half-dead from lack of sleep all the time!
- ...something else?

Step 5: Special Options

Your greatest power is something called **the World-Breaker's Hand,** which can destroy almost anything, even the hum from a streetlight or the shadow of a shoe. Normally it actually unmakes the target...

- ...which is why I never use it on people.
- ...except that *my* version actually just banishes things to the Outside. I still never use it on *parts* of people, though, since maiming people is wrong, and it's not clear whether that'd be a temporary or permanent problem.

Step 6: Choose your Favorite Scenes

Are you most often seen...

- ...working on or at the art shop/café you're putting together?
- ...painting or doing chalk paintings?
- ...crafting or selling masks?
- ...showing people around the archive of Professor Hideo Hayashi?
- ...cleaning?
- ...helping out?
- ...sharing a snack with some friends?
- ...swapping stories with people?
- ...hanging out in the world and experiencing stuff?
- ...getting worked up about your pet peeve/issue?
- ...having, or peeking in on, a troubled dream?
- ...being haunted by the person you used to be?
- ...being pleasantly/seductively haunted by the person you used to be?
- ...retreating to the "hidden room" of your memories?

Pick 2-3 favorites to help you figure out what you might be doing at any given time.

It's OK if the little icons don't make sense yet, and you don't have to memorize them—they're just coding the various parts of the game that "feel" a certain way. The first icon, for instance, marks the pastoral parts of the game that are all about a simple, honest life and connecting to people!

11 *Or maybe your family's, if you've been adopted into a shrine family?*

Step 7: Choose your Craft

You have the power to create minor wonders—magical things.

This isn't necessarily a big feature of your life. It's time-consuming and not very powerful and the effort-reward ratio is probably better for most of your other magic. But it *is* a thing that you can do, and it probably relates to something you're good at in the mundane realm.

Do you...

- ...work with glass?
- ...make traditional masks?
- ...paint?
- ...make clothing?
- ...act as a magical Archivist, finding and curating wonders rather than creating them?
- ...interact with people, strengthening their wishing hearts and teaching them what they're capable of?
- ...or something else?

You can also...

- ...choose several different Crafts, though it's better not to; *or*
- ...punt on the choice, with a plan to...
  - ...decide later?
  - ...develop this power after the start of play? *or*
  - ...ignore this side of your nature entirely?

Step 8: Review your Goals

Your life feels like it's always falling apart. Like everything is in a state of decay. This world! Being in this world is rough. It hurts.

No matter how hard you try, it all falls apart eventually. Things always get worse and worse, messier and messier, and the world gets crazier and stormier around you, and you start finding bits of glass and the dust of the Outside everywhere, and masks start appearing on the walls even though nobody hung them there and you can hear the voice of Melanie Malakh whispering in your mind, *Destroy. Destroy. Destroy:*

O hate the world!

But at least you have an escape—a single escape—when it gets to be too much. You can go up to your hidden room, high in Hideo's archives, near where the books become a labyrinth and then fade off into the senseless chaos beyond the world. You can relax and play there in the room of your treasured recollections and the bits of yourself—

But you can't do too much of that, or the world will slip away.

- **Quest 1:** You've always...
  - ...felt besieged by the world, worn down by your current peeves and their unfairness

- **Quest 2:** And lately you've felt like...
  - ...you can't keep *hiding* in your hidden room; you need to either embrace it as a good place, a good and normal part of your life, and stop feeling afraid that the world will slip away from you while you're in there, or you need to find some other source of strength and stop going there all the time.

- **Quest 3:** And you've *probably* decided to...
  - ...set up a little art shop, garden, and maybe café near the archive, *while*...
  - ...information about your dark past leaks out to the other PCs

Unless you want to replace that with some variation, like...

- ...restoring and organizing the archive itself?
- ...setting up a place of your own?
- ...earning money through odd jobs?
- *(Otaku Version)* ...setting up a local con?
- *(Romanticist Version)* ...restoring an old church?
- *(Romanticist Version)* ...reviving some forgotten tradition?
- ...or something else?

Regardless of the variation you choose, you probably still have your dark past leaking out to the other PCs over the course of this quest, because your secrets are the kind of secrets that are the most fun when they come out into the open early on but not *immediately.*

Step 9: Choose Your Connections

Connections are basically a measure of how well you know and *get* somebody. They're also a measure of how good you are at living somewhere or with someone.

You'll always have a handful of starting Connections:

- **The Wishing Boy 3.** You have a mysterious connection to the wishing boy.
- **Nightmares' Angel 1.** You just feel like he's a good person under the attitude.
- **The Archive 1.** You're familiar with Professor Hideo Hayashi's archive.
- **Fortitude 1.** You're a Fortitude girl.

1

You can discard these Connections later if you don't want them or they just don't seem to fit.

Talk to the players of the other characters, either now or after the couple of sessions. If someone agrees that you should be close to or comfortable with their PC, you can get a free level 1 Connection to their character too.

If you've been adopted into a shrine family, you can swap out your Connection to the Archive or to Fortitude in general for a Connection to that family. For instance, you could give up your Connection to the Archive for a Connection to the Sosunov Family, instead. Don't do this yet, though; read the appropriate section 10 first!

You can improve your character's Connections later as the reward from an appropriate quest.

(Optional) Step 10a: the Dream-Witch of the Vasili

Are you **Mayu or Reynard Vasili?** Then some of the details of your story might change.

Do you still have a hidden room that you retreat to?

- ...yes.
- ...no. I have a high place where no one goes. I sit and I feel the wind and it restores me.
  - ...I still get there through the archive, though.
  - ...the path there goes through Vasili-owned wildlands. The memories of the Strategist Malakh are scattered there, blowing in the wind.

Are you still connected to Professor Hideo Hayashi and his archive?

- ...yes.
- ...no. My Connection is not to the Archive but to the Vasili Family, and whatever I'm doing to make money is also for the Vasili family. This is because...
  - ...it was Herakleides Teófilo Vasili that worked with the strategist Malakh.
  - ...it was Nikhil Vasili, may he rest in peace.
  - ...the Vasili are the ones who took me in; Professor Hayashi is just a good memory from a bad time.

Are your friends from the archive actually members of the Vasili family instead?

- ...no. I have family, like Asuka and Gorou, and I have friends. Isn't that normal?
- ...no. I don't know anyone from the archive.
- ...yes, at least some of them:
  - Kirin Vasili, bound to the elemental processes of disease and health; oddly hypochondriac for someone who can sneeze out a cold in a single try.
  - Sakura Anastasia Vasili, whose elemental connection to cherry blossoms is pretty useless and who shares your conviction that the modern world is falling apart.
  - Daniel Vasili, bound to the constellations, who claims that they're living creatures herded by star-shepherds.
  - That practically feral girl living on the Vasili lands.

(Optional) Step 10b: the Dream-Witch of the Kichi

Are you **Morgan or Reynard Kichi?** Then some of the details of your story might change.

Are you still connected to Professor Hideo Hayashi and his archive?

- ...yes.
- ...yes, *but*—the work I'm doing is to support the Kichi family and their ways.
- ...it's not *his* archive. It's a Kichi family archive. He just does a lot of the on-site management, because the Kichi spend so much time up the hill by the pools.

(Optional) Step 10c: the Dream-Witch of the Sosunov

Are you **Miramie or Reynard Sosunov?** Then some of the details of your story might change.

You're still connected to Professor Hideo Hayashi and his archive, but is it *the* archive that's important to you and the story?

- ...yes.
- ...sort of? I still have strong connections to Professor Hayashi's "lower/worldly" archive, but my usual path to the hidden room and most of the important records are in the "upper/heavenly" archive at the Sosunov main family house.

(Optional) Step 10d: the Dream-Witch of the Titov

Are you **Miramie or Reynard Titov?** Then some of the details of your story might change.

Do you still have a hidden room that you retreat to?

- ...yes, in the depths underneath the Titov shrine.
- ...yes, in Hideo's archive.

Are you still connected to Professor Hideo Hayashi and his archive?

- ...yes. I am working for the Titov family, but I still care about Professor Hayashi.
- ...no. My Connection is not to the Archive but to the Titov Family, and whatever I'm doing to make money is also for the Titov family. This is because...
  - ...no one else will have me.
  - ...it was Iskandar Titov that worked with the strategist Malakh.
  - ...it was Nirmala Titov that worked with the strategist Malakh.
  - ...I am held beneath the shrine—well, Melanie Malakh is. I must stay.
  - ...I wounded many, but the Titovs have taken me in. I should not bother Professor Hayashi further.

Are your friends from the archive actually members of the Titov family?

- ...no. I don't know that I can even call them friends.
- ...no. I don't associate with anyone from the archive.
- ...yes, at least some of them:
  - Kiri Titov, hiding in her books, cruel because she understands weakness so very well.
  - Sakura Anastasia Titov, who left and toured the world for three years before they dragged her back.
  - Danny Titov, who is unnaturally fascinated with the shards of Melanie Malakh.

Step 11: Review Your Powers and Weaknesses

You have two supernatural weaknesses:

- The wishing power of your heart (your "Miracle Points") seeps away any time you're hurt and does not replenish itself at the normal rate.
- You're haunted by Melanie Malakh and the power of the Outside. When you're sick, your work, your simple honest work, attracts the dust of the Outside and the remnants of your past. If your **Sickness** Issue gets high, this becomes actively supernatural—things like waking up to see a mask leering down at you from the ceiling, or everyone turning to look at you and whisper "Kill them. Kill them." as you walk through a fish market. (And deny it, explaining that they were trying to sell "kilthim cod," or whatever, if you confront them on it.) Stuff like that.

That's the price you pay for being the remnant of Melanie Malakh. On the other hand:

- **Here's the big win:** you can destroy things, including intangibles and qualities, just by focusing on them and declaring them unworthy of existence. It's not the most cheerful power but its practical breadth is staggering.

Also...

- You're very good at dreaming (except possibly at the not-having-nightmares part):
  - You're good at handling surreal, dream-like environments.
  - You understand how to get into someone else's dreams.
  - You can send your dreaming and sometimes even your waking spirit out to visit people and things you care a lot about.
- You have some sort of magical Skill...
  - ...by default, something to help you fit in among humans, but it could be something else.
- You have a hidden room that can replenish the wishing power of your heart. You'll emerge from it with new treasures and afterwards the world around you will be orderly and exceptionally sane for a little while.
- You have one alternate form...
  - ...in dreams, you wear a mask and a grey and white kimono. If you stretch out you have an amorphous, ghostly lower body. Either way you trail off into shadow and you don't have proper feet. Sometimes you fade into this shape *in the real world* when traumatized, shortly before rushing off to the hidden room.

Step 12: Props

Before play, you'll want to...

- Copy, download and print, or open your book to your character sheet.
- Make sure the group has a bowl of tokens to serve as XP.

Optionally:

- Consider obtaining a cheap party mask for verisimilitude on those occasions when your character is masked.

Optionally:

- Gather 5+ tokens to serve as MP, different from the XP tokens.
- Gather 11 tokens to serve as Will, different from the XP/MP tokens.
- Copy or download and print quest cards for your quests.
- Copy or download and print your "Twitch. Twitch." sign.
- Copy or download and print your "Innocent/Suspicious" sign.
- Look around the table to identify the other PCs. Then warm up for play by practicing (for those that are present)...
  - ...head-desking at the goofiness of **the Wishing Boy.**
  - ...giving thumbs-ups to **the Best Friend.**
  - ...gaping speechlessly at **Nightmares' Angel.**
  - ...groaning or rolling your eyes at **the Troublemaker.**
  - ...wincing or saying *aww!* at **the Prodigy.**
  - ...bowing gratefully to **the Child of the Sun.**
  - ...shivering at the weirdness of **the Angel of Fortitude.**
  - ...and whatever turns out to be appropriate for any other PCs.

YOUR NAME

NATURE

FAVORITE SCENES

STRESSOR

WHAT DOES YOUR WORLD-BREAKER'S HAND DO?

CHANGED QUESTS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

CONNECTIONS

YOUR POWERS AND WEAKNESSES

YOUR GOALS

ARC TRAITS

FAVORITE SCENES

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

DIVINE

TOUGH

NORMAL

CURRENT MP

WILL

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Fortitude PCs

Step 1: Choose Your Archetype

Oh, hello! Welcome to the world of the **Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.**

You don't look like one of the usual protagonists, do you?

Well, that's OK! Come and be someone special, then. Someone *new*. Someone who wasn't *supposed* to be part of this story, until a shard of dream-glass, magic-glass, dragon-glass got stuck into your body, brain, mind, heart, or soul—

If you have access to **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake,** you can be...

- **Tempted.** You sit at the edge of the world sometimes and you listen to the Outside's voice.
- **Dreaming of the Sun.** You're struggling with the stuff that holds you back and dreaming of Jade Irinka—lost, murdered angel of the Houses of the Sun.
- **A Dying Scientist or Magician.** Your death is coming and you *won't accept it!*
- **Someone Fascinated with Death.** Do you have Death's portrait on your wall?
- **Someone at Your Limit.** You're old, tired, sick, or maybe just plain *mortal*—this is as good as you get. This is as far as you can go. You're done.
- **A Troubled Kid Desperately Fighting to Save Others.** You don't even realize that after a brief prologue *you're* the one who's going to die.
- **Someone Who Can Feel Their Death Coming.** *or*
- **Someone Messed Up.** You're living a bleak and broken life. You might not even know why.

Each of these is going to point you towards one or two appropriate Advancement Arcs. Each has an in-built gateway and story Arc building to miraculous powers.

But first, along the way, you're going to die.

That's your ticket, as a miscellaneous Fortitude PC, to becoming involved in great events and earning miraculous powers comparable to your peers. You're going to die.

Then—

You're going to come back.

Step 2: Choose Your Character Type

Now it's time to pick one of the character options from **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake!**

Who are you?

You can choose...

- **The Shop Fox,** maybe named Kaho or Hideki Kanda:
  - ...to be glamorous and magical.
  - ...to be earnest, innocent, and teasable.
  - ...to be slippery, subtle, and clever.
- **The Vampire**, maybe named Kolya (Nikolai) Mikhaylov or Sessily Mikhaylova:
  - ...to be a brooding avatar of teenaged romantic angst.
  - ...to be terrifyingly strong and vital.
  - ...to have comical incidents involving crosses and the sun**.**
- **The Immigrant from Earth,** maybe named Harmonica James, Anastasia Furlough, John Sakuragi Custer, or Dynamite Murai:
  - ...to be an all-out badass action hero with a job to do in Town.
  - ...to be the outsider who doesn't know what's going on.
  - ...to be a refugee from the normal world.
  - ...to play yourself, or someone like yourself.
- **The Other One (aka "the Citizen of Fortitude"),** maybe named Polly Niktina or Kenji Shibai:
  - ...to be an ordinary Fortitude girl or boy.
  - ...to be a completely unexpected hero(ine).
  - ...to have some completely weird, unique, and unexpected talent or skill.
  - ...to be a magician without being tied to the shrine families.
  - ...to epitomize the slice-of-life elements of the game.
- **The Shrine Maiden** (or **the Priest**), maybe named Yui Sosunov or Stephen Yatskaya:
  - ...to have an important role in the culture and spiritual life of Fortitude.
  - ...to be a shrine maiden or priest.
  - ...to be magical and powerful in a kind of normal, everyday fashion.
  - ...if you've read the setting material and really like a shrine family!

Step 3: Some Basics

Just like in **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake,** you'll choose a basic quest and an XP emotion. Technically I think I really should copy all of that here, but honestly, since you must have *just* finished looking at character creation in that book, I'm not going to bother.

Go to **Character Dynamics** in that book.

Choose a basic quest. Choose an XP emotion!

Step 4: Review Your Second and Third Quest

You've chosen your first quest—your "basic" quest. You're also going to have two other quests, both mostly shared among all the Fortitude PC variants.

One of them is **A Far and Sunless Land.**

That's the quest where you die. You get ripped untimely away from everyone! It's so sad! You don't actually *have* to take it—you can find a different story to start working on and get miraculous powers for no particular reason—but it's the typical path.

The other quest is **Meet the Other PCs.** It's meant to give you some general direction in the first few sessions of the game. Normally, it's fixed: your job is to tangle yourself in the affairs of the other PCs. It's a quest that says: right now, before you die (and even after you die), *something* in your life is kind of driving you to get involved with them.

If you happen to know that there's something that at least a couple of other PCs are interested in, you can replace this with a variation that focuses on your involvement with *that*. For instance, if **the Prodigy** is investigating the legend of **the Angel of Fortitude,** and they're both PCs, then you could work on becoming the Angel's sidekick or joining the investigation. Or if the other players' interests are focused pretty tightly on the Yatskaya household or on the archive of Professor Hideo Hayashi, then you could be working on something to do with that!

Recommended XP Emotions

The four standard bonus XP emotions that I'm not using for the main 8 characters for this campaign—emotions that you'd be trying to evoke in the other players through your character's play—are:

- **Fist-Shaking XP:**
  - ...if you want to be totally convinced you're the center of the universe.
  - ...if you like being a lovable jerk.
  - ...if you have an impulse control problem.
  - ...if your name is a good one to shout while shaking one's fist.
- **"Oh no! (Name) is in Trouble!" XP:**
  - ...if you plan to get in way over your head all the time.
  - ...if you're irrationally convinced of:
    - ...your own personal immortality.
    - ...everyone else's good intentions.
    - ...the fundamental justice of the universe.
  - ...if you're cute, underaged and/or undersized.
- **Fist-Pump/Salute XP:**
  - ...if you have a ton of catchphrases.
  - ...if you're bombastic, larger-than-life, and dramatic.
  - ...if you have a genre.
  - ...if you don't really act like (or think) the world around you is real.
- **Putting my Faith in You (with this XP token) XP:**
  - ...if you're a big brother/big sister archetype.
  - ...if you're sincere and diligent.
  - ...if you're earnest and heroic.
  - ...if you're a lot skilled and just a little bit lucky.

So my recommendation is that you choose one of those. You could also try a variant on the Prodigy's *Aww!* XP, where people say "aww" not because of your terrible burdens but because of your cute/shy reactions to trouble or romance... or invent your own!

What if Everyone Has This Quest?

So I was thinking about what happens if most of your group plays characters like yours—characters not directly involved in the main plot—and thus almost everybody has the quest, "Meet the Other PCs."

Now, the truth is, in most ways it's a *good* thing if you have a bunch of people getting XP from strengthening the bonds between the PCs. But it may also feel a little funny, like it's replacing the whole game premise and the idea of organic connections with "and we're all desperate to meet and connect with one another!"

So...

If there are already two other people with "Meet the Other PCs" or the Troublemaker quest "The World is Changing," or some variant thereof—

You can and probably should pick some other quest to start you out. I'd suggest one of these quests from **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake:**

- **Generic Project (Fortitude Style)**
- **Trying to Fix some Social Problem (Fortitude Style)**
- **Dependable Person (Fortitude Style)**
- **Exile**
- **Sacred Child**
- **Friend to the Birds**
- **Friend of the Beaches**
- **Shrine Duties**
- **Good Catch**
- **Ship's Friend**
- **Little Ship** *or*
- one of the Connection quests, based on your starting Connection to someone;

So...

What quest did you wind up with here?

- ...the standard "Meet the other PCs" quest?
- ...something else?

Step 5: Pick a Virtue

Your character has a unique *virtue*, which will manifest itself as a Bond.

It's something like:

- "...honesty."
- "...good-heartedness."
- "...organized."
- "...humility."
- "...courage."
- "...thrift."
- "...creativity."
- ...or whatever!

This is in good part what's going to save you from death—the *thing* that's going to sustain you long enough to make it back.

Figure out in advance how to show this when it isn't necessary and how to practice this when you're alone. (For instance, a "courageous" person might dress according to their own sense of style to show courage even when there's no danger. A "good-hearted" person can practice that virtue when alone by thinking good wishes towards others or thinking about how to better support them.)

What's your special virtue?

Besides the obvious, how will you demonstrate it in play?

Step 6: Pick a Shard Power

Once upon a time, a witch and a glass-maker made a dragon out of glass and taught it to hate the world. It raged and it would have destroyed everything; only, it shattered, instead.

— Campaign Premise

At some point in your life—I don't know when—a shard of the glass dragon lodged in you. It may very well have happened long after the glass dragon broke. Most of the PCs are younger than the story of the glass dragon, after all. In a lot of cases it's going to be kind of mysterious how it actually happened.

But in you—in your kidneys, your brain, your liver, your dreams, your mind, your ego, your id, your superego, your soul, your heart, your right arm, your hand, your eye, your throat, your chakras, your destiny, *somewhere in you*—

There is a shard of the glass dragon.

And recently it's started to empower you. Vaguely! Unreliably! (Given the fact that you're going to die soon) Dangerously! But, well, empower you it *has.*

It's something that should make sense but leave lots of questions about specifics unanswered, like:

- "Nothing can catch me."
- "I punish the unworthy."
- "I never let go of what is mine."
- "No lock can hold me out."
- "You have always known me."
- "Animals are my friends."
- "I speak the language of the storms."

This isn't a replacement for your normal archetype abilities. If you're a vampire or shop fox or whatever, you still have that power. This? This is something else.

This is something *new*.

What is it?

Step 7: Choose your Favorite Scenes

Are you most often seen...

- ...hanging out in the world and experiencing stuff?
- ...wandering Fortitude with a snack?
- ...playing games?
- ...doing chores?
- ...fishing?
- ...helping out?
- ...talking with friends about stuff that's going on?
- ...standing up for what you believe in?
- ...getting in way over your head, but refusing to back down?
- ...getting into scary trouble?
- ...being lost and overwhelmed?
- ...expressing your faith in someone?
- ...listening, wide-eyed, to traditional stories?
- ...encountering omens of your forthcoming death?
- ...admiring the beauty of the sun and the lake?

Pick 2-3 favorites to help you figure out what you might be doing at any given time.

It's OK if the little icons don't make sense yet, and you certainly don't have to memorize them—they're just coding the various parts of the game that "feel" a certain way. The first icon, for instance, represents scenes where you explore, hang out in, or just experience the world!

Step 8: Review Your Powers and Goals

All told, you have the following specific abilities:

- ...any particularly special Skills. What were they again?
- ...your character-type Bond.
- ...your character-type Affliction.
- ...your virtue.
- ...your shard power.

Take a moment to think about how all that works together.

You have five XP-earning methods to keep in mind—

- At more or less any time,[12] you can earn XP...
  - ...from your bonus XP emotion.
  - ...from the bonus XP condition for your first quest, which you've designed.
  - ...from the bonus XP condition for your second quest (usually, proposing a theory about the other PCs, or how you relate to them).
- In each IC week...
  - ...you can earn a couple of XP a week through appropriate scenes.
  - ...you can earn 1 XP/week for your third quest from an appropriate scene.

Take a moment to think about how all *that* works together.

Step 9: Props

Before play, you'll want to:

- Copy, download and print, or open your book to your character sheet.
- Make sure the group has a bowl of tokens to serve as XP.

Optionally:

- Gather 3+ tokens to serve as MP, different from the XP tokens.
- Gather 8 tokens to serve as Will, different from the XP/MP tokens. If you chose "A Fading Flower," above—that is, if you're dying of being old and at the end of your life—you're going to want 11 soon.
- Copy or download and print quest cards for your quests.
- Copy or download and print any signs that you'll need.
- Look around the table to identify the other PCs. Then warm up for play by practicing (for all that are present)...
  - ...doing whatever you need to do to earn your own bonus XP emotion.
  - ...head-desking at the goofiness of **the Wishing Boy.**
  - ...giving thumbs-ups to **the Best Friend.**
  - ...pointing and gaping speechlessly at **Nightmares' Angel.**
  - ...groaning or rolling your eyes at **the Troublemaker.**
  - ...wincing or saying *aww!* at **the Prodigy.**
  - ...bowing gratefully, hand over fist, to **the Child of the Sun.**
  - ...shivering at the weirdness of **the Angel of Fortitude.**
  - ...sighing and offering an XP token to comfort **the Dream-Witch.**
  - ...and whatever turns out to be appropriate for any other unique PCs like yourself.

12 up to ~1 quest XP and ~1 emotion XP per 15 minutes of play

YOUR NAME

ARCHETYPE AND CHARACTER TYPE

FAVORITE SCENES

QUESTS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

CONNECTIONS

YOUR BONDS

YOUR AFFLICTIONS

ARC TRAITS

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

DIVINE

TOUGH

NORMAL

CURRENT MP

WILL

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Playbooks

Let's switch gears, now. Keep the character sheet, if you filled it out, but you can set the lifepath aside:

Your playbook is meant as your character's core reference in play.

It's the owner's manual to your character. It's your guide to their operation. Inside it, you'll find...

- ...a slightly more in-depth character description.
- ...a detailed description of your powers and abilities.
- ...cards and descriptions for your starting quests.
- ...suggested actions to take when you don't have any better ideas.
- ...a timeline.

Your quests include an "Arc" quest that restates or reiterates one of the quests from the main storyline section on pg. 449—

Once you finish it, you'll move on to the next quest in that Arc. Once you finish the Arc (which should take you a while), your first story will end and your powerset will grow beyond the starting playbook... but you'll find everything you need to understand your expanded powers in **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG,** and there's three more stories focused on your character on pg. 451–545.

If you're the HG, you don't have a playbook; instead, it pays to skim them all and get a superficial knowledge of each.

The Wishing Boy (or Girl)

Fact Sheet

Summary

You are **Chuubo, the Wishing Boy.** You are a simple, ordinary boy. Your Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine grants one wish every week.

Primary Quests

- Make precious memories with your friends.
- Learn the ways of Fortitude.
- Deal with the power and the person haunting your dreams.

Bonus XP When...

Players slap their forehead (more in amusement than irritation) as a result of...

- ...the unintended consequences of your powers.
- ...your character's haplessness.

Powers

Your daydreams and your peaceful nature bleed out into the world around you. Trouble washes off your back.

You control the Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.

Common Variations

Shake it up! For an atypical Wishing Boy experience, pick 0-3 of the following:

- You are **Shokyou**, **the Wishing Girl,** a simple, ordinary girl.
- You are not completely ordinary—you have *glasses.*
- You are not completely ordinary—you are secretly a river dragon.
- You are not completely ordinary—you are secretly a glass dragon brought to life.

Character Description

As Chuubo, you'll be playing a pretty ordinary guy.

You're kind of goofy and hapless. You try to do right by people. You have a good smile. But you aren't anything special.

You don't *want* to be anything special.

The world isn't about grand dreams and heroic adventures. They're out there but they're not what matters. What matters is an ordinary life, right? Friendship, and doing goofy things with your friends. Love. Experiences. Precious memories. Sailing out on the water and dreaming of crazy things.

Laughter.

So when you built a wishing machine—when you went down to the vacant house at the end of your cul-de-sac and snuck in and closed the door and unrolled your plans and got out your saw and hammer and nails and wood and built your Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine that grants wishes—it didn't change *that* much about your life.

You just, you know. Get an ice cream now and then. Wish for a friend or two. One time you stained your school uniform—you like to wear your school uniform, even the tie, even when you don't have to—and you used wish power to get that *right* out.

In **"The Glass-Maker's Dragon"** you also have a shard of strange power stuck, like a thorn or a bit of glass, into your dreams.

Home and Family

As Chuubo, you live over the hills in the modern part of Town—in **Horizon,** or **School Region,** built around Principal Entropy's School.

Now, Horizon has a rep as some sort of gothic, brooding ruin with lots of walking dead and monsters and such... but you'll cheerfully inform people that that's an exaggeration. It's not *always* foggy, and the vampires and ogres are actually pretty nice when you get to know them, and the mortality rate is definitely less per capita than in almost *all* of those towns you see in cop shows or zombie movies or whatever. You have *lots* of good times in Horizon, in fact, exploring creepy graveyards or sitting out on your sidewalk and petting the neighborhood cat or playing jacks with ghosts or talking about nothing important with your best friend. Or whatever!

You have parents and a younger brother or sister—maybe. They're never around when anyone else is.

This could be a completely innocent coincidence, particularly since this campaign is set in Fortitude so you're not going to be home all that often anyhow. Or you could be covering up some completely mundane secret like a divorce or time warp or something... or there could be something sinister going on.

Your friends have never met them, and sometimes people'll tease you, saying, "Chuubo, I wonder if your family even *exists!*"[13]

Hobbies and Diversions

Your favorite (book and) comic shop is *Eclectic*, run by Yulia Rozhkova. There are chairs by the entrance where you can sit and read in the sunlight and she doesn't even make too big a fuss about your doing that if you don't have cash on you that week!

Your favorite pier to sit and dangle your feet off is probably the one at *Kokoryov Harbor.* It's so noisy! But something in the place just gives you peace.

You're resisting the siren song of Fighting Fantasy Wizard Cards. You know it would just suck up all your cash.

Hints

> *"Once upon a time, a witch and a glass-maker made a dragon out of glass and taught it to hate the world. It raged and it would have destroyed everything; only, it shattered, instead."*
>
> — Campaign Premise

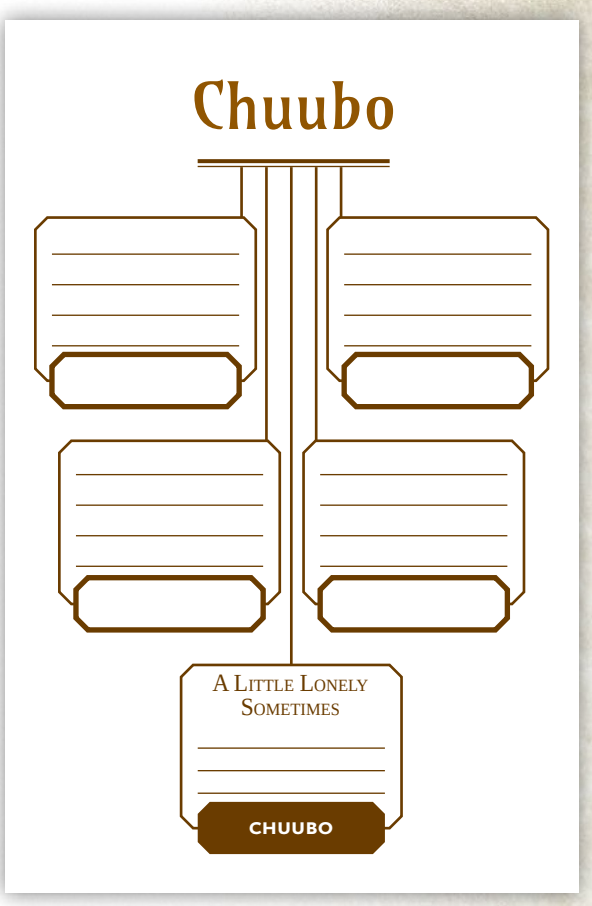
I think a key piece of that glass is stuck in your head or in your dreams.

I think **the Dream-Witch** is haunting you. I think she's a real person, and one of the residents of Hideo Hayashi's halfway house in Fortitude—probably Miramie Mesmer, although maybe it's one of the others, instead.

I think you're going to go to Fortitude, and study Fortitude magic or glassmaking, and meet her.

I don't think she's going to be your enemy. I think you're going to wind up trying to redeem her, or help her, or work together against something else, instead.

But... I could be wrong. The HG could take things in a different direction. *You* could take things in a different direction. Or the story could grab its own reins, just like the glass dragon itself, quite possibly, did.



The "Wishing Map"

Your power of wishes is based on your **Wishing Map**, which is in turn built on your relationship to the other PCs. You'll start, as shown above, with the raw power of being a peaceful kid who enjoys life and is a little lonely sometimes.

For anything more, talk to each of the other players either before or after the first session. Get a single phrase from each of them to summarize what they think of Chuubo or what their relationship with him is.

This is the basis for your Wishing Map.

Every wish you make flows from something on your Map. For instance, you have "enjoys life" written up there near the top. A nice, sunny day would help you do that, so you could go up to the Wish-Granting Engine and wish for a nice, sunny day. Bringing Picasso back from the grave—that would be harder for you, because by the time you've come up with a justification like "I'm a little lonely, so I wish Picasso back from the grave" you're on very thin ice with the wishing power of the heart that allows the Engine to work at all.

13 But they must, mustn't they? I mean, somebody had to buy the little pizza bagels that are in the freezer, right?

That said, if nobody but undead Picasso will do, you *do* have two things in your favor:

- An extremely tenuous wish will probably still *work*—it's just that it's more likely to go horribly wrong instead of just entertainingly wrong.
- You have the power to add phrases to the Wishing Map in play.

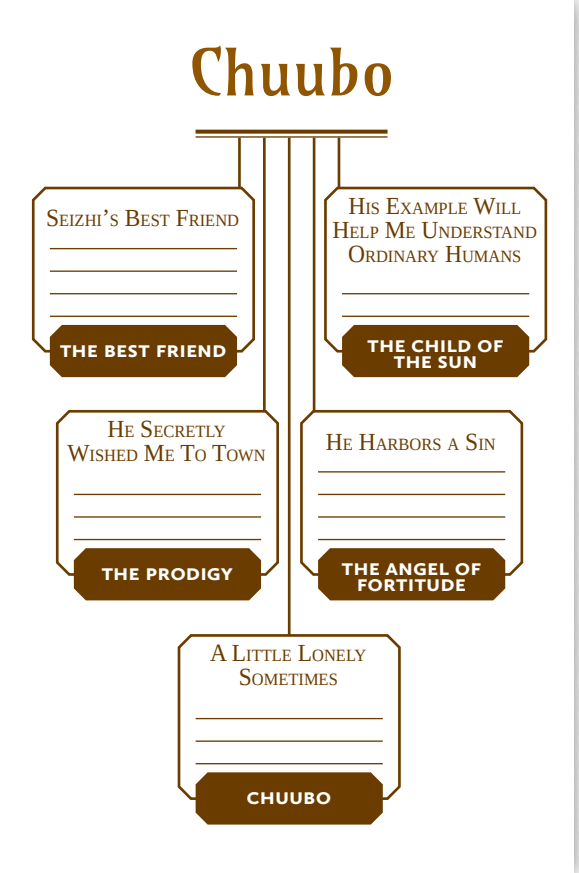


Figure 1- Example Wishing Map
(You'll use this to make wishes that come true!)

Once you've gotten one phrase from each other PC, additional phrases usually come from the "Precious Memories" quest on pg. 83. Specifically, "Precious Memories" and quests like it can earn you something called a **Recharge Token;** this, you can later spend either to replenish your reservoirs of cope and magic or to add a new phrase to your Wishing Map.

Suggested Phrases

Here are some possible descriptions of Chuubo in **"The Glass-Maker's Dragon."** Note that these are just my guesses! The other PCs, and even the NPCs, could have very different ideas about who Chuubo is and what you are about.

- **The Best Friend** thinks Chuubo:
  - ...is Seizhi's best friend.
  - ...needs someone to watch over him.
  - ...is kind of goofy.
  - ...is fun to talk to.
- **Nightmares' Angel** thinks Chuubo:
  - ...is frustratingly simple-minded.
  - ...does not grasp the seriousness of this situation.
  - ...is secretly everything Leonardo wishes he could be.
- **The Troublemaker** thinks Chuubo:
  - ...has a grand destiny.
  - ...has a good smile.
  - ...is fun to play tricks on.
- **The Prodigy** thinks Chuubo:
  - ...is a pretty ordinary kid.
  - ...is a good guide to Town.
  - ...is deeply suspicious.
- **The Child of the Sun** thinks Chuubo:
  - ...is very down-to-earth.
  - ...needs help with this whole dream-witch thing.
  - ...reminds her of herself.
- **The Angel of Fortitude** thinks Chuubo:
  - ...should be planted and turned into a tree of worlds one day.
  - ...is making pretty improbable claims with this whole "Wish-Granting Engine" thing.
  - ...is an admirable child.
- **The Dream-Witch** thinks Chuubo:
  - ...holds the key to her lost memories.
  - ...is part of the glass dragon.
  - ...is honest, good, and kind.

101 Example Wishes

1. "I wish we didn't have to worry about schoolwork for a while."
2. "I wish this headache would go away."
3. "I wish I had all the newest manga."
4. "I wish I could laser away rust with eye lasers."
5. "I wish everybody could just be friends."
6. "I wish my bicycle could talk."
7. "I wish I knew why this masked girl was haunting me."
8. "I wish everybody would get their flu shots this season."
9. "I wish this rain would go away."
10. "I wish I had a better tree house."
11. "I wish I could find some pirate treasure."
12. "I wish I could meet the phoenix."
13. "I wish I were better-looking."
14. "I wish I were better at science."
15. "I wish *I* were an awesome vampire."
16. "I wish I had a magic washcloth that could clean anything."
17. "I wish I had a magic feather that could give my best friend confidence."
18. "I wish I ran a newspaper."
19. "I wish I were sick enough to skip school this week."
20. "I wish that someone would be my heroic mentor to show me how turning into a giant snake could be useful after all."
21. "I wish that the Star Wars prequel trilogy was good."
22. "I wish I could talk to cats like Rinley."
23. "I wish I could play laser tag with my friends."
24. "I wish eel were in season."
25. "I wish that nobody had to die."
26. "I wish the old sun would come back for a day."
27. "I wish for a soapbox derby!"
28. "I wish people were more sincere."
29. "I wish my friends would find what they're looking for."
30. "I wish the Principal's evil world would become the good world."
31. "I wish there were a giant wall around Town so that the Outside couldn't get in."
32. "I wish I could meet an elf."
33. "I wish I had a better gaming console."
34. "I wish I had the best shoes ever."
35. "I wish people would be better about recycling."
36. "I wish that that fire had never started!"
37. "I wish teriyaki grew on trees."
38. "I wish I both had, *and could eat*, an ice cream."
39. "I wish an ice cream would appear, and then events would proceed naturally."
40. "I wish an ice cream would appear in a context such as to allow me to eat it, and then events would proceed naturally."
41. "I wish that I were better at making wishes involving ice cream."
42. "I wish *I* were a twin."
43. "I wish that my gardening project would go better."
44. "I wish my friends and I would be superheroes with an awesome superhero base."
45. "I wish I had a band."
46. "I wish someone interesting would become my pen pal."
47. "I wish Arkady Sosunov were more confident."
48. "I wish I could help the Titovs somehow."
49. "I wish I could turn into a seagull and soar peacefully in the skies."
50. "I wish seagulls were cooler."
51. "I wish I had a telescope that could see all the way to Eris."
52. "I wish that I'd have a really good excuse to wish for something cool next week."
53. "I wish it were Christmas already."
54. "I wish Narnia were real."
55. "I wish I had a famous blog."
56. "I wish I had a space station."
57. "I wish every time people said nice things about me, they'd get a cookie."
58. "I wish our school trip would be to somewhere more interesting than the recycling center under the campus."
59. "I wish I knew how to apologize to Leonardo about this."
60. "I wish pedal-powered ornithopters didn't need quite so much athletic ability to handle."
61. "I wish the laundry were already done."
62. "I wish the laundry would *always* be already done."
63. "I wish I could snap my fingers and say, 'cold drink!' and bam, I'd have a cold drink."
64. "I wish that mean dogs that were going to bite people would always drink pillow-teeth tea first."

65. "I wish that the public transportation between Horizon and Fortitude kept more convenient hours."
66. "I wish that Town had a better DVD store."
67. "I wish people would pay more attention to how cool my tie looks."
68. "I wish somebody would invent a cheap jetpack."
69. "I wish I had a supercomputer that could, like, beat everybody at chess and... solve crimes and riddles and stuff."
70. "I wish the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy would have a crab stuck on his head."
71. "I wish life were like on Swiss Family Robinson."
72. "I wish I had a bunch of money."
73. "I wish every day could be Sunday."
74. "I wish I could burp really complicated music."
75. "I wish the Golden Phoenix Bun Shop delivered."
76. "I wish I could just do this past week over."
77. "I wish we could go back in time and see the creation of the glass dragon."
78. "I wish everyone who wanted to have one had a nose."
79. "I wish I had a secret door in my house that led right to the Yatskaya Shrine."
80. "I wish I had an evil laugh that was even better than Leonardo's."
81. "I wish I had an awesome accent."
82. "I wish my house would never run out of essentials."
83. "I wish I had a secretary who would smoothly intercept anyone trying to complain about my wishes."
84. "I wish Laodemus would show me that amazing flying elbow drop move of his."
85. "I wish I knew the languages of birds and beasts."
86. "I wish I had cool ninja servitors."
87. "I wish I could have an amazing wuxia fight on the roofs of Fortitude this weekend using baked goods as weapons."
88. "I wish for the sky to be beautiful and the evening perfect when my best friend goes on that date."
89. "I wish I had a herald to announce things for me."
90. "I wish I were flossing enough."
91. "I wish things would get better."
92. "I wish I could see a meteor shower this week."
93. "I wish the next book in this series would go just ahead and come out now."
94. "I wish the author of this series weren't dead."
95. "I wish I knew how to fix radios and stuff."
96. "I wish that I would be clearer-headed."
97. "I wish this summer would cool off a bit."
98. "I wish the winter queen would be our friend."
99. "I wish that I could heal sick people."
100. "I wish for everybody to return home safely."
101. **"I wish I hadn't wished that."**

Quests

You start the game with three *quests*, and have the power to swap them out or pick up more—you can pursue up to four quests at any given time. I've chosen three quests to...

- ...serve as your basic, default character motivation in play ("Precious Memories").
- ...give you extra direction in the first few sessions ("Learn the Ways of Fortitude").
- ...tie you into the campaign plot ("Haunted").

Bonus XP

Once per fun scene, though at most once per fifteen minutes of play, you can earn bonus XP for either of the first two quests just by bringing them up—e.g.,

- ...saying "Scrapbook!" to recognize the scene as a precious memory worth scrapbooking.
- ...declaring, in a relevant or amusing fashion, "I'm learning the ways of Fortitude!"

You can earn a bonus XP for the third quest, **Haunted**, once per in-game week by picking a scene from the quest's list of scene options to play out.

Other Quests

If you're interested in another quest or two, and you have access to **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake,** I'd recommend looking at the quests for...

- ...trying to become a **Dependable Person**.
- ...learning to bring in a **Good Catch** of fish.
- ...being recognized as a **Sacred Child**.
- ...working on a **Generic Project**.
- ...**Joining the Kichi.**
- ...**Joining the Sosunov.**
- ...**Joining the Yatskaya.**

Precious Memories

15 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest

You want to make precious memories with your friends.

This quest is all about goofy and memorable scenes that don't go anywhere, or at least don't *necessarily* go anywhere. If you occasionally make intense and serious scenes into precious memories, that's OK, but focus on the fun.

To earn a bonus XP for this quest, all you have to do is emote that this scene with a friend *is* a precious memory. You can say this any way you like but a good catchphrase for this quest is "Scrapbook!" to indicate that this situation is definitely one for the scrapbook.

Rewards

Completing this quest earns you a Recharge Token—a *particularly* precious memory. At some point in the future, you'll be able to draw on that memory either to refresh your supply of Will and MP to full mid-week or to add a new phrase to your Wishing Map.

Bonus XP

Life—it's all about making precious memories with your friends.

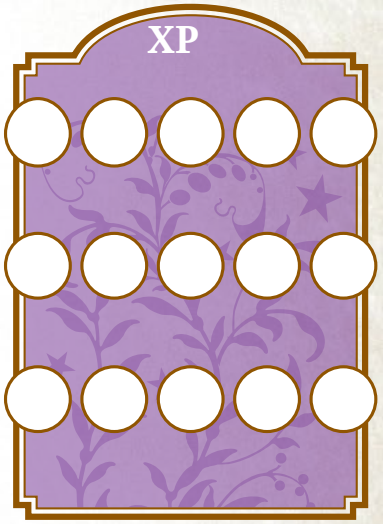
Like this one!

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by contextualizing what you've been doing in the current scene as a precious memory.

You can indicate this any way you like but a good catchphrase for this quest is "Scrapbook!," as to indicate that this situation is definitely one for the scrapbook.

Is that what you say?

Or do you usually say something else?



Learning the Ways of Fortitude

25 XP Quest

1:

2:

2

You've been spending a lot of time in Fortitude—mostly on weekends, of course.

Are you learning a trade?

Are you seeking the help of the shrine families? Are you visiting someone?

Or do you just like sitting on the docks and watching the boats go in and out and enjoying the sunshine and fresh air?

What You'll Do

So while you're on this quest you should be trying to...

- ...get praise for fitting in or for your local-area competence.
- ...learn or practice some unique local custom.
- ...listen to the stories of Fortitude.
- ...apply the morals and ideals of a recently-told or remembered story of Fortitude in sweet or amusing ways.

However, I'm going to let you fudge this if you like.

To declare a scene a good fit for this quest, and to earn a bonus XP, all you actually *have* to do is *declare* that it's relevant. Just... decide it, decide that you're learning the ways of Fortitude, and that this has something to do with what's going on.

Usually you'll do this by declaring or emoting "I learned this in Fortitude" or "I'm learning the ways of Fortitude!" or whatever.

Bam! Bonus XP towards the quest.

Variations

While most versions of **the Wishing Boy** should have *something* they're learning and absorbing lessons from and about, it doesn't actually have to be "Fortitude Citizenship 101"—you could be focused on passing your classes over in Horizon, or on learning glass-making, or on studying Yatskaya Magic. You could even be working on something outré like a quest to "Build your Own Boat" or "Study the Construction of Mecha."

To proceed through such a quest, focus on...

- ...engaging in the relevant studies.
- ...learning meaningful or important things from the relevant studies.
- ...getting in trouble because of those studies.
- ...getting praise for those studies.
- ...using stuff you learned or did as part of those studies in sweet or amusing ways.

The bonus XP condition for such a variation is the same as for the default version—declare that the quest is relevant, and bam, bonus XP. Though, do try to make sure that that declaration is either funny or true!

Rewards

Completing this quest usually earns you a new "Perk" like:

- **Power Up Perk:** Increase a relevant Skill (Sailing, Domestic Skills, Good Smile) by +1.
- **Connection Perk:** Gain a level 1-2 Connection to Fortitude.
- **Accessory Perk:** You get a bicycle.

Or the non-Perk benefit:

- **Birthday:** You get a scene where your family-analog in Fortitude[14] recognizes you as an adult (possibly your 15th or 16th birthday).

14 If you spend enough time in Fortitude, you acquire a family there. I don't mean blood relatives, I just mean... you know. People. People who take you in and treat you like family, even though you're technically probably not.

Learning the Ways of Fortitude

Bonus XP

You're painfully foreign here. You thought of yourself as this laid-back, unruffled, unworried type, but in a lot of ways you were still a Horizon kid. There was always this underlying sense in your life like you were in danger of *missing out*. Like you needed a good game guide to your life or you might do things *wrong* or *out of order.*

Like you were always being judged.

Like being laid-back was about *fighting* to be laid-back, you know?

It wasn't easy. It wasn't free.

Bit by bit you're learning to let go of that. Bit by bit you're learning that work can be healing, that the moments of your life can be stretched to hours, that it's just as good to watch the birds and enjoy the wind as to play a new computer game or read a manga. Bit by bit you're becoming part of the world.

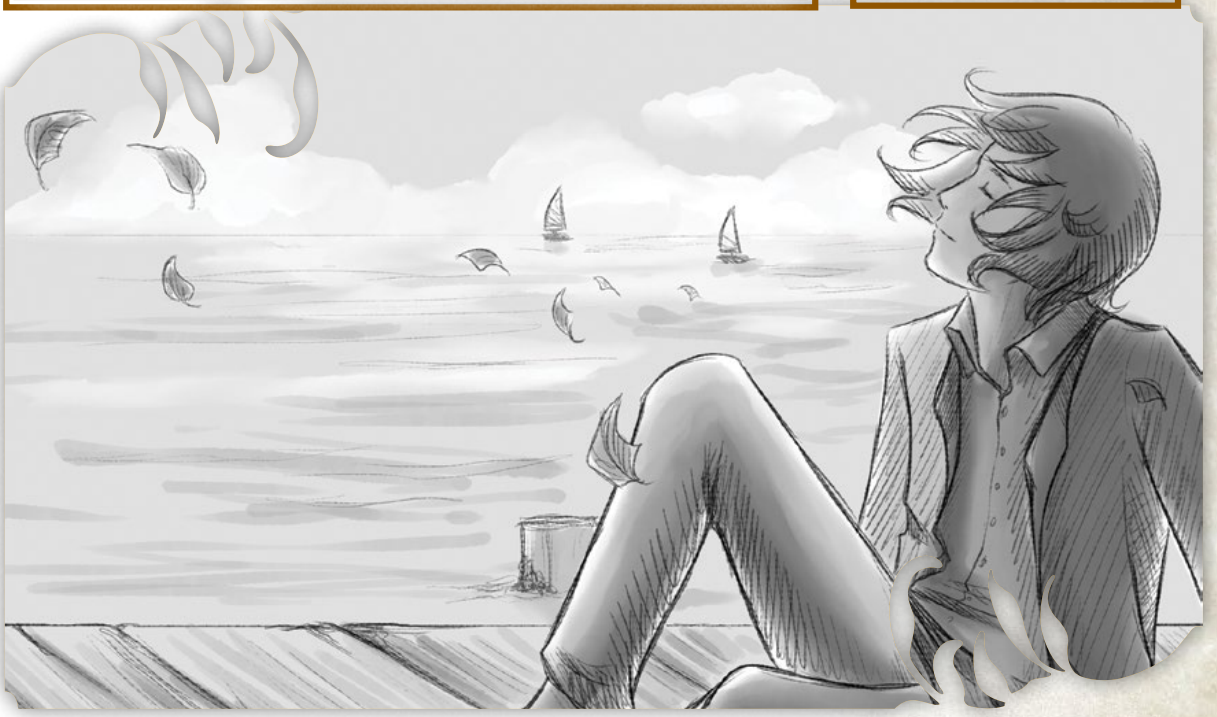
And here's how you show it.

When it's funny, or when it's true, or when it matters, you'll say or emote something like:

- "I'm learning the ways of Fortitude!" *or*
- "Well, I've been learning the ways of Fortitude."

You can do this at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) to earn a bonus XP for this quest.

XP



Haunted

35 XP Quest

1:

2:

3:

This quest begins the story "Chuubo and the Tiresome Temples," pg. 457.

2

You're haunted. There's something embedded in your mind, something powerful, like a thorn stuck in a lion's paw.

It's a power useful in judging the world and, if it's wicked, ending it.

And because of that—

Even though you live a long way from Fortitude, Outside dust keeps getting into your house. A masked woman keeps showing up in your dreams—strangely attractive, strangely menacing, and almost certainly a real person using magic and not just a dream-image.

So you're going to have to find someone in Fortitude who can help you, or teach you to help yourself. You're going to have to put a name and a face to the power that's haunting you from afar. And you're going to have to reach out to her—

Befriend her. Or maybe declare her as an enemy. Or *something*.

She's almost certainly the Main Character and PC option, **the Dream-Witch**—but don't be afraid to let the events of the game throw you a curve ball. Maybe she's something else. Maybe *it's* something else. Maybe it's even *sometimes* her and sometimes something *else*.

Rewards

This quest often grants a small miraculous power relating to dreams or sleep. Afterwards, I suggest reviewing the notes on pg. 456-457 and moving on to **"Wishing for Ease"** or **"Wishing for Power."**

Face-palming

Your bonus XP emotion is amused *exasperation or incredulity.*

You specifically want to elicit this reaction over...

- ...the trouble Chuubo gets himself into, *or*
- ...the unintended consequences of your powers, particularly your wishes.

Players express this emotion when they...

- ...face-palm.
- ...say "face-palm".
- ...spit-take.
- ...put their head in their hands.
- ...beat their head against the table or a wall.
- ...shake their hands in the air in disbelief.
- ...say, "No. No. No no no. Don't. Don't. Oh no. You wouldn't."
- ...or some equivalent, but it only counts if they're still having fun.

Each such face-palm earns you one XP. This is free-floating XP—you can spend it during the session, or at the end of the session, on any quest you like!

You can earn up to 1 face-palm XP every 15 minutes of real time. If another player *dares* you to do something face-palm-worthy, and if you take that dare on and earn a face-palm, you can earn an additional XP that isn't bounded by the clock—it doesn't count towards the 15-minute rule, and you can earn another XP within 15 minutes before, after, or both.

Advice to Other Players: the face-palm reaction should be *sincere*, but it can totally be *exaggerated for effect.* In fact, it usually *should* be—if your exasperation is legitimate and not based in teasing or amusement, you should probably stop the game and resolve the matter out of play instead of giving out XP.

Haunted

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when you've...

- ...found someone in Fortitude who can help you or teach you how to help yourself.
- ...put a name and face to the power that's haunting you from afar.
- ...formed an important connection to it—recognized that power as, e.g., a friend, enemy, parent, or SO.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

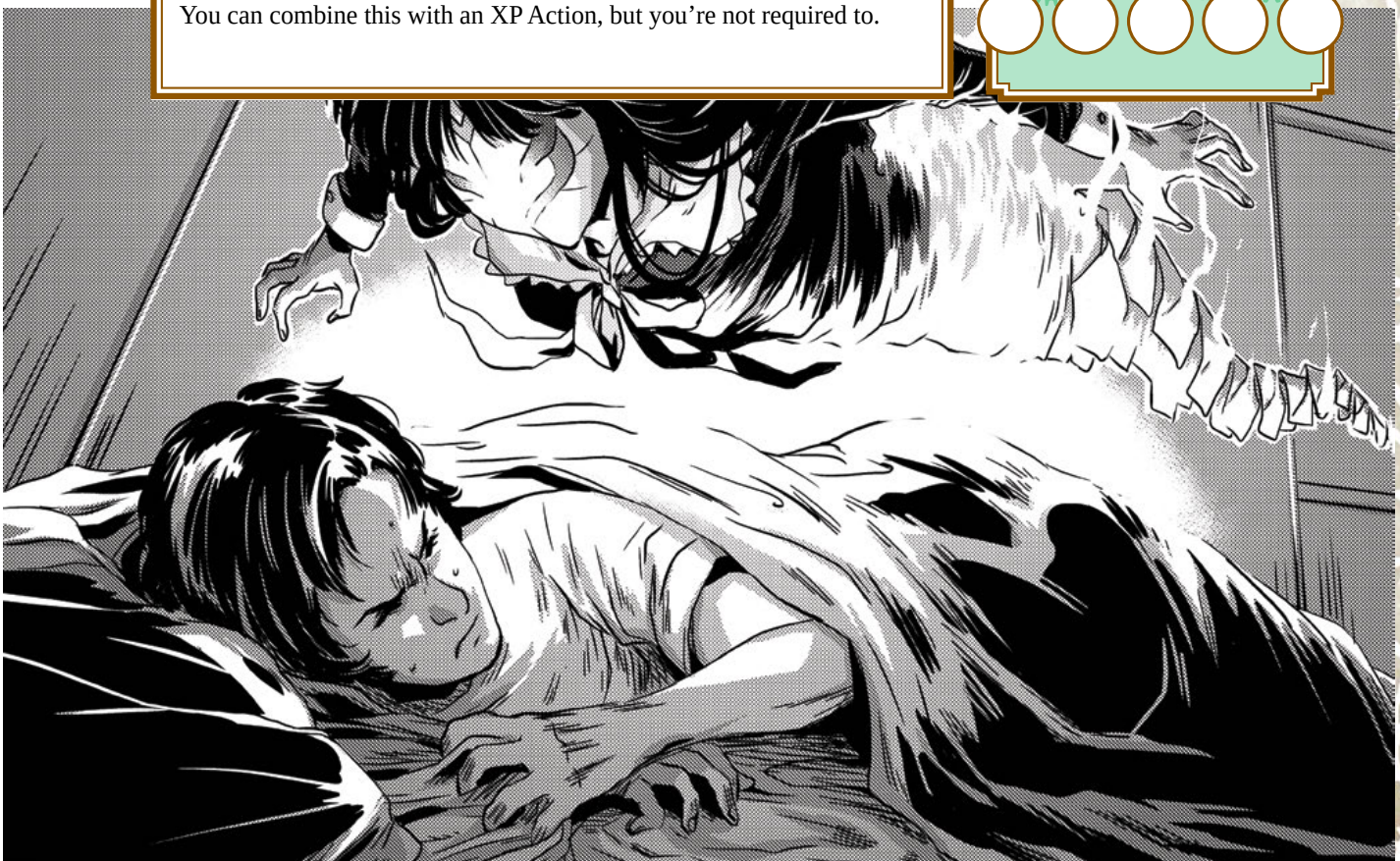
Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by...

- ...doing reckless stuff together with a rival, enemy, or wicked creature.
- ...having a troubled dream.
- ...investigating magic that might help your situation.
- ...talking to a scholar or sailor about your situation.
- ...performing cleaning- or purification-related chores.
- ...talking with somebody about what dreams are, as compared to reality.
- ...talking with somebody about whether the world deserves to exist, whether it's good or bad, or whether that even matters.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP



Abilities

You have **8 Will** and the following mundane abilities—

- **Domestic Tasks 2.** You're good at cleaning, cooking, and the like.
- **Kindness 2.** You know how to be kind.
- **Good Smile 2.** You have a good smile.
- **Sailing 1.** You're familiar with sailing and boats.
- **Hobby (your choice) 1.** You're familiar with something else.

You'll use these to accomplish ordinary things in play.

Connections

You start the game with two free Connections:

- **The Best Friend 2.** You have a best friend.
- **The Dream-Witch 1.** You have a mysterious connection to the dream-witch.

You can also get a level 1 Connection to any other PC by mutual agreement.

Miraculous Abilities

As Chuubo, you have the following miraculous abilities:

- **Extremely powerful magic makes sure you stay a healthy, ordinary kid.**
  - You basically never get hurt.
  - Stuff that would kill most people just dazes you.
  - ...but you have trouble taking the spotlight sometimes.
- **Your daydreams kind of bleed out into reality.**
  - Your daydreams are often visible to others.
  - Your daydreams are sometimes tangible in harmless but useful ways.
- **You're good at calming things down.**
  - You can make a place calmer and quieter just by trying.
  - You can calm almost anyone down.
  - Once per season you can unleash a "peace-splosion" to really settle things down.
- **You can make one wish per week.**

You have two alternate forms:

- **You think you might be able to turn into a giant snake.**
  - It... probably wouldn't help.
- **You become "Dark Chuubo" by tying your tie around your head.**
  - (Shokyou instead becomes **Dark Shokyou** or **Shokyou Rock and Roll.**)
  - This removes your ability to calm things down, *but...*
  - ...it gives you an ability to stir things up and make them more rocking.

Health

You have 2 Normal Health Levels, 1 Tough Health Level, and 3 Divine Health Levels.

That means that even without your **Immortality** ability, you're as tough as nails—you could survive three nukes, one chainsaw to the stomach, and fall out of a second floor window onto a beehive and you'd still just barely be OK. However, note that if something *does* bypass **Immortality**, this additional layer of toughness mostly manifests as "plot armor," where you can find *some* way to survive, rather than representing actual true grit—it's not that you laugh off even the first nuke, it's that there's some crazy plot twist like your soul getting caught in your shadow when you "die;" the bomb falling in love with you instead of killing you; you getting blasted away on a rubble "surfboard" and landing in the Town mattress dump[15]; or your finding a shelter *just* in time to "only" wind up with serious radiation poisoning.

When **Immortality** applies, as the name suggests, you can skip all that rigmarole and just... get up a while later wondering what all the fuss was about? Although, the occasional justification or explanation wouldn't hurt!

Miracle Points

You have 5 Miracle Points (MP) that you can use to enhance your miraculous abilities or use them more often than usual.

Once spent, you'll regain 1 MP/week, up to your normal 5.

You can gain additional MP through Issues, when Region Properties or your Affliction get you into trouble, or by spending a week diligently doing something that honors a Region Property or Bond. (e.g. helping make sure everyone has a home in Fortitude.)

15 Always throw out your old mattresses properly in a mattress dump instead of just stacking them on top of one another in the back yard until they fall on somebody!

Perks

Characters in this game have a handful of **Perks.** You gain them or improve them by completing quests, and you can have up to 8.

You'll start with these Perks:

Ordinary

You don't really want to be a god of dreams or a river dragon or a tree of worlds or whatever. You're just an ordinary person. That's all you want to be. You're like—

In a world of chaos and disruption, you're like a signpost of humble, ordinary life driven into the twisting ground to pin it down and make it sane.

Affliction, based on your Calling

2 **Connection: the Best Friend**

You have a best friend.
That's even their character title!

1 **Connection: the Dream-Witch**

You have a mysterious connection to the Dream-Witch.

1 **Connection: ???**

At the start of the game, with the player's consent, you may take a free level 1 Connection to any other PC.

Health

You're pretty sturdy.

+1 Divine Health Level

Ordinary

Here's how the "Ordinary" Perk works.

You're just an ordinary person. It doesn't mean that much at first, but if you wind up picking up a **Calling** in play—something that you have to do, something that you're *meant* to do—it'll feature heavily in that. You'll become something *supernaturally* ordinary, something stabilizing, a part of the simple, honest basics of the world. You'll become an anchor to reality—

Or at least, that's one thing you have the potential for.

Any time you have 1+ points in the **Calling** Issue, the following rules apply:

- The HG will invoke **Ordinary** to defend you from effects that would spot you as extraordinary. Such an effect will need [Strike ≥ your Calling] to discover you as anything else.
- The HG will invoke **Ordinary** to protect you from effects that would *make* you extraordinary in an overt, obvious fashion. Such an effect will need [Strike ≥ your Calling] to succeed.
- If you have Calling 1+, you have to do *something* to deflate any scene that is making you out to be this super-special person of destiny. Maybe it's getting the hiccups when you get the microphone to make your speech. Maybe it's pretending to really be hurt when someone shoots you. Maybe it's just pointing desperately at the person next to you whenever the spotlight turns to you!
- If you don't do this, the HG will invoke **Ordinary** to give you two warnings and then to **automatically remove you from the scene.** Normally you wander off, need to use the bathroom, or realize that you were just daydreaming the scene; under sufficient duress, however, you'll dissolve into a hidden spirit world or turn into a 108-yard-long snake and slither away. You can stay in the scene if you or somebody else uses a miracle with [Strike ≥ your Calling] to keep you there.

You can replace this Affliction with a different identity if something changes over the course of the game and "Ordinary" is no longer the core of who you are. If you want to change this consciously and deliberately in character it requires a quest, but since I'm handing it to you with your character I'm going to make a special rule:

If you and the HG agree, it's also OK to just change it either because something happened in play to change it or because (as a player) you just don't find it fun.

Reality Syndrome

When you were 5, you created the Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine, Mk. I.

It was a cardboard box.

For a long time—from that day to the completion of the modern Engine—the story of your life was a story of daydreams and boxes; and while you'll probably never play that out, and if you do you'll probably skim through it, the game records that story anyway. It is—was—a miraculous story Arc, or set of Arcs: **Reality Syndrome 3.**

That history is what empowers your daydreams, makes them ever-so-slightly miraculous, and gives the modern Engine its motive force.

Here's how that works.

Effective Daydreamer

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- 0 MP—Your daydreams become visible over time.
- 4 MP—You can invoke this power instantly.

After a few minutes of daydreaming, while you're sustaining this power, the area around you picks up a Region Property—

- **You can perceive and adjust Chuubo's daydreams.**

That is, people can move bits and pieces of your daydreams around by hand, have a conversation with people you're daydreaming about even if you're wearing headphones and can't hear them yourself, and so forth.

You can use this offensively, e.g., to blind or deafen or confuse someone, but only if their player goes along with it—otherwise even the lamest explanation for how they get around it, up to and including "...somehow," can circumvent the effect.

Wishing

Type: Imperial Miracle, Ritual Power **Cost:** —

Once per week—after each Sunday's dawn—you can go down to the Wish-Granting Engine and make a wish.

The wheels and cogs in the Engine will turn. The sparkers will spark. The creaking component of your Engine will creak, and the portion that's intended for honking will honk, and there will be a silvery shimmer from the bells, and that make-a-joyful-noise component that you built will give a joyful shout; and then the whole thing will shudder and burn with its power and the shining beacon at the top will fire off a lance of light to Heaven; and your wish—

Whatever wish you make!—

Your wish comes true.

You wished for an ice cream, once. That was a mistake. You can't have ice cream and eat it too, and the sun almost went out to keep it from melting. Really, everyone's pretty lucky that the world lasted long enough for you to wish the ice cream back away. And let's not even *talk* about the time when you wished that everything would be OK.

But don't get the idea that wishing is inherently bad or dangerous or dumb.

It's not.

Sometimes your wishes turn out OK. Sometimes they turn out *better* than OK. Sometimes they save people, really, genuinely save them, or make Town into a better place.

Wishing isn't always good and wishing isn't always bad.[16]

It's just... what it is, really, like everything else in life.

16 *Though wishes that don't flow from your Wishing Map come pretty close to "always bad"*

Dreams Made Flesh

Type: Miraculous Action

Cost:

- 0 MP—1/week, your daydreams can peaceably interact with reality.
- 1 MP—Use this power a second or later time this week.
- 2 MP—Use this power a second or later time in a handful of hours.
- 4 MP—Use this power instantly.

Once per in-game week, after invoking Effective Daydreamer, you may use your daydream to peaceably interact with reality. For instance, you can climb a daydream ladder to reach a real house's roof or have a daydream enchanted broom clean your house.

You can spend extra MP to use this power when you've already used it this week. Spending 4 MP is enough to invoke both **Effective Daydreamer** and the power-up instantly—for instance, if you're falling off a cliff into Big Lake, you can spend 4 MP mid-fall to daydream up a cushioned motorboat, land in it, sit up, shake yourself off, and zoom away.

Once you've used this power, you can keep using it for the rest of the scene.

Knight Path Miracles

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle **Cost: —**

Once upon a time, there was something that was true about you. What was it?

There was a role you aspired to reach.

What was that?

And there was something in your way. You're not sure what that was either. It's a little strange.

If you figure out what those things are—I don't care whether that's by declaring them *ab initio* as a player or by "discovering" them in the course of events in play—then all you'll need is a 15-XP quest to armor yourself in that truth or that failing so that anyone who looks at you can see it; or to live up better to that role; or even to call upon that role's patron powers.

This isn't normally as good as just doing a 15-XP quest for a Recharge Token and using it for more Will during a week or to power up your Wishing Map—but it's an option. It'll usually (but isn't required to) use the quest card from the opposite page.

Knight Path Miracles

2

Bonus XP

You're trying to reconnect with something that you used to, or "should," be. You're trying to garb yourself in majesty or cinematic vice. As part of the process you'll usually meditate, do purification rituals, and/or do goofy stuff in order to get in touch with your former or childhood self.

Pick a two-sided sign—I've provided a few options here. One side is the side you show other people when they question (or look like they might consider questioning) this sort of activity. It's a bold statement, like "I know what I'm doing" or "I'm becoming something ... greater." You can earn a bonus XP at any time (though only once per 15 minutes/scene) by expressing that sentiment—normally, by showing others that sign.

The other side of the sign, on the other hand, reveals what you're *really* thinking. Ideally you'll re-read it, or at least remind yourself of it, every time you pick up an XP for this quest.

XP

I'm Becoming Something... Greater.

don't hiccup. Don't hiccup. Don't *hiccup.*

This is a Very Important and Serious Ritual Connected to my Past.

this is a very important and serious ritual connected to my past

Centered

It is very important that I keep my focus on what I am doing and do not get distracted by thinking of other things or even on things like thinking about how important it is that I keep my focus on... um... um, the, uh, you know, the thing, the focus, you know, the THING, that, you know, it was (continued on other side)

Child of the Ash

You've started on a new Arc, "Child of the Ash."

This is an **Otherworldly** story Arc about the truth of your identity—about the connection, yet to be defined and explored in play, between you and the vast tree that grows and hangs its shadow over the edge of the island of King Death.

It will tie you to...

- ...a *kaiju* form, traditionally a giant snake;
- ...an alien place:
  - ...that great tree;
  - ...or the forest where it grows;
  - ...or the shore that it shadows;
  - ...or the island of King Death; *and to*
- ...a certain quality of peacefulness that is living in your heart.

I don't know all the answers about what this is and what this means. I won't even claim it necessarily means *anything*—there are other versions of **the Wishing Boy,** and some of them will have that *kaiju* form and that peacefulness without any connection to that tree or to this Arc. It's even possible that that island isn't real!

But this version of the character has the Arc:

Otherworldly (Child of the Ash) 0

And if you choose to stay on that Arc, you will keep the following powers (and eventually add more)...

- ...immortality.
- ...a radiant heart that can calm others, or, if you get into it, help them rock out.
- ...a potential for transformations.

Let's talk about how this works.

Timing and You

When you have a power that works *mid-scene* or *starting mid-scene*, that means that you use it after some meaningful stuff has already happened in the current scene.

When you have a power that works *after a few minutes*, that means that either a few things have to happen while you're setting this up, or nothing is happening at all. Ideally this covers about 5 minutes of game time in a languid scene or 5 minutes of real time in a scene of fast-paced play.

Immortality

Type: Miraculous Action, Major **Cost:**

- **0 MP**—Damage or enchantment has only temporary, appropriate effects on you.
- **1 MP**—You totally recover and shrug everything off 1-2 times mid-scene.
- **2 MP**—Starting mid-scene, you shrug off attacks and other effects like they're paper tigers.
- **4 MP**—You're basically unaffected by the world around you.

Your wounds are strictly G-rated at all times. If you're stuck in hard vacuum, for instance, your eyes will bug out a little and you'll claw at space but you nothing gross happens.

So if:

- Someone hits you?
- You forget to eat for three months?
- You're hit by a nuclear barrage?
- People are pouring molten steel over your head?

Shrug it off! You don't see what all the fuss is about.

In general, you can recover from almost any predicament as soon as none of the Main Characters are actively paying attention to you—mid-scene, if you're willing to spend MP, or after the scene ends, if you're not. If you're drowning in a volcano, for instance, you'll sink under the surface; once people stop watching the mournful bubbles, you can legitimately splash up to the edge of the magma squealing *"aaah! hot hot hot!"*

However:

- You can suffer from the Sickness Issue—it's just that the individual manifestations of turning into a werewolf or being turned to the service of evil or whatever are G-rated.
- You can be confined as long as it's interesting and doesn't keep you out of play. If there is interesting stuff going on, it's not a *predicament.*
- Extremely deadly stuff, like nukes, volcanoes, and level 7+ miracles can still hurt you. Your wounds will still be much less severe than a reasonable person would expect, and they'll heal in anywhere from a minute to a day, but if someone uses an orbital mass driver to shove the spear of Longinus through your guts, you *will* get a terrible wound, and the visuals *won't* be child-safe.

Occasionally I'll introduce an effect that lets you take some action at the cost of "a terrible wound," or that seals a wound so that no effect can heal it. If you're doing something like that to yourself, Immortality will not heal such wounds.

Arc Powers

Immortality is your "Arc power"—you get it for *being* on one of the Arcs that grant Immortality. If you change to a different Arc, it's replaced by whatever power that Arc offers instead.

The rest of these powers become permanent as soon as you reach **Child of the Ash 1**, which is normally as soon as you've finished a set of quests totaling 120+ XP.

I suggest you stick to Arcs that offer Immortality—there's a decent selection of them and it's kind of one of your things. That said, there's a plausible exception: you *could* decide that the most important thing for you to do is to power up your Wish-Granting Engine. That'd be a good idea but tricky and dangerous work and the Arc power would be something called "Sickly," instead.

Peaceful

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost:**

- **0 MP**—Given time, you can calm someone/something or make a place more peaceful.
- **4 MP**—You can invoke this power with a word.

Invoke **Peaceful** and the place you're in will become progressively nicer and quieter. After a few minutes, this qualifies for a Region Property:

- **Things become more and more peaceful.**

You can also invoke this power in a targeted fashion to calm or quiet something down. After a few minutes, the target has a moment of being as calm, quiet, and clear-headed as possible under the circumstances. This is pretty much "whatever the target's player or the HG thinks is the calmest feasible result"—a rage spirit won't be affected at all; someone in a state of righteous fury might shift into icy calm, fade into a thousand-yard stare, or calm down for a moment and then revert right back to fury; and a loud motorcycle engine would probably settle into a quieter, smoother rev.

Peace-Splosion

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost:**

- **0 MP**—1/season, invoke a "peace-splosion."
- **4 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a book.

Once per season, you may invoke **Peaceful** on a grand scale, e.g., calming the entire ocean or stopping a war.

This functions essentially as a wish like...

"I wish this [[situation/place/thing]] would just calm down!"

...and, like a wish, it gives the HG and the group as a whole a lot of leeway in deciding what that means. For instance, the HG and the group would have broad discretion as to whether soldiers at war, e.g.,

- ...stop fighting...
  - ...to admire the sunset.
  - ...to have a party.
  - ...to have peace talks.
  - ...because the entire battlefield freezes over in ice.
  - ...because the wind scatters them to the four corners of Town.
- ...or keep going, but start using really quiet weapons and whispered battle cries.

The time it takes to invoke this effect is variable but cosmetic—it never takes "too long" to invoke, so it's just a matter of whether it makes more sense for you to stand there making soothing gestures for a few minutes (or whatever) or not. If you're spending 4 MP, you can set this time frame yourself, including "instant."

In addition to the seasonal use, you can invoke this at any time, if...

- ...you and the HG agree that it would resolve one of your current level 4-5 Issues; *or*
- ...you spend 4 MP.

"Dark Chuubo"

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost:** —

Take off your tie and tie it around your head and you become **Dark Chuubo**[17]**.** This reverses the effect of **Peaceful** and its power-up: for instance, it would create the Region Property...

- **Things become more and more rocking and energetic.**

...and talking to people would get them energized and pumped up instead of helping them chill. The powered up version would function basically as the wish *"Let's rock!!"* and you could in theory use it to, e.g., start a Fortitude-wide rave or trigger a volcanic eruption.

Kaiju Form

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost:**

- **0 MP**—Become a *kaiju* over the course of several minutes.
- **4 MP**—Become a *kaiju* instantly.

You think it is possible that you can turn into an 108-yard snake, or possibly it is actually a 108-mile long snake[18], and maybe even back again. You have never told anyone this because it's a bit weird. In any case you're pretty sure that doing this would not actually help anything.

(And you are right!

There is a level 2 Auctoritas guarding the idea that "turning into a giant snake never helps," so you'd need to put at least 2 Strike on this miracle for it to help at all—and even then, the only ability you'd gain is the ability to say "well, I'm a giant snake, so... you know... probably I can do this, right?" and look pleadingly at the HG.)

That said, the power is there if you want it, and could eventually become useful if you pursue this Arc.

It's Not Forever

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/season, between two chapters, revert to your non-*kaiju* form.
- **1 MP**—Switch back a second or later time per season.
- **2 MP**—Switch back mid-chapter (over the course of a few minutes).
- **4 MP**—Assume your non-*kaiju* form instantly.

If you do turn into a giant snake, which I do not recommend, it's not forever!

You can turn back!

...probably.

An Otherworldly Tree

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle

Cost: —

You may use your dreams to learn more about the island of King Death, its shore, the forest that grows beyond it, and the tree that shadows there that shore. However, each use of this power requires a 15-XP quest.

This isn't something you'd *normally* need to do, but it's a power that you have and I can't know the circumstances at your table, so I thought I would mention it. There's a possible quest card for this on the following page.

17 Shokyou instead becomes either Dark Shokyou or "Shokyou Rock and Roll."

18 You are not very good at metric.

An Otherworldly Tree

2

Bonus XP

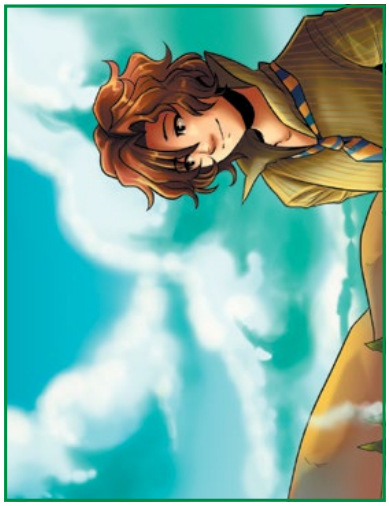
You're dreaming about the island of King Death.

This quest comes with a division of states—there's the you who's fully awake and alert to the mortal world, and then there's the you who's oppressed and burdened by thoughts or dreams of graveyards, zooming over water, the shores of distant islands, and roots tangling around your bones.I've made a sign for this—a reversible card, which you could in theory have on the table in front of you in play to show which state you're in. You can earn a bonus XP at any time (though only once per scene/15 minutes) by flipping the card, showing that you're moving between states—focusing on the world of life, or fading into dreams and thoughts of death.

If you can't actually keep the card in front of you, holding up the card with the relevant side facing people or just saying or emoting something appropriate can earn you the XP instead.

XP

In the Shadow of Death



Awake and Alive

Actions and Issues

Here's some things you're often doing.

Pastoral Stuff

Talking about what's going on

Shared Reactions

Hanging out in the world and experiencing stuff

Slice of Life

Living a simple, honest life

Shared Action

You like just kind of soaking in the world, experiencing the feeling of stuff, doing simple honest things, and hanging out with your friends. You can get bonus XP for these kinds of actions a couple of times a week.

Trouble

Getting worked up over stuff

Obsessive Action

Getting in way over your head while trying to do simple stuff

Never Say Die!

You tend to double down when simple things go wrong. If you're trying to catch a cat, and it goes out on a window ledge, so do you. If a giant bird snatches it and flies off, you're going to start looking for a way to follow it into the sky. **Never Say Die!**

You sometimes get stressed out over the simplest things, like whether you're flossing enough or whether a forthcoming movie is going to be good enough to live up to your expectations. That's **Obsessive Action.**

...why a Snake?

You have no explanation for why you can turn into a giant snake, so it's better not to do it very often. One time you found a bottle of whisky and you didn't dare to drink it even though you were kind of curious just in case you're the kind of person who turns into a giant snake when drunk.

Wondrous Stuff

Activating the Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine

invoking a Ritual

It doesn't *have* to be, but invoking the Engine is often a formalized scene—the kind of thing where, in a TV show, there'd be a lot of stock footage. If the HG cares about that sort of thing, it'll play out as a "**Ritual,**" which operates on weird and atypical rules.

Issues and You

If you pick up the **Complex** Issue, I recommend it be "worrying over nothing," e.g., realizing that you don't floss enough and becoming obsessed thereby. Your most common **Vice** Issue is probably haplessness, where you tend to do unproductive, pointless, or counterproductive things when on your own.

Note the extra rules concerning you and the **Calling** Issue under "Ordinary," above.

Timeline 1-2: Playing through your Childhood

The HG may want to play through your childhood at an accelerated pace—probably about 50x acceleration, covering a year in about the same time you'd usually cover a week.

In a game like that, your history would look like this:

Age 5: You create the Wish-Granting Engine, Mk. I. It is mostly a cardboard box.

It is ambiguous whether your wishes at this age really "happen" or are just games of pretend. It's even possible that they were pretend at the time, but that at some point in the future you will wish that they'd been real!

Age 5-8: This is when the game would start.

Precious Memories: This quest doesn't change.

Learning the Ways of Fortitude: You mostly only visit Fortitude to buy candy or grilled fish or to sit near the water. But kindly people might talk to you about the Fortitude way of life anyway!

Haunted: You are not actively haunted yet, but you might have weird interactions with Outside dust, encounters with the Dream-Witch, visions of a shadow on a distant shore, and inexplicable deliriums and illness.

Age 9: You normally stop playing with the Wish-Granting Engine for a few years here because it's just a cardboard box and that's kid's stuff. (*This is up to you.*)

Age 10-11: Somewhere in here is probably when the Dream-Witch and the dust of the Outside start actively haunting you.

Age 12: This is usually when you build the Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine, Mk. II. This is the current version that really works!

Age 15: This is "the present."

(The major difference between timeline 1 and timeline 2 is when the old sun dies, which isn't very personally relevant to you. In timeline 1, it was a couple of years before you built the Wish-Granting Engine. In timeline 2, it happens when you're 8.)

Timeline 3: Starting in the Modern Day

In a game that starts in the present, your history is a little less spread out. The Mk. I Wish-Granting Engine might not even have existed. The current Engine is probably newer than the first two timelines suggest—you've had it for a minimum of three Sundays[19] and a maximum of "most of your life," but I'd guess that you built it 12-18 months back.

You've been haunted by Outside dust and the dream-witch for the past 3-6 monthst.

19 That is, enough time to wish for a Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine, a best friend, and an ice cream.

The Best Friend

Fact Sheet

You are **Seizhi Schwan, the Best Friend.** You didn't exist. Then Chuubo wished for a best friend, and bam! Seizhi Schwan! You are terrified that one day someone will notice that you are not actually a real person and then something horrific and unspecified will happen.

Primary Quests

- Invent a history for yourself.
- Help answer the wishes of the local animals and birds.
- Find your destiny.

Bonus XP When...

Players are happy for you and give you a thumbs up! You should aim for a life of overall stress/awfulness but with frequent awesome/sweet/joyful moments.

Powers

As a proper best friend and person who is totally real[20], you are extremely good at seeing people's hearts, connecting to them, and fitting into situations. You're also able to read the hearts and wishes of animals.

Common Variations

Shake it up! For an atypical **Best Friend** experience, pick one or more of the following:

- You are a girl, named either Suzy Schwan or Seizhi Schwan.
- You can't feel the wishes of animals—instead, you feel the wishes of...
  - ...the dead?
  - ...buildings?
  - ...machines?
  - ...the clouds, the winds, and the weather?
- You think this is actually the second time you've existed. You just lost your existence the first time. That's why Chuubo was able to bring it back! Were you...
  - ...a legendary hero of Town?
  - ...a horrible demon?
  - ...a sandpiper or other animal?
  - ...a rat?
  - ...an ordinary human?
  - ...a wish spirit?
  - ...something else? Someone else? You have no idea!
- You're not *afraid* that people will find out you're not real. Instead, you act shy because...
  - "...that's what Seizhi Schwan would do."
  - "...I don't want to steal the spotlight from real people."
  - "...something from outside the world is hunting me."

Character Description

You drifted in the tumult and the storm. You were frightened. You were frightening. You were lost, so very lost, and you did not even know yourself.

That was what it was like, to live in the far Outside.

You were a spine, a thorn, a tentacle of the Bleak Academy. You were an unfolding horror. You were a fear, you were fear itself, you were afraid, and all these things because you could not find yourself, you could not find a personality to be, you were alienated from yourself, you did not exist.

You did not exist.

Then Chuubo, who was lonely, wished for a best friend. And you were dragged screaming up through the levels of the Outside and into the world and Town. You started... being. You became real.

Suddenly you could look in the mirror and see yourself.

Suddenly you could say something, and you'd hear it. You'd recognize that voice. That was the best part. You would recognize that voice, because it would be *yours*.

And oh!

It was so very, very good, being real.

You even forgot for a while that you were a fake, an illusion, a constructed being. You forgot, because it was easy to forget, because the sun rose every morning and it cast down light and you saw things and you knew that you were seeing them. You breathed both in and out. There was gravity, and it knew you, recognized you, it pulled everything in the universe towards you at a rate proportional to the product of your masses divided by the square of the distances between you. And there was summer. And there was fire. And there was cold and there was wind. And you could sit with Chuubo in the middle of it all, like the whole universe was spinning around you, you, *you*, on top of the earth and under the turning sky, and you could play jacks and dice and gin

20 Honest!

rummy, and you could talk about random things, and it was *great*.

You had weird powers.

You were magical and full of wish power. You were really persuasive, sometimes. You could see what people were wishing for when they blew out the candles on their birthday cakes, and you could even see how that knowledge invalidated those wishes as they were made. One time you were out swimming and you got to playing with an octopus and before you knew it you had changed your color and were stretched out flat against a bottom rock. That was a crazy day!

It's kind of freaky.

It's kind of freaky and it's even a little insincere, you think, having powers like that. But back then it didn't bother you. That's not the kind of thing that bothers a *real* person, after all. Why, back then, if somebody tried to make your powers into a big thing, you could have just put your hands on your hips and laughed, saying, *Ho ho ho, of course I can see the wishes in your heart, old chum! I'm a real person, you know, named Seizhi Schwan!*

So that was your Heaven, and every day was a marvel; until one day Chuubo showed you his Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine—

—and you remembered.

Maybe it was the same day he created you. Heck, maybe it was the same *instant* he created you. You don't know. You *think* you'd already known him, known him practically forever, but you were created complete with a sense of history, so you can't really know on what day the creation actually transpired. Maybe it was the same day. Maybe he waited a few days. Maybe he waited a while. But it probably wasn't long.

He couldn't have known that it would hurt you, after all.

Anyway, you saw the Engine; and you remembered; and now you know.

Now you live with it every moment, with knowing that you're not real. With the horrible fear that one day everyone will point at you and say, "Oh my God that boy over there he's just an imaginary person! Fake person! Fake person! Kill him!"

Or that one day you'll try to wake up, try to clear the last bit of dreams from your head, and you won't be able to. And you'll try to move your arms and legs and head and mind and you won't be able to. And you'll panic and flail harder and harder, only you won't actually flail at all, and you'll realize that it's not working, that waking up isn't working, because you don't exist.

This isn't really your preference as to who you'd want to be. As existences go, being geeky, awkward Seizhi Schwan isn't exactly the top of the list. But it's *so* much better than being nothing. It's *so* much better than having everyone point at you and call you out as a fake. So there's nothing for it but to be Seizhi as hard as you can.

You'd love to have riches, to luxuriate in palaces and silk baths (like ordinary baths, but with silk instead of water) and other incomprehensible follies. But you can't. That'd make you someone *different*. It's natural for Seizhi Schwan to *want* that, but not to *have* that. At least not yet. And you'd love to be awesome, like your brother Laodemus, or heroic, like **the Prodigy**, or—well, speaking frankly—to be a famous superstar genius mega-athlete wealthy ruler of everything who can fly and shoot lasers out of his eyes, like... like...

...well, unfortunately, *that* would be like "nobody."

And that's the problem, isn't it?

There's nobody like that, and even if there *were*, they'd be totally fake, wouldn't they? A famous superstar genius mega-athlete ruler of everything flying laser person like that wouldn't actually exist.

So you'd love to get Chuubo to make a wish and solve all your problems, sure, or just solve them yourself by going to the most luxurious possible place and *fitting in*. You *crave* that, you want it so badly you can taste it, but at the same time, it's scarier than the face of death itself to you, because above all things, you have to stay who you are, who you've become, the person whom by becoming you have wrenched free from the nothing of being nothing whatsoever at all. You have to stay Chuubo's best friend. You have to stay Seizhi Schwan. And if you want anything else, you have to earn it, *Seizhi Schwan* has to earn it, step by step, growing slowly and painfully into it, just like anybody else.

Because you have to *exist*.

Above all else, more importantly than anything else, you have to *exist*.

It's just too bad there aren't any self-help books that would tell you how to actually do that, and become more real.

Home and Family

As **the Best Friend,** you live over the hills in the modern part of Town—in **Horizon,** or **School Region,** built around Principal Entropy's School. Horizon is a gothic, brooding area and you are pretty sure that it is just *crawling* with walking dead and vampires and monsters and stuff. The fog and the gargoyles and the tombstones and the people mysteriously vanishing and the clip-clip-clop of horse hooves on the cobblestones—it's pretty terrifying!

I mean, OK, look. It's not like you don't belong there. It's your home, and you're used to it, it's got its hooks in you. Sometimes you're not even really comfortable at all in the peace and quiet of Fortitude where you could be attacked at any moment by things *not* coming back from the dead and there *not* being fog or megalomaniac scientists or vampires or whatever—but even so, every time you get back on the bus to Horizon, part of you is certain that *this* time you are going to get killed.

Your parents are Mortimer and Melancholy Schwan, morticians. Your older brother is Laodemus Schwan, an itinerant masked wrestler and adventurer. He refuses to admit it to you but you suspect that he and his life partner Aidan are gay. Your housepet, Vixoth, is an ancient and absurdly intelligent bat.

They are probably...

You hate to admit this, but they are probably a fake family.

It's hard to be sure. It's distantly possible that they're real people with improbable names who have a falsified child/sibling. Or that they *were* real people, but that the wish changed them up a bit. But it's most likely that they're every bit as imaginary as you.

If they are, don't show them the Engine! Oh, do not! No matter how angry you are; no matter how lonely; no matter how much you might want your family to understand, you must never show them the Engine.

Because if they are fake people, your family, and not real people at all, they probably do not yet know.

Hints

> *"Once upon a time, but not all that long ago, the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy rode up into the sky of Fortitude and he drew back his great black bow and he fired an arrow and he killed the sun."*
>
> — FROM A DISCUSSION OF YOUR QUESTS

I imagine you as having been part of... a lifeless, seething land of the dead.

Then the sun goddess died.

I think death... changed... that day. I think non-existence changed that day too. You *were* a part of "the Lands Beyond Creation"—

And then she lit them up and turned them into "the Outside."

I think you are a person and not just a thing; and I think that there is more to that story than just a wish. I think that the wish is why you are *here*, and why you have a body, and a form, and a name. But I think you might owe the *real* miracle of your existence not just to Chuubo but to the former sun.

So if you have a destiny, I think that destiny is something to do with **the Child of the Sun** or with the former sun herself.

I think you will go to Fortitude to help or hang out with your best friend. And you'll get involved with the story of the glass dragon, which was also affected somehow by the sun or its death; and **Nightmares' Angel**, too; but most of all, with **the Child of the Sun**. Your personal story will begin, I think, when you find how it can fit with hers, or, if it's more interesting, with the story of the old sun and the Bleak Academy.

Note that in some fundamental ways you're a Horizon kid, so you're going to have to work a little harder to fit into the story than most—I'm leaving you in that pickle because it maps directly onto your IC struggle, but do bear in mind that you may need to be a little active about getting yourself involved rather than letting the story come to you.

Quests

You start the game with three *quests*, and have the power to swap them out or pick up more—you can pursue up to four quests at any given time.

I've chosen three quests to...

- ...serve as your basic, default character motivation in play ("Hide the Evidence").
- ...give you extra direction in the first few sessions ("The Wishes of Birds and Beasts").
- ...tie you into the campaign plot ("Why Are You Here?").

Bonus XP

The first quest is about making up a fake history for yourself. The second quest is helping out the animals whose wishes you sense. Both are the most fun when things get a little crazy and over the top. So once per fun scene, and at most once per fifteen real-life minutes, when you notice that things have gone over the top or decide to *take* them over the top—you can earn a bonus XP towards one of those quests.

You can print out the **Over the Top** sign below and hold it up when this happens.

As for the third quest, **Why are you Here?**, you can earn a bonus XP once per in-game week by picking a scene from the quest's list of scene options to play out.

Other Choices

If you're interested in another quest or two, and you have access to **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake,** I'd recommend looking at the quests for...

- ...learning a trade, aka, **A New Job!** or **A New Hobby.**
- ...becoming a **Dependable Person.**
- ...becoming a **Shrine or Park Guardian.**
- ...becoming a **Friend to the Birds** or **Friend to the Street Cats and Dogs** of Fortitude.
- ...**Joining the Kichi.**
- ...**Joining the Titov.**

There're also the variations on *the Wishes of Birds and Beasts*, particularly the option to honor the wishes of the dead instead of of animals, below.

Hide the Evidence

15 XP Quest

: Chibi-Quest

You want to cover up the fact that Chuubo wished you into existence.

You mostly do this by planting stories of your past—telling people stuff that makes it seem like you've always been real, and ideally confuses them into remembering you as having been around—and investigating the places and things and parts of the world you need to understand in order to make your stories seem plausible. One day you'll be reminiscing with an old woman about the old days before the recent construction in her neighborhood. The next you'll be laboriously skipping stones at a pond as part of constructing a story of how you got an incredible nine-skip stone (or should it be seven? Is nine at all plausible?) when you were younger and a real person who totally existed and was doing things while young.

To earn a bonus XP for this quest, make sure that this gets a little over the top—or bribe yourself with a bonus XP for this quest by deciding to *take* them a little over the top. Get caught in lies. Work way too hard. Tell ridiculous stories. Get people to buy ridiculous stuff hook, line, and sinker. Hold up your **Over the Top** sign, if you have one, and rake in the XP.

Rewards

Completing this quest earns you a Recharge Token—a memory, event, or thing that to you represents a certain level of *reality*. Later, you can draw upon that Recharge Token once to either replenish your willpower and wish power ("MP") mid-week or add a phrase to your canonical, well-established history (pg. 112).

Bonus XP

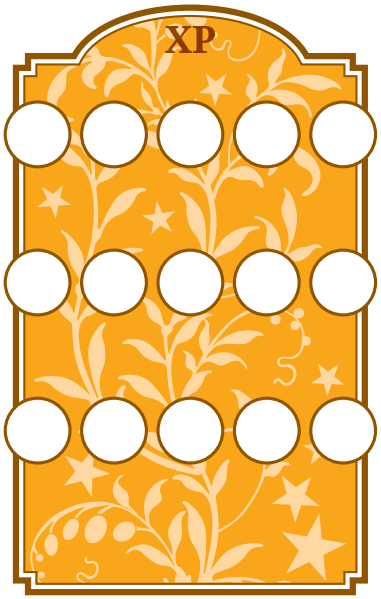
Arrange for a sign. It says **"Over the Top."**

Sometimes when you're making up your history, or taking pains to establish it as real, or when you're caught in a lie or contradiction—

Things get a little over the top!

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) when that happens, or when you decide to *make* it happen and *take* things over the top. At that time, hold up the sign or otherwise declare/observe that things have gotten over the top and you can claim the XP.

You don't even have to say anything in character! You just have to hold up the sign.



The Wishes of Birds and Beasts

25 XP Quest

1:

3:

You have the power to know what people want. And, sometimes? What animals want, too. Sometimes you'll just be hanging out and you'll suddenly realize that...

- ...that bird over there doesn't have enough shiny stuff for its nest;
- ...or, that dog needs *someone* to help un-mend a mended fence that's in the way of its usual wandering route;
- ...or, that cat is really getting too old to fight the other tomcats properly and wishes it had someone else to sub in as its champion.

On rare occasions you may even pick up a really weird wish from some animal, like a heron that wants to be human or a dolphin that wants to play with some human, dolphin, or octopus that it met a few years back.

You can feel this stuff! You can *see* it.

So you help.

To earn a bonus XP for this quest, make sure that this gets a little over the top—or bribe yourself with a bonus XP to *take* them a little over the top. Run yourself ragged collecting string for bird's nests. Deliver cease and desist notices to dogs that bark a bit *too* much like other dogs. Find yourself disguising a heron as a person for a polite evening of humanistic revelry or arguing with a cat's owner about the kind of cat food it prefers.

Hold up your **Over the Top** sign, if you have one, and rake in the XP.

You can make up your own animal-helping tasks, or pick them up from the HG.

Variations

Instead of helping animals, you could help the dead; or a shrine family; or just people around Fortitude and Town in general. Or you could have some important work that you're doing—maybe you collect bodies for transportation to your parents' funeral home, sometimes. Maybe you're investigating something for Chuubo?

Any such quest would earn bonus XP when it gets a little over the top.

I've left the thing you're actually helping blank on the quest card so that you can write in "the local birds and beasts," "the shrine family Titov," "the dead," or whatever else.

Rewards

Completing this quest usually earns you a new "Perk" like:

- **Accessory.** You get some awesome toy or tool you've been wanting.
- **Power Up.** Increase your **Do Stuff** by +1.
- **Trick.** You can now read the heart of something new. Is it...
  - ...the dead?
  - ...machines?
  - ...clouds?
  - ...(if you didn't start with this) animals?

  Sufficient practice will establish this Trick as a natural feature of your **Heart-Reader** ability, at which time you will no longer need this Perk.
- **Bond.** Gain a new level 1 Bond that ties you to one of the creatures you met or promises you made during the course of this quest.

Or the non-Perk benefit:

- **Birthday:** You get a scene where your family-analog in Fortitude[21] recognizes you as an adult (possibly your 15th or 16th birthday).

21 If you spend enough time in Fortitude, you acquire a family there. I don't mean blood relatives, I just mean... you know. People. People who take you in and treat you like family, even though you're technically probably not.

Thumbs-Up

Your bonus XP emotion is players being *happy for you*.

You want your life to be troubled, oppressive, stressed, and short on the simple pleasures so that it's more noticeable when good things happen. You want to embrace the good things that do happen, vigorously, and let your happiness about them show. You want to make the category of "things to be happy for Seizhi Schwan about" to be, in short, as big as possible. And you want to be good enough to people, and kind enough to people, both in front of them and when they're not around, that people can *be* genuinely happy for you when things go well.

So here's what you want people to do when they get that frisson of happiness that is "Seizhi Schwan is having a good day."

They'll...

- ...give you a thumbs-up.
- ...give you a fist-pump.
- ...give you a big smile, accompanied by some sort of XP-related gesture.
- ...say "Thumbs up."
- ...say "Beam."
- ...say "Grats" or "Way to go."

...or some equivalent thereof.

Each such thumbs-up earns you one XP.

You can earn up to 1 thumbs-up XP every 15 minutes of real time. It's also possible for a player to *dare* you to make them happy for you, presumably because your life is totally sucking—e.g., you're languishing in a dank prison cell somewhere, chained to the wall. If you can actually get a thumbs-up in circumstances like that ("oh my God, the rats in here are adorable. Come here, little guy? You totally remind me of my friends in Fortitude. Oh, you're nibbling me! Hahaha." Or "Yes! Drafted into the Yakuza! *This is my destiny!*") it isn't bounded by the 15-minute rule—you can earn another XP within 15 minutes before, after, or both.

As a special rule—it isn't *quite* a thumbs-up, so if someone else winds up with this XP condition they might not have this proviso—you *specifically* can also earn this bonus XP when someone else confirms:

- "Yes! That *was* your destiny!" or
- "Yes! This *is* your destiny!"

The Wishes of ...

Bonus XP

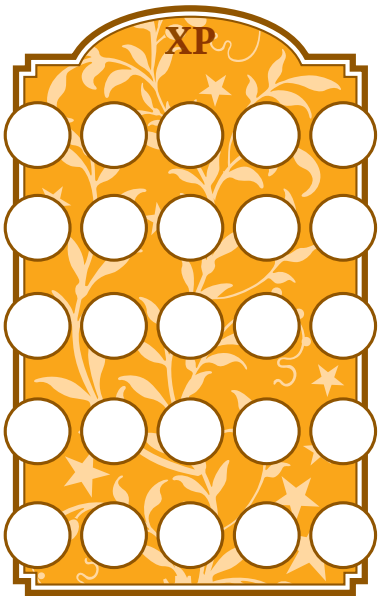
Arrange for a sign. It says **"Over the Top."**

Sometimes when you're helping out the

…things get a little over the top.

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) when that happens, or when you decide to *make* it happen and *take* things over the top. At that time, hold up the sign or otherwise declare/observe that things have gotten over the top and you can claim the XP.

You don't even have to say anything in character! You just have to hold up the sign.



Why Are You Here?

35 XP Quest

1:

2:

This quest begins the story "Schwans and Sovereigns," pg. 469.

You're looking for your destiny—the thing you're meant for, the way you slot into the world.

If you have a destiny, after all, that makes you *real.*

And you've been having nightmares lately about the death of the sun—about that time when the old sun, Jade Irinka, got killed by the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy, and a new sun took her place.

Maybe it's connected. Maybe it isn't.

All I can say is that when someone tries to tell you what you're for—who you should be, what you should be doing, or just generally puts an expectation on you however unfair or silly it may be—you can make a fist and declare, "Yes! This is my destiny!"

The player always says this out loud, but Seizhi has the option of subvocalizing it or saying it under his breath.

Rewards

The normal reward for completing this quest is that you actually *do* find a destiny—complete with a "Perk" like:

- **Superior Skill.** Gain a level 2 Superior Skill reflecting your new aspiration or role.
- **Affliction.** Gain a new Affliction representing the same.
- **Bond.** Gain a level 1 Bond Perk reflecting your new aspiration or role.
- **Power.** Gain a small miraculous power relevant to your new aspiration or role.

Afterwards I suggest reviewing the notes on pg. 468–469 and moving on to the quest **"The Troubled Sky."**

"The Walker in Darkness"

There's a recurring feature in your Arcs—"**the Walker in Darkness."**

This dude(tte)'s the bad example. They're the one who falls to your vice to give you the strength to reject it, or the one who makes it worse so that you can triumph over them at the end of your character Arc. They're not a big enough deal to be the villain. They're a mid-boss, or a friend you try to save. They're a sinner that this Arc is likely to consign to the metaphorical flames.

In your first quest, this is probably "the Sacrificial Bull" (pg. 323)—someone with a name like Edith Bull, Jake Bullworth, or Vladimir Bûl.

And they have one of two paths here. Maybe they're going to share your concerns about not being real, because they're descended from a Magister of the Bleak Academy and it kind of freaks them out. That version of the character? They're going to do something really stupid because of it. They're going to be a friend, maybe, at first, but they're going to get the idea that because they're not completely real their choices don't matter, and they're going to do something stupid and wrong.

Or they're going to be a jerk.

They're going to be a jerk to you about your not being real. They're going to be mean and grind your face in it.

Ultimately this is in the HG's hands for right now. Basically, at some point, you want the HG to introduce this person. Maybe one of the Bulls I mentioned above, maybe some other Walker in Darkness. You can collaborate with the HG on who this will be or you can let them handle it, but ultimately bringing the character in isn't your job—

It's just, you get 5 XP when they show up! So you want it to happen!

You *are* responsible for making sure this is on the HG's agenda—you have only yourself to blame if they just *forget!*

Why Are You Here?

2

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you do something that connects you spiritually or practically to death and rebirth, the sky, a holy mountain, or the sun.
- ...you find a place for yourself in Fortitude, ideally one that connects and relates to one or more of those ideas.
- ...a context is established or updated for your regular interactions with **the Walker in Darkness** as an enemy/rival you're stuck with occasionally or a friend/ally you sometimes get the chance to see.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...having one of those nightmares (about the death of the sun).
- ...talking about one of those nightmares.
- ...talking with somebody about death and what it means in a world of potential rebirth.
- ...talking with somebody about the nature of the unknown chaos outside the world.
- ...talking with somebody about what it means to belong somewhere.
- ...talking with somebody about fate, free will, and meaning.
- ...a scene mostly leading to/motivated by your declaration, "This is my destiny!"

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Abilities

You have **8 Will** and the following mundane abilities—

- **Know Stuff 3.** You know a lot of stuff.
- **Exist 3.** You are extremely good at existing.
- **Do Stuff 1.** You're familiar with doing stuff.
- **Ordinary 1.** You're familiar with being ordinary.

In addition to the obvious applications in terms of continuing to exist (which you do correctly and precisely, often winning praise from those around you), you may use your **Exist** ability to do things generally helpful in staying alive and in Town. It is further helpful when pretending to be real—much more so, in fact, than the Marx Brothers glasses originally purchased for this purpose.

Connections

You start the game with two free Connections—

- **The Wishing Boy (or Girl) 4.** You're Chuubo (or Shokyou)'s best friend, by universal law.
- **Wish Spirits 1.** You like the wish spirits of Town.[22]

You can also get a level 1 Connection to any other PC by mutual agreement.

Miraculous Abilities

As Seizhi Schwan, you have the following miraculous abilities:

- **You were created by a wish.**
  - You're *really* good at being the Wishing Boy's best friend.
  - You regenerate wish power (aka "Miracle Points") quickly.
- **You're really good at reading people's hearts.**
  - You can see what people want, right now and in their lives.
  - You can see what animals want.
  - You're good at understanding people and animals.
  - You're good at communicating, even...
    - ...in noisy environments.
    - ...to people who don't want to listen.
    - ...across language barriers.
- ***You* decide how Seizhi Schwan fits into the world.**
  - You can fake up a history that's hard for even wishes to change.
  - You can communicate *so well* that your target starts turning into you...
  - ...or reject something so thoroughly that it becomes *less* you—even...
    - ...your "ex"-reflection.
    - ...your "ex"-photograph.
    - "...that person who spilled the soup" (who isn't you).
- **You can fit in anywhere.**
  - You can adapt quickly to any environment.
  - You can create a temporary deep connection to anybody or anything.

22 *Wish spirits are natural spirits, like will-o-wisps and flower fairies, that make people wish for things.*

Health

You have 2 Normal Health Levels, 1 Tough Health Level, and 2 Divine Health Levels. This is the "normal" level of toughness for a character in **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine:** you can survive a lot, but not so much because of physical toughness as because of your adaptable nature and your wishing heart that finds solutions. Like, if *my* legs exploded suddenly, I'd probably just die of blood loss, but *you* might quickly stick a pair of chair legs on there and infect them with Seizhi Schwan-ness instead![23]

2

Miracle Points

You have 5 Miracle Points (MP) to enhance or activate your miraculous abilities.

You regain 1 MP, to a maximum of your normal 5...

- ...at the beginning of a new week.
- ...from your **Frantic** ability when you get into trouble.

You can also gain additional MP, with no particular maximum...

- ...through Issues.
- ...when Region Properties get you into trouble.
- ...when a Bond, e.g., "Chuubo's Best Friend," gets you into trouble.
- ...when you spend a week diligently honoring a Region Property or helping Chuubo.
- ...when you spend a week diligently honoring some Bond you've earned from a quest.
- ...when your **Is This My Destiny?** power gets you into trouble.

Perks

Characters in this game have a handful of **Perks.** You gain them or improve them by completing quests, and you can have up to 8.

You'll start with these Perks:

Chuubo's Best Friend

You're good at doing things to help or support Chuubo. That's not the whole of your story—it can't be, you think, because someone who *only* exists to support somebody else isn't *real*—but it's a big part of who you are.

Bond, based on your **Calling**

4 **Connection the Wishing Boy**

You're also good at reading Chuubo's heart and knowing what he needs.

1 **Connection: Wish Spirits**

You like and get along with the wish spirits of Town.

1 **Connection: ???**

At the start of the game, with the player's consent, you may take a free level 1 Connection to any other PC.

23 On the other hand, I'm not going to spend the rest of the night worrying that my legs will actually explode, whereas you, or at least Seizhi Schwan, might.

Chuubo's Best Friend

Here's how the Chuubo's Best Friend Perk works.

You're Chuubo's best friend by mystic law—that's what you were created for. At first that's just a social reality. You like him. He likes you. You're best friends! But if you wind up picking up a **Calling** in play, something that you're *meant to do*, it'll react with that. The wish that created you won't let your destiny... to be the Pizza King, or the right hand man of the Child of the Sun, or to rule the lake-elf kingdom, or whatever... supercede your friendship to Chuubo without a fight.

Basically, your ability to support him will scale up with whatever else you're doing, and maybe that's an amazing good thing (by making it possible to hold fast to your legendary friendship even while doing big things that he wouldn't otherwise be part of) or maybe it's a destiny cage-match where whatever it is you're meant to do is struggling under the heel of the wish.

Luckily, this is a "Bond" and not an "Affliction," which means that you as a player will have all the say in which—you decide how this Bond applies, and all the HG can do is veto or allow the benefits.

Any time you have 1+ points in the **Calling Issue,** you may draw upon this Bond as follows:

- Invoke **Chuubo's Best Friend** to waive the need for food, water, rest, and air while you are hanging out with Chuubo. You have to be focused on him or on interacting with him, though—it's not enough just having both of you in the same place.
- Invoke **Chuubo's Best Friend** when you're taking a mundane action specifically to be a good best friend to Chuubo and there is an Obstacle or conflict getting in your way and you can add your Calling to the level of your action.
- Invoke **Chuubo's Best Friend** when you're taking a miraculous action specifically to be a good best friend to Chuubo and you can add your Calling to the action in Strike. Strike from a Bond doesn't add to Strike from other Bonds, but it does add to Strike from MP and Strike intrinsic to a miracle.
- Invoke **Chuubo's Best Friend** when being Chuubo's best friend really sucks and the HG may give you up to your Calling in Will or in MP.

Becoming Somebody

The Arc of your existence is from being nobody to being somebody—expressed, in game terms, as a miraculous story Arc, or set of Arcs,

Become Somebody 3.

About 120 XP into the game[24] you're currently expecting to take this one step further and reach

Become Somebody 4.

Four! Level four! That's *really* somebody!... isn't it?

Anyway, the progress you've made so far, just by coming into existence, comes with a set of bundled abilities. Here's how they work.

Frantic

Type: Special **Cost:** —

You're never so resilient as when you're terrified.

You may take the **(Be in) Trouble** Action any time you can meet its condition. Doing so earns you 1 MP, up to a maximum of your starting MP. Each additional group XP that you earn from this Action also earns you an additional MP.

Seizhi-Sense

Type: Miraculous Action **Cost:** 0 MP

You're intimately aware of unreality. If you suspect that the reality you're interacting with may be under attack or that someone or something in your vicinity might be unreal, you can invoke **Seizhi-Sense** and clearly see the influence of unreality on a situation—

It's like all the stuff that isn't well-grounded in a solid reality like Fortitude's will glow or burn in your eyes, and there's enough detail to at least *attempt* to figure out what's going on. (That is, it won't *tell* you what it means that something's unreal, but you'll see enough to use Skills and investigation to attempt to figure it out.)

Wish-Sense

Type: Special (activates a Level 3 Affliction when used)
Cost: 0 MP

Invoke your **Wish-Sense** and you can *feel* the personhood in others. You can see its shape. You can *feel* people's dreams and wishes. You are particularly good at figuring out what people and animals want, both in their life and *right now.* Sometimes you'll have to use a Skill like **Know Stuff** to do this, particularly early in the

24 Although the exact number is totally up to the HG and could go up to like 250.

game when the HG is still getting used to your powers. Other times the HG will just tell you what's going on.

The big deal here is that while this power is active, your ability to understand people's hearts and wishes is a law of the world. You can have a little trouble figuring things out when someone has the **Cool** Trait or is using a miracle to confuse matters, but it takes a miracle with 3+ Strike to actually block you out.

Wishes of the Dead

You can replace the ability to read animals' hearts with the ability to feel the wishes of dead people.

Specifically, if you have this power, corpses will tell you—

Well, not really what *they* want, because they mostly want to rot and return to the soil, or lie around in their graves, or stuff like that, but what the people who used to live in those bodies wanted.

If you don't have this power, then you can still *try* using **Know Stuff** and your general character concept to figure out what a dead person wants, but there's a level 1-2 Obstacle when you're trying to understand the heart of a ghost and a level 4 Obstacle when trying to read the heart of a corpse.

Similarly, there are character variations that have some insight into things like what machines want or what clouds and wind and stuff want. Bear in mind that inanimate things that have never been alive may not have very clear or meaningful desires—such a power would be *useful*, but it's not a license to interrogate random environmental things.

Canonical History

Type: Level 3 Auctoritas **Cost:** —

Your canonical history is a list of statements. It starts as:

- **The Best Friend** is the child of Mortimer and Melancholy Schwan.
- **The Best Friend** almost beat Chuubo in that legendary soapbox derby a few years back.

(It's a bit sparse right now.)

This forms the established orthodoxy of your past. Everyone who would know such things knows them. Sometimes people even know them without a good reason to. These two slim reeds of fact are as close as you're going to get in your false existence to something real.

A level 3 Auctoritas protects this history. That means that no matter what, no matter how reality goes awry, no matter what anyone does, if the effect in question doesn't have 3+ Strike, your canonical history remains untouched. (If it does have 3+ Strike, your canonical history is suppressed and overridden but remains, in some vague metaphysical sense, extant.)

Expanding Your History

You can build on this history over the course of play, adding additional statements to the list at the cost of one Recharge Token each. You can add any statements you like, and each new statement becomes established and orthodox—as canonically true and *real* as the two above.

Now, if you go for something literally unbelievable—something like "The Best Friend created the world" or "The Best Friend once turned into an 108-mile-long snake"—people may conclude that this orthodoxy is mistaken, or, more likely, reflects a confused or metaphorical account of events. They may freely conclude that some sleeping power inside you created the world, or that **the Angel of Fortitude** had a troubling dream wherein you turned into an 108-mile-long snake, or something like that, instead of just *believing* it and going along.

But for the most part, when you add something to your canonical history, it happened. It's real. You can cite it, chapter and verse, to anybody who wants to know.

Is This My Destiny?

Type: Special (activates a Level 3 Affliction when used)
Cost: 0 MP

You're incredibly good at "going native"—whether it's fitting in as a doctor in a hospital, a mecha pilot when suddenly thrust behind the controls, or a prince of the sewer people when suddenly mistaken for the same.

While you sustain an action, you have a level 3 Affliction that's basically:

- "This must be who I am!"

This has the following effects:

- You have at least a +1 Tool bonus to doing whatever you should be doing.
- You have at least a level 3 Connection with the environment.
- The HG will sometimes throw miraculous coincidences and bursts of inspiration in to help you out.
- You'll have a lot of trouble remembering that this isn't *always* who you are.

Also, it takes a pretty powerful miracle (with at least +3 Strike) to forcibly make you something else.

Touch the Heart

Type: Special (activates a Level 3 Auctoritas + Level 3 Obstacle when used; can wound)
Cost: 1 MP

You're actually pretty good at being Seizhi Schwan—being that, and *communicating* that. When you're being yourself[25], you can invoke **Touch the Heart** and gain an extraordinary ability to cut through barriers to communication and connect to somebody. This ability transcends language (or at least facilitates charades) but does not transcend physical barriers to communication—if someone is deaf and has their back to you, or physically runs away, or gags you and drops you in a tank full of alligators, it won't let you connect to them.

Otherwise, though—

While you sustain this power, people are prone to understand what you're getting at. Further, anyone trying to shut you out and refuse to listen to you faces a level 3 Obstacle (for mundane actions) and a level 3 Auctoritas (if using miracles.)

25 *Which should be pretty close to all the time, admittedly.*

Seizhi Syndrome

Type: Special **Cost:** —

While **Touch the Heart** is active, you can use the channel of communication it creates to attack, corrupt, or possibly benevolently transform somebody that you're talking to—specifically, to infect them with *Seizhi Schwan*-ness.[26]

The target will know immediately if you choose to invoke this feature of this power. After that...

- ...a few seconds of conversation can creep someone out and give them a Surface "Wound."
- ...a few minutes can build that up to a Serious "Wound."
- ...a few days with a captive audience can give them a Deadly "Wound" of Seizhi-ness.

This power is basically a mundane action that has special rules while **Touch the Heart** is in force, so how much control you have over the process is up to your action level and the HG. If you're targeting a PC, their player also has a lot of say about what exactly the wound that they take does.

Note that this action is protected by the Auctoritas, so even Immortal characters will need to use Strike or mundane actions to resist it.

Power Comparison

The Troublemaker has a similar power similar to **Touch the Heart (Heart-Speaker)** but it doesn't really *find a way* to talk to somebody so much as just beam encouragement or discouragement straight into their hearts. She's much better than you are at bypassing purely physical obstacles to communication, but not as good at getting past supernatural communication-clouding tricks, and she can only convey the kind of stuff that a wishing heart cares about: "Help is on the way," sure, or "Come quickly!" but not (unlike you) "Hey, could you pick up some groceries?"

26 **Note:** *Chaining people to chairs and turning them into copies of you is wrong.†*

† *But turning a robot or golem into your twin, helping someone dye their hair red, or helping someone recover from something else that is corrupting them, could be OK. And it's not necessarily evil to use it to even out a power imbalance if you're ever held captive!*

Reject

Type: Special (activates a Level 3 Auctoritas + Level 3 Obstacle when used)

Cost: 2 MP

You can also cut something or someone off from being Seizhi Schwan: *You! You're not me! Stop being me!*

While you sustain this power, it basically puts a level 3 Obstacle or a level 3 Auctoritas in the way of their being you—imitating you, transforming into you, or being you. This has three semi-practical uses:

- You can target your shadow, reflection, or image to distort it.
- You can freak out anyone who tries to clone you.
- If someone has evidence that you did something, or a prophecy that you will do something, you can explain that that historical or future self is totally not you.

The special effects here depend mostly on your emotional state. Normally it just kind of muddies the waters, but if you're agitated enough it can scale into things like punching a mirror and shattering your reflection instead of the mirror itself, sucking your image out of every nearby photograph, or turning a passing flight of swans into ostriches so that their name will sound less like Schwan.

The Ugly Duckling Reversion

You can also use this while interacting with somebody to make them actively... *less* you. To say: No! Your hair can't be red! You can't be Chuubo's new best friend! You can't have a last name starting with S!

Or whatever.

This works as with **Touch the Heart.** The target will know if you choose to invoke this feature of this power. After that...

- ...a few seconds of interaction can creep someone out and give them a Surface "Wound."
- ...a few minutes can build that up to a Serious "Wound."
- ...a few days with a captive audience can give them a Deadly "Wound" of not-being-you-ness.

However, unlike **Touch the Heart,** invoking this power isn't usually a conversation or an act of communication so much as you, e.g., waving your hands to push them away and averting your eyes and ranting incoherently. It might look a *little* cooler than that if what you're doing is intended to help someone, but that's basically the idea.

Touchstone

Type: Special (activates a Level 3 Auctoritas + Level 3 Obstacle when used)

Cost: 4 MP

You can bind yourself to something (or someone). You can *fit* yourself to it, making it a touchstone to reality for you, a place where for however short a time you genuinely belong.

While you sustain this action you have an effective level 4 Connection, and any miracle that would break this effect or disrupt your use of that Connection needs at least 3 Strike. Mundane actions to drive a wedge between you and the target would face a minimum level 3 Obstacle.

You can invoke **Touchstone** and your first mundane action with the new Connection simultaneously.

Arc Powers

Frantic is your "Arc power"—you get it for *being* on one of the Arcs that grant Frantic. If you change to a different Arc, it's replaced by whatever power that Arc offers instead. That will usually be either...

- **Immortality** (which means it's a kind of weird Arc for you),
- **Sickly** (which will probably play up your unreality), *or*
- **Frantic** (which will mean that you'll stay, er, Frantic).

Touch the Heart (Powered Up)

Type: Special **Cost: 4 MP**

Spend a total of 4 MP on **Touch the Heart** and you start haunting your target.

The world goes weird. Reality distorts.

Your Seizhi-Schwan-ness becomes a monstrous, overwhelming force. Before your targets can attempt to resist—before options like "physically run away," "close down physical channels of communication," or even "give in" are available—they have to play through a terrifying or goofy chase, haunting, or impact sequence first.

That is, a *break from reality.*

You're like some creature from horror or of religion: you batter their senses and their mind.

Now, the downside of this is that you can't actually apply Seizhi Syndrome or the other *effects* of Touch the Heart to them until the sequence ends.

The upside is that this actually happens. It's dream-sequence-*like*, but it's actually real. Or at least, it's a break in the nature of the real. If you glow with divine glory and angels sing your praises, you actually glow with divine glory and angels sing your praises. If you have to chase somebody, you can warp your physical body, crawl through televisions and appear around corners, and have your words thunder through hallways and impinge directly on people's minds. Basically, you can use all kinds of horrible special effects as long as they have the effect of underlining the fact that Seizhi Schwan is trying to express something to them. Use the mundane action system if you want to achieve any other benefit from this—e.g., scaring someone besides your target, fixing a broken television, using the singing angels as a signal or message, or winding up closer to where you wanted to be.

Dating

You've thought about dating, but what if there's some secret step in the date process that you'll get wrong? Then your date will point at you and say, "Oh my God! You're a fake person! A real person would totally have known the correct response for that statement on my part!" Later you will probably get dissected by evil birds and bees in their sinister bird and bee lab.

Actions and Issues

Here's some things you're often doing.

Comfortable Stuff

Sorting out your head by talking about stuff

Shared Reactions

Hanging out in the world and experiencing stuff

Slice of Life

Doing the things you do

Shared Action

You like just kind of soaking in the world, experiencing the feeling of stuff, doing simple honest things, and hanging out with your friends. You can get bonus XP for these kinds of actions a couple of times a week.

Trouble

Getting *way* too worked up over stuff

Obsessive Action

Going way too far trying to fulfill a responsibility/duty

Never Say Die!

Encountering some kind of scary trouble! Oh no!

Trouble

You worry a lot. I mean, a lot. A lot. I mean, you're probably worrying *right now.* I'm having to write all these sentences just to show how much you worry and maaaybe that means you have a *neurological problem* that makes you worry *too much* and will later on *kill* you—

But you can't stop now! You've got to fret about *that!*

You also have this tendency to over-commit and then push yourself too hard to keep up.

And you're more likely than average to be the one who encounters the scary monster or falls overboard or whatever for bonus drama, too!

...you're a troubled kid.

Timeline 1: Playing Through Your Childhood

The HG may want to play through your childhood at an accelerated pace—probably about 50x acceleration, covering a year in about the same time you'd usually cover a week.

In a game like that, your history would look like this:

Age 3: The sun dies, and is reborn.

Age 5: This is when the game would start. You probably don't *actually* exist yet, but since you were retconned into this era when the Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine created you, you might as well play it through!

You mostly visit Fortitude with Chuubo to buy candy or grilled fish or to sit and talk by the water.

Age 12: Around here Chuubo shows you the Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine and you realize that you're not real.

Age 15: This is "the present."

That "legendary soapbox derby" where you almost beat the Wishing Boy has always been, and will always be, "a few years back," from the moment the game begins—

It takes more than *time passing* to change something like the Canonical History of Seizhi Schwan!

"Childhood"

If the HG decides to play through the characters' childhood, it's *highly* probable that you're actually being retroactively inserted into those memories and stories. You can play through them and do important stuff and earn XP normally, but anything you do before age 12 is extremely suspect and in the next couple of years uncertain—you may later discover and have to hide evidence that that thing you did or saw or whatever didn't happen or did happen but wasn't you after all!

Timeline 2: Playing Through Your Childhood

This timeline is for playing through your childhood, if the HG and/or the player of **the Child of the Sun** decide to complicate things a little and have Jade Irinka die in play.

In a game like that, your history would look like this:

Age 5: This is when the game would start. You probably don't *actually* exist yet, but since you were retconned into this era when the Wishing Machine created you, you might as well play it through!

You mostly visit Fortitude with Chuubo to buy candy or grilled fish or to sit and talk by the water.

Why Are You Here?: You can count a scene where you meet and hang out with either Jade Irinka (the sun) or her daughter **the Child of the Sun** towards this quest.

Age 8: The sun dies and is reborn.

Why Are You Here?: This quest proceeds normally, and you no longer get bonus XP just for hanging out with the Child of the Sun.

Age 12: Around here Chuubo shows you the Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine and you realize that you're not real.

Age 15: This is "the present."

Again, that "legendary soapbox derby" where you almost beat the Wishing Boy has always been, and will always be, "a few years back."

Timeline 3: Starting in the Modern Day

In a game that starts in the present, the big events in your history were all pretty recent. The Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine has probably only been around for 1-2 years or so—

Ask the player of **the Wishing Boy**, if there is one, or otherwise talk to the HG—

And you've been dreaming about the death of the sun for roughly the past 3-6 months.

Nightmares' Angel

Fact Sheet

Summary

You are **Leonardo de Montreal, Nightmares' Angel.**

Primary Quests

- Study nightmares and the natural world.
- Investigate the Hidden Library.
- Face your premonition of death stirring in the waters of Big Lake.

Bonus XP When...

Your explanations of nightmare technology, your own behavior, and the world around you leave the players speechless with enlightenment.

Powers

- **You used your heart to rekindle the sun...**
  - ...and now, in darkness, you may heal from the most terrible wounds and become a creature of mechanical, heartless perfection.
- **You are set apart, alone and friendless...**
  - ...and thus you may protect others' innocence: ending anguish, expelling corruption, and erasing memories.
- **Your dreams are full of worms and rot...**
  - ...and thus you may use an abhorrent technology born of nightmares.

Common Variations

Shake it up! For an atypical **Nightmares' Angel** experience, pick one or more of the following:

- You are Dulcinea de Montreal, a woman.
- You are Leonardo (or Dulcinea) d'Avignon, wielding dark magic instead of science.
- The original **Nightmares' Angel** is dead—you are Leonardo (or Dulcinea) VII, a construct of the original's science. Possibly even a construct of *that* construct's science, or multiple generations on down the line!
- You aren't **Nightmares' Angel**—you're **the Rival**, obsessed with proving that your engine is better than Chuubo's.

Character Description

Heartless

You were raised in an evil orphanage. Everyone hated you. People were so corrupt, wicked, and mean that the heavens rendered a righteous judgment on the world and the sun... went out.

(That's probably why that happened, anyway.)

But you—you rose above it.

Staring up at the burgeoning night, you mumbled words of science and you ripped out your own heart. You used it as the key component in your **Abhorrent Sun-Sustaining Superconductor** and you, Leonardo de Montreal, kindled a new sun into the sky.

Skewerable

Later Billy Sovereign stabbed you right through your chest with a railway spike. He thought that it would impress everyone around you with his power. He thought that it would burst your heart and induce systemic shock and that you'd de-cardiac yourself to death. But you showed him! Your heart wasn't even *in* your chest.

"Too naïve," you gurgled, proving yourself the greater man, and you struggled your way free.

Eventually you discovered that Billy Sovereign can survive indefinitely while on fire. This was at first amusing and then disturbing and finally a horrifying proof that the world hates you and will never allow you to have anything you want.

Friendless

You tried to fit in. You really did.

You met **the Wishing Boy** and you thought: here's somebody who's not a *total* waste of time. So you tried to hang out with him. You grit back your cynicism behind your teeth. You didn't laugh when people tried to be good. You played his stupid games and you sat on his stupid sidewalk and you pet his neighbor's stupid cat.

In the end, though—

A life like that is completely useless. It's a waste of a mind. It's a waste of a *person*.

You couldn't bear it. You had to do something. You had to be *important.*

So you left.

Corrupted

Far beyond the gates of Town, at the end of all hopes and fears and journeys, there lies the Bleak Academy. And there is a dark behind its doorway and in that dark there seethe a thousand shades of dream.

You pounded on those gates.

You came to steal the power of the Bleak Academy—to make yourself master of nightmare, and of death. For who better than you, the incomparable Leonardo de Montreal? Who better than you to disassemble evil, tear down endings, conquer that which is feared, and bring back the fruits of it to Town?

Only—it didn't quite turn out that way.

The Headmaster of the Bleak Academy took you in.

He showed you the secrets all of world and sound, and dream; uplifted you. He made you master of being and nothingness and all ten thousand thousand things that are within the world. And then he turned your dreams to worms and rot inside your head, as the price of this knowledge, and took away your sense of good and evil, and killed you, he killed you, he stabbed you right through the chest with a blade of night and darkness; or, at least, that's what he tried.

"Too naïve!" you gurgled.

Too naïve! You're not one of those weak, pathetic sheeple who go around keeping vulnerable internal organs in your chest. Not you! Not the incomparable Leonardo de Montreal!

Your heart was back at home, in Town, keeping the sun in the sky.

That's why he couldn't kill you, and because he couldn't kill you, he had to send you home.

Glorious

You're a god of dream and nightmare now, a lord of the far dominions—though here we should pause and recognize that this is allegorical; for what you really are is a master of strange Science—and you could be evil if you wanted to be. You've lost that voice in your head and heart that tells you when you're doing wrong, so you could totally be evil, if you wanted, and wash away the world in a great flood, and make an end to bullies and to beasts.

It'd be easy. You'd just... turn off the Mechanism of Original Sin[27], and go to Town.

But that wouldn't be enough. That wouldn't *show* them.

...well, OK. It would show *some* of them. Most of them. Probably. But the key and most important thing is, it wouldn't show them *all*.

So you're going to do something better. You're going to be a hero. You're going to be Town's savior. You're going to show them that the world is a terrible and all-devouring place and the only one who can save them from it is the one they hated, the one they shunned, the one they didn't recognize and honor.

Not Chuubo. Not that *child* and his maddening *wishing machine*.

You.

The unparalleled, the invincible, the incomparable de Montreal!

Except...

You think your death is coming for you. You think that it is stirring, out there in the waters. It is something the Headmaster sent for you—probably.

Or maybe the glass dragon, from that weird old story.

Maybe even something else.

Your dream of greatness is going to catch up to you; it's going to draw you down to the water to meet your death; and if you do die, that's a bit of a problem, because all the horror the Headmaster stuffed inside you will come pouring out to break the world.

Home and Family

As Nightmares' Angel, you live in **Old Molder**—a brick and metal maze of abandoned factories, warehouses, and apartment buildings. It's the detritus of Town's brief flirtation with the twentieth century. It's a popular haunt for vagabonds, artists, and ne'er-do-wells.

Well, that's where you live *formally*, in any case.

For right now?

For right now, you're spending most of your time in Fortitude. You've even rented a room in a house full of people who are obnoxiously not-exactly-like you. And their dog! It yaps incomprehensibly! It doesn't understand tensors![28]

You don't really have a family at all right now.

Back at home there is your robot butler, Alvin RIMM. This incredible "Ritually Impure Manservant Machine" consumes particles of sin and moral impurity through its Sin Maw and converts them into computational and motive energy—what better companion for a young man of unscrupulous character?

27 A marvelous moral prosthetic with gears you can really watch!

28 You know.†

† ...you've asked.

But *that* is *there*, and *this* is *now.*

While you are in Fortitude you mostly keep him powered down.

Hints

"Once upon a time, but not all that long ago, the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy rode up into the sky of Fortitude and he drew back his great black bow and he fired an arrow and he killed the sun."

— from the character generation information for **the Best Friend**

I think that part of your history is fake. I think that you knew the former sun, Jade Irinka, very well. I think you may have even loved her. It is even possible that you had time to spend with her, years of heroic adventuring or fun experiences with her and Chuubo and maybe some of the rest. But—what happened was too painful.

So you cast the memory, and your closeness to Jade, and all those years if they existed, away. And now all that happened is just, one day, the Headmaster rode up, and the sun was gone, and you tore out your heart.

That isn't necessarily what happened.

It's just something that *might've.*

Hints (Part 2)

"Once upon a time, a witch and a glass-maker made a dragon out of glass and taught it to hate the world. It raged and it would have destroyed everything; only, it shattered, instead."

— Campaign Premise

There is an old story of how the King of the Universe decided to kill the whole world. So a hero slaughtered the King and made a house from his insides. The blood that flowed from the King trickled down into the world and became the first irrigation system.

The Queen of the Universe became very angry. She took form as a dragon and came to kill the world. The hero tried to face her, but there was a weight of sin on him. He'd killed the King of the Universe, after all.

So she tore him into shreds.

You have come to Fortitude. Your researches will entangle with you with the lives of the Dream-Witch and the Wishing Boy. The two of them may even try to save you. Rinley Yatskaya certainly will. But...

How can you face the glass dragon if it comes? How can you face the Outside? You are a wicked thing. You are under a weight of sin. That's why it is your destiny to die.

Nightmares' Angel and the Child of the Sun

Your contention that you kindled the new sun into being may come as a surprise to **the Child of the Sun** if the matter ever comes up—even though in a very real sense she *is* that new sun.

People!

Introspection is not a thing that they are good at.

Character Variation

Leonardo d'Avignon isn't a naturalist—he's a spiritualist and psychologist, studying mindscapes and spiritual energies.

The Glass Dragon (Scientist's Perspective)

You suspect that the glass dragon is a manifestation of chaos—a recurring one, at that: a particular way that the Outside attacks Town.

You know, almost like you could remember it, not that you can, that twenty-some years ago a glass dragon *did* show up in the skies above Fortitude, and seemed like it might destroy stuff, and then it shattered. Maybe it was just because it was fragile, but you don't think so. You think somebody *did* something.

You just don't know what.

Quests

You start the game with three *quests*, and have the power to swap them out or pick up more—you can pursue up to four quests at any given time.

I've chosen three quests to...

- ...serve as your basic, default character motivation in play ("Natural Scientist").
- ...give you extra direction in the first few sessions ("The Hidden Library").
- ...tie you into the campaign plot ("The Outside Stirs").

Bonus XP

The first quest earns bonus XP when you *propose a theory about the natural and pseudo-natural world.* The theory doesn't have to be right or anything, and it only has to be sane and relevant to the extent that lets you hang on to your pride as a scientist. You can get that bonus XP up to once per fun scene and up to once per fifteen minutes.

As for the other quests, **The Hidden Library** and **The Outside Stirs**, you may earn a bonus XP towards each of these quests once per in-game week each by picking a scene from that quest's list of scene options to play out.

Other Quests

If you're interested in another quest or two, some good options include...

- ...modifying the quest **the Hidden Library** into something useful for investigating the doings of the Fortitude rats, or the matter of the Titov shrine.
- ...redeeming some horror that escaped into the real world from your nightmares using the main book quest **Bind.**
- ...or, if you have access to **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake,** finding a bit of peace for yourself as a **Shrine or Park Guardian.**

Natural Scientist

15 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest

You're a student of the natural world, which in your case extends between the physical world and the world of nightmares. You like to take notes on things, do zoological and botanical sketches, and talk about the structural and biological underpinnings of things. You'll show up in people's nightmares, or get into discussions of them later, and argue with them about what they mean. You'll wield strange technology which you *claim* makes sense.

You spend a lot of time making observations and coming up with theories. Since the first is a necessary prelude to the second, we can simplify this whole quest down to its core:

To earn a bonus XP for this quest, just propose a theory—aloud, usually, although internal monologue can count if necessary—about something in the natural world, the pseudo-natural world (including things like the Outside), or in the worlds and places born of nightmares.

Rewards

Each time you complete this quest, you earn a **Recharge Token**—some discovery that you've made, thought that you've had, or dream that percolated through the coffeemaker of your fevered unconscious mind, is precious enough to you that by thinking back to it, once in the future, you'll be able to replenish your stores of Will and wish power ("MP").

Natural Scientist

2

Bonus XP

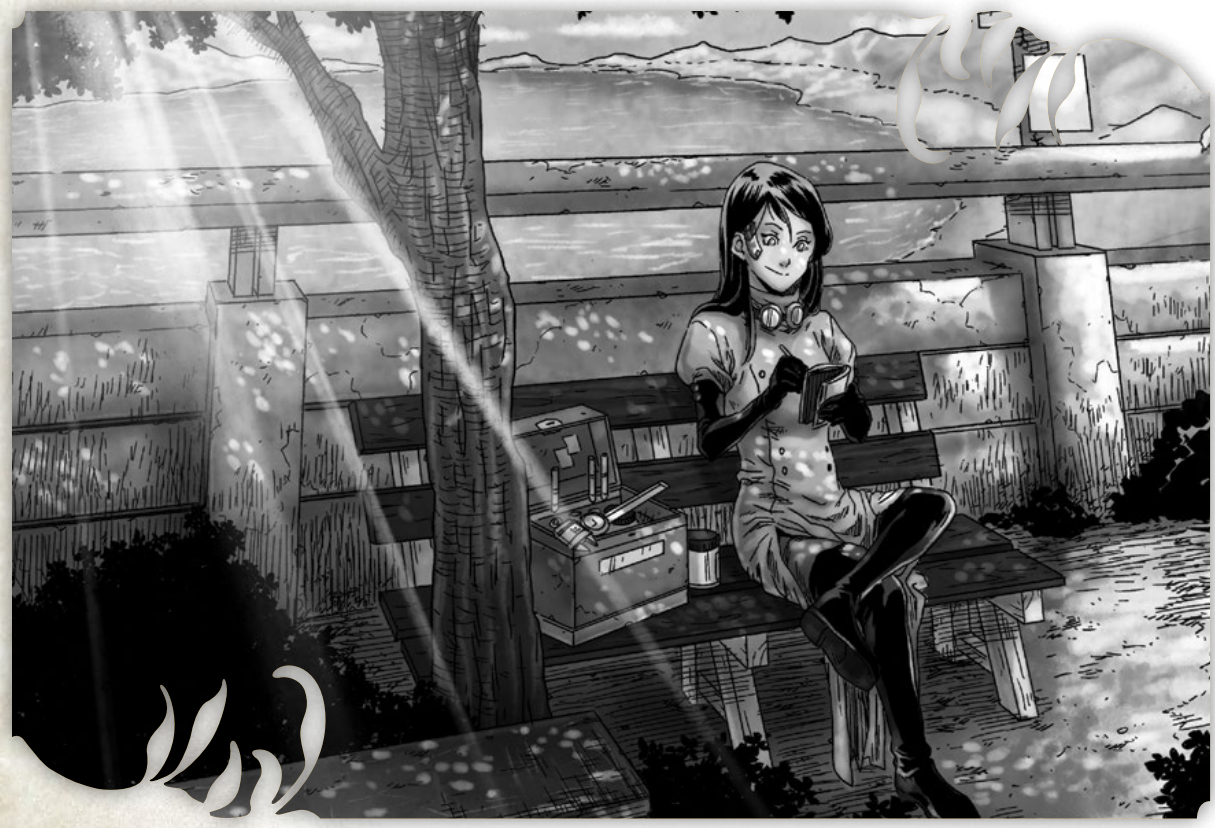
To do science properly is a guilty pleasure—one of the little things that helps sustain you. There's just something so *healing* about studying a bird or slime or phenomenon, taking notes on it, thinking about it, and coming up with ideas about what the world (beyond the boundaries of your own mind and body) means!

It's not as effective as following the wild brilliance of your muse but it's more orderly. More proper. More *sustaining*. It's like your nightmare science is the junk food of your genius and this the warm steamed rice.

You'll do all kinds of things as part of your studies of the world around you, but most importantly, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by **proposing a theory about something in the natural world, the world of nightmares, or the paranatural environments around them.**

Note that you do have to actually consider/entertain the theory IC—it doesn't technically have to be *aloud*, once you've proposed the theory actually thinking about it can be confined to your inner monologue, but the *point* is to consider it in play and have it potentially shape your behavior and actions, not to come up with interesting and goofy things to say at the gaming table.

XP



The Outside Stirs

40 XP Quest

1:

2:

4:

This quest begins the story "Nightmares Open," pg. 477.

This quest started with your dreams of death.

You dreamed once that you tore apart your death and scattered the pieces of it in Big Lake, but that your doom defied you, refused to stay broken, the pieces began to coalesce and pull themselves back together into a single thing.

That thing wore the face of Jade Irinka, the dead sun.

You know that it is the destiny of wicked things to drown in Big Lake's waters—and that you are wicked. And even worse than your own wickedness is the blasphemy inside you. The Headmaster forced it into you, a plague, a curse, a rot, a blasphemy—sometimes you have to grit your teeth to keep it from getting back out.

You've been feeling the waters calling to you. You're hoping that it's just some stupid thing like "a new glass dragon is coming" or "Chuubo is going to wish for a sailing trip with you and it's retroactively making you pick up familiarity with boats," but the truth is, your death is coming. It's inevitable. The only thing you can really hope for is that it'll turn out to be metaphorical, like, a temporary death, or something that *feels* like death, or just something you'd rather die than see.

And worse, when you got to Fortitude, when you'd found yourself drawn there—"to investigate," of course. Not out of some kind of macabre fascination with your own impending doom—you realized that *everyone's* in trouble. Everyone's in danger. All of Town.

Something's stirred up the Outside. There've always been occasional riotously colorful storms coming in from Outside, flowing in over Big Lake, full of the particulate essence of the great beyond—but they're getting a bit more frequent of late. There's an overall increase in the Outside's ambient presence in people's nightmares, and in the groundwater, and people have been dreaming now and then of the mask of a dream-witch and the shine of some vast glass creature.

Is it because of you? Is it because you survived the Bleak Academy? Is it something to do with this "angel of Fortitude" character you've heard about? Or with those old stories of the glass dragon?

You don't know.

And *that* is unacceptable.

Rewards

Finishing this quest often grants a bit more self-acceptance and a "Perk" like:

- **Connection Perk.** Gain a level 2 Connection to...
  - ...some wicked pet found in the near Outside.
  - ...some ghost or remnant of Jade Irinka.
  - ...some other dead or quasi-dead creature, e.g., one of the wraith-sailors (pg. 447).
- **Superior Skill Perk.** Gain a level 1-2 Superior Skill tying you to the water or the Outside in some fashion.
- **Accessory Perk.** You've found or won or earned a little self-motivated skiff—by default, its name is "Eagle."

  When you're sailing it, you can spend "miraculous Will" (a separate pool of 3 Will that replenishes every time you take an in-genre XP Action, or share a scene with someone else who does) to handle navigation, sailing, and weather survival rather than or in addition to your ordinary Will.

After you've finished **the Outside Stirs**, I suggest reviewing the notes on pg. 476-478 and moving on to **"Someone's in Trouble!"**

The Outside Stirs

2

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you explicitly take responsibility or get handed responsibility for dealing with the riled-up Outside.
- ...you construct some sort of defensive perimeter.
- ...you encounter Jade Irinka, the former sun, or the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy.
- ...three weeks/chapters pass without obvious IC progress on the quest.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through:

- ...sympathizing with, or assisting, the outcast and the wrong.
- ...dreams calling you to a place of danger.
- ...listening to stories of strange things happening in Big Lake.
- ...regaling people with a legend of the Outside, the glass dragon, or the epic dangers (or whatever) that are the focus of the quest—typically a legend invented by your player but occasionally forwarded from previous discussions with the HG.
- ...complaining to the other PCs about the progress of your investigations/work.
- ...reluctantly allowing yourself to be dragged away from it, *or*
- ...reluctantly allowing others to get involved with it.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

The Hidden Library

25 XP Quest

2:

It's not really intentional. It's not what you're *doing* here in Fortitude.

But your research into other things will lead you to the hidden truths of Professor Hideo Hayashi's archive and give you a lead on the stories of the Dream-Witch and the shards of the glass dragon.

I don't know if it will ever matter much to you. You have your own stories. You have your own deal. Perhaps they won't cross over all that much. But I wanted to start you off with a quest that'd give you a good chance to get involved.

Rewards

This quest typically ends with an *insight*—you understand something—and a new Perk to generally enhance your strength:

- **MP.** This Perk adds 1 to your starting MP. (You also get an immediate MP.)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when you...

- ...get someone to show you the ropes of Professor Hayashi's archive, since that's got the best records of things like historical storm frequency and local legend.
- ...stumble on or are shown the hidden part of the archive's upper floors, where it fades into a portion of the Outside.

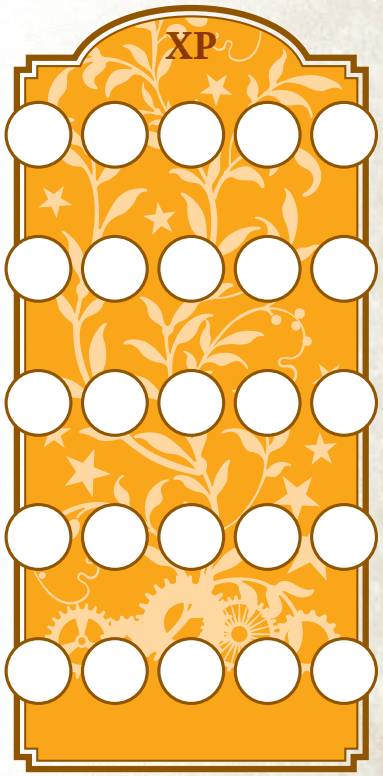
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- ...you discuss the operational principles of your or Chuubo's Engine.
- ...you work on your theories in a café near the Archive.
- ...you're drawn into somebody else's obsession (manga, movies, whatever).
- ...you fall off of a building.
- ...you are bitten by a snake.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Nightmare Technology

Cruel physics seeks always to nail you to the cross of feasibility. Your desires and your plans are always fetching up against some mewling reason's shore. *Evolution knows no telos,* whimpers the world. *Impurity, for a robot, is an irrelevant conceit. Time is not a fluid, Leonardo. Compasses can't point to truth. Ball bearings have nothing to do with getting your bearings in the wilderness, and a machine, for the love of God, cannot know what it means to sin. For the love of God. For the love of God, de Montreal!*

2

And perhaps these claims are true. Perhaps, you will admit, in the most congenial of your moods, that certain elements of your methodology are suspect.

But what of it? You are Leonardo de Montreal, and you have moved beyond such petty distinctions as those between *what is possible* and *what is not.*

The First Principle of Nightmare Technology

Nightmare technology is generally biotechnology. The devices you build are not always conscious and only rarely intelligent but almost all of them are on some level alive and aware.

Behind your camera lenses are eyes. Your robots have beating hearts. Inside your super-fabrics are layers of something organic or generated by something organic. Your portals between real and nightmare lands are edged in blood or in living hands.

Creating new people, new animals, and even new species is within your science's scope.

The Second Principle of Nightmare Technology

Nightmare technology blurs the conceptual and the physical. Compasses *can* point to truth. Time *can* be compressed into a fluid.

It's relatively easy for you to build a device that's powered on a spiritual, notional, or emotional conceit—on faith, wickedness, or lies; on attention or truth; on love, jealousy, or hate. Similarly sensing such things is a relatively simple matter.

It's more difficult but still quite feasible for you to make a machine that *manipulates* such things. The space between reality and dream is a wall. The space between tonight and tomorrow: the same. Nightmare science can make a portal through either. A truth ray to reify a statement and cause it to become fact is equally within your grasp.

Implicitly all processes are reversible: turning food into energy and turning energy into food are symmetric concepts, even if thermodynamics usually breaks the parallel; thus a machine that takes in electricity and regurgitates meals is as viable as an artificial stomach that does the opposite.

The Third Principle of Nightmare Technology

Regrettably, however, nightmare technology is *bad.*

You shouldn't use it. Not ever. Well, hardly ever.

There is a blasphemy sealed inside you—the Headmaster put it there—a curse of flood, poison, rot, and worst of all, a curse of the world *being wrong,* a curse of the world being offensive to the order that gave it rise—and the greater the power of your nightmare devices, the more influence that blasphemy has. People who use your devices, including yourself, often suffer from an escalating Issue like **Sickness, Complex, It Never Stops!**, or **Vice**.

The Final Weakness

Worst of all, nightmare technology is frail. It has a tendency—even as do nightmares themselves—to fray against the reality of the world.

In the past they were fragile. They'd melt against the wishing power of the heart or the harsh cold will of the Bleak Academy. Even without the presence of miracles to oppose them, they would still decay swiftly in the harsh light that is the *Is*. No sooner would the relevant Issue resolve, in fact, than your device would most likely go rogue or melt down into dust and ash.

...but to this, at least, you have found a partial remedy:

The Incomparable Nightmare Engine

At the Bleak Academy you forged a new path for yourself. And somewhere along that path you built—built? Found? Created, seized, constructed? ...summoned forth, let us say—your **Incomparable Nightmare Engine.**

Do you not recall, my dear, how the laws of physics once battered us about, like a bully ripping a person's tongue out on the playground and spitting horrible sticky gunk into their throat? Do you remember what that was like?

That kind of thing is over now.

No longer are you physics' wretch but now it is your own. Let the laws of the world run as they may: it is the function and the potency of the Engine to suspend them

for a time. It is the power and purpose of the Engine to rip open a seething hole between *what is possible* and *what is not*, and while that power courses through the world such petty dreams as physics' have no sway.

Hear it now.

You summon the power of your incomparable nightmare engine and lo! the thunder roars. The Cacophony Component clamors with its endless tuneless bells and the Maddened Piping Portion trills forth with its maddened pipes. The World-Cracking Claws of your diabolical engine do clench and churn within the world, and there rises a wail of dolor from within the distant halls of reason;

And then, as if the truth were a pane of glass, that metal strikes—

As if the world were a gust of dream, struck down by will—

What you *conceive*

Becomes the *real*.

Such is the Science of Leonardo de Montreal!

You labor fiercely, then, to build some abhorrent device; to make the thing of your conception while the laws required for its operation are yet fact; and when at last it is complete, and perfect in every respect, you seal it against the errant gusts of the laws of nominal reality and no more will it need the Incomparable Nightmare Engine for its work.

It is with a combination of great relief and great reluctance that the Nightmare Engine unclenches and withdraws its force. It bellies itself low against the earth, when you are done, and busies itself in loathsome sulk, whispering and complaining in the thousand reedy voices of its kind while the Loathsome Sulk-o-Meter affixed to it counts down the hours of its spite. Sixteen hundred hours later, more or less—it has ranged from thirty seconds to seventeen weeks, in the times you have recorded—it will be usable once again.

As for your newly-made device, it is complete and sealed; it shall be years, at least, before the world does break it down and you would need the Nightmare Engine to make it work again.

Miscellaneous Powers

The two key limitations of nightmare technology (that it's bad, and that it frays a little in the world of the real) apply principally to stuff made with the **Nightmare Science** Skill. Other powers that use nightmare technology as a special effect aren't necessarily bad or frail in the same respect—the normal rules for your other powers override their description as "nightmare technology." Most of the actual effect of these limitations is in the HG's hands anyway—

I just wanted to make sure both you and the HG knew that it wasn't *automatic* that using, say, **I Alone May Save You** (pg. 138) is bad.

Nightmare Science

Type: Magical Skill **Cost:** —

As **Nightmares' Angel,** you have the ability to make devices that shouldn't work, and yet they do.

Nightmare science is a magical Skill. Technically that means you can do anything at all with it—the limitations on the Skill are thematic and not practical. That doesn't mean that throwing away your theme and using nightmare science to burp out a succession of ever-cooler magical flying unicorns is a good idea. It just means that if somehow you wind up there, if somehow that *does* seem like a logical place to take nightmare science, I'm not going to be the one to rule it out and I don't think your HG should (at least not exactly) either.

However, unlike most Skills, magical Skills like nightmare science *do* face Obstacles even in the course of relatively "normal" applications. Even stuff that's perfectly normal nightmare science, like breeding special "seethe-hounds" that can seethe through walls or down pipes, can face a level 2-3 Obstacle depending on the details of their construction. Harder stuff faces harder Obstacles, and stuff outside your normal thematics faces a +2 Obstacle on top of that! Making a jetpack, for instance, is Obstacle 4-5 even though it's definitely "easier" than making a large dog that can squeeze through small pipes: the normal nightmare flying machines are bulky zeppelins and flying fortresses, not zippy jets, so you suffer a difficulty jump.

Even though the formal rules term is "magical Skill," the word you should be paying attention to here is "Science." This isn't magic, or at least not zap-or-shout-a-spell kind of magic: you start by doing research,

observation, and experimentation, and then the actual use of the Skill is engineering.

In short, doing stuff takes time.

In fact, even if you *are* doing magic, even if you're a d'Avignon sorcerer and not the scientist de Montreal, using this Skill probably *still* takes time: time spent reviewing grimoires and experimenting and then casting complicated spells. It's the same process, science-like and then engineering-like, only in a pointier hat; that's just part of what **Nightmares' Angel** is.

This is to some extent proportional to the point of what you're doing—if you're just doing something to *be doing science* then you can draw upon a vast field of half-finished ideas, notes, and machines and can probably put it together in a matter of days. (And even then, it's only "days" because this is a slow, pastoral game.) If you're trying to solve a meaningful problem, it might take a couple weeks. If you're building something that would change the state of your lives and the game, it might take a season of intermittent effort or a 15-XP quest.

If you want to hurry, if you want to skip past all of that—well, to a certain degree, you can. There are always corners that can be cut. But going *too* much faster takes you outside the thematics of the Skill and you'll suffer the same +2 Obstacle you would if you'd abandoned science entirely and just started burping out unicorns.

Standard obstacles for the practice of nightmare science include:

- **[Obstacle 0]** Perform simple, practical, and realistic feats of engineering, such as putting together a quick block and tackle.

- **[Obstacle 1]** Build "normal" machines[29] with some slight improvements 10-100x faster than an ordinary person reasonably could.

- **[Obstacle 2]** Build living, self-motivated automata;
- **[Obstacle 2]** Manipulate genes;
- **[Obstacle 2]** Use abstract concepts as a power source;
- **[Obstacle 2]** Detect or observe abstract concepts;
- **[Obstacle 2]** Build large and bulky land vehicles and ships;
- **[Obstacle 2]** Build "shielding" against world laws (e.g. the chaos of dreams or the Outside.)

- **[Obstacle 3]** Build large, bulky flying machines and submersibles;
- **[Obstacle 3]** Build devices to manipulate abstract concepts in limited ways;
- **[Obstacle 3]** Build short-distance time and reality portals;
- **[Obstacle 3]** Create anti-entropic technology[30];
- **[Obstacle 3]** Create fully aware and intelligent beings;
- **[Obstacle 3]** Build devices to act at a distance;
- **[Obstacle 3]** Build empowerment chambers to transform people in limited and normally positive ways.

We're reserving Obstacles 4 and 5 for nightmare adaptations of other magical Skills' techniques. For instance, the Kichi family can astral project while staring into their magical pools as an Obstacle 2 technique. The Yatskaya can embody a spirit or archetype as an Obstacle 3 technique. So a device that you could plug into your brain that would send your thoughts out to scan the world would face a level 4 Obstacle—as for the Kichi technique, plus 2. A machine that grafted a "spirit" or post-Jungian nightmare archetype into your flesh would be Obstacle 5—as for the Yatskaya technique, plus 2. These things would be even harder and more unreliable at first because you won't automatically know how to make them—first, you'd have to overcome the Obstacle, and then you'd have to overcome the fact that the result is not necessarily entirely as you'd expect.

In general, random stuff that isn't listed above or emulating an established technique from another magical Skill will be Obstacle 3-5; once you hit Obstacle 5, that's as hard as it gets.[31]

29 "Normal" here means "for Earth, available to the middle class in a developed country, circa 2003-2020."

*30 But not anti-*Principal *Entropic technology*

31 So why do anything at Obstacle 5 that isn't just an All-Powerful I-Win Button? ...honestly, if you could get your "things go terribly wrong" percentage down low enough, you probably wouldn't. In your experience, though, there's at least a 20% chance that any given creation will make your life more complicated rather than less, and contemplating the probable outcome if an all-powerful device goes wrong is not conducive to a good night's sleep.

Materials Taken Out of Nightmare

Thanks to some of your other powers, you have access to materials taken from nightmares. You don't *have* to use them—it's not like Tesla ever looked around at reality and said, "Agh! These materials are too normal! No scientist could ever use them to make anything disturbing or cool!"—but it's really a good idea.

Using nightmare materials and letting them add freaky details to the resulting machines is a +1 Tool bonus and sometimes the HG will even voluntarily scale that to a +2!

The Incomparable Nightmare Engine

Type: Imperial Miracle, Ritual Power

Cost:

- 0 MP—Invoke this power 1/season.
- 4 MP—Use this power a second or later time in a season.

Note: This is a specific version of your **Supreme Invocation** power (pg. 143) and counts against its seasonal use.

Once per season you may invoke your Incomparable Nightmare Engine and take nightmare technology to the next level—making one of your nightmare devices permanent[32] and exalting its powers to the level of a wish. This functions as a wish would (see the various discussions in the various books of that ridiculous *child* Chuubo's powers), and most specifically as:

"I wish this device actually worked."

I'm phrasing the wish like that to give you the best possible sense of how it would play out:

I realize that strictly speaking your nightmare devices already *work*, they're just frail, but if the story winds up twisting the wish, or giving it cool positive consequences, I want those to relate to the device's function and not to its longevity.

Outside-Measuring Caliper

Your Outside-measuring caliper provides a measure of the amount of Outside corruption present in any given location, with key values including:

- "Hm."
- "Can't tell."
- "Concerning."
- "This is very serious."
- "I've never gotten readings like this!"

Normally to use this device you will hold it up a bit above eye level, adjust the levels a bit, and squint. It's also useful for tossing on the table in front of someone else who understands science, as this will almost invariably cause them to let out a startled oath at the results of your recent measurements. You may turn the startlement dial preemptively up or down to increase or decrease the level of startlement that this provokes.

The Mechanism of Original Sin

Having lost your inborn sense of good and evil, you must compensate with your Mechanism of Original Sin. Through seventeen methods it watches you always, glaring down on you from some empyrean peak of mind and causing you to know when you are naked, sinful, or wrong. The mechanism must receive a regular diet of type A blood, yarn, hamburger, and salt or it will cease to function, with various deleterious effects and implications.

32 *Or at least not inherently doomed to near-term obsolescence*

101 Nightmare Things

[Obstacle 1: Nightmare-Style Versions of Mundane Technology]

1. The Incomparable Floss-Crab assists in flossing.
2. The Headache Worm painlessly removes headaches and cleanses optic discolorations.
3. The Unabashedly Hygienic Clothes Maw dries wet clothes with its heated tongue.
4. The Icing Tree twines through the air to extract the summer heat.
5. The Wrist Needler clings to your wrist and fires anesthetic needles when provoked.
6. The Peculiar Entertainment Box distills the behavior it witnesses to create ever-more-realistic puppet shows.
7. Variable Boots adjust your height within a margin of six inches either way.
8. The Lazy Glass is a mirror that runs a few minutes slow.
9. Thermodynamic Tubing effortlessly heats water or other substances poured inside.
10. Your Sticky Knife is inexplicably sticky but doesn't like to cut people.
11. Popping a handful of Wakeful Eyes is always good for quick energy.
12. Bug Skewers tend to pierce bugs when thrown. Or dropped. Or waved about casually.
13. The Lung Organ is a pipe organ principally made out of pipes ripped from a white dream-whale's lungs.
14. Squirm Nails squirm to avoid being hammered. This was not your most practical invention ever but the original batch of 108 really ought to be used for *something*.

[Obstacle 2: Modest Machinery]

15. The Hopping Scarecrow Closet whips open its coat and the clothes hung inside pop out.
16. The Romantic Tension Robot relies on romantic tension to survive.
17. Grocery Bugs collect and put away groceries. They can assemble into giant hands or spheres.
18. Shadow Patches crawl to and spread over windows to provide emergency shade.
19. Hornbills du Montreal are purple-and-black hornbills that love you. And have an extra eye.
20. Land cats are land-crawling catfish. They cook themselves when they hear fingers snap.
21. Gloom walkers are giant, gloomy tripods that walk around.[33]
22. Your magnificent love-powered assembler nanomachines absorb local "love radiation" to sustain their existence and to build specific objects—then neatly dissolve, their task complete, when they've used that ambience up.
23. Jar beetles fly into jars at the end of their lives, whereupon they decompose into honey.
24. Third-eye fish recognize and reject desire and ignorance. Splish!
25. The de Montreal Fetal Screening and Scrubbing Process cleans away unhealthy gene complexes in an unborn child.
26. Your Viral Wickedness Solution turns viruses against one another.
27. Your Lie Fire Lantern blazes up when it hears what it thinks is a blatant lie.
28. Your Truth Compass allows you to navigate the metaphorical waters of uncertainty.
29. Your Nightmare-Detecting Centipede scurries up and whistles in your ear when someone in your vicinity is having a nightmare.
30. Your Elegantor Tank is a large elephantine alligator-like vehicle. Its skin is thick and its eyes are clear laminate.[34]
31. You could spread a Great Net between Big Lake and Fortitude to filter out incoming storms.
32. Your Seeping Blood Bots flow down through the sewers and the water table and map them.

33 You don't remember what they're for.

34 It does not make things more elegant, for clarity. That would be your Elegantator Tank, which is half-elephant, half-alligator, and half-potato. Elegantly.

33. The Decency Engine adapts the basic technology of the Mechanism of Original Sin to train animals and machines to act with decency.
34. Your Regrettable Snarler was *supposed* to bite you immediately before you took an action that you would regret within the next hour. Instead it just kept biting you until you threw it off a cliff.
35. Your Injustice Glasses darken when you regard injustice. Your Justice Shades, conversely, darken when they regard justice.
36. There's no better sneaking vehicle than a Shadow Python-back Pavilion—while it can be a little difficult to find the python when you need it, the creature's ability to precognitively avoid moving to places where it's going to be seen is truly quite remarkable.
37. Your micro-plants feed on vacuum energy to produce "branching oxygen."
38. A cat can look at a King, so your cat-eyed Divine Right Detection Device can spot people socially empowered to perform certain activities.
39. Your Heart Odometer tracks how far any given person has walked down the road towards love.
40. Outside Normalizing Boxen use directed attention (they stare at the Outside and make a "staring noise," *jiiiii*) to colonize patches of the Outside with a tamer form of reality.
41. Your Hands-Free Communication Device is powered by people not touching it.
42. Your marvelous Redemption Machine is a floating eyeball with a dangling metal arm and long, wire-like fingers. It floats around after evil people staring at them until they redeem themselves in shame. Sometimes at night it wet willies them while they sleep. You are explicitly excluded from the category of viable targets.
43. Umbrella Angels flutter in the sky above you, drink the rain, and die in the light of the sun.
44. Your Incomparable Expressiveness Assistant sits on the back of your head and curls its eyestalks forward to echo your chilling glares, curious looks, innocent looks, winks, and eyerolls. Do *not* accidentally build your Incompatible Expressioning Assistant instead!
45. Your Gift Squeakers squeak frantically when the person who receives them has just said the wrong thing. They are certain to be a hit this Christmas.
46. The Sunless Sphere shelters you from external light while rolling you ponderously around Town. Regrettably it is very hard to keep in good repair.
47. Fwip Gloves unfurl sticky yard-long tendrils to grab things for you when you 'fwip' them at something.
48. Air-purifying spores float gently around your head and release pine scent.
49. Coal mite swarms are "artificial ghosts," tracing out letters on the wall to form what an actual ghost, if there were one, would want to say. They also eat mosquitoes.
50. Your Travail-Observing Lemur weeps for you and your sorrows.
51. Your Dramatic Gesture Glove feeds on your drama to produce visible dramatic F/X or to recharge electricity-using devices.

[Obstacle 3: Supreme Science]

52. Too many cooks spoil the soup, so your Cookless Crock-Pot spits up superior *anti-spoiled* soup divine beyond the conceptions of lesser men.
53. Your Inventory Item is always with you. It comforts you.
54. Your Fear-Induced Straightening Device uses the "clarity of fear" to automatically disentangle cords and straighten lines.
55. You have the power to grow wings of blood and fire, but that's so... weird. Abnormal. Suspicious! But with your wing injections that incite *other* people to grow wings of blood and fire... you can finally chop off that problem at its source!
56. Screening Goggles filter out obstacles from your visual field.
57. Your Hand-Held Reality Flosser removes irregularities in space-time.
58. A long time ago, Chuubo explained to you that you "have to" read a certain comic—that it is practically "the whole reason that the world exists." His pitiful mind could think of nothing better to do with such a comic than read it—but *you* have gone far beyond his feeble proposal and conceived of the Outside Seeding Project: scattering microscopic pieces of his the-reason-the-world-exists comic throughout the chaotic Outside, you hope to seed dozens, hundreds, or even millions of new realities!

59. Your Conceptual Diffusion Device dissolves things or ideas into a diffuse foam; you may then or later use a drop of a hyper-real fluid to reconstruct them.
60. Your Two Linked Pens write the same thing when clicked, no matter how far apart they are.
61. Your Two-Things Tangler temporarily interrupts reality to "fuse" two things together.
62. Your Sleepless Edge can cut a portal between tonight and tomorrow morning. Time to show tomorrow's Leonardo de Montreal what-for!
63. The Barren Wanderer slips sideways through Sleepless Edge's portals to explore between the two sides of midnight. What stories will it bring when it returns?
64. Your spray bottle of Sky-Pinning Reagent can hold the sky still, so that it ceases to retreat from you when you approach it—at last that field of blue becomes something that you can touch, peel apart, or climb!
65. Similarly, your Sphere-Cracking Space Bat is more than able to fly up to the crystal sphere around the world and crack it with its head, letting in rain or a falling star from the other side.
66. Your vast submersible, the "Blue Whale[35]," can safely explore the deepest waters of Big Lake.
67. Your Writhing Dream Beetles eat their way between world and dream before they die.
68. "Lance Corporal," your vast dream-yacht, can sail the "waters" of people's dreams.
69. The Awful Bell sounds like anybody's worst nightmare when it's rung.
70. The Transfinite Hypersphere Polymer Coating on your gloves allows you to reach through time and steal breakfast from yourself. Or, you know, other stuff!
71. Your glorious lighter-than-air sky palace and gardens can reach heights of almost 50 yards above the ground!
72. Your Worth-Injecting Six-Guns allow you to shoot value directly into people. Bang!
73. Your "breath amplification chamber" can turn anyone into a Chi powerhouse for a short time.
74. When triggered, your Cephalopod Superstructure assembles ordinary objects around you into the twitching limbs and eyes of a cephalopod battlesuit. Never before has wielding sandwiches, books, dressers, and porcelain animals in combat felt so liquid, so natural, or so supreme.
75. Your Infallible Humanity Emulator can sit on the forehead of a dog, cat, or bird and cause it to display convincing qualities of humanity.
76. Your Swift Watch reliably generates a certain amount of extra spare time every day.
77. Your Personality Bombs unleash disturbances in the psyche.
78. Your Infallible Cat Disextinctory Device will transubstantiate a nine-lived cat to one of its previous lives.
79. Your Out-of-Sight Out-of-Mind shielding activates automatically to protect you from things you've forgotten to worry about.
80. Your Mirrored World Window lets you stare into the baffling alternate dimension where Dark Chuubo, and not you, went to the Bleak Academy.
81. The Endless Raven lives the same day over and over again.
82. Your Nightmare Infusion, Mk. I, pours vivid nightmares into someone's head and confuses their sense of reality utterly for up to 24 hours. They will fade in and out of the Outside while the effect remains.
83. Your Sin-Scrubbing Loofah can purify things damaged by spiritual pollutants.
84. Your Unbearably Artistic Mesh sinks into the surface of an object and infuses it with emotional meaning—sadness, joy, bittersweet melancholy, or whatever, much as Titov magic might.
85. The Lightless Pointer projects an alluring absence that dogs, cats, and pointing fingers are drawn to follow.

35 Sometimes you think you are not very creative at naming things.

86. Your Anti-Pastoral Leaded Coffin provides you with a place where you may retreat to, even in Fortitude, and avoid feeling like things must move slowly, that work must be fruitful, and that you have a home. You are not sure why you care enough to create such a thing, exactly, except that you occasionally have horrific images of yourself twenty years from now as one of those pastoral people who stare out at the sunset and say, "Yup." This must not be!
87. Your Chilling Realization Bubbles, which you manipulate with magnetic sticks, produce a chilling realization when they pop against a person.
88. Your Pathetic, Groveling Minion Machine has an artificial internal life complete with dreams and nightmares. Eventually this will creep you out and you will build it a Live-for-Yourself attachment, which will probably go wrong.
89. Topo de Montreal is a synthetic tele-operated talking rat version of yourself, which must, of course, assume its own intelligence and agenda when not actively controlled. (Otherwise it would be found out.) Eventually it will steal its controller and no longer will you have an agent among Fortitude's talking rats.
90. If a Fortitude family loses its youngest child, you might create an Inverted Nightmare Child to soothe their feelings of loss. This... might not work out as you expect.
91. Your Mechanism for Original Sin complained about your eating the cookie people, so you are hoping that your Incomparable Gingerbread Afterlife will alleviate the moral strain!

[Obstacle 4: Forbidden Techniques]

92. Your "Nightmare Metal" is a high-tech polymer memory metal created by infusing ordinary elements with nightmares. You can produce a small amount of this at Obstacle 3 if you have access to extremely appropriate nightmares.
93. Similarly, your "Solid Fire" interleaves fire, lightning, cloth, and a sticky nightmare colloid, and can sometimes slip down to Obstacle 3.
94. **(Obstacle 2 Changeling ability, +2 Difficulty):** Your Entity-Mirroring Shell can consume you and remold you to look and act like someone else.
95. **(Obstacle 2 Fox Magic ability, +2 Difficulty):** You can shatter some nightmare device to instantly unleash a gout of flame, lightning, or poison.
96. (**Obstacle 2 Fox Magic ability, +2 Difficulty):** Your Integrated Vulpine Injection sheds your old mortal flesh into steaming goop and frees your Leonardine or Dulcinean spirit to run forth in the shape of a dream-fox. That's like a fox, only, you know, more dream-like.
97. (**Obstacle 2 Yatskaya ability, +2 Difficulty**): Use your nightmare science to make a cat do what you say. Say, "Cat, I know nightmare science. Do what I say!" Then provide instructions. Surprisingly, if you can overcome a mere level 4 Obstacle, that feline very well might!

[Obstacle 5: Beyond the Limits of Nightmare]

98. **(Obstacle 3 Changeling ability, +2 Difficulty):** Your Nightmare Infusion, Mk. II, leaves the target physically in reality but detaches them utterly from themselves. Despair fills them; their eyes vanish, replaced by night and falling stars; they preach the gospel of the Bleak Academy.
99. **(Obstacle 3 Fox Magic ability, +2 Difficulty):** Having learned a great deal about what people refuse to look at or listen to, you can make yourself effectively invisible.
100. **(Obstacle 3 ability for... some kind of magic, probably? +2 Difficulty):** Your Incomparable Time-Stitching Device can save any nine things.
101. **(Obstacle 3 ability for... monks? Kung fu monks? Probably? +2 Difficulty):** Activating your Supreme God-Body Ascension Method, you transcend mortality, flying into the sky amidst sheets of spiritual lightning, a roiling divine power building up inside you until it bursts out in a nuclear-like explosion that rectifies and purifies, or at least mysteriously affects, many things. Later, you drift down amnesiac from the sky, having failed to properly become an all-conquering spirit-body God.

Shock and Awe

Your bonus XP emotion is *speechlessness.*

Like any good scientist, your role and your burden is to explain the world to all the people who just don't get it. They are always wondering such things as "Just how does that nightmare technology work?" or "How can it be that Leonardo de Montreal, who professes to loathe us with every fiber of his being, is once again helping out?" or "Wait, why are there talking rats in Fortitude? How does that work?".

It is up to you, with the unequalled beneficence of a de Montreal, to answer these questions in such a fashion as to leave them with little else to say. If they wish to demonstrate their speechlessness at the end of such an explanation or demonstration, they may award you an XP as follows:

- Gaping at you in an exaggerated, comical, and therefore clearly intentional fashion.
- Lifting up a finger as if they're going to respond, but then lowering it again, ideally to point at a bowl containing XP tokens while silently shaking their head.
- Covering their eyes but helplessly peeking through the gaps in their fingers at you, in horrified and unwilling fascination.
- Saying, "Speechless!"
- Saying something roughly equivalent to "*Right* then," and moving on.
- Saying something roughly equivalent to, "I think we are all now more familiar with the [topic, e.g., the reasons that Leonardo de Montreal is once again helping us out, which are not in the least bit beneficent.]"

You are normally obligated to answer questions in character, which requires that you first engage the interest of others in asking them of you or at least expressing confusion, uncertainty, or an interest in an explanation in your presence. However, if you are in an extremely casual game where having players step out of character to ask questions of "Professor" de Montreal makes sense, then please feel free to answer across the fourth wall, ideally with the aid of a handy flipchart that materializes unexpectedly when such occasions occur.

You can earn up to 1 speechlessness XP every 15 minutes of real time. Further, if another player or PC consciously weaponizes this—that is, demands an explanation from you for the pure entertainment value of it or to stun/baffle/perplex/silence somebody in the world—you can earn a speechlessness XP that isn't bounded by that 15 minute rule.

Advice to Other Players: As long as the justifications Nightmares' Angel gives are entertaining, and as long as they have a tinge of vivid, vital unreason, you can feel free to exaggerate your speechlessness, enlightenment, or smirk of amusement for effect. In fact, you should! There's one exception: if Nightmares' Angel goes overboard in interpreting things as asking for an explanation—e.g., in response to "hey, how've you been?"—then you should observe a stricter protocol, and start awarding bonus XP only if actually stunned or brought to laughter by the response.

Abilities

You have **8 Will** and the following mundane abilities:

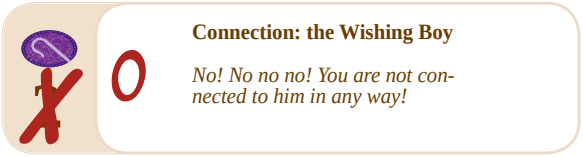
- **Weather-Sense 2.** You have an uncanny sense for weather.
- **Perseverance 2.** You're good at not giving up.
- **Love for the Wicked 1.** You believe even the worst deserve kindness.
- **Shield 1.** You're oddly familiar with protecting people.
- **Dream Analysis 0.** Your dream analysis helps only rarely.
- **People Skills 0.** You're uncomfortable with people.
- **Swimming -1.** You're not good with water.
- **Domestic Tasks -1.** You're not good around the house.

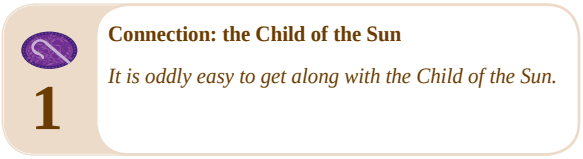
You also have one mundane ability with special rules (detailed above):

- **Nightmare Science 2.** You practice a unique form of science.

Connections

You start the game with two free Connections—





You can also get a level 1 Connection to any other PC by mutual agreement.

Miraculous Abilities

As **Nightmares' Angel**, you have the following miraculous abilities:

- **You are heartless (when not in sunlight).**
  - You only have to worry about blood loss and chest wounds when in sunlight.
  - You may act with a heartless perfection, in the dark.
  - You can heal from almost anything, in the dark.
  - Once a season you can miraculously increase **the Child of the Sun's** Connection to you.
- **You have rejected friendship. In exchange:**
  - Once per week, you may...
    - ...heal wounds beyond medical science.
    - ...protect an innocent from attack.
    - ...prevent or reverse aging and decay.
    - ...release someone from unbearable suffering.
  - You may endure the most awful burdens indefinitely.
  - Once per season, you may expunge an unwanted memory from the world.
- **You were twisted at the Bleak Academy...**
  - ...and learned a marvelous nightmare technology!
  - ...but an awful blasphemy dwells inside you.
  - If you're ever too badly hurt it might escape into the world.
- **You are better than the fools and weaklings around you...**
  - ...and can see through their pathetic deceptions...
  - ...and straight through to their plans.
  - You also tend to encounter people when they're at their lowest.
- **What wounds you, only strengthens you.**
  - Once per season you can turn a wound into a temporary power set, comparable to the bullet points above.
  - You can recover from just about any wound.
  - Once per season, you can draw on a wound for a wish-level effect.
- **You might grow wings of blood and feathers and fire.**
- **You have mastered nightmare technology.**
  - You have access to the Incomparable Nightmare Engine...
  - ...and various other devices.

Health

You'll normally start the game with 2 Normal Health Levels, 1 Tough Health Level, and 2 Divine Health Levels. This is the "normal" level of toughness for a character in **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine,** and it means you can survive a lot.

In fact, you already have—

The truth is, you *used* to have 6 Divine Health Levels. But then you cut out your heart, resolved to never know friendship, wept at the perfidy of lesser creatures, and had the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy stuff a blasphemy into your chest. And each time, instead of letting yourself heal, you metaphysically locked the wound in place to use it as a power source.

So that used four of your Divine Health Levels up.

And you're still going. And even if you take five *more* wounds and die, you have a good chance of dragging yourself back again from the grave. You are, in short, extremely resilient. The life force in you isn't dependent on biology: it's all fueled by the raw will and magnificence of Leonardo de Montreal.

Miracle Points

You have 5 Miracle Points (MP) that you can use to enhance your miraculous abilities or use them more often than usual. Once spent, you'll regain 1 MP/week, up to your normal 5.

You can earn bonus MP, with no particular maximum, through various game mechanics, but you don't really have any *convenient* access to them—probably the best shot you have at picking up extra MP when you need them is your **Sickly** power, below, which can increase your **Sickness** or **Trauma** Issue and occasionally give you MP.

Perks

Characters in this game have a handful of **Perks.** You gain them or improve them by completing quests, and you can have up to 8.

You'll start with these Perks:

0

Connection: the Wishing Boy

No! No no no! You are not connected to him in any way!

This Perk functions as a level 2 Connection but only when you can plausibly pretend to yourself that you're being completely detached and impartial.

1

Connection: the Child of the Sun

It is oddly easy to get along with the Child of the Sun.

1

Connection: ???

At the start of the game, with the player's consent, you may take a free level 1 Connection to any other PC.

Wounded Angel

Herein you will find the stories of your life thus far—recorded, remembered in the game as the miraculous story Arc, or set of Arcs,

Wounded Angel 3.

The powers that you have today come from these the struggles of your past.

Here's how they work.

Heartless

You have no heart inside your chest. That's why stabbing you in the chest is so naïve!

Heartless Perfection

Type: Miraculous Action

Cost:

- **0 MP**—When not in the sun, claim immunity to blood loss, chest wounds, and emotional attacks.
- **1 MP**—After a few minutes in the dark, take 1-2 mechanically perfect actions.
- **2 MP**—After a few minutes in the dark, become mechanically perfect until you leave the dark or the scene ends.
- **4 MP**—Become mechanically perfect from the instant you reach the shadows (or, if you're already in them, from the start of the scene).

Only in the sunlight do you have a heart. Thus, shadow, night, and windowless dark immunizes you against blood loss, chest wounds, and emotional attacks.

Further, once you've been out of the sunlight for a few minutes, you can activate **Heartless** and become mechanically perfect in a heartless skill. You make no errors, maintain a chilling equanimity, and think with cold precision. This does not enhance your speed, strength, or raw will, so a sufficient mob can still overcome you in a fight and characters like **the Prodigy** may sometimes exceed you with a comparable miracle.

Timing and You

When you have a power that works *mid-scene* or *starting mid-scene*, that means that you use it after some meaningful stuff has already happened in the current scene.

When you have a power that works *after a few minutes*, that means that either a few things have to happen while you're setting this up, or nothing is happening at all. Ideally this covers about 5 minutes of game time in a languid scene or 5 minutes of real time in a scene of fast-paced play.

Supreme Heartlessness

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Use this power 1/week.
- **1 MP**—Use this power a second or later time this week.
- **2 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a handful of hours.
- **4 MP**—Use this power instantly.

Spend a few hours away from the light of the sun and activate **Supreme Heartlessness** and you may recover from any debilitating condition, up to and including death. This can in theory cure even Corrupted and Heartlessness, but it's the player and not the character who invokes this power and chooses which conditions to repair.

IC, you're just aware that in the dark, you heal.

Friendless

You have no friends and you may not know love. More precisely, you cannot *admit* to such emotions—even in the privacy of your soul—and if cornered on this point, confronted with proof of friendship or forced into an admission, you must either wound one of your health levels or lose access to the powers below.

I Alone May Save You

Type: Miraculous Action
Cost:

- **0 MP**—Use this power 1/week.
- **1 MP**—Use this power a second or later time this week.
- **2 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a handful of hours.
- **4 MP**—Use this power instantly.

You are a shield to others' innocence.

Have you sacrificed friendship and love to protect others? Or are you like Ayn Rand's Galt, your strength an accidental enabler of the weaknesses of lesser men?

Starting mid-scene, you can invoke **I Alone May Save You** to...

- ...heal the wounds of others, *if and only if* they are beyond ordinary medical science (such as death or transformation).
- ...free someone from unbearable anguish.
- ...protect, save, or shelter an innocent.
- ...prevent or reverse aging and decay.

You can then continue to invoke this power without additional MP cost for the rest of the scene, e.g., if you're freeing a bunch of people from transformation or sheltering an innocent from repeated attack.

This power can only save people from anguish and trouble with a physical or spiritual root; social, emotional, and moral suffering are outside its scope.

Salvation Scenes

Sometimes the whole point of a scene is for you to use this power. In this case, you still can't use it until mid-scene without spending 4 MP, so I recommend that you spend the early part of the scene...

- ...wheeling in and setting up relevant nightmare technology
- ...ranting about the galling small-minded pettiness of other men
- ...explaining why only the nightmare science of Leonardo de Montreal has merit, and/or
- ...arguing vigorously, and possibly with nobody, that you *choose* not to have friends or love anybody.

Holding up the Sky

Type: Imperial Miracle
Cost:

- **0 MP**—Endure a burden indefinitely, after preparing.
- **4 MP**—Use this power instantly.

Given a few hours to prepare, or having survived the first few hours of something terrible that happens, you may invoke **Holding up the Sky** to bear even the most agonizing and impossible burdens indefinitely. You can skip the preparation/survival interval and invoke this power instantly at a cost of 4 MP.

Memory's Surcease

Type: Imperial Miracle, Ritual Power
Cost:

- **0 MP**—Invoke this power 1/season.
- **4 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a season.

Note: This is a specific version of your **Supreme Invocation** power (pg. 143) and counts against its seasonal use.

Once per season, you may invoke this power to expunge a memory from the world, casting up a veil of nightmares between that memory and reality and sending the truth of the matter staggering off through the Outside to the gates of the Bleak Academy.

This functions under the same rules as a wish—specifically:

"I wish that we could just...
forget that that happened."

Accordingly, the normal outcome is that people just forget the matter unless they are willing to fight to hang on to the memory—but the HG may decide that it's more fun to have your nightmare technology go haywire and reverse the event itself, make everyone amnesiac, or unleash brain scrambler beasts on Town instead.

Corrupted

The Bleak Academy turned your dreams to worms and rot inside your head.

The Stuff of Nightmares

Type: Miraculous Action

Cost:

- **0 MP**—After a few minutes' exposure, fish 1-2 components or devices out of nightmares per scene.
- **1 MP**—Push the limits on this a bit.
- **2 MP**—Pull a ton of stuff out of someone's nightmares.

Spend a bit of time either in the presence of someone having a nightmare, or talking about their deepest and most irrational fears, and you can invoke **the Stuff of Nightmares** to tease out a portion of their nightmares as a building material or a simple mundane device.

To the dreamer, a nightmare may seem complex and ethereal; to an iconoclastic and forward-thinking scientist, daring to defy the orthodoxy of Jung, they are easily recognized as simple molecular compositions of principally standardized components, useful in the construction of machines. An eye-devouring rhomboid, for instance, so commonly wrapped around the outer layer of a dream, makes an excellent frictionless component; a truculent gom, however furious its protests, may be teased out into circuitry or rope! In sum, to you, a nightmare serves as the equivalent of a fully-stocked laboratory and wilderness explorer's kit in one.

Even without the more outré applications, with regular access to nightmares you can build complex but ordinary devices (such as radios, dams, computers, and so on) tens or hundreds of times faster than any ordinary boy.

The Sickness Rises

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/week, after a few hours of sleep, your nightmares escape into reality.
- **1 MP**—Use this "power" a second or later time this week.
- **2 MP**—Use this "power" a second or later time in a single day.
- **4 MP**—Use this "power" instantly, even while awake.

Your own nightmares are a different matter. If you let yourself dream them for too long, the world around perturbs and becomes a place of swamp-rot and choking, polluted air—very like some proletariat sense of Hell.[36] This has disturbed your progress on your incomparable Nightmare Map, forcing you to perform your dream-delving while in a white room environment or a desolate wilderness. In Old Molder, you had your mechanical butler wake you exactly 90 minutes into any nightmare, but in Fortitude, you mostly just drink a lot of coffee and pre-pay five times the requested damage deposit.

This isn't really a very great power to have, and I'm sorry. In theory, you could use this offensively by dozing off in the homes of those that you dislike, or to break free if you are ever chained—but this is a minor advantage at best, since conscious use of technology is more suitable to a hero of your stature.

From the Land of Rot and Poison

Type: Imperial Miracle, Ritual Power

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Invoke this power 1/season.
- **4 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a season.

Note: This is a specific version of your **Supreme Invocation** power (pg. 143) and counts against its seasonal use.

Once per season you may open a gate from your nightmares into the world, call out a nightmare horror with whatever powers you describe, and command it to perform a single task. This functions as a wish would, and specifically the wish:

"I wish [name of the horror] would crawl out of my nightmares and do [task] for me."

You must normally sleep for a few hours first, as per *The Sickness Rises*, but this limitation is cosmetic and intended for consistency only, so if you need to work around it the HG should be as lenient as dramatically possible.

36 *This has been adapted a little bit for* **"Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon"***—normally, you'd have a red world of fire and suffering in here, and you still can if that's what you'd prefer or expect!*

Glorious

You are better than everyone around you.

Put like that it seems like a good thing. But it's not. It's a wound. It's a horror. It's a crime against your soul. It's good to be the incomparable Leonardo de Montreal, but to live in a world of callow, vicious, scheming fools—that's hardly an ideal arrangement!

Superiority

Type: Miraculous Action

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Starting mid-scene, invoke this power now and then with stuff in between.
- **1 MP**—Starting mid-scene, use this power on multiple characters in quick succession.
- **2 MP**—Starting mid-scene, use this power on everyone in the room.
- **4 MP**—Open a scene by cold-reading as many people as you want.

You can see through the pathetic deceptions of other men. Invoke **Superiority** after a few minutes of interacting with a character to determine one of the following:

- A one-sentence description of how they are most likely to betray you.
- A one-sentence summary of the wickedest thought in their mind.
- Whether they are being honest with you, and why.

You can use this power against any given target once per scene.

Flash of Insight

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/week, with work, you have a flash of insight into someone's plans against you.
- **1 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a week.
- **2 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a single day.
- **4 MP**—Use this power instantly.

Spend a few hours pacing and talking to yourself and trying to figure out somebody's plans against you and you will have a flash of insight that pierces through to the heart of any formal or inchoate plans against you they may have made. You might recognize that in a mere three days someone is likely to stab you through your chest with a railway spike, say, or realize that a teacher has readied a pop quiz you may or may not be prepared for in the hopes that it will detrimentally affect the grades of students like yourself. If your target has not yet made any plans against you, you discover this as well.

XP Actions

Each in-game week, every PC has the opportunity to take two "XP Actions" and earn the group XP. Usually these will be the three XP Actions "in genre" for a pastoral game:

- **Shared Action**
- **Shared Reactions**
- **Slice of Life**

You'll try to connect to people while doing chores or talking, or you'll be out in the world and you'll have a moment or mood that sticks with you. As **Nightmares' Angel,** you'll also have the option "I immediately (Suffer) Trauma as an XP Action!"

Materials

Once—when you were young, and foolish, and naive—you used mundane substances as the foremost materials for your devices.

You laugh! You shake your head! But it was so!

Soap shavings, metal, wire, and lint; ash and wood; bubbles and wine; dandruff, teeth, and even human hair—these were the substances of your craft. And they have their place, of course, even now. They have their uses.

But how simple-minded you must have been!

It is beneath you, beneath any great inventor, you now know, to build your works from principally material dross. The substance of invention is not any physical thing, but rather nightmare; it is not eccentricity, as the lumpen claim, but *simple practicality* to recognize that it is from the stuff of wicked dreams that greatness must be built.

General Wounded Angel Abilities

If the above are the wounds you picked up along the way, this is the path that marks your *learning to live with your life in general.*

Sickly

Type: Special **Cost:** —

You are prone to trials and your life is a sorrowful thing.

Once per session you may do all of the following, in order:

- declare yourself under attack by corruption or trauma;
- declare a suitable:
  - **(Suffer) Corruption** or
  - **(Suffer) Trauma**

  XP action—basically, you experience surreal effects and then your corruption, sickness, or ongoing psychological damage gets worse; *and then*
- automatically pick up a point of the **Sickness** Issue unless your Sickness Issue is either at 5 or has just recently been resolved.

This power is functionally a narrative one—from an IC perspective, it's not the power to *be* sickly but the power to *be right about how much your life sucks.*

You will receive a bonus MP at Sickness 1, 3, and 5, as well as when the Issue "resolves," making this power one of your more reliable methods for recovering MP.

Oh, You Fool

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost:** —

Something in your fate means that you tend to see people at their worst and most helpless.

When someone makes a terrible mistake, or gets into terrible trouble, or otherwise shows their worst or most vulnerable side, it is inherently probable that you are nearby and watching. Deciding which scenes you actually show up in is a player-level matter; what this power gives you is an inherent boost to the dramatic appropriateness of your showing up, as if you'd established that you were nearby.

Nightmare Devices

Type: Special **Cost:** —

As **Nightmares' Angel**, you begin play with the following miscellaneous devices:

- the Abhorrent Sun-Sustaining Superconductor (pg. 142).
- the Mechanism of Original Sin (pg. 129).
- your Ritually Impure Manservant Machine (pg. 119).
- your Outside-Measuring Caliper (pg. 129).
- the Incomparable Nightmare Engine (pg. 126).

You may also wish to have a tool belt or pocketed coat stocked with miscellaneous ephemera such as goms, eye-devouring rhomboids, inverting maws, and the like (pg. 139)—

Freakish nightmare devices that can act as a +1 or sometimes even +2 Tool for your Science!

Arc Powers

Sickly is your "Arc power"—you get it for *being* on one of the Arcs that grant Sickly. If you change to a different Arc, it's replaced by whatever power that Arc offers. That could be Sickly, but for most Arcs it's either Immortality or the MP-regeneration power "Frantic."

The rest of the powers below are permanent, whether or not you're currently on the **Wounded Angel** Arc, and you'll keep them even if you lose the wounds with which they might logically seem to correlate.

The Incomparable Nightmare Engine

Occasionally someone will suggest that ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** is comparable, at which time you may wish to gently remind them of the Incomparable Nightmare Engine's name.

(Cage for a) Blasphemy

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost:** —

At the Bleak Academy the Headmaster poisoned you. He filled you up with an awful blasphemy. And now, because of that, if you ever lose your last Divine Health Level, the sky will fill with stormclouds, the ground will seep with foul water, and you will begin to vomit out poison, rotten chunks of wood or flesh, and corrupting spirits from your mouth and your hollow chest.

And then—

Well, you don't know what happens then. You don't know the rest. You don't want to find out. The Headmaster forced a wish of poison, rot and drowning into your chest, but you don't know or *want* to know the details; all you know is that shortly after that last Divine Health Level is lost, that wish will go into effect across Town or wherever you happen to be.

Maybe it'll only last a few hours. Maybe you can stop it by healing up that last health level. You don't know.

If you permanently wound your last two Divine Health levels (right) this poison ravens out but if it fades away or is dealt with or otherwise resolves, you may contain the blasphemy indefinitely by refusing any recovery from your wounds.

Sustaining the Sun

When the sun went out, you used abhorrent superconductive technology to help create a new one. Strictly speaking the name **Abhorrent Sun-Sustaining Superconductor** is a misnomer, since the machinery functions more to *cause* the sun than to *sustain* it—even if you shut the device down and took your heart back and... used it to power something else or as an amusing conversation piece or something... the sun would probably last another ten billion, three hundred and sixty-seven years at least. However, first, this presumes that nothing further will happen to desolarize the world, when in fact sun-threatening events are quite common and a backup system is more than a little advantageous; and second, it presumes that you give a flying fortress what the Horizon Terminological Institute has to say, when in fact you have long since stopped even *opening* their letters.

Empowered Wounds

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost:**

- **0 MP, 1 Divine Health Level**—Empower one wound per season.
- **4 MP, 1 Divine Health Level**—Empower one wound at any time.

When something really, really bad happens to you, you can turn it into a power source. This removes one Divine Health Level from your character sheet, binding it inextricably to the wound, but gives you the following abilities:

- A new miraculous ability, usually something you can use weekly or at any time.
- A new Imperial ability that helps or strengthens you—that is, its focus must be on *you*, not on attacking or changing someone or something else.
- Optionally, a third ability that completes or competes in some fashion against one of the other two.

You have rough control over the kinds of powers you get, but may have to experiment some to fully define or discover them. These powers replace the normal benefits of a wound[37].

Empowered wounds cannot heal and no one can free you from them save yourself—you must invoke **Recover**, below, before *any* healing effect of any sort can lift the burden from your flesh or soul.

If you're confused about how to handle wounds and removing a health level from your sheet, proceed as follows:

- If the thing you're transforming isn't a wound, take a wound or use it *to* wound your highest remaining Health Level anyway.
- If you just wounded a Normal or Tough Health level, swap the wound with the wound in a Divine Health level.
- Remove the new wound and the Divine Health level simultaneously from your character.

37 Alas! You will never know the normal pleasures of a wound. "I've just lost my hand!" the others will celebrate.† Or "Look! A sneeze!" But these simple joys elude you. Your only benefits from your wounds are terrifying miraculous powers.

† People do not actually celebrate this.

Recover

Type: Special **Cost:** —

You may stop empowering a wound at any time, allowing you—potentially—to recover from conditions acquired in play. The associated powers go away and you gain a new, wounded Divine Health Level. You do not immediately heal; rather, healing becomes possible.

As a special exception to ordinary procedure, self-healing powers may remain active long enough to help you recover from the wound that created them. For instance, if someone cuts off your head, it's perfectly legitimate to:

- take a cool temporary power where your head flies around and a slower weekly power "neck viscera hands" that lets you knit your spine back together;
- fly your head around for a while enjoying the thrill of decapitation; *and then,*
- when being a head in the game gets boring, disempower the wound, hook your neck viscera hands in, and start healing.

Suffering is a power source for you: it's painful and awful and you do not like it one bit but it is rarely incapacitating for very long.

Supreme Invocation

Type: Imperial Miracle, Ritual Power **Cost:**

- **0 MP**—1/season, invoke a wish-level power from one of your wounds.
- **4 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a season.

Once per season you may use an empowered wound as justification for a wish-level effect—wish that something were so, tie it thematically to the wound, and it becomes so. Normally this is instant but if the connection to the wound is ephemeral or vague then the process takes some time. For instance, if a head wound compromises your memory, you might be able to use this power to erase an incident (for the most part) from the memory of Town. Ultimately, you can probably do anything at all here: the question is, *what do you want to wish for?* And *how can you tie this to your core and current wounds?*

Once an Angel

Type: Imperial Miracle, Ritual Power **Cost:**

- **0 MP**—Invoke this power 1/season.
- **4 MP**—Use this power when you've already used **Supreme Invocation** this season.

Note: This is a specific version of your **Supreme Invocation** power, drawing on any wound you like, and counts against its seasonal use.

You keep thinking that if you really wanted to, you could grow wings of red and blood and feathers and orange and fire. They'd be awesome for flying too close to the sun because there'd be no phase transition preceding falling.

But if you can grow wings like that, then you're not a human. Maybe you're not even a person. It could mean you're a devil or a changeling phoenix child or that your memory regarding the salvation of the sun isn't as accurate as you think.

So, so far, you don't.

The Wayward Heart

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost:**

- **0 MP**—Connect to the Child of the Sun 1/season.
- **4 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a season.

Once per season you may invoke this power while talking to **the Child of the Sun.**

Your heart will beat inside the sun. She'll gain 1 point of inherent Connection to you (up to a maximum of 5) and her Connection with you will rise to 5 for the remainder of the Scene.

You, who have sacrificed yourself to save another, may become closer to them thereby.

Though, her player has the option to reject these benefits. Don't be too creepy about them or she just might!

Deeds of the Binder

2

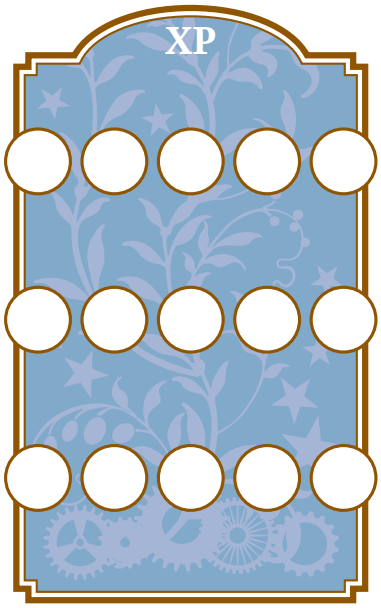
Bonus XP

You're working on some grand project of nightmare science—to be ready upon the completion of this quest.

But how shall it function?

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by **proposing a theory about how the device will function, how it will be built, what its design should be, or something unusual it could be used for.**

Note that you do have to actually consider/entertain the theory IC—it doesn't technically have to be *aloud*, once you've proposed the theory actually thinking about it can be confined to your inner monologue, but the *point* is to consider it in play and have it potentially shape your behavior and actions, not to come up with interesting and goofy things to say at the gaming table.



The Deeds of the Binder

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle **Cost:** — You may undertake a grand project of nightmare science as a 15-XP quest. This isn't necessarily stronger (or, for that matter, weaker) than anything else you do—

It's just a way to break free of the normal rules structures that bind you by committing real time and part of your advancement to the project. Maybe you get it done faster or better or with less Will than mundane Science; maybe it's cheaper or more effective than or breaks the usual limits on your miracles.

The point is, as someone who has studied at the Bleak Academy and become a god of dream and nightmare, you may pursue a 15-XP quest to:

- Imbue some of yourself, or some of your occult power, into an object, person, or thing.
- Summon out a vaster strength from some wicked power or wound.
- Conjure or create a servant, reshape a region, or construct a fortress.

This then manifests as a miracle but you don't have to use an action to sustain it—you can "stay on the quest" for up to a season to keep the miracle active.

Later on, if you develop your **Wounded Angel** Arc further, you'll learn to make grand ritual attacks on your enemies or to reshape the cosmos with projects such as this.

The Indistinguishable-from-Humanity Machine

Leonardo VII, the mechanical version of Nightmares' Angel, is an astonishing mechanical man constructed so realistically as to be indistinguishable from a human. When someone attempts to distinguish him from a human, Leonardo VII may point them irritably at his operating manual; it says quite clearly, on page 17 and again on page 32, that this can not be done.

Actions and Issues

Here's some things you're often doing, along with notes on the kind of Scene that I'd expect to grow around them.

Declarations

Monologuing, before a decision

Decisive Action

Proposing a theory—then trying a risky experiment

Science, Faith, and Sorcery

If you find yourself monologuing or theorizing, the trick to giving those words dramatic payoff is to have them lead to your actually *doing* something—taking a risk.

Trouble

Getting *way* too worked up over stuff

Obsessive Action

Going way too far trying to live up to your self-image

Never Say Die!

Doing things you oughtn't

Wicked Action

You tend to be a little high-strung—you'll get worked up, rant, and do over-the-top things at the drop of a hat.

You don't let anyone or anything beat you—not while there's breath in you to fight.

You're not that great with temptation. Sometimes the Mechanism for Original Sin will tell you that something you want to do is *wrong*. Or maybe just unhealthy. But—how can you resist? You want to do it! Besides, this is for... this is for science! Or maybe for... revenge? Maybe even for the sake of a potentially useful coworker who you don't think of as a friend at all!

Ritual

Activating the Incomparable Nightmare Engine or other terrible powers

invoking a Ritual

This doesn't *necessarily* happen, but your supreme invocations have a tendency to also invoke a formalized scene—the kind of thing where, in a TV show, there'd be a lot of stock footage and music. If the HG cares about that sort of thing, it'll play out as a "ritual," which operates on weird and atypical rules.

Issues

If you pick up a **Complex,** I recommend it be an obsession with your impending doom.

Your most common **Vice** Issue is risking your sanity on controlled delves into your own nightmares or into dangerous parts of Town in order to understand what's going on. It's also relatively common for the Mechanism of Original Sin to go on the fritz and give you a "Vice" that's really just ordinary behavior that you believe (because your mechanical conscience tells you so) is wrong.

Timeline 1: Playing through your Childhood

The HG may want to play through your childhood at an accelerated pace—probably about 50x acceleration, covering a year in about the same time you'd usually cover a week.

In a game like that, your history would look like this:

Before Play: You're in an evil orphanage. The sun dies. You re-make it.

Age 6-9: This is when the game would start.

Meeting People: Sometimes you escape for a bit and go over the hills to Fortitude. You may dislike the PCs at first meeting, but pretty soon you decide that you'd like to *try* this friendship thing. You can temporarily replace "Natural Scientist" with a quest where you propose theories about the other PCs and how to relate to them—or just fold them under the general rubric of natural science.

The Hidden Library: You may wind up spending a lot of time with the various miscreants and ruffians who frequent the genuinely astonishing Archive of Professor Hideo Hayashi in Fortitude.

The Outside Stirs: Sometimes, when you're in Fortitude, you notice that the Outside is stirred up. Is it because you saved the sun? Is it because something out there *wants* you? Or is it something to do with the glass dragon? And why are you drawn to Big Lake? You're not wicked! You aren't somebody who deserves to die!... are you?

Age 10-11: You escape the orphanage for good and set up in Old Molder.

Age 10-13: You give up on Chuubo and/or the PCs and acquire **Friendless.**

Age 10-14: You go to the Bleak Academy and acquire **Corrupted** and **Glorious.**

Age 10-15: You build the Incomparable Nightmare Engine back at your home in Old Molder.

You're drawn to set yourself up in Fortitude, though, to keep tabs on the stirred-up Outside.

Age 16: The present.

Timeline 2: Playing through your Childhood

This timeline is for playing through your childhood, if the HG and/or the player of **the Child of the Sun** decide to complicate things a little and have Jade Irinka die in play.

In a game like that, your history would look like this:

Before Play: You're in an evil orphanage.

Age 6: This is when the game would start.

Meeting People: Sometimes you escape for a bit and go over the hills to Fortitude. You may dislike the PCs at first meeting, but pretty soon you decide that you'd like to *try* this friendship thing. You can temporarily replace "Natural Scientist" with a quest where you propose theories about the other PCs and how to relate to them—or just fold them under the general rubric of natural science.

The Hidden Library: You may wind up spending a lot of time with the various miscreants and ruffians who frequent the genuinely astonishing Archive of Professor Hideo Hayashi in Fortitude.

The Outside Stirs: the Outside isn't stirred up yet, so any investigations you do for your "**the Outside Stirs"** quest are just a general study of the edge between the world and the Outside. Similarly, if you're drawn to Big Lake, you probably don't immediately think it's "because I'm wicked, and wicked things should drown there." You're just... called to the lake.

Age 8: You meet Jade Irinka, the angel of the Houses of the Sun. She is the most awesome adult lady ever.

You dream that she's going to die, either before or after meeting her, and start working on an Abhorrent Sun-Sustaining Superconductor to stop that from happening.

If Jade finds out, she probably doesn't like it—not because she wants to die, she just thinks the Superconductor is Abhorrent—and she may even destroy it and force you to start over.

Age 9: The Headmaster of the Bleak Academy kills Jade Irinka. You rip out your heart and use it to finish your Sun-Sustaining Superconductor and kindle a new sun in the sky.

Later, Billy Sovereign, the worst bully at your orphanage, stabs you in the chest, but it doesn't work, because you don't have a heart there.

Age 9-12: You set Billy Sovereign on fire. He doesn't die. It is... really disturbing.

Age 10-11: You escape the orphanage for good and set up in Old Molder.

Age 10-13: You give up on Chuubo and/or the PCs and acquire **Friendless.**

Age 10-14: You go to the Bleak Academy and acquire **Corrupted** and **Glorious.**

Age 10-15: You build the Incomparable Nightmare Engine back at your home in Old Molder.

You're drawn to set yourself up in Fortitude, though, to keep tabs on the stirred-up Outside. You discover that Billy Sovereign's been hanging out there a fair bit too. I wonder why!

Age 16: The present.

Timeline 3: Starting in the Modern Day

In a game that starts in the present, your history is a little simpler.

The sun died and you rekindled it when you were around 8-9.

You gave up on Chuubo around age 13, which is also when you went to the Bleak Academy and came back.

You came to Fortitude to investigate the threat of the Outside 1-3 months back.

The Prodigy

Fact Sheet

Summary

You are **Natalia Koutolika, the Prodigy,** a Russian émigré to Town. You are talented and have the potential to be a hero, but for years your heart was frozen and it has only just begun its thaw.

Primary Quests

- Enjoy the peaceful moments—the lulls between the storms.
- Hunt down an evil magic roof snake born from your past trauma.
- Thaw your frozen heart.

Bonus XP When...

Players wince in sympathy or "aww, poor thing" in sadness at what Natalia goes through.

Powers

You're incredibly talented—a once-in-a-generation prodigy near the peak of human mental and physical potential. In particular you have access to a legendary strength of spirit: what some martial artists call "overflowing Chi" or "Ki" and some other PCs call "the wishing power of the heart."

In your day-to-day life you're just an extremely competent teenaged girl. When you push yourself to excel you'll rival pulp science adventurers, cinematic kung fu heroes, and even supernatural or divine warriors out of legend.

Common Variations

Shake it up! For an atypical **Prodigy** experience, pick one or more of the following:

- You are Antony Yuryevich, a boy.
- You are Natalia Cordova, from Spain.
- You are Natalie Coutourier, from France.
- You are Zeinaba Kiros, from a hidden kingdom near Ghana.

Character Description

You are **Natalia Koutolika,** a Russian émigré to Town.

You lived in Russia and you were cold. You were cold and hard and bitter and you were just a kid. You were smart and you were street-smart. You were fierce and you were strong. You were truly incomparable—one of the best, perhaps *the* best, in an entire mortal generation—and you were in despair; for no matter how strong or smart or clever a little Russian girl was, no matter how many math problems you could solve or black belts you could beat up, there wasn't any way that you could change the world.

Nobody could.

That's what you thought, anyway, until your family moved to Town.

This is a really weird place. It's probably not even a *real* place—like, maybe this is a dream, or a KGB experiment, or something. The people here don't notice it as much as you do, but this isn't like any foreign country you've ever heard of. It's not like America or Greenland or France or anywhere like that. It's too peaceful. It's too good. People anchor their laundry lines with little bits of floating rock and the rats talk way too much, way more than any rats you've ever heard of, anyway, and the fact that you can't tell whether they're speaking Russian or English or for that matter whether *you* are speaking Russian or English is disturbing on a different level entirely.

Your family just laughs at you. "You are just being silly, Natashenka[38]," they say, when you go on about stuff like that. When you explain to them that Town cannot possibly exist.

But that's OK.

It's OK that it's like this, and it's OK that nobody believes you that it's strange, because somehow—somehow this place is *good* for you. Somehow when you look around at all the people pretending to believe in a peaceful world it makes your heart hurt with happiness. Somehow when you look up in the sky and see the shining of the sun, it makes you feel *better* about the world. Somehow it's knocked the burden from you. Somehow it's melted you. Somehow this place and its people have made you laugh, and then made you *care*, and then made you believe—

O the madness of the world!

38 Your family calls you Natashenka even though it is not your real name and takes almost 13.5% longer to say. The familiarity of the nickname comforts you but the inefficiency is infuriating.

—that it matters. That something matters. That there is a point.

Because you know what?

You know what?

If there can be a place like this—if there can be things like this, if there can be stuff like this, if there can be a place like *TOWN*—then the world is not as closed and terrible and barren and lifeless as you thought, as you knew, as you were certain it was always going to be. If the world secretly has places like *this* in it, then it's OK, then everything's OK, then it's a world where it's *possible* for someone like you to fight for justice, to make a difference, to dream of making everything in the whole world *better*.

And you will, you know. You will fight.

And you will win.

Home and Family

You live in **Fortitude**, that sleepy and sprawling fishing neighborhood by the docks of the Big Lake.

Your father is named Yuri. He has a small fishing boat. Sometimes he helps out at the bait store which is run by Old Ivan. Your mother is named Lenya. She works at the bakery on the weekends but during the week she stays home with your 2-year-old brother Sergey. Your tutor is named Nikolai. He doesn't seem to mind that you're a bit skittish around teachers and sometimes skip some of your lessons. Some of your older male cousins, such as Vanya and Aleksey, have also moved to Town.

All 48 Russian immigrants in Fortitude (from Old Ivan at the bait shop to the Widow Morozova in her mansion) treat you as family.

Natalie Coutourier

Some players may find **Natalie Coutourier,** the French version of the Prodigy, a more mature and sophisticated character choice.

In addition to being French, Natalie Coutourier is an eternally youthful vampire princess. Like most vampire princesses, she can walk safely in the sunlight and mask the disconcertingly predatory vampiric body language. She grew to resent the endless politics of the vampire courts and came to Town. You may wish to replace **Frozen Heart** with something vampire-specific. Her chronological age is probably 80-150 and her mental age is probably 15-20, where it will likely permanently remain.

Hints

"Once upon a time, a witch and a glass-maker made a dragon out of glass and taught it to hate the world. It raged and it would have destroyed everything; only, it shattered, instead."

— Campaign Premise

Part of this campaign is about that glass dragon, and specifically that...

- ...the glass dragon is coming back to life...
- ...a new one is being made; *and/or*
- ..the PCs will satisfyingly investigate the reasons and truths behind this story.

I think there should be a parallel between you and that glass dragon. You're not the same thing or anything (because it just doesn't quite fit), but you come to Town with this despair in you, this world-hate and this suppressed rage, and then Town is going to shatter that.

So...

It's possible that you'll feel weirdly at home with any dream-witches or glass-makers you meet.

It's possible that if the glass dragon comes back to life, or a new one shows up, that it'll see itself in you and vice versa—that it'll be your reflection.

It's possible that one of your roles in the story is to mourn for a glass monster nobody else would mourn for, or to show it whatever answer *you* find to despair, or to keep people from being too quick to kill it or vice versa if it does come back.

That's why your first quest is to fight something a bit mysterious, a bit connected to you, and a bit like a dragon, and to kill it—so you can see where that path does and doesn't lead.

Natalia Cordova

Natalia Cordova, the Spanish version of the Prodigy, adopts the hero identity "Masked Justice."

She's the child of retired pulp adventure heroes and grew up having all kinds of adventures and learning to handle herself in the world. Then something awful happened, like trouble with the government or being captured by evil were-sharks, and it froze her heart and made her family move to Town.

She hasn't put on a mask and been a swashbuckling hero in over a year and a half—or, if you arrive in Town at age 5, *ever*—but maybe in the first story or two of the game, she'll realize that it's time.

Quests

You start the game with three *quests*, and have the power to swap them out or pick up more—you can pursue up to four quests at any given time.

I've chosen three quests to...

- ...serve as your basic, default character motivation in play ("Peaceful Moments").
- ...give you extra direction in the first story or two ("The Golden Snake of the Rooftops").
- ...tie you into the campaign plot ("Thaw Your Heart").

Bonus XP

Peaceful Moments and **Thaw your Heart** are very personal quests—they earn bonus XP when you *feel* certain things. I've prepared props for you that add a bonus layer of meaning here, but at the core, you just have to decide and then emote that your PC is feeling certain things and you can earn a bonus XP. You can get that bonus XP up to once per fun scene and up to once per fifteen minutes.

As for the middle quest, **The Golden Snake of the Rooftops,** you can earn a bonus XP for this quest once per in-game week by picking a scene from that quest's list of scene options to play out.

Other Quests

If you're interested in another quest or two, and you have access to **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake,** I'd recommend looking at the quests for...

- ...becoming a **Friend to the Birds** of Fortitude.
- ...being an **Explorer** and traveling the paths of Big Lake.
- ...spending time out on the water in the **Love for the Water** quest.
- ...becoming a more **Dependable Person.**

Zeinaba Kiros

Zeinaba Kiros, the African version of the Prodigy, is the princess of a hidden kingdom.

Zeinaba's father's evil half-brother obtained either American or Soviet backing for a palace coup, exiling Zeinaba into a pointless life of soirees, private jets, and high-class boarding schools. This wouldn't be so bad, but she's discovered that he's devastated the country in her absence. I'm leaving that devastation nonspecific but I assume it involved lots of misery among either the populace, family members left behind, or both, as well as some sort of psychic, Atlantean, or ancient astronaut technology which her uncle had uncovered.

If she gets to Town at 5 years old, she probably just caught a brief confusing glimpse of what her uncle was doing before being sent first to America and then to Town. Otherwise, she probably lives a happy and privileged life until around age 10-13, when she borrows a small plane, pilots it back to her native country for a jaunt, and discovers the devastation. When she realizes that she's been enjoying life while this horror goes on at home, her heart breaks; when she realizes that she can't fix it, her heart freezes.

At Peace

You Don't Have Time For This.

Peaceful Moments

15 XP Quest

: Chibi-Quest

You like the simple, peaceful moments—the moments after the storms, when the metaphorical waters smooth and everything is OK.

You're not really good at *accepting* them—

If there's anyone else around to share the moment with, it's hard for you not to immediately turn your thoughts to everything that's wrong—

But those are the moments that you live for.

To earn a bonus XP for this quest, all you have to do is decide and emote that this is one of those moments. Take a cup of tea and stare out at the water. Sit up on a roof and listen to the birds. Fall over and zone out because a big job's been done. You can express this any way you like but I'd recommend printing out and holding up your **At Peace** sign (opposite).

It says **At Peace** on the side you're showing everyone, and on the other side, it reminds you: *You Don't Have Time For This.*

Rewards

Completing this quest earns you a Recharge Token—somehow the peace you've found has coalesced into substance, not literally, probably not literally anyway, but into substance in the form of a trinket, knickknack, smooth stone, colored shell, memory, or gift that you treasure.

Once in the future, you can think back to that, or roll it in your hand, and it will restore your Will and MP ("wish power") to full.

Bonus XP

You need peace. You love the simple, quiet moments. But it's hard for you to accept them. It's hard for you to *allow* yourself to stop.

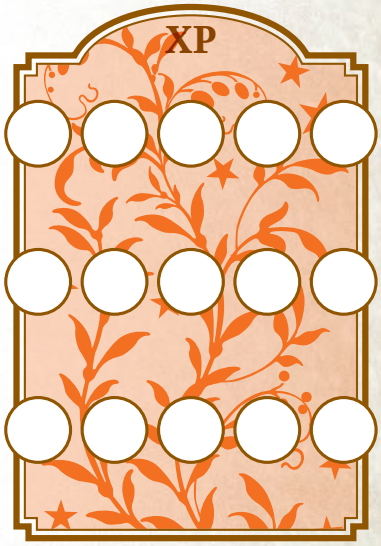
I've prepared a sign for this —

A sign to show that you're at peace for a moment, that things are OK for the moment, and that you're relaxing. You can earn a bonus XP at any time (though only once per 15 minutes/scene) by expressing that emotion—normally, by holding up the sign.

The back side of the sign will remind you that you *don't have time.*

If you're not playing in a place where you can actually hold up the sign, it's OK to just remind yourself quietly of what it says, or, if you must, ignore the back side in its entirety.

What's your sign?



The Golden Snake of the Rooftops

25 XP Quest

1:

2:

4:

5:

2

There's a reason that your heart froze. There's a reason that you stopped believing in the world.

Something *wrong* happened. You were betrayed by a role model. Or somebody you cared about died. Or somebody sacrificed themselves for you. Or you failed and somebody got hurt.

Deep inside you is a core of rage; and it's gotten loose.

It escaped you when your boat sailed in to Town. You don't know how you know that. But you know. It took some of your memories, some of your rage, some of your grief, and now it is a great gold-scaled python, poisonous and strong, that lives on the rooftops of Fortitude.

You have to hunt it down and stop it from hurting anyone else.

If you can kill it—that's absolution, isn't it? And peace? And forgiveness?

Variations

Your nemesis might not be a golden snake—it could be your doppelganger (flesh or glass), or your shadow, or a shapeless evil, or a vast and wicked bird.

Or maybe the thing you're hunting isn't anything *directly* connected to your heart. It could be that there's something from your past that ties into the Outside somehow—that you realize after hearing a legend or story in Town that one of the people involved in your backstory was the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy, or one of the phenomena involved was the glass dragon or the Outside, and you go out and research stuff like that and listen to stories until you find what you're looking for at the archive of Professor Hideo Hayashi.

Anyway, the point of this quest is twofold:

- ...to give you an excuse to wander Fortitude, act a bit suspicious, meet the other PCs, and think of yourself as a hero of justice, while also keeping the actual menace to the shadows and the roofs and other places that don't disturb the sleepy nature of the region; *and*
- ...to give you a reason to talk about what happened in your past.

So if you change up how the quest works, that should be the core of the stuff that gives you its bonus XP.

Rewards

By default this is a straightforward epic struggle. It ends with a dramatic scene where you obtain a blessed spear, stab the snake through the eye with it, and leave it pinned to the roof as its body slips over the edge to choke it on its own weight.

That would end by earning you a new "Perk":

- ...a new Health Level, either a **Normal** or **Tough Health Level,** depending on how much work it felt like you put into the quest; *or*
- ...a cool blessed spear.

It's also possible that this is more about coming to terms with your past, in which case it might end with your making an alliance with the snake or doing some sort of vaguely sappy "accept your heart and it will stop attacking people in the shape of an evil snake" thing. That would earn you a Connection to the snake, perhaps, or some cool new trick for a Skill.

The Golden Snake of the Rooftops

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...someone accuses you of controlling the snake or being the snake.
- ...you have a scary fight scene with the snake and lose, run away, or can't finish it off.
- ...you track it to its lair at "Madcaps' Nave," atop the Archive of Professor Hideo Hayashi, where it nests with bits and pieces of your memories.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...prowling the rooftops.
- ...making a new friend/acquaintance while out hunting the snake.
- ...helping someone who's in trouble.
- ...talking about your past in Russia, reflecting on (IC) and developing (OOC) the memories that the snake is nesting on.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Wincing

Your bonus XP emotion is *sympathy* or *pathos*—you want to tug at the players' heartstrings. Maybe it's because you're struggling onwards on bleeding feet across a field of broken glass. Or maybe it's because you're a lonely outsider standing in the snow and despairing for humanity and the world while everybody is celebrating Christmas inside. Maybe it's because everybody you've ever loved turned out to be a KGB assassin participating in a program to break your mind—or maybe it's just because you really wanted to give somebody Valentine's Day chocolates but you couldn't find a way to admit that to yourself.

As some of these examples may suggest, and as a special rule, you're also allowed to get bonus XP from overshooting, melodramatically *failing* to tug at the heartstrings and provoking laughter instead because you're just plain trying too hard.

The standard expressions for sympathy are...

- ...wincing.
- ...saying, "Wince!"
- ...or emitting an *aww!*

Each such wince earns you one XP.

You can earn up to 1 wince XP every 15 minutes. If another player *challenges* you to push yourself, despair, or otherwise do something appropriately (sym)pathetic, and you manage to earn a wince or *aww!*, you earn 1 XP that isn't bounded by this rule.

Thaw Your Heart (aka "A Troubled Protagonist")

35 XP Quest

1:

2:

This quest begins the story "Flowers in the Ice," pg. 495.

You want to believe in the world. You want hope. You want friends. You want light. You want life.

But it's hard!

You don't want to admit it when something touches your heart. You don't even want to *notice* it. If you do notice that you've gotten too emotionally close to someone, you tend to freak out. You *know* that it's only going to get you or them hurt later on. You have trouble coping with the presence of **the Child of the Sun** (or, if necessary, some other Main Character that the HG decides should be the in-story emissary of the concept of light)—you can't deal with how you feel in the presence of incarnate hope, she scares and awes you.

To earn a bonus XP for this quest, all you have to do is decide and emote that something *did* reach your heart—even if you won't admit it IC. You can express this any way you like but I'd recommend printing out and holding up your **Touched** sign (opposite).

It says **Touched** on the side you're showing everyone, and on the other side, it reminds you: *This will end in pain.*

Rewards

On completing this quest or any of its variations, you can get a new sign and stop thinking that it'll end in pain every time something touches your heart;[39] plus you'll get a reward:

- You can you have a dramatic scene where your heart thaws and you accept that life has a point and people are good, accompanied by:
  - ...a new miraculous ability—typically:
    - ...some "power" suitable to a legendary martial artist or assassin and costing 1 MP for each use.
    - ...a defensive ability that lets you reduce the level of wound from a physical trauma once per week, or more often with MP.
    - ...a power that lets you wave away circumstantial obstacles in the way of appearing at or descending from high places, normally limited to the possible-but-impractical but including outright impossible options if you spend 4 MP.
  - Or:
    - ...a new level 1 Bond tying you in some fashion to the Child of the Sun, *plus;*
    - ...you get to replace your level -1 Connection with her with a level 1 Connection instead.
- Or, instead of a dramatic scene and a power, you can celebrate a birthday, growing one year older.

Afterwards, I suggest reviewing the notes on pg. 494 and moving on to **"An Unlikely Friendship"** (pg. 360).

39 although sometimes you'll get a new sign for the followup quest that won't be much better

Thaw Your Heart
(aka "A Troubled Protagonist")

Bonus XP

You don't want to admit it when something touches your heart. You don't want to notice it. It's really uncomfortable. It challenges your image of yourself.

But it keeps happening

I've made a sign for this. It's to show that you've been touched by something. That it's reached you. You can earn a bonus XP at any time (though only once per 15 minutes/scene) by expressing that emotion—normally, by holding up the sign.

...the back side of the sign reminds you that this will only end in pain.

If you're not playing in a place where you can actually hold up the sign, it's OK to just remind yourself quietly of what it says, or, if you must, ignore the back side in its entirety.

XP

(I'm) Touched

This will end in pain.

Abilities

You have **8 Will** and the following mundane abilities:

- **Martial Arts 3** You're an awesome martial artist.
- **Mathematics 3.** You're a math prodigy.
- **Dance 1.** You know your way around a dance floor.
- **Student 1.** You know your way around a school.
- **Russian Émigré 0.** You are uncomfortable with your heritage.

You have one mundane ability with special rules (detailed below):

- **Cool 3.** You are hard to hurt, embarrass, corrupt, or co-opt.

See also **Tireless** and **Mad Skills**, below.

Connections

You start the game with four free Connections—

- **[PC of your Choice] 2.** They remind you of someone you've lost.
- **The Koutolika Family 1.** You're comfortable with your family.
- **Fortitude Rats 1.** You don't know what it is, but you get along with them.
- **The Child of the Sun -1.** You don't know how to deal with someone like this.

If you're in a 1-player game, or a 2-player game where the Child of the Sun is the other PC, you can choose an NPC for the free Connection. You don't have to choose the free Connection immediately, although ideally you should choose within the first few sessions.

Character Variations

Variations on **the Prodigy** may choose different level 3 Skills here, e.g. replacing Mathematics with Superior Vampire for Natalie Coutourier or Martial Arts with Adventurer for Natalia Cordova.

Unusual Abilities

As Natalia, you have the following unusual abilities:

- **You're a hero and a prodigy, good at handling the tough stuff.**
  - You get more done in any given week than most.
  - You're hard to trick, mess up, or oppose with mundane actions.
  - Your level 3+ Skills become more impressive as your Heroism Issue rises.
- **You have strong "Chi" (aka "wishing power/ miracle points/MP").**
  - You can accomplish a mundane action "perfectly" (and with perfect timing).
  - You can enhance your strength, speed, and clarity.
  - You can enhance your balance and control.
  - You can accomplish ridiculous, mythic feats.
  - You can master a ridiculous, mythic technique for a story.
  - You get extra MP when you get in trouble.

You can't enhance "magical Skills" with Chi, although sometimes the effects you achieve will seem a lot like magic!

- **Your heart is frozen, which protects you from certain effects.**

Health

You have 2 Normal Health Levels, 1 Tough Health Level, and 2 Divine Health Levels. This is the "normal" level of toughness for a character in **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine:** you can survive a lot, but not so much because of physical grit as because you're good at figuring out ways to survive stuff.

For instance, if somebody drugs and drowns you, you're the kind of character who'd normally use one of your powers, go into some sort of slow-metabolism trance, and survive. If you don't have the MP to do that the normal way, you'll still *do* it—you'll just "take a wound" and get sick or slowed down for a while instead of popping back up to the surface totally fine. If somebody hits you with a matter disintegration beam, you're definitely going to lose one of your health levels—but maybe, instead of being disintegrated, you're just banished into a sideways dimension and keep fading in and out of reality. Or you just lose your hand, and you need to do weird lizard-style meditation to get it to regrow.

Basically, your health levels represent your ability to survive at least five things that you *don't* manage to defend against with utter perfection.

Miracle Points

You have 5 Miracle Points (MP) to enhance or activate your miraculous abilities.

You regain 1 MP, to a maximum of your normal 5...

- ...at the beginning of a new week.
- ...from your **Frantic** ability when you get into trouble.

You can also gain additional MP, with no particular maximum:

- ...through Issues.
- ...when Region Properties get you into trouble.
- ...when Skills tied to your Bond, "Mad Skills," get you into trouble.
- ...when you spend a week diligently honoring a Region Property (e.g., helping somebody find/make a home in Fortitude).

2

Connection: [PC of your choice]

They remind you of someone you've lost.

1

Connection: the Koutolika Family

You're comfortable with your family.

1

Connection: Fortitude Rats

You don't know what it is, but you get along with them.

-1

Connection: the Child of the Sun

You don't know how to deal with someone like this.

You don't have to keep this Perk—it doesn't actually do you any good.

Perks

Characters in this game have a handful of **Perks.** You gain them or improve them by completing quests, and you can have up to 8.

You'll start with these Perks:

Mad Skills

You are simply the best there is.

This Bond makes you more awesome with your level 3+ Skills as your Heroism rises.

Bond, based on your **(being a) Hero**

Frozen Heart

You've accepted bleakness, coldness, and despair into your heart.

This armors you against happiness but also against the loss of emotional control.

Affliction, based on your **Sickness**

Cool 3

You're awesome. You're perfect. You're *the Prodigy.*

You have three points of **Cool.**

This means that anyone trying to hurt you, embarrass you, corrupt you, co-opt you, or mess with something you're actively watching or protecting takes a -3 penalty to their mundane actions.

Mad Skills

Here's how the "Mad Skills" Perk works.

You are a creature of study and training. You can make yourself miraculously flawless with your strong inner power but when you pair that with mundane professional competence—with the hard-won fruits of training and endless practice—you become strong enough to punch your way out of a time stop and cunning enough to out-clever the fallen angels in their hells.

Any time you have 1+ points in the **(being a) Hero** Issue, you may...

- ...invoke **Mad Skills** to waive the need for food, water, rest, and air while you are actively using one of your level 3+ Skills.
- ...invoke **Mad Skills** when one of your level 3+ Skills gets you into trouble and the HG may give you up to your **Hero** Issue in Will or MP.
- ...invoke **Mad Skills** any time you're taking a mundane action:
  - ...relating to one of your level 3+ Skills, *and*
  - ...facing an Obstacle of some sort...

...and you can add your **Hero** Issue to the level of the mundane action.[40]

- Invoke **Mad Skills** any time you're taking a miraculous action related to one of your level 3+ Skills and you can add your **Hero** Issue to the action in Strike. Strike from a Bond doesn't add to Strike from other Bonds, but it does add to Strike from MP and Strike intrinsic to a miracle.

Unlike most of your abilities, this could in theory enhance a magical ability—if you ever wind up with a level 3+ magical Skill, bear that in mind!

Frozen Heart

Here's how the "Frozen Heart" Perk works.

You are a creature of winter.

You have trouble accepting hope; light; the sun; strong emotions; and peace. Even after your heart thaws a little and you learn *to* accept such things—you are very controlled, with only the slightest slips in your mask to show how hard it is on you to *be* so controlled!

Any time you have 1+ points in the **Sickness** Issue, the following rules apply:

- The HG will invoke **Frozen Heart** to defend you from effects that would force you to believe that things are OK or will be OK. Such effects will need [Strike ≥ your Sickness] to succeed.
- The HG will invoke **Frozen Heart** to defend you from effects that determine how sick you are, how bad it's going to get, and (particularly in cases of corruption, but also in general) where your loyalties lie. Any such divinations or ascertainments will need [Strike ≥ your Sickness] to succeed.
- The HG will invoke **Frozen Heart** to protect you from taking any permanent or long-term damage from brooding, even if you happen to brood while standing outside in the freezing cold or forget to eat and drink for a few weeks. As a specific exception, this doesn't apply to damage from heat.[41]
- You may sink into internal wintry depths to arrest the course of an ongoing transformative or corruptive influence. This doesn't help you take positive action—if you've been shrunk to an insect's size or turned into a ravening werewolf, for instance, it won't help you operate complex machinery—but it does mean that even as a werewolf, you can *stop* yourself from savaging your friends.

  This is totally optional, and your having this power doesn't mean you're playing wrong if you decide to go ahead and savage your friends anyway. It just means that if you *as a player* think you should be able to stop yourself, well, you can! If somebody is actively sustaining the transformation or corruption effect, they can overcome this resistance by using [Strike ≥ your Sickness].

*40 If it's possible to use **The Prodigy** instead, that's probably better! But this is pretty good.*

41 The only reason for the heat thing is theme. Don't try to find a dramatic or rules reason for it other than that!

The Ace

Your history is clouded and hidden at the start of the game—full of unrevealed secrets—but it makes you who you are. It gives you your strength and your power.

It is not stated but it is recorded; it is the miraculous story Arc, or set of Arcs:

Aspect (The Ace) 3.

From there come your miraculous powers.

Frantic

Type: Special **Cost:** —

You're never so creative and effective as when you're terrified.

You may take the **(Be in) Trouble** Action any time you can meet its condition. Doing so earns you 1 MP, up to a maximum of your starting MP. Each additional group XP that you earn from this Action also earns you an additional MP.

Arc Powers

Frantic is your "Arc power"—you get it for *being* on one of the Arcs that grant Frantic. If you change to a different Arc, it's replaced by whatever power that Arc offers instead. That will usually be either:

- **Immortality** (which means it's a kind of weird Arc for you),
- **Sickly** (which will probably relate to some strange or awful transformation), *or*
- **Frantic** (which will mean that you'll stay, er, Frantic!)

Tireless

Type: Miraculous Action **Cost:** 0 MP

Like everyone else, you have 8 Will to spend each week to enhance your mundane actions—but *you* also have another pool of 3 Will which replenishes every time you perform an in-genre XP Action or share a scene with somebody who does.

Basically, you get a little more done in any given day than you otherwise would.

You can use this bonus Will freely with any ordinary or Superior Skill, although, like most Ace abilities, it can't be used with magic or Connections.

The Prodigy

Type: Miraculous Action **Cost:**

- **0 MP**—Starting mid-scene, take 1-2 perfect actions.
- **1 MP**—*See "Push Yourself," below.*
- **2 MP**—Starting mid-scene, all actions are perfect.
- **4 MP**—Take as many perfect actions as you like this scene.

Starting mid-scene, you can invoke **the Prodigy** 1-2x/scene to...

- ...perfectly execute any act of mundane skill, e.g. fishing, typesetting, running, fire-eating, accounting, dancing, or planning an invasion. This includes being effective, productive, and really impressive at this if you want it to.
- ...automatically beat anybody's mundane action with your own.
- ...execute an action with perfect timing and grace.

Mundane Skill

You can use **The Prodigy** to perfectly execute any act of mundane skill. "Act of mundane skill" here covers almost everything that humans do, but it doesn't cover connectedness, reputation, relationships with people, and mortal-level magic. It'll often cover most of the same *things* that a Connection will, but it lacks the personal core.

Incidentally, this in no way means that you're *bad* at those things—

Or rather, you *are*, but you don't *have* to be. You can totally get good at the stuff that **the Prodigy** doesn't cover, embedding yourself in social networks, acquiring a good reputation, building deep connections to people, and even learning weird magical abilities as magical Skills—

But neither magic nor relationships are covered by your baseline miraculous power. At best you can fake them by being incredibly charismatic and shockingly good at stage magic.

Timing and You

When you have a power that works *mid-scene* or *starting mid-scene*, that means that you use it after some meaningful stuff has already happened in the current scene.

Push Yourself

Type: Miraculous Action
Cost:

- **1 MP**—Starting mid-scene, push yourself beyond the normal limits of **The Prodigy.**
- **4 MP**—Do so at the beginning of the scene.

Starting mid-scene, you can **Push Yourself** for an take an immediate perfect action augmented by...

- ...the strength of a bear, *and/or*
- ...the mental speed and precision of a computer.

This includes all the benefits of **the Prodigy**—for instance, as long as you can explain how you actually do it,[42] you can automatically outwrestle someone stronger *than* a bear.[43]

This power always at least doubles your mundane strength and precision, so if your soul is ever transplanted into the body of a cybernetic bear[44] or whatever it'll still make you a little more effective than you'd been.

Legendary Master

Type: Miraculous Action
Cost:

- **2 MP**—Starting mid-scene, take perfect control over your body.
- **4 MP**—Do this at any time.

Starting mid-scene, you can invoke **Legendary Master** to perfectly control and exert full strength through any and every part of your body—including, e.g., your hair. This also includes a "light foot" technique—you can move as if your body were much lighter or heavier and make extremely long, precise jumps.

You may choose to combine this with a specific action, which then also receives the benefits of **Push Yourself**, or just flood your body with this power in general.[45]

Anime Moment

Type: Miraculous Action, Major **Cost: 4 MP**
Invoke an **Anime Moment** at any time to...

- ...give yourself whatever power and speed you need to accomplish a task, even ridiculous tasks like building a tall stone wall in 15 seconds or outracing a laser, *and/or*
- ...do something outright impossible, but mythically plausible, with local and short-term effects (e.g., punch out a movie character from the audience, drink a whole lake, surf on a sound wave).

This includes any relevant benefits from **the Prodigy, Push**[ing] **Yourself,** and **Legendary Master.**

Special Training

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle **Cost:** —
You can put yourself through a grueling course of training—often retreating, if not to the actual mountains, to the vicinity of the two-story "Zushan Burgers" burger joint with its mountain-shaped roof and its tiny-woods back lot—to develop special and temporary Skills.

Specifically, over the course of a 15-XP quest, you can temporarily put together a level 3 Superior Skill—changing your body or developing a supernatural martial arts technique. If you want to learn to glide a few feet above the ground by compressing the air into cushions with foot vibrations and Chi or learn how to conjure fire with your martial arts, well, this is how. There's only three drawbacks:

---

*42 Basically, you have to convince the HG that the action you take is possible, but once you've made a case that you can win, you beat any mundane opposition and do so automatically. If you say: "I know martial arts, so of course I can subdue Johnny Twobears with the strength of a single bear," that'll work; if you say "I don't know, that elephant is probably charging me with a mundane action, so I punch it out and win" that is probably not fine. Thankfully, you have **Anime Moment,** below, for all your casual elephant-punching needs.*

*43 Warning! While you can beat up even pretty strong vampires and giants, be careful with ogres! They're not really all that great as all-around combatants, but many of them have an even more absolute strength than you do. If you ever encounter something called a "titan," or **the Child of the Sun** using a particularly strong limb, that could be pretty scary too.*

44 presumably to fight in some underground cybernetic bear tournament

*45 You might think that the second option is always better, or, if you misunderstand what it's doing, you might think that it's always worse. It's neither! Keeping Legendary Master going is a "sustained action." Basically, in **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine**'s action model you can be doing around two things at any given time. If you're sustaining an action, that's one of them—it uses half of your attention! So if you just kind of power up into a Legendary Master, and then get into a fight, you're powering-up and fighting and that's your two actions right there—if someone asks a question, you don't have the spare attention to talk. In fact, you might not even really have the spare attention to* notice.

(This is a pretty soft limitation in some ways because "fight and talk" is actually every bit as much of a valid action as "fight"—but only if the talking is part of the fighting, or if you knew when you started fighting that talking would be important too. If it comes up unexpectedly, you'd have to stop fighting or stop powering up to reassess priorities.)

- You have to stay on the quest after finishing it or the power goes away.
- You can only stay on the quest until roughly the end of the season (details are up to the HG).
- You have to be willing to claim that a human can master this technique through training.

You don't need to keep a straight face, though. You just have to be willing to *claim* that.

Spiritual Training

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle **Cost:** — Intensive meditation, reflection on Zen riddles, and austere spiritual living can awaken a spiritual aura around you with a strong effect you can specify. It takes a 15-XP quest to achieve this state, and once you've put in the 15 XP you can retain the aura indefinitely (well, up to a season) by remaining on the quest.

It's ultimately a matter of negotiation between you and the HG what these actually do, but the standard way of *using* them is to direct them with your mundane or **Ace**-enhanced actions—if you surround yourself in a storm of spirit swords, for instance, you can attack people with them using your mundane actions or your other Aspect powers. If you surround yourself in a healing glow, you direct it with your (limited) knowledge of medicine and anatomy.

Bonus XP

You're working on a new martial arts technique or developing a useful Chi aura. When you've put 15 XP into it, you'll be able to use it for as long as you remain on this quest.

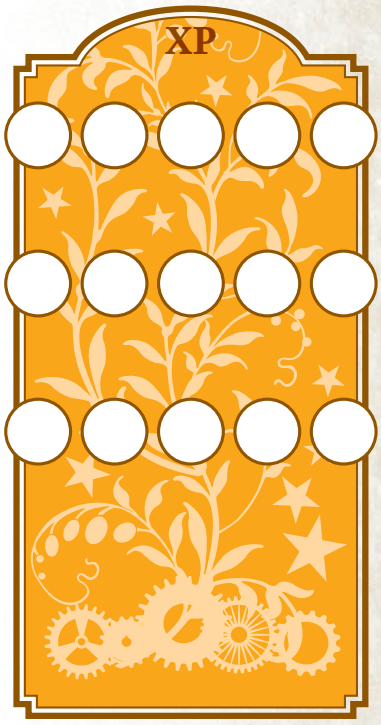
In the meantime, though, your training can get a little... over the top.

You know what I mean. Living on a grain of rice a day. Doing splits with your legs tied to stretchy tree branches, obnoxious martial arts masters, or unruly bears. Spending days at a time staring at a candle-fire. Tying yourself into awful martial arts machines. Balancing on needle-width stilts. Stuff like that!

I've provided a sign reading **"Over the Top"** on the next page.

When your training gets a little over the top, or when something happens mid-training to *take* it over the top, you can earn an XP—up to one per fun scene/15 minutes—by showing the other players that sign. You don't have to prove that it's over the top. You don't even have to say anything in character! You just have to hold up the sign.

If you *can't* hold up that sign, saying something like "OTT XP! Yeah!" or "Over the Top" can work just as well.



2

Actions and Issues

Here's some things you're often doing.

Comfortable Stuff

Out on the water, up on the roofs, out in nature, staring out the window—the world and its beauty touches even your frozen heart

Slice of Life

Living a simple, honest life

Shared Action

You like those moments when you're at peace and you can feel the melancholy beauty of the world. You can get bonus XP for these kinds of actions a couple of times a week.

Uncomfortable Stuff

How can you bear this?

Adversity

Go way too far trying to fulfill a responsibility/duty

Never Say Die!

You tend to bring a lot of trouble on yourself, suffering silently or extravagantly even when it might not be necessary.

Figure Out This Weird Place

Explore, investigate

Discovery

Something seems important/interesting

Foreshadowing

You tend to spend a fair bit of time poking around trying to figure this place out. You know enough to know that you don't know everything, which means stuff can capture your attention pretty easily.

Issues

If you pick up a **Complex,** I recommend it be "feeling like an outsider"—you work yourself up into a state of obsession over how you can't possibly fit in with people, and run away from opportunities to fit in and belong rather than face the possibility that you *might.*

Your most common **Vice** is despair: you indulge in moping, self-destructive behaviors, and standing dramatically alone in the cold—particularly when you've picked up the Sickness Issue and can activate your **Frozen Heart.**

While we're on that topic, note the extra rules concerning you and the **Sickness** Issue under "Frozen Heart," above, as well as the extra rules concerning you and the (being a) **Hero** Issue under "Mad Skills."

Timeline 1-2: Playing through your Childhood

The HG may want to play through your childhood at an accelerated pace—probably about 50x acceleration, covering a year in about the same time you'd usually cover a week.

A game like that would begin when you are 5 years old.

...which is, of course, a little awkward.

The simplest thing to do is just to show up in Town then, but that plays all kinds of heck with your back-story. It's salvageable—you'd be too young to have really failed somebody, but you could still have a "dark past" where somebody you cared about died or sacrificed themselves for you. You wouldn't completely understand what that *means*, but you'd still have a legitimately traumatic history and a frozen heart.

But it's awkward!

I'd really rather you not arrive until age 10 at the earliest. But I also don't want you to sit the first session and a half out, much less the first five sessions if the early years run long! So I'm going to offer you a couple of options.

The Dream-Interactions Option

In the first few years of the game, you're not in Town yet—but your life is already touched by events there. In particular, you sometimes show up in the dreams of the Wishing Boy or the Dream-Witch or in the nightmares of Nightmares' Angel.

You can participate in play in two ways: first, by having scenes in Russia where you interact with similar people to the PCs, played by the players; and second, by showing up in people's dreams.

There is a real possibility that if you play out this route that you are not actually growing up in Russia but in a dream-world, or fake reality, or something else created by "the Bleak Academy." (A college in the chaos at the border 'tween the world and death.)

The Eduard/Aelfthryth Option

A second option is to start the game playing the heroic talking rat **Prince Eduard Fujimoto** or his sister **Princess Aelfthryth Fujimoto**. You'll be cut off from rat culture (for reasons you don't want to talk about) until you've dealt with the golden snake of the rooftops.

Only—you don't deal with it. You lose to it. You're rescued by **the Troublemaker,** Rinley Yatskaya, during your first real battle with it, but either you get poisoned and weakened during that battle and can't keep going or you actually *die* on a later encounter. (If Rinley is a PC, though, try not to kill Eduard off—she usually has him as an important contact!)

After that battle, Natalia comes to Town; you swap to playing her as your character; and she picks up the quest where Eduard or Aelfthryth left off.

Your mundane skills as Prince(ss) Fujimoto would be **Athletics 3, Carousing 3, Dance 1, Wiggle Eyebrows Knowingly 1,** and **Representative of Rat Culture -1.**

The Double Life Option

Even after coming to Town, you have frighteningly realistic dreams or visions of a life back where you come from—it's like your experiences "back home" just *keep on happening*, even though you're here. This is probably because of a wish or some event that happens later on: like, maybe "originally" you didn't get to Town until age 10, but in the future Chuubo will wish that you'd gotten here earlier (so you didn't have to live through all that) and it'll go slightly wrong. Or Leonardo de Montreal will remove the world's memory of the fact that you didn't arrive until age 10.

Something weird like that!

The Coutourier Approach

If you're playing the vampire princess **Natalie Coutourier**, then the problem isn't that you start the game too young—it's that you're too old! It's easy to understand why an eternally teenaged vampire would hang out with teenagers, but it's harder to explain why they'd hang out with 5-year-old kids. Still, this is an easier problem to fix: maybe you got drained of blood and wound up younger, or maybe you're actually eternally a child, or maybe you've been hired as an *au pair* for the family of one of the PCs.

Timeline

So, once you've worked that out, your history'll look something like this:

Age 5: The game begins.

Age 5-8: You can choose to arrive in Town at this age. If so, then the trauma of your past is probably pretty confusing and nebulous to you. Alternatives include the dream-interaction option above; playing Prince Eduard or Princess Aelthryth Fujimoto for a few years; or the double life option, above.

"The Golden Snake of the Rooftops:" if you're still in Russia for this, then, in addition to the normal 1/chapter options, you can get a bonus XP for this quest from any sufficiently interesting and dramatic scene in Russia or from making an appearance in somebody else's dreams.

Age 9-10: This is the usual age at which your heart freezes. For instance, this is normally when the character variant **Zeinaba Kiros** discovers what's happening in her home country.

Age 10: This is the usual age for you to come to Town. This is normally a direct or indirect consequence of a wish—either a direct consequence, if **the Wishing Boy** finds out that you're in terrible trouble, or an indirect consequence, where some random wish happens to make more sense if your family decides to move to Town.

Age 15: This is "the present."

Timeline 3: Starting in the Modern Day

In a game that starts in the present, your heart froze around 5 years ago and you arrived in Town about 3-36 weeks ago. In a 1-player game, or a 2-3-player game where you're meeting the other PCs just as you get off the boat, it might also make sense to start just as you arrive.

(...but even with 3 players, be really careful.

It'd work great in a game where you're "the interesting thing that happens to the protagonists this month." You could probably meet a laid-back PC team like Chuubo and Seizhi the instant you get off the boat, and things'd be fine.

But if the other PCs are, like, Leonardo and Rinley, then they've got serious stuff of their own to deal with. If you show up "on camera," the story'll demand they drop it and pay attention to you—making it likely they'll be irritatingly unhelpful and/or artificially attentive. That won't give your relationships a good starting place for organic development!)

Natalia Koutolika

You remember how you would throw aside the papers, the problems and the proofs, and rage at your old tutor Maksim, saying it was useless, useless, meaningless, because—

Because—

But the words would not come out.

The pain of them welled up instead and closed your throat against the sounds.

You remember how Danno who taught you the fighting arts would push you hard, and he would not let you be kind to the students with whom you sparred, but tormented you if you showed them the slightest compassion or weakness; until one day you would not bend, would not spar; when made to spar would not crush the arms of the weaker ones, would not snap the legs of the slow ones, would not show them why you were the best; when set with agonizing solitary exercises instead, did not complain, but only bore them and let the time with him become an agony.

But all of it was useless, useless; principles and fighting, useless all, because—

Well, that's something we're going to figure out in play.

The standard version of **the Prodigy** has baggage. Some of it dates back to Danno—was he an immature bastard, or were you in some sort of sinister assassin-training program? Some of the baggage dates back before that. Did a younger sibling die? Did an older role model die? Did someone you really cared about betray you?

For the **Glass** campaign, this isn't necessarily very important—you can play it down, and if you arrive in Town at age 5, you may wind up skipping it entirely. Then again, maybe it'll wind up at the core of who you are!

The Troublemaker

Fact Sheet

You are **Rinley Yatskaya, the Troublemaker.** You're convinced that neat stuff will happen—or can be *made* to happen—if you hang out with the PCs.

Primary Quests

- Tell stories.
- Make trouble—get people out of their shells and practice courage.
- Get involved with the people and destinies around you.

Bonus XP When...

Other players groan or roll their eyes at your goofiness. Tell bad shaggy dog stories and puns; be awkward, naive, and emotionally transparent; and bring a bit of tall tale ridiculousness into things.

Powers

You know how to encourage and channel the power of a wishing heart—that is, the power of personality, love, dreams, and *wanting* that people can use to change the world.

Your shrine family has ties to seals (the animals), dreams, and cats.

Common Variations

Shake it up! For an atypical **Troublemaker** experience, pick one or more of the following:

- You are a boy.
- You were kicked out of your family after an... incident.
- You're still the youngest sibling, but you're the normal PC age or slightly older.
- You're part of a *different* shrine family—you're:
  - Rinley "Valentine" Kichi, snoop and matchmaker extraordinaire.
  - Rinley Sosunov, from a "Buddha stories" instead of "tall tale" genre.
  - Rinley Titov, summoned from the earth to contain some waking evil, only to discover that it's not actually going to wake up this year (decade?).
  - Rinley Nicholas/Nicoletta Vasili, with a superior connection to...
    - ...the hearth, letting you work miracles with cooking and sewing.
    - ...(if the player of **the Wish-Granting Engine** doesn't exist or doesn't mind) steam and electricity, so that machines and power in general love you.

  You'd also have a particularly good reason to worry about your sister Mayu (pg. 168).
- You're not the youngest sibling!

Rinley "Valentine" Kichi

Instead of the Yatskaya abilities (discussed on pg. 176), Rinley "Valentine" Kichi would have:

- **Kichi Family Magic 2**
- **Superior Dreamer 1**
- **Snooping 2**
- **Matchmaking 0**

(She isn't quite as good at matchmaking as she thinks.)

Rinley Sosunov

Instead of the Yatskaya abilities, Rinley Sosunov would have:

- **Sosunov Family Magic 3**
- **Superior Dreamer 2 [still]**

I suggest picking up one of the standard Sosunov family Bonds (see **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG** or **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake**) as a reward from some early quest.

Character Description

How could anybody possibly live up to your big brother and big sister? Brother Kuroma who can speak for Death; sister Caroline the legendary witch—

And then there's you.

You, little Rinley, saddled with not just one but *two* whole names bigger than yourself.

To be a **Yatskaya**, with a family like yours, is bad enough. But to be a **Rinley**, too, named after the most legendary member of your family ever—after that guy who punched one shark into another shark's mouth, stole the halo of a saint and lost it in a bet, and invented salt and pepper—well.

You've spent most of your childhood trying to find something of your own to be.

That's maybe why, when you found that rat prince with his turtle-shell shield fighting a huge gold snake in the gardens of Maple Hill, you helped him out; and kept him safe in a shoebox, after, while he recovered from its poison.

You're not really supposed to help the rats. They're technically enemies of the family.

But—

It was so totally worth it! As magical as your home can be, it's generally very quiet and dream-like and still. It wasn't until you started hanging out with Prince Eduard that you started having actual *adventures.*

You can sense potential like that in the other PCs, too. You can sense *destiny* like that in them:

The brooding cloud of adventures to come.

Rinley Titov

Instead of the Yatskaya abilities (pg. 176), Rinley Titov would have:

- **Superior Dreamer 3**
- **Superior Hunter 2**

Superior Hunter is a level 2 "be Robin Hood" kind of Skill that comes with 2 Edge when being kind of Robin Hood-like is useful.

This version of Rinley could track a ghost through fifty miles of dreamland and catch a passing impression in her hand—not that anyone in your family would *care* or anything beyond occasionally calling you rabbit and/or telling you to go catch one.

They may not realize that, not yet. That's OK. You can have an ordinary friendship with them, or a troubled one, or even the kind of thing where sparks fly. But *you* know that they're going to get into interesting stuff, and have great destinies, just like you. You just need to keep an eye on them. You can feel it. It'll happen.

Maybe you'll have to give it a little... push.

The Yatskaya Shrine

As Rinley, you live in Fortitude—specifically, in the **Yatskaya Shrine** on Maple Hill, where clouds of multicolored incense hang heavily in the air, dreams blend into reality, and cats come and go as they please.

Your father Goro is mild-mannered and a little bit addled. He's often away on dream-journeys.

Your mother Shiori was snatched away by a large bird when you were two years old.

Kuroma

Your big brother Kuroma is a sulky swordsman. He can summon King Death—the rats' idea of Death, an aspect of or competitor to the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy—into his body and pluck out lives, grant life, or speak the secret words of death thereafter.

Most of the time... that just means he's a good swordsman with useful thoughts on death.

His magic isn't easy to use and tends to be limited to flowing with the circumstances and the will of King Death—he can't just randomly pluck out the life of a giant glass dragon or breathe life back into a dead rat or whatever you might need without spending enough Will to risk his own heart stopping.

And even then it might not work!

Conversely, sometimes—when something's "in tune" with the world and Death, and he's willing to make the effort—he can be pretty awesome.

Caroline

Your big sister Caroline can disappear into a shadow, jump at least five meters straight up, outfight a lion in a brawl, talk to cats as easily as to people, and do *magic*—like, real magic, like *witch* magic, admittedly by summoning the Witch of the Far Roofs down into her skin. This seems to ride on the Issues people have—her curses exaggerate the contradictions already present in someone's life, and resolve at the same time those Issues do; her other powers mainly play a support role to that effect.

Most of the time... that means she's a languid, patronizing, kind of cool older sister who runs the shrine.

She could probably help you with almost anything, but, like Kuroma, she'd have to burn a lot of Will to do it, and she has her own business to attend to.

Idril Nakano

Kuroma's friend Idril Nakano claims to be an octopus spirit who's taken human shape. He's got white hair and wears a white yukata and has a red dot on his forehead. He's kind of a jerk and a prima donna, but he's good for Kuroma, so you tolerate him. He's really just kind of *around*, but maybe one day he'll be revealed as an awful villain, or have a redeeming tragic history, or be your gateway to under-lake adventure or something, so that's why I'm mentioning him!

Eduard

Your friend **Prince Eduard Fujimoto** is a reckless prince of the rats. Sometimes between sessions he'll drag you off on elaborate and fanciful adventures. He's great at carousing and actually pretty good in a scrap, except for that whole "he's a foot and a half tall, not counting the tail" thing.

Hints

> *"Deep inside you is a core of rage; and it's gotten loose.*
>
> *"It escaped you when your boat sailed in to Town. You don't know how you know that. But you know. It took some of your memories, some of your rage, some of your grief, and now it is a great gold-scaled python, poisonous and strong, that lives on the rooftops of Fortitude."*
>
> — from the Prodigy's "The Golden Snake of the Rooftops" quest

I think that the golden snake that you saved Eduard from is a monster named **Typhon**, which is sometimes a dragon, sometimes a snake, and sometimes a golden whip, and which **the Prodigy** currently hunts. I think this might wind up connecting your story a little more closely to hers.

I think that in general your role is going to be to be part of the social glue of the PC group.

Bring people together. Keep them together. Level things out so that people can stay friends and nobody gets too isolated!

Hints (Part 2)

> *"Once upon a time, a witch and a glass-maker made a dragon out of glass and taught it to hate the world. It raged and it would have destroyed everything; only, it shattered, instead."*
>
> — Campaign Premise

I think that the glass dragon shattered because of something it understood about the world.

But what?

I think—specifically because you're the character most likely to pursue such a question and because it features in your long-term character arc—that you're probably going to have to be the PC to figure that out.

That's a really long-term goal, though. It could take a while!

Rinley Nicholas/Nicoletta Vasili

I'm assuming that "Nicholas" would be a boy's middle name and "Nicoletta" a girl's, but, really, it could go either way! This version of Rinley would replace the Yatskaya abilities with:

- **Superior Connection to the Hearth 3**
- **Superior Dreamer 1**
- **Athletic 1**

Or you could swap that out for a different Vasili-style connection (see **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG**.)

Your big sister Mayu is pledged to the wind of the high places, and one day they'll carry her away. This has some thematic similarity to the way **the Dream-Witch** works, so it's possible that the HG will play that up. If there's no PC Dream-Witch, Mayu may even *be* the Dream-Witch herself! Or you may unexpectedly lose her mid-game when the wind just... takes her.

Tall Tales

You're a bit of a storybook figure sometimes, although you haven't figured that out about yourself yet—you're on the road to becoming a trickster hero, holy fool, or transformative leader one day. For right now, you can accomplish things in the background by telling a suitable tall tale about how you got it done.

In the world of Rinley Yatskaya, it's apparently normal to throw the rules to the wind and...

- ...sail on a thimble?
- ...tap trees for root beer?
- ...dig up gold from a random spot that seems lucky when you're short on money?

Stuff like that.

Early in the game there's a chance that you're actually just making these stories up and you actually got to wherever or earned that bit of money the ordinary way. And you're always probably exaggerating a little when stuff happens completely off camera—but eventually even the most skeptical people will have to admit that at least some of the time you're *actually* and *definitely* doing some pretty amazing stuff.

You'll start with the ability to use Tall Tales to:

- Travel somewhere, possibly bringing others along.
- Either:
  - Repair clothes and other things made of fabric.
  - Make small amounts of money at need.

You can learn to do other things with it, though—basically, enough practice or a "Perk" from a quest will add something to that list. If all you want to do is learn a new ability temporarily, or for that matter teach someone one of these abilities temporarily, you can do that as a 15-XP quest and it'll last roughly until the end of the season (or until you "abandon" the quest.)

Tall Tales

Type: Affliction, based on your **Something to Deal With** Issue

Cost: —

if you're an NPC, then this is based instead on someone else's ***Mystery / Illusion***

Sometimes your methods for doing things are a little unbelievable!

Any time you have 1+ points in the **Something to Deal With** Issue, the following rules apply:

- You can invoke your Tall Tales power between scenes or in a flashback, e.g. declaring that you "recently" used it to do something. (Sailed somewhere on a thimble, stitched up some torn clothing using a cobweb, rapped on each door you walked past until someone tossed a gold coin into your hands out the window, or whatever.) This lets you accomplish whatever either automatically as a miracle or with player and HG collaboration as a Ritual.

  It takes an Auctoritas of some sort or an opposing miracle with [Strike ≥ your Something to Deal With] to prevent this from happening.
- It's up to the HG on a case-by-case basis whether this invocation is a Ritual or a simple declaration.

  If the HG would rather handle it as a Ritual, it goes something like this: regular play stops for a bit while you summarize or narrate the details of what you do/did to complete this task. Other players can participate by...
  - ...throwing in descriptions of things going on around you as you do this.
  - ...throwing in descriptions or suggestions of things you might do as part of this.
  - ...giving emotional reactions to the story.
  - ...contradicting your claims with a proposal of their own—explaining aloud why some part of your description can't possibly have happened or "revealing" the magician's trick of how you "actually" achieved some effect.
- Of these things, only contradictions slow you down at all. You can usually hand-wave a contradiction away by providing an explanation of how you overcame that obstacle or why their declared trick couldn't possibly be what really happened, but if a Main Character uses a miracle with [Strike ≥ your Something to Deal With] to

On Cats

If you increase your Cat-Speaker Skill to 3 (typically as the reward for a quest) you'll be able to have actual conversations with cats. That's about the limit of your natural potential, but in theory something magical or soul-altering or otherwise freaky could let you increase it to 4-5.

Your family is bound to the cats of Fortitude. You talk to them. You protect them. Caroline, at least, is a strong enough magician to *lead* them.

The rats, conversely, believe that if there are ever too many cats in Fortitude, a nightmare that they call **Hedge the Fang** will manifest in the bodies of the cats and hunt the rats down. So they impose a strict quota: the humans have to keep the local feline population under a thousand or the current rat-human truce will be off.

That's why your friendship with a rat prince is a little bit awkward.

Your family would probably just roll their eyes if they knew—your father might try to "put his foot down," too, but he'd fail. On the other hand, it's dimly *possible* that you'd get disowned. Or that Prince Eduard would!

2

cast your story into doubt, or if they point out that your story is going to bump into an Auctoritas of some sort and you can't explain your way around it, that stops you just as completely as their using a miracle against the action itself.

- If you get into trouble because of something introduced with the use of this power, the HG may award you with some number of MP or Will up to and including your Something to Deal With rating.

You'll gain the **Something to Deal With** Issue by spending time in peaceful and quiet places, doing laid-back and bittersweet scenes—basically, scenes where you're being languid and casual tend to precede scenes where you idly mention something ridiculous and outrageous that you've recently done.

If you're having trouble picking this Issue up organically in play, you can ask the HG to give you some kind of appropriate dream or daydream or idle hour between scenes, something to calm and free you and limber up your mind for this kind of power, and to give you a point of the **Something to Deal With** Issue as they do. You don't actually have to play it out if they agree.

Quests

You start the game with three *quests*, and have the power to swap them out or pick up more—you can pursue up to four quests at any given time.

I've chosen three quests to...

- ...serve as your basic, default character motivation in play ("Story Time!").
- ...give you extra direction in the first few sessions ("The World is Changing").
- ...tie you into the campaign plot ("The Straw-Haired Kid").

Bonus XP

Once per fun scene, though at most once per fifteen minutes of play, you can earn bonus XP for either of the first two quests just by bringing them up—e.g.,

- ...saying "Storytime!" to recognize impending or ongoing story-telling;
- ...declaring, in a relevant or amusing fashion, that you or someone else is coming out of their shell and growing up!

You can earn a bonus XP for the third quest, **the Straw-Haired Kid,** once per in-game week by picking a scene from the quest's list of scene options to play out.

Other Quests

If you're interested in another quest or two, and you have access to **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake,** I'd recommend looking at the quests for...

- ...tending a garden or shrine in Maple Hill as a **"Shrine or Park Guardian."**
- ...becoming a **Friend to the Street Cats (and Dogs).**
- ...keeping **Up-to-Date** with everyone in Fortitude.

Story Time!

15 XP Quests

: Chibi-Quest

You love a good yarn, whether you're telling one or listening to one and whether it's true, false, or anything in between. It's part of why you get along with Eduard—cats aren't much for stories[46] but Fortitude rats can't get enough of 'em. You're particularly fond of spinning just-so stories.

You won't generally have time to tell a full-length story in play, so it might help to focus your stories on 3-4 "beats" of a few sentences each, which you can then slip in between other things that are going on. (Set the topic, develop it a bit, provide a twist, and follow up to some conclusion.) Like, "I had a cousin with a boat once." "Sweetest little thing you've ever sailed." "Until it got eaten." "You should never go sailing. You'll lose your boat!"[47]

So in theory you make quest progress when the stories you and the other PCs tell one another add a lot of flavor; or when a major part of a scene is listening to someone else's story, or someone listening to your story, or a general exchange of stories. But the truth is, identifying that kind of thing is too complicated. So let's boil it down to this:

To earn a bonus XP for this quest, all you have to do is declare the current scene to be or include a storytime—usually by saying or emoting, "Storytime!"

Rewards

Completing this quest earns you a Recharge Token—a cool thing, memory, or story. Once in the future, you'll be able to think back to that, maybe monologue on it or tell it if you've got time and cope for that, and then bam, it'll refresh your supply of Will and wish power ("MP.")

Bonus XP

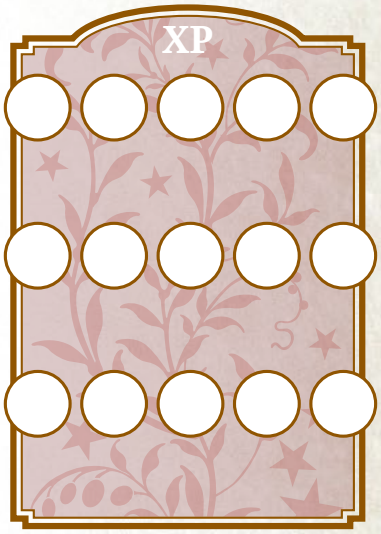
You love stories. Telling them. Listening to them. That's *important.* That's *cool.*

So... you can earn a bonus XP for this quest with an emote or statement that says, basically: *oo, storytime!*

Pick a catchphrase for this. You don't have to use the exact same catchphrase every time, but it's the core of your experience here. It's usually pretty straightforward and to the point:

"Storytime!"

But it could be something like clutching dramatically at the air and declaring, "Once... upon a *time!*" even when it's not your story to tell.



46 *Though the ones they do tell are pretty good 'uns!*
47 *This is why they don't let me write stories.*

Bonus XP

You used to be so young. So *sheltered.*

Even a little shy.

But that's changing now. You're coming out of your shell now. And it's fascinating to you.

It's not something you ever expected to happen. In the drug-misted Yatskaya temple it always seemed to you like people just kind of *were*, like Goro and Caroline and Kuroma and you yourself were just always yourselves.

And now that you're out in the world and the wind and the air is clear—

Say it! Notice it!

- "Wow. I'm growing up."
- "Wow. I'm coming out of my shell."
- "Wow! You've changed!"

Whatever!

You can do that at any time (though only once per 15 minutes/scene) to earn a bonus XP for this quest—and once you've established the pattern there's no reason you can't be as delighted in other people growing up as in you doing it yourself!

XP

The World is Changing

25 XP Quest

1:

2:

The early part of the game is also the start of a major new epoch in your life. You're starting to spread your metaphorical wings, figure out who you are, and become somebody to reckon with—while as a *player* you have access to all your powers from the beginning, you're going to be using and discovering all the miraculous abilities for the first time *IC* during play.[48]

You're also making a lot of new friends right now—you just have to *look* at the other PCs and you can see that these are people whose destinies are going to be interesting, and tangled up with yours, and that's an exciting discovery for a kid who'd mostly been kind of alienated from everybody before.

So you want to break the reserve of the other PCs. Get them to come out of their shell. And you want to grapple with growing up, yourself, usually by first getting scared of or intimidated by something and then "growing up" a little and facing it. But again, all that's too complicated, so let's focus on a simple declaration:

To earn a bonus XP for this quest, all you have to do is recognize or declare progress to exist: that is, declare as part of a scene that you are growing up and coming out of your shell, or that somebody else is!

Variations

Maybe you don't actually want to get people out of their shells. Maybe you just want them to accept you *into* their shells—

Well, their lives—

Well, you know. Maybe you just want them to involve you in ordinary things, I mean. Or maybe there's something specific that you want to get people involved in: like, you want to get together with some friends and

48 *Some of them you'll notice and be startled at. Others will be invisible to you!*

Groaning

Your bonus XP emotion is *amused disdain.* Like you feel when watching things that are so bad they're good, or like a lot of older siblings feel towards their younger siblings in this age range.

I don't mean that you want to feel that. I mean, you want to get *the other players* to feel that. You want Rinley to evoke it. You want people to look at you and kind of roll their eyes.

Basically, you're aiming to be awkward, transparent, and impulsive.

Camp and throwing in bad puns can help with this too!

Players express this emotion when they...

- ...groan.
- ...say, "groan."
- ...roll their eyes and head dramatically.
- ...say, "eye-roll."
- ...raise an eyebrow and squint dramatically at you.
- ...wave you airily off 2-3 times.
- ...whine, "Rinley."
- ...say, "biiiiiiiiii (or beeeeeeee)."
- ...snort.
- ...say, "Oh, Geez," and *then* snort.
- ...pull down one eyelid and stick their tongue out at you.
- ...say "I don't know you."

Sometimes this will blur with a head-desk or speechlessness; in such a case, you can ask if that counts as a groan, and they can turn it into one by saying:

- "...yes, yes," or
- "...whatever."

Each such groan earns you one XP.

You can earn up to 1 groan XP every 15 minutes of real time. However, another player can attempt to mess with you, either by having their character do annoying things or by narrating some feature of your life. If you play along with this and *still* manage to provoke a groan, you can earn another XP that isn't bounded by the fifteen-minute rule.

A classic example would go like this:

> **You:** "OK, I'm cracking some eggs and making omelettes."
> **Other Player, Messing with You, in Narrator Voice:** "And that is when Rinley Yatskaya realized she'd forgotten to pack the insides of the eggs. She'd only brought the shells!"
> **You, bonking yourself on the side of your head:** "Rinley! Can't you take a yolk?"*
> **Other Player:** "... I don't know you."

Note that eye-rolling is probably more central to what this is about than groaning; I've chosen to make groans primary even though they're slightly off point and are less tactile than eye-rolls simply because a groan makes itself obvious while an eye-roll is easy to miss.

Advice to Other Players: the groan should be *sincere*, but it can totally be *exaggerated for effect.* In fact, it usually *should* be, since you shouldn't *actually* disdain your fellow players.

* *Incidentally, I used this example to figure out what your XP condition would be. I said, "What emotion would be amusingly challenging to produce when someone has just narrated an absurd dilemma for you?"*

run a co-op store, or put together a band or secret club or an official school club, and you need to drag people into *that*.

Or maybe you're not really concerned with courage or growing up in general—your real challenge is learning tact, or delicacy, or honesty, or cleanliness, or keeping your promises, or fairness, or temperance, or whatever.

Anyway, you're growing up! So pick a way that you're changing, and a thing to be happy about when other PCs do it, and that'll be the core of the variant quest. No matter what, the basic bonus XP condition is pretty much just declaring it—that your plans are coming together, that you're learning tact, whatever! Rubbing your hands together and declaring, "Soon, soon, my pretties, all the tact will be *mine!*" is strictly optional but qualifies.

Rewards

The reward for this quest is usually a **Power-Up Perk:** something that gives +1 to one of your Skills. Alternately, you might get a small miraculous ability—something comparable to the "Octopus Singer" ability in the core book (that lets you lure octopi out from the lake).

The Straw-Haired Kid (aka "Adventure GET")

35 XP Quest

1:

4:

This quest begins the story "Rinley Yatskaya Looks for Trouble," pg. 485.

2

This is the story of how you meet somebody, somebody cute, and how you find out that they only have 1-3 seasons to live. Not even because of some disease or something. They're just that kind of short-lived creature.

It's the story of the straw-haired kid.

And there's this cute little animated trash or clay spirit, this *living quest log*, called Totem or Palimpsest, and I bet one day it'll be your magical companion. And there's this wolf that's your friend's death, that's the *spirit* of your friend's death, and it's hanging out. And there's this guy, Simon Brambles, and he's going to try to stop you from finding stuff out. Maybe in this quest. Maybe the next one. He's going to be all serious and fatherly, like he thinks that you're better off *not* finding stuff out, but he's probably going to be wrong and a jerk because guys like him are that way.

But mostly?

It's the story of how you meet. It's kind of rough.

See, there was this spirit hanging out by the river or on the streets.

You saw them.

And you thought they were cute. Someone you'd kind of want to hold hands with, you know? Maybe, but probably not, kiss.[49] So that makes them...

- **...Rafael Bannik,** a boy?
- **...Sessily Shishika,** a girl?

They were playing with a paper bag blown in the wind or maybe playing on a reed flute. And the moment you saw them, you knew that they were going to be really important in your story.

And maybe Totem or Palimpsest was there too. (What's its name, by the way?)

It was this little assemblage of trash, river clay, or origami all folded up and come to life. It doesn't talk out loud, but it can communicate by folding itself into meaningful shapes, writing on itself as a scroll, revealing words already written onto its wrappers or brass plates—something like that.

And there was this wolf. You saw it, by the water, before it turned and loped away.

And you talked for a bit, and it was neat, but I don't know what you said. It can come up in a flashback or something later. Right now, it's just...

You talked. And you realized when you finished talking, sometime afterwards, that the straw-haired kid must have been a spirit, and you wanted to look river spirits or whatever up in the local library or the Archive, but you didn't find anything. Or, rather, that whole *shelf* of stuff was rewritten into weird gibberish, and the one behind it too. It was weird and disturbing. Not that you'll know this yet, but Simon Brambles (pg. 427) got to the records first.

You're not going to let that stop you.

You haven't *found* the kid again, but you won't let that stop you either. In fact, it just makes things more interesting.

Adventure GET!

Notes

You'll have that same sensation of "Wow! This person is going to be important to my story!" when you meet each other PC. You don't necessarily think they're cute or awesome, but it's actually OK to get distracted by *their* mysteries and their stuff as long as you don't completely forget the straw-haired kid—

That's part of your adventure too!

49 I guess you could also think they're awesome and want to hang out with them and share their reflected cool instead of hold hands, date, or kiss. That works too!

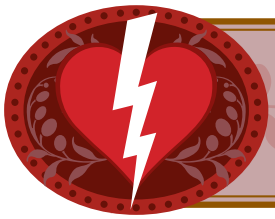
Rewards

The typical reward for this quest is the level 2 Perk **"Shine."**

This lets people who are doing things for you, or in your service, use that level 2 Shine as their base Skill if their best applicable Skill is level 0-1.

Afterwards, I suggest reviewing the notes on pg. 484–485.

Finishing this quest usually also pushes you past the orientation and excitement period on the stuff you're dealing with (new PCs! River spirit! Investigate! Cool!) and moves on to the phase where you decide what to do and charge forward. For that phase, you'll move on to the quest, **"Let's Doing!"**



The Straw-Haired Kid (aka "Adventure GET")

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...trouble starts or gets much worse in a well-staged way—whether that's accidentally walking backwards into an enemy camp, breaking into a supposedly empty manor during what turns out to be a dinner party, or declaring that everything's fine as long as there aren't any werewolves around just before werewolves show up.
- ...someone rescues you.
- ...you stand in a shadowed place and tell someone a secret, then run away before they can react.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you:

- sneak into somewhere you shouldn't go
- risk trouble by digging into somebody's secrets
- drag others into your affairs/arrange their lives for them
- propose a theory about the underlying situation you're in
- tell someone a story related to the underlying situation you're in
- get into trouble trying to help somebody else
- risk trouble in the name of *adventure!*

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Mundane Abilities

As **the Troublemaker**, you have 8 points of Will and the following mundane abilities:

- **Storytelling 2.** You're pretty good at telling stories.
- **Legends 1.** ...and you've heard a lot of them!

You have three mundane abilities with special rules (detailed below):

- **Claimed by the Sea 1.** You're good with the water.
- **Superior Cat-Speaker 2.** You can talk to cats. You're also good at cat-like stuff.
- **Superior Dreamer 2.** You're really good at coping with strange things.

You'll want to replace Claimed by the Sea and Superior Cat-Speaker with appropriate alternatives if you're playing a Rinley from a different family.

Connections

You start the game with the following free Connections—

- **The Yatskayas 2.** You're at home at the Yatskaya Shrine.
- **Prince Eduard 2.** You have a friend in this rat.
- **[Each PC] 1.** You're drawn to these people.

You can start with a level 2 Connection with any other PC, instead, by mutual agreement.

You Have A Home In...

Your home is always shrouded in vaguely psychoactive incense—it's the way your family disposes of the dust of the Outside. It's really hard to distinguish truth from daydream in the Yatskaya shrine, and cats come and go as they please.

Yatskaya Abilities

Claimed by the Sea

Type: Superior Skill **Cost:** —

Your great-great-great-whatever-grandfather was a seal and the sea hasn't forgotten your family yet. It calls to you. Not *much*, or anything, but some! You're unrealistically good at swimming, tolerating cold water, understanding fish, and communicating with seals and other comparatively intelligent sea life.

It's still only a level 1 Skill—there's a *lot* of greats in that "whatever"—so it's nothing to write home about, but it *is* superhuman. It comes with 1 Edge in relevant mundane conflicts and occasionally a bit of dramatic license to take a smaller wound from exposure or reduce the Obstacle for talking to a seal or whatever.

Superior Dreamer

Type: Superior Skill **Cost:** —

You're good at handling surreal, unreal, chaotic, and dream-like environments. You can dream lucidly, fall asleep or wake up at will, and fend off mental attacks with ease. In addition to the baseline level 2 Skill, you have 2 Edge in any mundane conflict that's about anything like that.

Note that it's almost impossible to use this Skill to *do* stuff in the waking world—if somebody else telepathically assaults you or something, you might be able to turn the tables, but you can't usually just shove people out of the way when a bull is charging and say:

"I'll handle it! I'll use my... *dreaming!*"

The results would almost certainly be gory.

Superior Cat-Speaker

Type: Superior Skill **Cost:** —

This is a great Skill because you can use it to do all kinds of cat-like things—sneaking, getting to high places, being athletic, hunting, bobbing your head up and down while watching a bird out the window, and so on! It's only a level 2 Skill, but it comes with 1-2 Edge on any conflict where being cat-like is an advantage, which means you're basically a ninja or a SEAL[50] except with a higher chance of embarrassing goofs.[51]

50 As it were

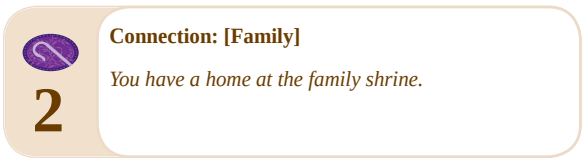
51 Both because "2 Skill + 1-2 Edge" inherently means "can keep up with a Skill 3-4 person, but isn't as practically effective" and because cats themselves have a high hilarious failure rate on their otherwise superhuman athletic and stealth skills.

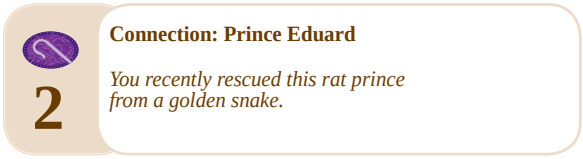
You can also use this Skill to *talk* to cats—not only do you have an exceptional skill at reading their body language and interpreting their noises, they're substantively smarter and more alert when interacting with you. You can do stuff like tell a cat to go get help and have a chance it'll actually do so, or look at a cat's body language and realize that it's smelling or hearing a large predator coming from the... northwest?... that it thinks you should feel some concern about. Stuff like that!

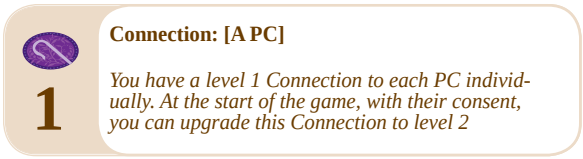
Perks

Characters in this game have a handful of **Perks.** You gain them or improve them by completing quests, and you can have up to 8.

You'll start with these Perks:







Miraculous Abilities

In **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine,** many characters have miraculous powers that derive from "the wishing power of the heart, that can change what is possible."

...but most of them don't actually *think* of it that way.

One of your special powers is that you *do* think of it that way—that you *know* that hearts have a wishing power that can make things happen and you can use that consciously. Because of that, you also have an odd perspective on the possible: "what you can do without wish power" is the same kind of category to you as "what you can do while blindfolded" or "what you can do while standing on one foot:" it's a *meaningful* category but not a very *important* one.

As Rinley Yatskaya, you have the following miraculous abilities:

- **You have a strong heart.**
  - You gain heart power ("miracle points") quickly when you're in trouble.
  - You can make your miraculous abilities stronger for a scene.
- **You can see and talk to the wishing power in a person's heart.**
  - You can tell when someone is putting their heart into something.
  - You can talk directly to somebody's heart.
  - You can call up "wish spirits" to help you out.
- **The wishing power of the heart can change what's possible.**
  - You can make something seem more possible or more difficult.
  - You can enhance other people's power to get things done.
  - You can handwave difficulties and get things done tall-tale-style...
    - ...during scenes, with MP.
    - ...between scenes, as per your Tall Tales ability above.
  - You can shut down other peoples' ability to do implausible things.
  - You can change people's destinies.
- **You've learned some pretty weird things along the way.**
  - You tend to know a little bit more of any story that comes up.
  - You can swap peoples' wishing hearts around between their bodies.

Health

You have 2 Normal Health Levels, 1 Tough Health Level, and 2 Divine Health Levels. This is the "normal" level of toughness for a character in **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine:** you can survive a lot, but mostly because of your adaptable nature and your wishing heart that finds solutions. For instance, if you fall off of a cliff and break your back on the rocks below, you won't just die. But you won't just laugh it off and keep moving around normally either!

Instead, maybe you'll solve the problem yourself, however questionable your methodology might be ("luckily, there were plenty of seashells and bird feathers nearby to melt down into a full-body cast.") Or maybe something else will save you: the magical water of the

pool you fell into will turn you part-plant or something, or a bunch of fairy doctors will happen along!

Miracle Points

You have 5 Miracle Points (MP) to enhance or activate your miraculous abilities.

You regain 1 MP, to a maximum of your normal 5...

- ...at the beginning of each new week.
- ...from your **Frantic** ability when you get into trouble.

You can also gain additional MP, with no particular maximum...

- ...through Issues
- ...when Region Properties get you into trouble.
- ...when your **Tall Tales** ability gets you into trouble.
- ...when you spend a week diligently honoring a Region Property.

Ah, the Angel. Right.

Nightmares' Angel, being heartless, is sometimes immune to your powers. In particular, powers that affect his wishing heart are likely to fail when he is not in sunlight or even altogether.

Spiritual

You spent your childhood sealed away from the world in the dream-like fastness of the Yatskaya, cool and quiet and alienated from ordinary things.

I am certain that in this time you lived a thousand stories: had strange adventures in that place where day-dreams border on the real. And certainly when you did not live them you must have read them, heard them, told them. These stories I do not know; they are not writ herein; but they are still remembered.

The game records them in a miraculous story Arc, or set of Arcs, **Spiritual 3.**

These are what bound you to your "Element"—the wishing power of the heart that can change what's possible and what isn't—and gave you most of your miraculous powers.

Fears of a Sinking Thimble

Type: Miraculous Action [with free Strike = Arc level]
Cost: 0 MP

Not many people are bold enough to sail on a thimble, but you believe in dreams and wishes and the magic power of the heart. That's why you can do things like that!

Only...

What if the power of the heart... went away?

No worries! You're pretty sure you'd know before you actually got on board that thimble. You have a magic wish-warning that tells you when something bad is happening to wishes and dreams—to that power in the heart that makes it possible for people to bend the world. This power also lets you know if something bad is happening to the Wish-Granting Engine, although if you don't yet know what that *is* the warning would be an extremely confusing alert.

You don't always get this warning, even when you should—so if the HG forgets, that's just too bad, and I'm not listing it among your major powers. Basically, it's here in case you or the HG is ever *looking* for it, rather than as something you should be relying on every day!

There's a Tree in the Way

Type: Miraculous Action

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Use this power (every few hours).
- **1 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a handful of hours.

You can impose a vague sense of dream-like impossibility—of "nobody could really do that"—on something. Like, someone wants to go into the woods, and you don't want them to?

There's a tree in the way.

You can also create a vague aura of plausibility over something, so that when you first explain that your plan for getting to the moon is "catapult," it doesn't seem so ridiculous.

This is not a very strong power: all it does is create a sense that something *should* be impossible, or *should* be possible, but if someone stops and thinks about it they can see right through you and if somebody ignores the feeling it has no or minimal effect. However, even if someone tries to ignore you and this power completely, there will always be a sense of dream-like wonder or reasonability painted onto the target idea.

Heart-Reader

Type: Miraculous Action **Cost:** 0 MP

Invoke **Heart-Reader** to tell whether something is a labor of love, an ordinary act, or the dreary trudge of somebody just going through the motions. You can invoke this power real-time or after-the-fact, and you can even get a detailed sense of how *much* love is in something.

This is also the power that lets you see people who'll be important to your destiny. By default, this is assumed to include the other PCs, and it's a kind of overwhelming sensation—even if you decide not to be actually younger than the other PCs, even if you're *older,* you're still bonus goofier and more awkward around them because you can *see* how important they'll be to you even before they actually are. It's like love at first sight, only with ambivalent general connectedness instead of love—

And you'll often get that to a similar or lesser degree for Arc-specific antagonists, associates, and romantic interests as well.

Heart-Speaker

Type: Special **Cost:** —

While you have **Heart-Reader** active, you can speak directly to somebody's wishing heart—to the part of them that pours its love and wishes into stuff, or doesn't. The heart only really cares about emotional information, but sometimes you can sneak in factual data if the emotional relevance is high.

Your actual speaking is just a normal action, but you can bypass obstacles related to communication ("they can't hear you over this concert") or mental state ("they're just not going to listen") when it comes to encouraging or discouraging somebody. You've essentially got a broadcast radio that's tuned to the frequency of the heart.

Power Comparison

The Best Friend has a similar power, **Touch the Heart,** but his power is both weaker and more general. He can communicate with people, and not just their wishing hearts, so he can convey information that isn't so emotionally important—but if someone can't see or hear him, he's not going to be able to talk to them at all!

There's No Turning Back Now!

Type: Miraculous Action **Cost:**

- **0 MP**—Enhance the power of a wishing heart 1/ week.
- **1 MP**—Use this power a second or later time this week.
- **2 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a handful of hours .

Invoke this power when somebody is following their dreams and you can strengthen their power to go forward. This has one or more of the following effects, as you choose:

- Unless they've already got something like this going on...
  - ...they get a +1 Tool bonus from "wish power" to whatever they're doing.
  - ...they get about 1 Edge in a mundane conflict, too.
- An opportunity or helpful person is drawn to them. How fast it gets there depends on the natural pace of events—normally, a couple of weeks, but it's always fast enough to be useful (which could be "seconds" in a combat scene, or "years" if it's a life's ambition).
- Some kind of trouble appears on the road behind them, so that they'll be in trouble if they try to turn back or give up. Again, how fast it catches up to them depends on the natural pace of events.

Divine Mantle

Type: Miraculous Action [Special] **Cost:** 1-3 MP

Spend up to 3 MP and invoke **Divine Mantle** to give all your miracles, for the rest of the scene, miraculous "Edge" equal to the MP spent. Miraculous Edge works just like Strike, but it doesn't add to Strike (you get whichever is best) and it doesn't break Auctorita.

When you invoke the Divine Mantle you are wreathed in an aura of wish power—you burn brightly with the "wishing power" of your heart!

This aura is a subjective/experiential radiance, like the effect of **There's a Tree in the Way,** and not a matter of visible light or tangible effect.

Work of Fable

Type: Miraculous Action **Cost:** 1 MP

Spend an MP and invoke **Work of Fable** to:

- Handwave away a level 1-3 Obstacle involving "completely inadequate tools." You can make a great breakfast with just two eggs and a turnip, sail Big Lake in a kettle, and shoot down a zombie gunman with a water pistol.
- Spot any useful opportunities that you might otherwise be missing, including opportunities to meet someone helpful.
- Re-use an effect from the powered-up version of this ability below, as long as the circumstances are close enough (HG's discretion) to how you used it before.

Note that in some cases you can save the MP and still do what you want to do by waiting until the scene ends and then using **Tall Tales.**

Wish Spirit

Type: Miraculous Action

Cost:

- **1 MP**—Call up a wish spirit.
- **2 MP**—Invoke this power a second or later time within a handful of hours.

Invoke **Wish Spirit** to call a wish spirit to you. Wish spirits are natural spirits, like will-o-wisps and flower fairies, that make people wish for things. They all love you and think you're basically a really big wish spirit with thumbs, so they'll generally be as helpful as they can once you summon them.

...which isn't very much! But they're cool, and they can fly, carry messages, and illuminate things. They are also good at beatboxing.

Anti-Wish Spirits

Sometimes a wish spirit goes wrong and becomes an anti-wishing fairy instead. Instead of making people wish for things, they get really upset when confronted with a wishing heart. "Just cut that out!" they say. "Nobody wants to be around that sort of thing!"

The World Doesn't Work Like That!

Type: Miraculous Action, Bleak
Cost:

- **2 MP**—Put a stop to a magical/heroic action, or crush a hope.
- **4 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a handful of hours.

Invoke **The World Doesn't Work Like That!** to:

- Completely shut down a mundane action facing an Obstacle 2+, or any similarly improbable miracle.
- Cause something amusing, ironic, or tragic to happen to turn a hope recently stated aloud in play into dismal despair.

A Little More to Any Tale

Type: Miraculous Action
Cost:

- **2 MP**—Know a little more than you should.
- **4 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a handful of hours.

You've heard a lot of weird stories.

Invoke **A Little More to Every Tale** to know a little more about anything that's come up in play. If the HG doesn't want to share, you can generally come up with new information yourself!

As a special rule, if the HG isn't sure you're right—whether they want to give you tentative information or are skeptical of your proposed new bit of data—you get the MP back.

Change Destinies

Type: Miraculous Action, Major **Cost:** 4 MP

You can change the destiny or purpose of a wishing heart, which pretty much means "of a person." This functions pretty much as a weaker version of a wish—like:

"I wish they'd always have friends around them."

"I wish their destiny was to be a librarian."

Only, because it's *not* a wish, because it's a miracle, there are the following differences:

- Resisting is easier.
- Outright ignoring the effect inflicts just a single Deadly Wound instead of two.
- The effects are awesome but comparatively understated.
- The power of the effect is that of a Major miracle while sustained.
- Once you stop sustaining the miracle, the power level normally[52] fades to that of a series of mundane coincidences and Obstacles.

Swap Hearts

Type: Miraculous Action, Major **Cost:** 4 MP

Invoke **Swap Hearts** to extract somebody's wishing heart and put it in someone or something else. Typically this forces a swap, although you can do a little bit of juggling for 3+ way swaps if you need to. If the HG introduces **the Ideologue,** you may be able to learn her technique for hanging on to the heart and turning the abandoned body into a giant monster instead!

If you swap or otherwise move around a PC's heart—well, first, note that they'll *probably* defend by taking a wound which defines their own variation on the desired effect, but second, note that players retain their usual character sheet in a new body, keeping all of their miraculous and Imperial abilities and changing only those mundane Skills *directly* affected by the change.

(If players want to keep playing their old body with new powers and a new personality, I'm OK with that! But it breaks the game's model of events a little, so I can't recommend it.)

It's up to the HG whether hearts eventually drift back to their former owners or stay swapped forever. I'd recommend assuming that PC hearts drift back to the right body by the end of the story, though.

You learned this trick from an old cat, who learned it from spending too much time snoozing on the back of something called "Malambruno." Also most of his hair fell out. It looks ridiculous!

52 *Once you stop sustaining the miracle, it's in the HG's hands, and they can technically do whatever they want with it, including ignoring it immediately or scaling it up all the way to wish level—but normally, it gets pretty weak.*

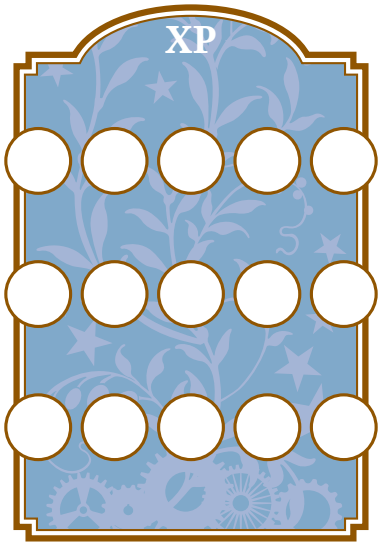
Great Work of Fable

Bonus XP

You have something you need to do, but you just don't have the means. Every idea you come up with has a level 4-5 Obstacle—it's as unfeasible as suddenly teleporting to Mars or building a perpetual motion machine. But if you keep trying, you're sure you'll figure *something* out.

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (though only once per 15 minutes/scene) by **proposing a theory as to how you'll get this thing done, or, if you already know basically what you want to do, by proposing a theory about how and why it might actually work.**

If there's nothing else important going on in the game, you'll usually then play this out in a dream sequence before cruel reality shows that it just won't work after all.



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Great Work of Fable

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle; Major **Cost:** —

Spend a 15-XP quest planning and pondering your approach and you can upgrade either **Work of Fable** or **There's No Turning Back Now!** to an epic level—

You can wave off even level 4-5 Obstacles involving inadequate tools and learn to sail on a thimble, post letters via hollow logs, and telephone somebody when your phone lines have been cut and they're not even holding a phone. Further, you can demand that an opportunity or helpful individual show up to facilitate something you plan to do *even if they wouldn't otherwise exist*—prompting possible scenes like:

Them: "How did you get in?"
You: "You left your window unlocked."
Them: "*I don't have a window.*"

The effect is persistent—once you've established that you can post letters via a hollow log, then it's obviously no longer a *great* work of fable to do so. If you stayed , on the quest after finishing it, then you can do that very thing again—

The Obstacle is gone!

Even if you finished the quest, though, the mere act of establishing something as possible lingers and reduces the expected Obstacle to level 1-3 more or less indefinitely. That in turn means that you don't need a new quest to make it possible again. (How could it be impossible? You've done it!)

As long as the HG buys that the circumstances are sufficiently close (e.g., they might restrict you to the same hollow log, or to hollow logs in the same area, or of the same wood, or similar shape, or something), you just need to spend a single MP on **Work of Fable** to do it again.

This advantage lasts basically until a reasonable HG might forget that you'd done it. Thus, if you use such an advantage every session or two and there's no huge gap between sessions, it stays possible. Otherwise, you may have to keep track of these effects yourself and remind the HG occasionally of them in some orderly fashion.[53]

This is also the powered-up version of **There's No Turning Back Now**—you can use it to figure out how to make things possible for someone else, not just yourself, and after that it's just 1 MP to make it possible for yourself or that someone again in the future.

53 It's not really that I think the HG needs to know the details of what you can do, or that the HG needs to monitor or control your use of this. I just don't want the session to break down into "No, remember back when I did this and that?" "Wait, sort of, wasn't it when…" or "Dang it, if I'd remembered you could do that, I would have done this…"

Rinley's Dreams

Bonus XP

To wield some of your greater miracles you must exist outside yourself—must set aside *living* and walk into *dreaming*, so that you can see your own heart's wish power from outside and shape it with a meditative care.

You may earn a bonus XP towards these miracles at any time (but only once per 15 minutes/scene) by shifting into that state—or, if appropriate, by shifting out from it. I've provided a two-sided card to help you track these events; you'll normally keep it in front of you, flipping it over in play to indicate your change of state.

If you can't actually keep the card in front of you, though, holding up the card with the relevant side facing people or just saying or emoting something appropriate can earn you the XP instead.

Note: This is a valid quest card for "Great Work of Fable" as well as for "Rinley's Dreams."

XP

Living in the Now

Drifting in the Wind

Rinley's Dreams

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle; sometimes Major
Cost: —

Certain Spiritual miracles are slower, time-consuming things. To evoke these greater effects, you must return to your old ways—to dreaming your life away in the temple of the Yatskaya or, at least, spending portions of your life in a dream-life state—for the duration of a 15-XP quest. Some of these great slow miracles include:

- Using your dreams to investigate something to do with wish power or the wishing power in a certain person's heart.
- Use wish power in some fashion as a Major miracle to protect or heal something or stabilize it against the influence of fear, trauma, tragedy, and the Outside.
- The "great works of fable," discussed here.

Creature of Fable

Lately you have come out of your shell. Now you are moving forward with your life. Now you are becoming something *new*.

A creature, as it happens, of fable.

This is a new story Arc. A new path. And it starts at **Creature of Fable 0.**

Frantic

Type: Special **Cost:** —

You're never so resilient as when you're terrified.

You may take the **(Be in) Trouble** Action any time you can meet its condition. Doing so earns you 1 MP, up to a maximum of your starting MP. Each additional group XP that you earn from this Action also earns you an additional MP.

Arc Powers

Frantic is your "Arc power"—you get it for *being* on one of the Arcs that grant Frantic. If you change to a different Arc, it's replaced by whatever power that Arc offers instead. That will usually be either:

- **Sickly** (if death and decay have been getting to you.)
- **Immortality** (if they *very much haven't.*) *or*
- **Frantic** (in which case you just stay Frantic! The power is always the same.)

The rest of your powers are either permanent (all your **Spiritual** powers) or will become permanent (your **Creature of Fable** powers) as soon as you complete your first Arc.

Tall Tales

Type: Affliction, based on your **Something to Deal With** Issue

Cost: —

if you're an NPC, then this is based instead on someone else's ***Mystery / Illusion***

This power, discussed in detail above, comes from your early **Creature of Fable** Arc.

Iconic

Type: Imperial Miracle or Miraculous Action, Major

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Maintain an iconic appearance, to the extent reasonable.
- **1 MP**—Invoke a major miracle to revert your appearance instantaneously.

You have an iconic appearance—a certain hairpiece, maybe; a certain fixed level of grubbiness and cleanliness; a handful of standard outfits. The details are up to you and you can fiddle with them in the first story or two, but the point is, you *have* one. You have *a look*. When people read about you in a few centuries there will be an iconic Rinley.

That's *you*.

And to a certain extent that never changes. You can be dolled up for hours and become slightly grubby again in an instant. You can trudge through a bog for weeks, shake the water out of your pants, and be practically clean again.

Whether it's fashionable, dorky, scruffy, pure, or "cool," one shake of your hair and one pat-down of your clothes and bam! You're back to yourself.

This power has two models for operation.

The free version is limited by reason. It's an Imperial miracle, and it lets you resume your normal standard of appearance *to the extent reasonable*, and via a visible progression that could be stalled or held back by others if they fight. If your hair's been shorn by a marauding shorn-beast, it might not pop back to its full length instantly; instead, you hold out your hand, someone tosses you a wig, and you put it on, just in time for the wind to blow you a new strawberry-leaf crown to hold it on. If you've been forced into an elaborate get-up for a marriage ceremony, it might unravel slowly enough for panicking servants and relatives to keep on top of things until the moment before the pledge.

If that's unsatisfying, the second version lets you spend an MP to invoke a major miracle that simply instantaneously rewrites you as looking the way you ought to look.

If you ever wish to change your iconic appearance you may do so by spending a Recharge Token; when the book ends, or the next book if you barely had any time to evaluate it, you'll decide whether to keep the new version of yourself or go back to the old.

Actions and Issues

Here's some things you're often doing.

Pastoral Stuff

Lazy days: soak up ambience while hanging out somewhere (the shrine, Maple Hill, a roof in Fortitude, or whatever)

Slice of Life

You're cat-like enough to really enjoy just *being* sometimes. You can get bonus XP for these scenes a couple of times a week.

Troublemaking

Poke around with something or somewhere new

Discovery

Do things you oughtn't

Wicked Action

You're a mercurial and sometimes bratty kid.

Paying Attention

Listen wide-eyed to people's stories

Foreshadowing

Feel things strongly: be shocked and overcome and take things personally, maybe because they are personal and maybe because you're a kid

Shock

People's stories can totally suck you in. You love stories.

You're also generally pretty emotionally vulnerable to the world and prone to being overwhelmed by it—whether it's being overwhelmed by a sunset, assuming that a particular legend is secretly about you or your friends, or trembling at the realization that your friend is going to die.

Tall Tales

Explain the weird folk-tale stuff you've been doing

Ritual

Your tall tales power is usually a bit formalized—it's not about you giving a good OOC explanation, and it's usually not *just* about your explaining things IC. They're a bit more like the narrator pausing to tell a story from the future of one of the things Rinley Yatskaya did, you know, back when.

Issues

If you pick up a **Complex,** I recommend that you're overreacting to some snub or kindness and building it up in your mind into an epic *thing*.

Your most common **Vice** is probably something relatively harmless like snooping or pestering, although laziness or getting into fights might sneak in there (particularly if you haven't brought in **the Idol** from another campaign.)

Note the extra rules concerning you and the **Something to Deal With** Issue under "Tall Tales," above.

Timeline 1-2: Playing through your Childhood

The HG may want to play through your childhood at an accelerated pace—probably about 50x acceleration, covering a year in about the same time you'd usually cover a week.

In a game like that, your history would look like this:

Age 2: Your mom is snatched away by a giant bird.

Age 4: This is when the game would start.

Age 4-7: You meet the other PCs, and you might even see the destiny in them, but you're probably actually a bit shy early on.

Age 8-9: This is a good time to meet Prince Eduard and start coming out of your shell and actively getting to know the other PCs.

Age 14: The present.

(The major difference between timeline 1 and 2 is when the old sun dies, which isn't very personally relevant to you. In timeline 1, it was around the time your mother was carried off, but probably not *exactly* the same time. Or was it?

In timeline 2, it happens when you're 7.)

Timeline 3: Starting in the Modern Day

In a game that starts in the present, the sun died and was reborn when you were around 7. You probably didn't save Prince Eduard and start having adventure in your life until *very* recently—1-3 months ago.

Mommy?

I assume that in a long-running campaign your mother's disappearance will eventually become relevant, but by default, you'll grow up thinking that everything possible has been done and she's just, well, gone.

One day you'll probably realize, "OMG, I could try to find out what exactly happened!" and it'll be a transformative moment for you because you'll never have really even considered the possibility before. However, note that the HG is not obligated to figure out this plot before running a game with you in it—your family only knows what the HG *does* decide on plus what they can improvise on the fly, and not a jot or tittle more!

I'm currently expecting there to be more on this in the forthcoming book on the rats of Fortitude.

The Child of the Sun

Fact Sheet

You are **Jasper Irinka, the Child of the Sun.** You're an ordinary girl and the goddess of the sun. You're cheerful, sincere, emotionally vulnerable, and like many goddesses you can grow extra eyes and limbs.

Primary Quests

- Bring light and warmth to the world.
- Figure out your mortal life.
- Develop your spiritual identity as the sun.

Bonus XP When...

Players use *gratitude hands* (e.g., hand-on-fist bow, hand-to-heart, fist-bump) because...

- ...their character's gratitude to you/your PC reached the player's heart.
- ...you/your PC supported/played up their character concept/direction.

Powers

You're the sun and the light of hope in the mortal world. So you're basically immortal and you have limited power over the weather. You can light others' path and help them find their dreams. You have the unique ability to grow personalized magical limbs and develop new senses when that'll help you inspire hope, defeat evil, or represent the dreams and hopes that people share with you—

...and to keep those limbs and senses around for use in other random things later on!

Common Variations

Shake it up! For an atypical **Child of the Sun** experience, pick one or more of the following:

- You are Raven Irinka, a boy.
- You're the new North Wind instead of the new sun.
- You're the new rainbow instead of the new sun.
- You're closer to being the firebird that kindles the sun than the sun itself.
- You're closer to being the hope or love that keeps the world alive than the literal sun.

Character Description

Far away and long ago...

You lived in the sky. You were the child of the sun. You played with the bird-faced spirits and the stars; the winds and the children of rainbows.

You rode the horses of the sun.

You played and laughed with the dogs of the sun, the firebirds, and even the great sun-bellied sloth.[54] You pressed your face against the glass-bottomed hull of the sky and stared down at all the people who lived below.

Later—depending on how the HG handles the early years of the game—you summered in a little house in Fortitude and got to play with the human and Yatskaya children that lived below.

Those days seem like a magical dream now.

Your mother was the sun. She was the glory, she was the *logos*, she was the light of hope that illumined the lower world.

Your father—

He came to Town long ago with the dust of a far and sunless land on his feet. He called himself the lord of Death's dominion, the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy, and an enemy of the world; but he loved the sun anyway, you think, and she loved him, for years and years, all the sunlit days of your childhood, right up until the day that he killed her.

Were you looking up at the sky the day that happened? Were you summering in Fortitude when he rode up on his pale horse and drew his great black bow and fired, and blood and darkness spread across the sun?

Or were you up there, beside her? Did she push you from the sky when he drew back his bow?

Did he shoot her, and her life stuttered and went out, and the sky gave way from underneath you, and you fell?

One of those, anyway, probably. I figure that you fell.

You couldn't help her. You were falling, probably, or you were on the ground, maybe. And Jade Irinka, who was the sun—

She died.

54 Its belly is not the sun. That would be ridiculous. Its belly just has the shape of the sun on it.

The First Miracle

And on that day death changed.

On that day all the lightless nothingness that is outside the world—and all the emptiness that follows life—took light.

Death wasn't dark enough, cold enough, or empty enough to swallow up the sun.

I don't know if your father knew that would happen. I don't know if he was trying to end the world or just to bring his lover home. Whether she let it happen or failed to stop it. Whether she's stuck outside the world, on the other side of death, because he shot her and she died; or she's a prisoner in chains; or if she's on her way to Town to see you once again and she just hasn't made it yet.

Maybe he murdered her. Maybe he kidnapped her. Maybe she tricked him into helping her change the nature of death. Maybe they eloped. I don't know. You don't know.

You know that you lost her.

That sucks.

Now you can't talk to her in the mornings when you're getting ready for School. You can't make her breakfast when you wake up earlier than the sun. You can't tell her the stories of the things that happened during your day.

But that miracle still happened. The change in the nature of death still happened. You know it. It burns in you, this is a truth that runs through you, up and down your nerves, through and in your bones.

Jade Irinka died, but she is not *gone*.

She kindled the whole idea of *goneness* with her light, instead.

The Second Miracle

And in the moment that you understood that—the moment that you felt that, felt the knowledge of that miracle spreading through you—

A new sun was born into the empty sky.

It's not Jade. It's not... you don't know who it is. No matter how you try to talk to it, it never answers back.

But it's a sun. It's light. It's proof that you're right, that he the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy who killed your mom—

That he didn't win.

Also it helps crops grow and keeps people from freezing to death or bumping into things all the time, so that's just great!

Home and Family

As the Child of the Sun, you fell to **Fortitude**—that sleepy and sprawling fishing neighborhood by the docks of the Big Lake.

It's not your home. Not yet. But it's the closest thing you've got, because:

You don't know how to get back up to the sky.

Maybe you can stay with the Yatskayas, or at Professor Hayashi's archive? Maybe someone else will take you in? Maybe you're kind of shell-shocked and roaming the streets like a stray dog? The *grief* left you as soon as you realized that your mom was still alive, but you've got plenty of shock, loss, and confusion left to sort through before you'll be "OK."

You don't have a family, either.

You haven't seen the Headmaster since you fell, and even if you did, until you hear from Jade's own mouth that she's OK, you're not going to trust a single thing Dad says.

As for Mom—

Sometimes you hear her laughter on the wind. Maybe? Sometimes you feel a touch of distant joy. But maybe that's just part of the nature of things, and not anything to do with *her*.

You had friends in the sky, and a home, but that all feels like a dream, now—a distant, fading memory—and for whatever reason, nobody's coming down to pick you up. Maybe the Headmaster is stopping them, somehow. Maybe without your mother, the paths between the sky and the upper world are gone, or even the entire kingdom in the sky.

Maybe they just don't know that you survived.

Hints: On the Glass Dragon

"Once upon a time, a witch and a glass-maker made a dragon out of glass and taught it to hate the world. It raged and it would have destroyed everything; only, it shattered, instead."

— Campaign Premise

You've always thought that that feeling—that "hating the world"—must be a lot like that moment when your Mom died, before you realized she was still alive.

And that makes you think—

That the dragon must have risen into the sky above Town, and it was made of glass. So the sun would have shone through it. It would have suddenly felt what you felt, when you realized that the sun was still alive. The miracle. The joy. It would have poured all the way through the dragon. After all, it was made of glass.

Isn't that maybe why it broke?

Hints: On the Child of the Sun

On another note: for clarity, you are the current goddess of the sun and ruler of Celestia.

In fact, you are the current *sun.*

You won't really understand this yourself for a while, but it's true. That sun in the sky, replacing Jade? On some level: that's *you.*

That's why it doesn't talk back when you say things to it.

I recommend that you focus on the lower world for now; that's why your memories of the sky are "dream-like." Getting back up to the sky and figuring out what's going on in Celestia and why they haven't sent anybody for you is a campaign of its own. But still—

If it ever comes up: you *are* the sun, and the goddess of the sun, and that is why you can do the things you do.

Quests

You start the game with three *quests*, and have the power to swap them out or pick up more—you can pursue up to four quests at any given time.

I've chosen three quests to...

- ...serve as your basic, default character motivation in play ("The Light of Hope").
- ...give you extra direction in the first few sessions ("A Mortal Life").
- ...tie you into the campaign plot ("The Miracle").

Bonus XP

Once per fun scene, though at most once per fifteen minutes of play, you can earn bonus XP for one of your first two quests. This is pretty easy:

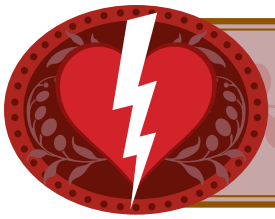
- Decide that you've done a good job at being the sun, say, "Ding!" or "Ting!" and claim an XP for **The Light of Hope.**
- Propose a theory about the lower world or the upper world, all scientific-like, to claim an XP for **A Mortal Life.**

You can earn a bonus XP for the third quest, **The Miracle**, once per in-game week by picking a scene from the quest's list of scene options to play out.

Other Quests

If you're interested in another quest or two, and you have access to **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake,** I'd recommend looking at the quests for...

- ...curating some of the clam beds or snail farms along the north beach as a **Friend to the Beaches.**
- ...working on **Shrine Duties** at a shrine.
- ...studying navigation and learning to be **Never Lost.**



The Light of Hope

Bonus XP

You're trying to be the light of hope in the mortal world. You're trying to be *sunny*.

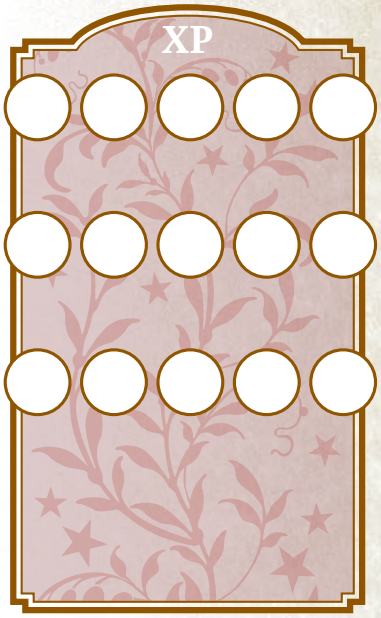
You can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you or someone else thinks, basically, that you've done that well. That you've *sunnied* well.

Pick a catchphrase for this—something you usually say. You don't have to say it *exactly* every time—it's just the *usual* thing.

Something like:

- "Ding!" or
- "Ting!", to represent a sparkle in your eye or on your tooth.
- "Sunny!" or
- "Emote: sunny!" to show how sunny you are.

The rule is: you can earn a bonus XP (up to once per scene/15 minutes) just by saying or emoting that!



The Light of Hope

15 XP Quest

: Chibi-Quest

You're the light of hope now. You've got to do your mother's job. That means shining on the darkness in people's lives—not necessarily to fix them, but to give that darkness a bit of the endless light and warmth that you have inside you.

Here's some sunny things to do:

- Get people to confide their secrets.
- Discover and bring some lost or hidden thing to light.
- Tend plants, help dry laundry, and do other metaphorical sun-like-things.
- Show off some art form that you use to help shine in the world: singing, dancing, painting, or whatever.

But really it's not about what *I* think is right here. What do *you* think is appropriately sunny behavior for the sun?

You'll earn XP for this quest through fun scenes with you and your friends wherein one of you feels that you've... sunnied?... well. Normally you'd indicate this by...

- ...saying "Ting!" or "Ding!" to indicate a spark of light in your smile or eyes.
- ...(them) snapping their fingers and pointing at you and *then* saying "Ding!" or "Ting!"
- ...(you) emoting "*sunny.*"

You don't technically *have* to accept the XP if it's a friend doing the dinging, by the way. I just thought it might be kind of nice to let them help.

Rewards

Completing this quest earns you a precious memory—a bit of private happiness, a moment to treasure and keep in your heart like a jewel. Sometimes you may also get a new hair tie or something else that you think is cool.

Each such precious thing is a **Recharge Token—**

Once in the future, you'll be able to draw on that happiness to replenish your supply of Will and MP to full mid-week or strengthen yourself before using your **Heart of the Sun** ability on a new Region outside of Town.

A Mortal Life

25 XP Quest

1:

2:

3:

You're new to the lower world. You're an alien here, and you spend a lot of time alternating between *failure to understand* what's going on and *figuring this place out*.

Once per scene, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by proposing a theory about how something in the lower world, or Fortitude in general, works, or how the sun interacts with the world.

What You'll Do

Over the course of this quest, you'll want to...

- ...participate in at least one of the holidays or ceremonies in honor of the sun.
- ...work through your feelings about your Mom.
- ...find a new place for yourself.

What kind of place?

Ideally you'd find work at a shrine and you'd say the traditional prayers to Jade in the early morning, study in the late morning, work and play in the afternoon, and perform traditional dances during the various large and small festivals where there's a role for somebody connected to the sun.

If necessary, though, you could work on a fishing boat or whatever else instead.

Variations

If you don't want to be the goofy alien that doesn't understand human affairs, you could have a pet bird or sloth or something from Celestia that you explain things to instead. Or you could ditch that side of your character entirely and focus on your difficulties *emotionally* accepting the world and being in exile from the sky.

If you don't want to focus on sun-related stuff, for whatever reason, you can look for a different sort of place in Fortitude. Do you want to fish? To study a trade? To be a street urchin? To make candles? To be a legendary hero?

A Mortal Life

Bonus XP

You don't really know how the lower world works. It's all... money, and sneezing, and denim, and dragonfruit and stuff. Is the dragon *in* the fruit? Is the fruit made *of* dragons?

You don't know!

Any time you wisely **propose a theory about how this lower world works, or a theory/memory about how the upper world worked, or a theory about how the sun fits into it all,** you can earn a bonus XP for this quest. (Though only up to once per fifteen minutes/scene.)

The expectation here is that mostly this quest's theories are going to be silly/goofy or a little sweet—but it's fine to be profound as well if you can manage it!

All that really matters is that it's really you, coming up with that theory, IC—not just a thing to say, but a concept to consider for at least a moment as a possible actionable fact.

XP

Rewards

Typically you'll pick up a new Perk that...

- ...offers a level 2 Connection to Fortitude.
- ...makes one of your (power-granted) limbs effectively permanent.
- ...gives a new Trick to use with your **Unnatural Action** power (below).
- ...offers a small new miraculous power.

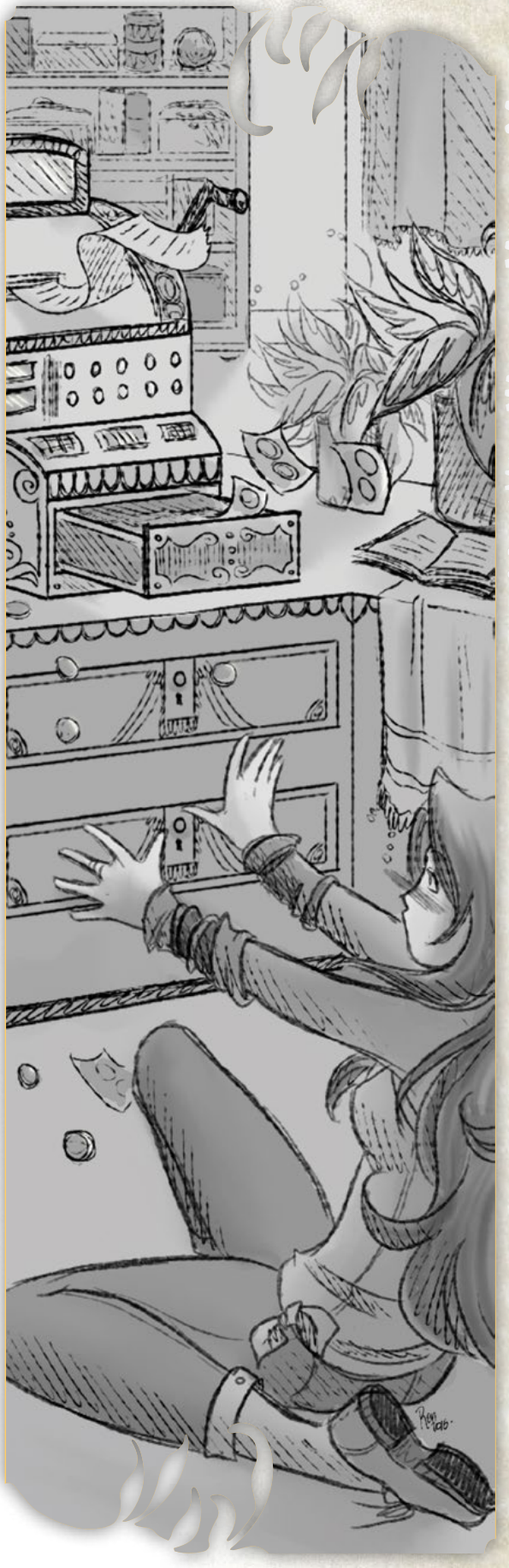
Alternately you may earn the non-Perk benefit "Birthday":

- You may celebrate a birthday, growing one year older.

On Being the Sun

The people of Town have a fairly vague sense of what it means for a person to be the sun. They don't really try to grasp the part beyond "a ritual figure connected to the sun"—either they politely doubt anything more than that or they accept it as a holy mystery. For that reason, it's possible for you to achieve incremental acceptance as the new solar deity: people might accept first that you've been "chosen" to represent the sun, or that the new sun lives in you, or whatever, and expect your actual development in that role to take time and practice. They might even expect that you'll give it up at some point, like, outgrow it and want to go be a fighter pilot or whatever instead.

I'm encouraging you to think of it a bit more literally as a player. You're playing the actual physical sun, which has at least two bodies, one quasi-human and one that mostly just sits up in the sky and burns. It should be impossible to draw a totally clear line between *you* and the sun, or, for that matter, between you and the concept of Hope. But at the same time, it's normally easier to move and take human-level actions with your humanoid body, so that's where the action is!



The Miracle (aka "Changes")

35 XP Quest

1:

2:

This quest begins the story "The Pleasure Ship," pg. 503.

2

As we've mentioned, you're the sun—the actual new sun, not just a child of the old one. You're the rightful ruler of the sky and an important religious/ritual figure in Town.

This quest builds towards your first real miracle, the first real sign that that's so:

A miracle, in answer to death; or, a miracle, commanding the powers and principalities of the sky.

Rewards

This quest usually gets you started on a **Primordial** Arc, which—when the Arc finishes—will substantially upgrade your power set.

You'll also get an *immediate* bonus in the form of a new Perk—usually, one of these:

- **Accessory.** You gain access to an unusual vehicle.
- **Accessory.** You gain access to a useful, often lightly magical, tool for self-defense.
- **Accessory.** You gain access to an unusual, but loyal, servant.

What I'm specifically imagining is that you'll raise one of the horses of the sun from the dead to be your friend and flying mount. But that doesn't *have* to be the miracle. It's just the rough *level* of awesome that I expect.

You're going to have a hard Arc—the next few quests are a doozy. It's only right that you should get something awesome from this as well!

Afterwards, I suggest reviewing the notes on pg. 503–504 and moving on to the quest **"The Refusal of the Call."**

Gratitude Hands

Your bonus XP emotion is *gratitude*—when someone's happy that you've defended them, fulfilled their trust, or given them a chance to shine.

A mere "thank you" is too common to get an XP for, of course. "Thanks" is quite commonly a speech act, a social lubricant, part of the structure of communication, and not real gratitude at all.

You can't get XP just from that.

You need *gratitude hands.*

Thus players can convey a bonus XP to you by...

- ...clutching the air over their heart.
- ...fist-bumping you.
- ...blowing you a kiss.
- ...saying, "Fist-bump" or "Mschaw" (or "Air-kiss" if they *must*).
- ...clasping one palm over their fist and bowing.
- ...putting their hand to their heart.
- ...stretching out their hand to you as they say thank you.
- ...miming taking your hand in both of those as they thank you.
- ...in general, saying, "Gratitude hands!"

A heavily inflected thank you—stage-whispered, spoken in a foreign language, or emoted in the various weird voices people use when they're using *gratitude voice*—also suffices.

For clarity, this bonus XP condition isn't about niceness or favors. It's about connecting to people and about fitting into their lives. You can do favors for people all day, but without that personal connection you won't get gratitude hands, and if you get it, that spark of connection, it only takes a little bit of niceness to get a solid, serious, fist-bump or mschaw.

Advice to Other Players: Remember that this is *your* gratitude. If you're immersed in your character, and your character feels grateful, so you feel grateful, that's fine! That works! But if you say, "Dang, I really need someone to crush my character's heart right now," and she comes by and crushes your character's heart, that totally deserves gratitude hands too. And if you think your character is probably grateful but you're not—that *doesn't* count!

The Miracle

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you have a traumatic transformation or dissociation scene in play, where your reality gets weird because your true nature is changing or revealing itself.
- ...you see a confusing vision, nightmare, or premonition of your or someone else's death.
- ...you meet and get the chance to help a mysterious child find their way.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...wrestling with/expressing nameless feelings of loss that make you act unnaturally
- ...trying and failing to burn things, to light them on fire
- ...getting confused about who and where you are
- ...listening to stories about things that were lost when Jade Irinka died
- ...talking with somebody about your destiny/nature and what it means
- ...talking with somebody about why there's such a thing as death
- ...dealing with acne, braces, your period, ear infections, or other annoyingly intrusive elements of physicality.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Abilities

You have **8 Will** and the following mundane abilities:

- **Courtly Manners 3.** You're very graceful.
- **Incarnation of the Sun 2.** You're in tune with the sun.
- **Riding 1.** You're familiar with horses and bicycles.
- **Art/Craft (your choice) 1.** You're familiar with something else.
- **Lore 1.** You know scraps of secret lore about the sun, the sky, the lake, and the Bleak Academy beyond the world.

You may use the **Incarnation of the Sun** ability to know the current time, time of sunset, and time of sunrise. It's also quite useful when you need to rise, set, or bring light—you rarely fall while climbing, when you do fall you fall gracefully, and you've practically always got a match or flashlight.

You can use any of your mundane abilities—though normally just the top two—for solar special effects like "and the sun comes out from behind the clouds" or "dramatic sunbeam!" This is possible because of your **Inspiring Radiance** ability, below.

Additional Abilities

It's common for **the Child of the Sun** to pick up additional mundane abilities when picking up new limbs—many of the very minor physical changes you can undergo come with a point or two of some mundane Skill. Note that if you pick up a "Superior Skill," it'll sometimes give you an advantage even when using one of your own Skills—for instance, if you pick up **Superior Skill: Intimidating 1** because you're tuned to an intimidating person's hopes and dreams, that's not a very good Skill on its own terms—but it'll give you a bit of an Edge when trying to intimidate someone with your Courtly Manners or with your being the Incarnation of the Sun.

Connections

You start the game with three free Connections:

- **The Prodigy 2.** She fascinates you. You're not sure why.
- **Little Island 1.** You love Little Island, although you don't feel ready to live there.
- **Nightmares' Angel 1.** He's a freak, but somehow you kind of *get* him.

You can start with a level 1 Connection with any other PC by mutual agreement.

Of all of these, the only one that is "inherent"—a permanent and intrinsic part of your character—is your Connection to Nightmares' Angel. That's both good and bad: it means that if you fill up all your Perk slots with other cool stuff, you still have a Connection to him, but it's also a little harder to improve and redundant with any Connection Perk to him you get!

Perks

Characters in this game have a handful of **Perks.** You gain them or improve them by completing quests, and you can have up to 8.

You'll start with these Perks:

1

Connection: [PC of your choice]

At the start of the game, with the player's consent, you may take a free level 1 Connection to any other PCt.

2

Connection: the Prodigy

She fascinates you. You're not sure why.

1

Connection: Little Island

You love Little Island, though you don't feel ready to live there.

Health

You're pretty sturdy.

+1 Divine Health Level

Health

You have a steady, persevering heart.

(Metaphorically, anyway. The physical one is always contracting—then relaxing. Contracting—then relaxing! Ba-bum! Ba-bum! Ba-bum!

And it won't say WHYYYYYY)

+1 Normal Health Level

Miraculous Abilities

As the Child of the Sun, you have the following miraculous abilities:

- **You are the sun, and the light of hope in the mortal world.**
  - You are functionally immortal.
  - You can influence the weather and the sky with your mundane actions.
  - You can radiate hope.
  - You can send out your consciousness in a sunbeam.
  - The nuclear furnace of your stomach can digest basically anything.
- **You can bind yourself to somebody's hopes and dreams.**
  - This gives you a new limb, sense, or tattoo/decoration relating to them or the dream.
  - They can emote to you from anywhere.
  - You have an easier time finding them and tracking their current hopefulness/despair.
  - You can light their path.
  - You can work effectively towards...
    - ...giving them hope, *or*
    - ...fulfilling their hopes.
- **You can generate new limbs with strange magical powers...**
  - ...when doing so brings hope.
  - ...to devour evil.
  - ...in response to damage.
- **Your form shifts and changes over time.**
  - You can talk with people to adjust/fine-tune the limbs created from their hopes.
  - You can keep the limbs you created to handle a crisis or bring hope.

You have one alternate form:

- If you absolutely must, you can cast off the form of humanity and become a levitating city-sized sun-inferno-creature kind of thing.

Health Levels

You have 3 Normal Health Levels, 1 Tough Health Level, and 3 Divine Health Levels.

That means that even without your **Immortality** ability, you're as tough as nails—you could survive three nukes, a tank round, and three or four serious kicks to the head before you're down for the count. For most characters, this kind of toughness is "plot armor," where they can find *some* way to survive—for you, that's still feasible, but you're more likely to survive by sacrificing some portion of your veneer of humanity. You're the *sun*, after all, and most mortal military arsenals just don't cut it against you. If you're thrown into a junkyard car compactor, and your Immortality isn't working, maybe you come out of it squished literally flat or you burn your way out in a gout of sunny disposition and have trouble not being on fire for a while thereafter. Often this will exactly match the kinds of effects that you can get from your "magical limbs" power set, which means that you can think of a wound as nothing more or less than an impromptu, temporary magical limb that's a bit less under your control and a bit more advantageous than you'd usually expect—and vice versa, inventing such limbs to survive threats.

You can also use your Health Levels to resist enchantments, transformations, and the like—or, more commonly, to twist them a bit to your purposes. Instead of letting someone turn you into a frog, letting your hair go green is probably sufficient; instead of letting someone bend you to their will, deciding to help them on your own and on your own terms is probably enough!

Miracle Points

You have 5 Miracle Points (MP) that you can use to enhance your miraculous abilities or use them more often than usual. Once spent, you'll regain 1 MP/week, up to your normal 5.

You can gain additional MP through Issues, when Region Properties or an Affliction-limb get you into trouble, or by spending a week diligently doing something that honors a Region Property or Bond. (e.g. helping make sure everyone has a home in Fortitude.)

The Altered Form: General Rules for your Transformations

You are not human. You are a part of the vastness of the world, the vast *connectedness* of the world, all entangled with others' hearts and dreams and hopes. You are something primal and primordial and you may grow new limbs, organs, and adaptations from the stuff of people's hopes.

This is a supernatural and profoundly spiritual process. I mean, it's also kind of gross and kind of horrific, and no amount of sunshine and sparkles can change the fact that you grow extra, inhuman limbs. You can horrify people, and it's *possible* for you to become a creature of horror or pitiable social reject by accident. But it's not *aimed* at that, it's not aimed at or modeling horror. It's aimed at making you a pre-human divine force. You have extra limbs to represent the fact that you're not limited to the human scale of action, you are a creature of doubled or tripled potency and senses, words and actions potentially burning with divine power, holding many symbols in your potentially many hands.

When you create a new limb, you'll need to allocate some of your divine vitality—one of your unwounded Health Levels—to that creation. **This doesn't use it up!** It's just that if you get hurt badly enough that you lose that Health Level later, you'll also lose the power in that limb.

Based on the Health Level you decide to use, you can choose that limb's basic form and power:

Normal Health Levels

At this level the physical change is an inconspicuous or pretty effect, such as…

- ...a gold ring around your iris.
- ...a tendril from your head that looks basically like a lock of hair.
- ...cool nail polish.
- ...a jacket you're never without.
- *(default option)* ...a tattoo with a symbol that represents somebody.

The limb in question usually comes with a low-level Bond or a level 1 Superior Skill. For instance, you might have eyes tuned to see true love, or your sports jacket might make you a little stronger and tougher, or a tattoo

of the Dream-Witch's mask might make you a better dreamer. Sometimes these changes give you a level 1 magical Skill or some other minor advantage instead.

In combination with your **Connect to Someone** power, you can use this to duplicate certain special abilities like the strength of the vampires or the magic of the shrine families. Be careful when borrowing the schticks of other PCs, though—that is, make sure they're OK with it before you go around copying **Nightmares' Angel's** "Nightmare Science" Skill or **the Troublemaker's** "Cat-Speaker" with this power, even if you have a deep connection with them. Conversely, please feel free to duplicate the key abilities of NPCs you've grown particularly close to—and players may be fine with your copying key PC abilities, too, as long as it's in a weaker form and it's obvious that you're borrowing or learning from *their* trick rather than usurping it as your own.

Tough Health Level

At this level the change is conspicuous but it leaves you able to pass as human, such as:

- ...you have notable antennae that you can pass off as hair or a hair decoration.
- ...you're wearing something disturbing, like a blood-soaked headband.
- ...you have one or two 10-20mm-thick manipulator tendrils growing from your back.
- ...you have a magical eye or mouth hidden in your hand.
- ...you're surrounded by a noticeable wind or glow.
- *(default option)* ...a magical sunbeam coils around you like a scarf or tentacle.

It's up to the HG how the power that comes with this limb works, but it usually manifests as a level 1 Affliction, a level 2-3 Superior Skill, or a specific miraculous ability that you can use a few times per scene. For instance, an amazing jacks-playing tendril might give you **Superior Jacks 3** (and probably 1-2 points of Edge on things that are just *like* playing jacks); a set of gills concealed on your shoulders might let you breathe underwater; and a noticeable wind around you might protect you or someone near you a couple of times per scene.

Divine Health Levels

At this level the change is still pretty but also a little disturbing and inhuman. E.g., you develop:

- ...a third eye in your forehead.
- ...a crown of fire.
- ...a pair of golden or fiery wings.
- ...shapely extra arms.
- *(default option)* ...two long, strong, sun-gold manipulator tendrils growing from your back.

This stuff is weird enough that it *does* make you stand out. It might even make you look a bit freakish. However, it's also usually pretty enough that if a fantasy artist drew you, it would be obvious that you're meant to be awesome and not to be a monstrous horror.

When you have visible alterations like these, people from out of Town who see you are likely to assume that you're a monster—but maybe just a very extreme cosplayer, or a refugee from a movie set. People from Town won't be sure whether you're an angel, a monster from some unworldly tribe, or what. But you'll also have a certain naturalness and aesthetic quality to the look, so if you're popular or if you're friends with someone they can get used to it pretty easily—these are physical changes out of the anime playbook and not out of the mythos of Lovecraft.

In terms of the associated power, these limbs may or may not prove stronger than the Tough options. Practically usable abilities are often level 2-3 Superior Skills or miraculous abilities, just as above. As an Affliction, as something you don't really control, the power of these Divine limbs might scale with your **Primordial** Arc, or even go past it, but even that's only a little better than the Tough options get.

That said, sometimes the circumstances of your acquiring the limb will force the HG to scale that up—a **Limb to Devour Evil,** for instance, is always at least as strong as necessary to make a real difference in your current struggle. If a Superior Skill or base-level miraculous ability won't make a practical difference, then the limb will just have to be stronger! Will it get free Strike? Become an Imperial miracle? Shroud itself in an Auctoritas? I don't know! But it'll be effective, whatever it is, and such extreme limbs are usually the kind of thing that go in your Divine Health Level slots.

Limbs and Health

I'm tying these to your Health Levels specifically so that you can lose them when sufficiently damaged. I don't think this is something that will ever be *terribly* important, but it could come up if you fill up all your health levels with limbs, or you could play it up for drama, or it might become a useful way for someone to power you down if you ever decide to become the terrifying nemesis of all that is good and right—

Basically, if you get a limb that will destroy the world in 24 hours, there *is* an option for removing it that isn't just "kill the sun and plunge the world back into darkness." This shouldn't be a scenario that actually comes up in play, though.

Abandoning Limbs

You can abandon a limb at will, e.g., if you'd like to use the Health Level for a different limb or you need that Health Level in order to soak a wound. The limb loses its powers immediately and fades away physically over the course of a few minutes (if it was using a Normal or Tough Health Level) to a few hours (if it was using a Divine Health Level.)

Wound-Limbs

It's reasonable for you to grow a new limb spontaneously and reactively when wounded—if some terrifying and awful swordsperson stabs you in the stomach with a magical blade, catching it in your embarrassing stomach-hand or having your stomach split into a fiery void is as good a way to handle that as any.

I want to emphasize that this isn't a *power* you have, per se—it's just a character-specific interpretation of the normal wound rules. When you take a wound in **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG,** you explain how your character handles it and you pick up a character trait accordingly. If it makes more sense for you to just bleed all over and pass out when somebody stabs you in the stomach, do that. If it ever makes more sense for Rinley Yatskaya to grow an embarrassing stomach-hand when someone stabs her, *she'll* do *that!* But on the whole, I figure that it's more likely to be the other way around.

When you're wounded, the HG will tell you what health level you'd need to wound; a "wound" to your Normal Health Levels usually manifests as a reasonably well-controlled Bond and a wound to any other Health Level as an HG-twistable Affliction. Like all wounds, you can't discard wound-limbs on your own, but your Immortality (pg. 205) will heal them pretty fast—probably 1-3 minutes for a Normal, 1-3 hours for a Tough Health Level, and overnight for a Divine Health Level.

You're actually not going to get wounded very often—as just noted, you're immortal! Most mundane events and even most characters are simply incapable of doing more than taking you out for a scene and maybe wounding a Normal Health Level. I just figured it'd be good to make clear that the way you usually think of wounds, when you *do* get them, is "dang, I have to spawn some new character feature, possibly a limb, which is more freakish than normal and will (for better or worse) go away pretty soon." It's not until you start having to give up established limbs you liked that getting hurt actually discommodes you, and it's not until you've run out of Divine Health Levels that you should have any reason to be *afraid*.

Child of the Ash

You were born as a limb and effusion and radiance of your mother—

A *cutting* of her, growing now in the soil of the lower world.

Your form is usually human, and even when you expand on it its usual base is human, but that's not your only option. You could have been a floating thing of endless fire, a congeries of hideous fusion-lit spheres, fiery maws, and limbs.

You just chose not to be because, seriously, why would anyone be that? Like, say you got a job at a supermarket. You go to restock some shelves. They BURST INTO FLAME. You scream! You run for a manager. The manager howls as you reflexively gulp him down into one of your fiery maws. That's going to get you a write-up! Corporate won't like that at all!

Or let's say you wanted to rescue a cat stuck up in a tree.

The cat wouldn't want to come down! It would hiss at you! And that's not even the worst conceivable scenario!

Still, the long measures of your birth—the nine months, or decades, or minutes, or however long it was you gestated inside her, it probably had a nine in it but it's not clear why anything to do with the sun would be in months—left their mark. They tell a story and that story is written into your flesh and bones:

A miraculous story Arc, **Otherworldly (Child of the Ash) 1.**

Its powers work like this:

Light to Encourage Hope

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Given time, you can communicate a feeling of hope.
- **4 MP**—You can invoke this power with a word, a fingersnap, or a sunrise.

Invoke **Light to Encourage Hope** and you can communicate a feeling of hope, either using your mortal body and language or by mixing that feeling into the light radiated by the sun. After a few minutes, this qualifies for a Region Property, either where you are or anywhere in the sunlight (your choice):

- **There is reason to hope**.

Characters who are in despair or on the border of despairing can draw on this property to resist that despair, to face impossible situations, or to keep trying/rise to the challenge after an awful failure. Sometimes it'll help them succeed; sometimes it'll help them recover MP/Will when foolish hope gets them into trouble. Often it'll lead to their gaining a point of the Issue **Trust.**

It's your own hope that you're radiating, so it's very hard for you to benefit from this yourself—although it's not totally impossible if you wind up with two minds, one of which is in despair, or something, or if you train yourself to dredge up reserves of hope and radiate when you're about to give up, or whatever.

Hope-Splosion

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/season, invoke a "hope-splosion."
- **4 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a season.

Once per season, you may fire off a tactical hope-burst of exuberance, lightheartedness, and cheer. This functions as a wish, though a fairly specific one—something like:

"I wish everything in this [situation/place] would be full of hope!"

This is an indiscriminate but almost completely non-lethal weapon—you won't control how far-reaching its definition of the situation is, you can't target specific people, and, much as with a wish, it's going to be up to HG and group interpretation on a case-by-case basis just *why* and *how* everything becomes full of hope. It could be…

- ...Santa Claus flying around wildly on a sleigh throwing presents at people while everything lights up Christmas.
- ...a horrifying, identity-crushing Stepford Hope.
- ...that a solid reason for hope appears.
- ...that everyone there has a bizarre, transcendent experience, a glimpse into the face of the universe beyond the universe we know, that fills them with ebullient and sourceless hope.
- ...that small "hope-bugs" swarm up from a previously unseen hopehill and start dashing into people's mouths and (if necessary) noses. They

actually taste like chocolate raspberries and give a kind of bubbly feeling when they sting or are digested by you but it's still kind of weird. They have the logo "HOPE IS GREA" on their wings, but only the really big ones have room for the final T.

The time it takes to launch your hopebursts is cosmetic—this power never takes "too long" to invoke, so it's just a matter of whether it makes more sense for you to stand there making hope-lifting gestures (or whatever) for a few minutes or not. If you're spending 4 MP, you can set this time frame yourself, including "instant."

Wicked Mode

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost:** —

You are not merely the child of Jade Irinka. Another part of you comes from the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy.

There's something you can do, e.g., rubbing your face with ashes or putting on a black cap of scholarship and spinning it around to point to *evil*, to unleash that side of you:

To *mark* your sorrow, or your change in allegiances, by going into a *wicked mode.*

Just doing that doesn't actually have any real effect on who you are. It's an *expression* of something inside you. But when you do it it will change your general Mood, the thing the two powers above are about, from "Hope" to "Disillusionment" or "Resignation." The Region Property you create is now:

- **There's no point in pretending.**

The "hope-splosion" becomes, instead, a wish of ennui:

"I wish people in this [situation/place] would just face reality."

This is meant to be the nicest possible implementation of despair—the kind of thing that makes sense as the antithesis of hope without actually being a *bad* thing. It's just across the river from acceptance and it's not all that far from peace:

The feeling you get when you're too tired to put on masks any more, too tired to hide from reality any more, or lie, or build things up, or disguise an unpleasant truth. A weary, defeated acceptance; an empty but an honest peace; a peculiarly gentle despair.

Feel free to change that—if you think your wicked mode is full-on actual despair, or even actual *death,* I'm not going to be the one to tell you no!

I just don't think that's so.

Kaiju Form

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Become a *kaiju* over the course of several minutes.
- **4 MP**—Become a *kaiju* instantly.

You think you could probably give up on all this humanoid stuff and turn your basic physical body into a shiny and hopeful but also totally horrifying congeries of fusion-lit spheres and fiery limbs and maws and the like. You'd probably be extremely powerful and certainly you'd be able to burn things extremely well. That said, you can't actually imagine a circumstance in which this would *help*—

Even if you can turn back afterwards, which you're not certain of[55], spending time as a horrifying monstrosity is almost certain to doom any chance you might ever have of good grades in School, finding love, learning to cook, adopting a cute puppy, hanging out with your friends, or telling your father what an inhuman monster he is without him laughing in your face. Everybody would be all, "No! I am not teaching my baking secrets to this horrible monstrosity" or "No! I cannot let you adopt this puppy. What if you turn into a ravening horror once again? The puppy would catch on fire! And that's terrible!"

I should note that while this could definitely be a useful transformation, for instance, if you ever get into an upstaging contest with a disguise artist or have to light a signal fire in the rain, it doesn't come with any automatic powers. You have one special power, below, that only works in *kaiju* form; other than that, the only benefit is that if you say something like, "My Intention is to light that signal fire by everting a fusion sphere onto it" or "My Intention is to roll across Tokyo provoking disaster and calamity" the HG is likely to assign a lower Obstacle and a more practical result.

This transformation usually takes a few minutes to complete and, once complete, is permanent.

55 *The power below means that your player* can *decide you can do this, but it doesn't mean that your player necessarily* will.

Mortal Form

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/book, between two chapters, revert to your non-*kaiju* form.
- **1 MP**—Switch back a second or later time per book.
- **2 MP**—Switch back mid-chapter (over the course of a few minutes).
- **4 MP**—Assume your non-*kaiju* form instantly.

It's generally easier for a teenager to turn into a gigantic alien flame-monster than the other way around. If you want to get back to your normal body, you'll need to get away from Main Characters at the end of a chapter, go somewhere unobserved, and work at it for what can take you *days*. In fact, at your level, it's so difficult that it may well be worth having someone talk you back to normal as the resolution of an Issue instead of paying the normal cost.

Turning back, like turning into a *kaiju* in the first place, is permanent once accomplished.

Shed Scales

Type: Miraculous Action

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Starting mid-scene, adjust your *kaiju* form's scale 1-2x/scene.
- **1 MP**—Starting mid-scene, adjust your *kaiju* form's scale an additional time.
- **2 MP**—Starting mid-scene, adjust your *kaiju* form's scale as often as necessary this scene.
- **4 MP**—Adjust your *kaiju* form's scale as often as you'd like this scene.

Your *kaiju* form, your fiery and awful shape, is kind of indifferent to scale. Are you three stories tall? Skyscraper tall? Or just barely small enough to fit into someone's house?

...maybe a little of both?

Invoke **Shed Scales** while taking a mundane action appropriate for a different size and, if you can overcome the appropriate size-related Obstacle, this power automatically re-scales you to somewhere between insect- and Regional scale where taking the relevant action with the relevant level of success is feasible.

You'll stay that size until you leave *kaiju* form or use this power again.

This power also gives you some automatic wiggle room—if the HG eyeballs a size-related Obstacle[56] as level 1 or so, you can just completely ignore it, take your action, and resize accordingly. Only stuff that's a big enough deal for a 2+ Obstacle ("You're doing *what?* OK, this is going to be epic...") even slows you down.

Some characters with this power stop having a fixed size at all—

Let the HG know if you're OK with them fudging your size now and then, and when and why that might tend to happen.

56 Including square-cube-law-related Obstacles and most strength, weight, and flexibility-related Obstacles, but only if the HG can figure out a size that makes the action feasible.

Otherworldly Divination

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle **Cost:** — Your **Child of the Ash** Arc ties you to a place—a world, a distant world, with a reality separate from Town's.

I'm going to guess that this is either the sky kingdom or the Bleak Academy.

You'll choose, as a player, which.

Over the course of a 15-XP quest, you can use your dreams to find something out from or about that world. Finding out *about* those places is likely to be difficult—you'll need Strike from an MP or a Bond to get past the natural barriers to doing so, and it'll be better used to help the HG or yourself put together an impressionistic picture of the place than to pin down facts. Finding out stuff *from* whichever of those places you can access is much more practical—in your dreams, you'll visit a great library of the sky kingdom that was, or the library of the Bleak Academy, and learn... well, from what that knows.

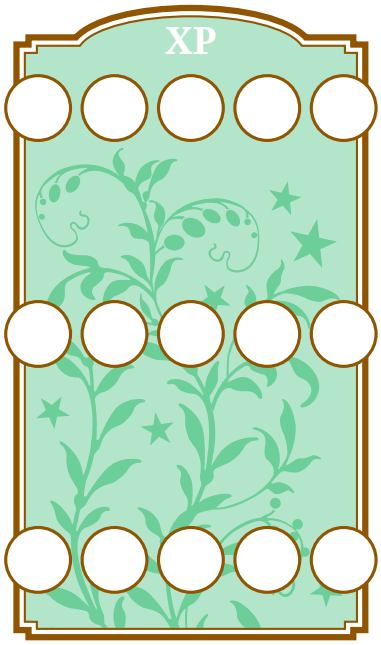
Bonus XP

You're dreaming about another world, a place that's deeply connected to you—most likely the sky kingdom or the Bleak Academy.

This quest comes with a division of states—there's the you who's fully awake and alert to the mortal world, and then there's the you whose thoughts are on your mother's kingdom or your father's keep.

I've made a sign for this—a reversible card, which you could in theory have on the table in front of you in play to show which state you're in. You can earn a bonus XP at any time (though only once per scene/15 minutes) by flipping the card, showing that you're moving between states—focusing on the mundane world around you, or fading into thoughts of distant and magical lands.

If you can't actually keep the card in front of you, holding up the card with the relevant side facing people or just saying or emoting something appropriate can earn you the XP instead.



Primordial

So that was you, before; a child of hope, who could in theory become a child of disillusionment or the fiery offspring of the sun.

But the death of the sun and your assumption of the title changed that.

In that moment you inherited some of your mother's nature, some of her history, some of the accumulated weight of destiny and being intrinsic to the sun. You inherited the miraculous story Arc, or story Arcs, **Mystic (Primordial) 2.**

You became—are still becoming, really—a divine creature of the Sun and Hope. Here's how that works.

Immortality

Type: Miraculous Action, Major

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Damage or enchantment has only temporary, appropriate effects on you.
- **1 MP**—You totally recover and shrug everything off 1-2 times mid-scene.
- **2 MP**—Starting mid-scene, you shrug off attacks and other effects like they're paper tigers.
- **4 MP**—You're basically unaffected by the world around you.

Your wounds are strictly G-rated at all times. If you're stuck in hard vacuum, for instance—well, the sun actually spends a lot of time in space and is OK, so maybe nothing happens to you there at *all*. But at worst your eyes bug out a little and you claw at space.

So if…

- ...someone hits you?
- ...you forget to eat for three months?
- ...you're hit by a nuclear barrage?
- ...people are pouring molten steel over your head?

Shrug it off! Hope is eternal. For every sunset there is a dawn. You are Jasper Irinka, and the sickest you ever get is semi-conscious and feverish for a night (and then a full recovery at dawn); most serious wounds just rip your sleeves a bit, make your breathing labored, and skin your arm or leg. And that's *assuming* that you actually get wounded instead of just growing a new limb!

Your recovery is generally a bit miraculous, and works best if someone is looking at you. If you're drowning in a volcano, for instance, and nobody's paying attention, then it'll be a long and miserable swim to the edge. But if everyone's eyes are on you, then it's a lot easier to rise to the surface in a sunbeam and a clot of seething red, which eddies away to reveal you still OK—either after the rest of the stuff in the scene resolves, or, with MP, during the same scene you fell in.

All that said, note:

- Extremely deadly stuff, like nukes, volcano baths, and level 7+ miracles *can* hurt you. Your wounds will still be smaller than you'd expect, and they'll heal in anywhere from a minute to "the next dawn," but if someone shoves miniature black holes into your eyes your eyes *will* bleed, and it *won't* look kid-friendly.
- You can suffer from the Sickness Issue—it's just that the individual manifestations of turning into a vampire[57] or being turned to the service of evil or whatever are G-rated.
- You can be confined as long as it's interesting and doesn't keep you out of play. If there is interesting stuff going on, it's not a *predicament.*
- Occasionally I'll introduce an effect that lets you take some action at the cost of "a terrible wound," or that seals a wound so that no effect can heal it. If you're doing something like that to yourself, Immortality will not heal such wounds.

If there's an Auctoritas protecting an attack and its ability to damage you, you may need Strike to use this ability, or it won't work. However, if immortality fails and you take a wound, it heals quickly (as noted above.) The only way you can get a long-lasting wound is if taking the wound is the price you pay for using some ability, e.g. ignoring a wish.

57 You will probably catch on fire a lot, but luckily… um… well, there's probably something lucky about it. Somewhere. You poor thing.

Timing and You

When you have a power that works *mid-scene* or *starting mid-scene*, that means that you use it after some meaningful stuff has already happened in the current scene.

When you have a power that works *after a few minutes*, that means that either a few things have to happen while you're setting this up, or nothing is happening at all. Ideally this covers about five minutes of game time in a languid scene or five minutes of real time in a scene of fast-paced play, but precision isn't very important here.

Arc Powers

Immortality is your "Arc power"—you get it for *being* on one of the Arcs that grant Immortality. If you change to a different Arc, it's replaced by whatever power that Arc offers instead.

I suggest you stick to Arcs that offer Immortality—there's a decent selection of them, including both **Child of the Ash** and **Primordial** if you take them further, and if you let yourself die to anything but a transcendent plot device sacrifice it's probably going to be plain bad for *everybody.*

2

Inspiring Radiance

Type: Special **Cost:** —

You are the sun. As such, you may use your mortal Skills to produce sunny days, beautiful sunsets and sunrises, dramatic illumination, and the like. You're normally limited to things that are pretty sun-like, like "shining on someone," but with practice or by overcoming a small Obstacle you can do things like "clouding over" or "making a rainbow." With *enough* practice or a Trick Perk, you can master weather effects that don't really have much to do with the sun at all like "stormy skies" or "writing kanji on the clouds."

The practical effect of this power is that if you say "I'm going to make a great dawn today" or "I don't like this guy. I'm going to glare at him all day from the sky and make him uncomfortably hot" or something the HG should ask you for an action level instead of just squinting at you with a dubious look.[58]

The Heart of the Sun

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—After a few minutes concentrating, send out a mote of sunlight to find/see/hear something.
- **1-4 MP**—Speed this process up.

Spend a few minutes concentrating and you can send a mote of sunlight out into Town with your senses of sight and hearing in it. It can…

- …move through sunlit areas very quickly.
- …focus your senses to see and hear from any specific place in sunlight.

As a speck of sunlight that can only really exist *in* sunlight, your mote is invisible for most practical purposes—but it does brighten shadows that it passes across, so extremely alert characters may overcome a level 2-3 Obstacle and spot it anyway.

Practically speaking, it usually takes around an hour to search a Region for a specific person-sized object that is visible in sunlight, but this is only an average. Sometimes you're lucky or unlucky. It's faster to find large things and things you have an approximate location for, and it's slower to find things that are smaller or that spend less than an hour at a time in the sunlight. (For instance, a puppy that's taken out for five minutes now and then might take you a few days to find, while a large building will usually only take a few minutes.) If you're trying to move your senses to a specific, known point in the Region you're in, it takes a minute or less; a specific, known point anywhere in Town takes up to five minutes.

58 *If they squint at you anyway you should draw yourself up to your full height, level an accusatory finger at them, and say, "You, sir or madam, are squinting at me in direct contravention of the instructions of Jenna Katerin Moran. I hope you're proud of yourself." Then, stick out your tongue!*

And run away!

You can spend additional MP to hurry this process. This is up to the HG—simply ask them, "Can I get better results if I dump some MP in this?" and they'll either shake their head sadly and apologize or say, "Sure, [1? 2? 4?] MP and I'll skip most of the concentration and get the mote right to where it needs to go." Make sure the HG knows that they can refund some or all of the MP if there's nothing to actually find, so naming a price isn't necessarily a spoiler.

You can optionally activate your other senses for use with this power, including smell, touch, and any senses associated with your magical limbs, but you are strictly unable to use this power to sense things that are not in sunlight. You can't even hear an air raid siren that's right next to your virtual "ear" if it is temporarily in shadow.

The range of this power is initially limited to Town, but you may spend a Recharge Token to learn to send out sun-motes to a Region in the broader world. If you want to widen the scope dramatically rather than increasing it in bits and pieces a Perk might be able to add disproportionately large chunks of territory to this power's reach.

Digest

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost:** —

These are absolute and unquestionable truths:

- You can digest anything you eat over the course of 2-3 hours, making it a part of you.
- There is nothing that is notionally impossible for you to devour.

There are many things in the world that you have *no idea* how to eat, like shadows, energy, and the moon. Like, you put a shadow in your mouth, you close your mouth, you swallow—that doesn't work! What a crazy idea!

...but with the right help, the right power, or the right trick, it's possible. No miraculous or mundane action, Affliction, or condition can make it impossible for you to eat something, only very difficult. Conversely, only the most dedicated effort that exploits wish rules can *stop* you from digesting something that you've discovered a method to eat.[59]

59 Do I expect this power to come up very often? No! I absolutely do not. But if your worst enemy ever transforms himself into an olive or you find yourself morally obligated to devour God, the Devil, and the Deep Blue Sea, you'll thank me for specifying that digestion of this sort is never notionally impossible.

Your digestive system is abnormal and mystical; if you get poisoned, you might still take a wound, but you have a really good excuse to define that wound however you like. (e.g., jellyfish venom might make you translucent instead of paralyzing you; deadly despair toxin might make you bleed shadows everywhere instead of feeling despair.) If you throw up, you'll tend to throw up fire, sunlight, and/or lumpy rainbows and sparkle soup instead of food.

At the HG's option, devouring something suitably magical and powerful will give you MP, XP, or even a new Perk.

Connect to Someone

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—After a conversation, bind to someone's dream or hope.
- **4 MP**—Skip the conversation and do this after a single (metaphorical) glimpse of their heart.

This power is about hopes and dreams. It's about people who want to be a god-queen or a hero. It's about people who wish they could reconcile with alienated family members someday. It's about people who wish they had more money to spend on clothing, or wistfully dream of being cool, or hope that they'll ace their tests this year. It's not so much about the things people *want*—it's OK for someone to have a dream that they know they can never get, or with a price that'd be too high if they ever did. It's about, not what they *want*, but the things that trouble them or calm their heart; that keep them moving forward... or maybe even hold them back.

It's about where people want to go, how they want things to happen, and where they dream of going from here.

When you've spent a while talking to someone about their hopes for the future, their wishes, their dreams, you have the power to "hold" their dreams—to *connect* to them, take those dreams into yourself without taking them away from your target, and use those dreams to manifest a limb.

The underlying "concept" of a limb is based on the person you're connecting to or the dream you're holding.

For instance:

If you connect to a teen idol, maybe you pick up a sparkly aura with a low-level Bond or Superior Skill at looking fashionable and awesome. If you connect to somebody's dream of going into space one day, maybe you'll pick up "Martian" antennae and enhanced cold and airlessness survival skills. (Or, because they're antennae, the ability to communicate with dogs.[60]) The more of a stretch this is, the more you'll have to practice to get the limb to work—but do feel free to go out on a limb here[61], because sometimes antennae to communicate with pets with are just more *fun* than cold resistance and less farcical than zero-gee space jumping.

You can adjust limbs like this somewhat over the course of a discussion, or a later discussion—if you want to fine-tune your Rinley-based tattoo or your golden wings, just talk to the person in question some more! It may be possible to actively increase the limb's powers over time and discussions like this—if nothing else, by building up an **(in) Over Your Head, Calling,** or **Something to Deal With Issue** over the course of those conversations, and then resolving it by creating a more powerful limb using **Limb to Create Hope** below.

While you hold their experience, your body changes and you gain a power. This manifests as…

- ...an inconspicuous and probably pleasant physical or attitudinal change and a tiny power, like a level 2 Bond or level 1 Superior Skill, which you must "store" in an unwounded Normal Health Level.
- ...a conspicuous but concealable physical or attitudinal change and a larger power, like an Affliction, level 2-3 Superior Skill, or a miraculous ability that you can use 1-2x/scene, which you must "store" in an unwounded Tough Health Level.
- ...a disturbing and inhuman (though possibly aesthetic) physical or attitudinal change, with roughly the same power level as those stored in your Tough level, which you must store in an unwounded Divine Health Level.

Binding to an Enemy

This power relies most fundamentally on *insight*—it's not about the *words* that you hear from the person you're talking to so much as the channel that that conversation opens to that person's heart.

If your target really doesn't want to share their ideas or experiences, doesn't want you to bind to them with this power, but *is* in communication with you, you can use the action system (usually, the mundane action system) to arbitrate whether they reveal a glimpse of themselves anyway.

The default assumption is that they probably do. It's *possible* for someone to keep up a good front in front of you and avoid your access to their experience, and being taciturn and "careful" helps with that, but it isn't always enough.

Sight of the Hopeful Heart

Type: Imperial Miracle
Cost:

- **0 MP**—Someone whose dreams you hold can tell you what they'd want you to know.
- **1 MP**—After a few minutes, know the rough location/status of such a person.
- **4 MP**—Know this information immediately.

If you're "holding" someone's hopes and dreams you can have an insight into their life and circumstances. They can emote to you from wherever they are, although there's a level 4 Obstacle in the way of your parsing this to get detailed information—I mean, there's nothing inherently *wrong* with someone emoting, "Wow, I sure feel stressed about the kidnappers demanding that I go alone to 1642 Rue d'Angleterre!" but parsing the address out of that is difficult for you.

If you're willing to spend MP, you can use this power to locate someone whose dreams you hold or to figure out how they're holding up. Specifically, you'll learn their…

- ...rough location.
- ...near-exact direction.
- ...despair and hopefulness level.

You can keep checking as long as you sustain this action without spending additional MP—it takes a few

60 I assume this is how antennae work.
61 No pun intended

more minutes (if you spent 1 MP) or a thought (if you spent 4 MP) each time.

Sun Lights the Path

Type: Imperial Miracle
Cost:

- **0 MP**—The sun lights the path for someone whose dreams you hold 1/week.
- **1 MP**—Use this power a second or later time this week.
- **2 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a handful of hours.

Invoke **Sun Lights the Path** when someone whose dreams you hold is lost or looking for something and any available sunlight (or light that can be described to resemble sunlight) will illuminate the path or thing. If they're lost or confused in a more abstract sense, this power manifests as a temporary level 2 Bond for them:

- **Sun Lights the Path.**

In particular, this means that the sun will light a path for them even if that doesn't necessarily solve the problem they're having—or even if it's not clear to anyone at the table what a solution would look like or what a given path being "right" would mean. If they then follow that path, they'll at least get a potential bonus on their mundane actions, potential Strike for their miracles, and most importantly, if it turns out to be the wrong path, or a path that gets them into trouble, they can earn 1-2 MP or some Will from that!

Sun Lights the Path [Powered Up]

Type: Imperial Miracle
Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/season, reveal an improved path with **Sun Lights the Path.**
- **4 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a season.

This power includes a free invocation of **Sun Lights the Path.**

Once per season, you can use **Sun Lights the Path** to illuminate a better-than-average path for someone.

This functions, effectively, as *your choice* of the following three wishes:

- "I wish that there'd be something at the end of this journey that's worth the trouble."
- "I wish that by the end of this journey you'll understand that *you're* worth the trouble."
- "I wish that the sun would keep you safe on the course of this journey."

In all three cases, start by figuring out what the path actually is—that is, where are they trying to go? Or, if they don't know, where are you trying to illuminate a path to?

Afterwards, in the first case, the HG usually handles things by thinking about where the path in question goes, and then (if necessary) inventing or moving something cool there.

The second option, where the target has to have a beneficial spiritual experience or at least gain or maintain a sense of self-worth, is harder. For a PC target, their player can either work with you and the HG to figure out what fulfilling the wish would take, or—if a growing sense of self-worth doesn't feel *accessible* for the character as they stand, treat it as an outright psychic attack. For an NPC, the option of "the HG just assumes that it *happens*" opens up.

The third wish typically creates an effect of some sort, variable in the fashion of all wishes, that keeps your target safe while they follow the path the sun points out for them; depending on how the HG wants to handle it, it can be up to the target to figure out how to make this protection work or up to enemies wanting to circumvent it to figure out how to do so.

Sight of the Hopeful Heart [Powered Up]

Type: Imperial Miracle; *[certain applications only]* Bleak
Cost:

- **0 MP**—Know many things about someone whose dreams you hold 1/season.
- **4 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a season.

Once per season, you may invoke **Sight of the Hopeful Heart** to know all kinds of things about someone whose dreams you hold. Specifically, this functions as a wish on the order of

"I wish I knew how to give you hope."

This tends to just give you whatever information the HG or the target's player thinks might be relevant to competently pursue inspiring hope in them. However,

if this starts getting into secret information or stuff they don't want to share, this may switch to Bleak rules—it becomes a kind of corruption or breaking down of boundaries, and is resistable as such.

Once invoked this power usually remains in force until there's a substantive narrative payoff or the story ends—it's not a one-time thing, where the HG or the target's player has to think up everything you might need to know right then or there; rather, it's a continual flow of information to back up your ability to inspire them towards hope. The information will grow a little out-of-date if you stop holding their experience but (since some of it represents an instant of deep understanding) it won't actually stop.

Limb to Create Hope / Limb to Devour Evil

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Manifest a new limb 1/season.
- **4 MP**—Manifest a new limb for a second or later time this season.

Once per season, when hope is distant and far away, when darkness threatens to consume you, you can invoke **Limb to Create Hope** or **Limb to Devour Evil** and craft a new limb to resolve the situation. There's something more raw and primal to this than a wish—the key rule for this new organ or limb isn't any of the wishing rules but rather that:

This limb or organ must be instrumental in inspiring or invoking Hope, or in suppressing Despair, Resignation, or Death, in a meaningful and well-grounded way.

It has whatever powers the HG thinks it must have, and they're as easy or difficult to use as the HG thinks appropriate, to guarantee that that rule is followed. However, if the limb has an Imperial power that overrides ordinary miracles or complex powers that need time and effort to figure out, the standard wishing rules apply.

You can also invoke this power to resolve an Issue—or, more precisely, a miracle that resolves an Issue receives a 4 MP discount, and doing so with this power often works well. It's particularly common for you to invoke **Limb to Devour Evil** when you have…

- ...a level 4-5 **Calling**.
- ...a level 5 **Hero** Issue.
- ...a level 4-5 **(in) Over Your Head** Issue.
- ...a level 5 **Sickness**.
- ...a level 5 **Vice**.
- ...an enemy that has just showily defeated you and your friends *twice*.[62]

The HG assigns the transformation to one of your Health Levels—normally to a Divine Health Level, but the limb can use one of your subtler Health Levels if appropriate. It displaces a held experience if necessary and can even displace a wound. However, if it displaces a wound, the change is temporary: it lasts only as long as necessary to fulfill its function, and then, unless the wound would have healed by then, the change goes away and the wound returns.

If you had an available, unwounded Health Level of the necessary level or above, you are absolutely allowed to keep the change afterwards, for as long as you like. (Even into the next story, if that's what you'd prefer!)

Mystic Quests

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle **Cost:** —

It's hard being the sun raised by people—growing up in Fortitude, or even in the sky, can't teach you how to actualize your real self. There just isn't the social context or support structure for it.

Even the self-help books are silent!

If you want to learn more about being the sun properly you have to kind of feel it out, exploring nameless and wordless sensations that hardly anybody else in the universe shares and nobody really has language for. Here's how that works.

Over the course of a 15-XP **Symbolic** quest, you can…

- ...develop a unique extension to your normal thematics and abilities that helps you with the problem—probably unnecessary because your main powerset covers most of this, but it could be useful if you're ever stranded in the Antarctic with no MP and nobody's hopes and dreams to hold.
- ...dissociate from your quasi-human self—you find yourself ripped from your life, given a new form, insights, powers, and location, in some fashion that fits with your nature as Hope and the Sun. Do you fly through the world as a bird of the sun? Manifest as a sun-dream in someone's head? Preach to the fire people of some distant land?

62 *not a formal Issue, but for the sake of kindness I'll give you a 4-MP discount on this specific use anyway.*

This quest miracle is usually a tradeoff between control and power: if you just let divine hope and the light of the world work through you, then you'll do some pretty awesome things, but really, it's just the HG doing them. If you insist on total control over the process, it's like, you can maybe hear a few whispered words of the world talking to itself, walk through a wall or two, or gain a temporary level 1-2 Superior Skill.

In the time you are not yourself, you will almost always hear a secret; when you return to being yourself, abandoning the quest, you will almost always wake up somewhere you weren't expecting to be.

These powers aren't likely to be very useful, but they're a part of growing up, so I'd recommend experimenting with them sometime anyway. Later on, when you've reached **Primordial 3**, you'll be able to use this kind of quest to create powerful blessings and mystical servants instead.

Limb to Devour Evil [Powered Up]

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost: 0 MP**

When you're facing some impossible threat from the Bleak Academy or elsewhere, and you invoke **Limb to Devour Evil**, you have the option to skip adding a freaky divine limb to your normal human body and make the sun itself go all freaky and use its sunbeams as tentacles or whatever instead. Sustaining this kind of thing for more than a few minutes hurts, a lot, but you're a goddess and you don't have an actual limit to how long you can keep it up—the only special downside of this power-up is that you have to be prepared to play, and watch others play, the kind of trauma that results from seeing the sun start wrestling the moon or picking up people with sunbeams and eating them or whatever.

Mystic Quests

There's something going on. You think it means... you... you think it... *r-relates* to...

It is about growing up, when you are the sun.

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (though only once per scene/15 minutes) by declaring that you can feel... someth—that, that there's a, a *thing*, you know? A-a *sensation*, a *connection*. That you're having something *happen*, because you are the sun. Something, it, it, it's *happening* but... but you, you, you don't know what. Taking you away from your you. Turning you into, into another thing for a while or or or or taking the part of you that's the *you* away from the part of you that's the not; or maybe helping, helping with some, um, some *thing* that needs to be helped. You, you don't know. No, no manual. No, I mean, *it's* not a manual. It's... a... it's a *thing*.

You don't have to say it that way. Certainly not at such length. But you do need to free-associate for a moment about what's going on, to claim the XP. ...talk about feathers, talk about wings, talk about frogs. Talk about tendrils writhing, twisting, and they all beyond all time and space. About, about... about setting, *fires* with your eyes. And your arms hurt. And your head, it's ringing. And your ears. And, and there's a stone, well, uh, um, it's *like* a stone, it's beneath your tongue.

Talk about what you *experience;* taste the leeks beneath the earth—and that ramble is what brings you in a bonus XP towards this quest.

XP

Limbs

a guide to being a many-limbed solar deity

I don't want you completely lost in terms of how the physical look of your character might evolve in play. So while this isn't completely binding, and both a few of my examples and some of what you might do in play might break from this pattern, I want to list the major changes that you're likely to pick up.

Here's the stuff that's pretty common—although it's OK if you want to hold off on extra arms and tendrils until you actually need them:

- 1-2 extra arms or tendrils
- a mark in one or both eyes
- a divinatory hair-tendril or pair of antennae
- a shoulder, neck, or arm tattoo
- 1-2 hair decorations, alterations, or headpieces
- other jewelry
- a cheek or temple tattoo
- a communication power in your left hand, a holographic display in the right, or a combined communication/display power in the right

Here's stuff that's a little less common, but still more or less "normal" for you:

- distinctive nail polish
- a surrounding aura, radiance, or breeze
- some mobile tattoo on your skin or floating symbol around your head
- specific clothing or sunglasses or glasses
- a changed body language or "look" to match someone whose dreams you hold
- a third eye in your forehead

Here's stuff that's pretty rare—when you choose something like this, you're customizing your character a bit by saying this is the kind of thing you do:

- wings, often with an additional limb-like power
- changes to your ears, or extra cat/fox ears
- limbs that involve creating or casting forth thread
- miscellaneous weapon-limbs (cannons, stings)

Traditional Extra Arms and Tendrils

The Child of the Sun may develop additional limbs—typically 1-2 extra arms or tendrils. I don't recommend more than that but I'm not ruling it out! If you're a fan of symmetry, it's OK to start with a pair of arms or a pair of tendrils, and then—if you need another limb like this later—convert one of them into the new form.

Normally you will imbue such a limb with a miracle: it either enchants what it touches or conveys some sort of force. For instance, you could imbue a tendril or hand with cold, either to radiate an icy chill or to imbue what it touches with the cold-nature. It's also relatively common to have a limb that can reach into an abstract space: memories, dreams, nightmares, or a handy nearby pocket of unspace that always has plenty of school supplies.

In terms of the health levels you'll use—

Extra arms aren't subtle. If they're particularly perfect, elegant, and normal-looking, you might be able to slip an unobservant person's notice—people don't tend to *actively* count the arms of the people around them—but it's still pretty unusual to use anything less than a Divine Health level on a pair of extra arms. Manipulator tendrils are a little subtler, since they can hide under or against your clothing or hair, but they still usually need a Tough Health level at the least.

Tendrils

In general, tendrils are agile and tend to come with an unusual level of physical competence—a tendril that picks locks or a pair of kung fu tendrils is more likely than an extra hand that does the same.

At the Tough level, we're generally talking about one or two delicate-looking plant-frond like tendrils, usually anchored in your upper or middle back. They're typically golden-brown, shining gold, or the same red as your hair. They're probably about as structurally strong as a typical human limb but look much more delicate and they are often easy to mistake for tendrils from nearby plants, strands of hair, or sunbeams.

At the Divine level, tendrils are more noticeable, generally a lot longer, and the fact that they embody supernatural power rather than genetic abnormality is more likely to be obvious.

Particularly at the Divine level tendrils can be made out of abnormal things—tendrils that *are* lightning or fire, or at least made of "lightning spirit-stuff" or "fire spirit-stuff" make sense. Tendrils are more likely than hands to be capable of delicate reality manipulation.

Hands

Hands, conversely, are more likely to have the normal human level of physical competence but also the power to enact enchantments or blessings—to imbue things with qualities or essences. If you have a really strong limb or pair of limbs, that's also likely to be arms and hands, because they're rougher and less delicate than tendrils.

Arms and hands occasionally come with a shielding power—the open palm can manifest a protective force. **If this is a very strong protective power it also generally has a weakness of some sort,** which you or your enemies may figure out in play.

At the Divine level, extra arms are a common expression of force and power, a protective ability, or an enchantment ability.

Examples: Normal Health Levels

- extra arms that are only there for an instant or two when you're doing specific things with them like opening a door with both hands full
- near-transparent manipulator tendrils

Examples: Tough Health Levels

- a variable-length manipulator tendril made of a sunbeam
- a tendril particularly good at some kind of fine manipulation (e.g. card tricks)
- a feathery tendril that can reach into someone's head and share their memories
- a feathery tendril good for fishing around in dreams and pulling out useful things with, as **Nightmares' Angel** does with nightmares

Examples: Divine Health Levels

- a pair of 10-yard-long kung fu tendrils usable for martial arts
- a tendril tipped with a node of physically destructive force
- a tendril made of lightning
- two showy arms and hands that can mold plasma blasts into being from the air
- a really strong arm
- on an appropriate arm:
  - a hand that chills things it touches
  - a hand that can adjust the temperature of things it touches
  - a hand that kills germs
  - a hand imbued (when the glove is removed) with a terrifying radiance of fear
  - a hand that reverts things it touches to a more traditional form
  - a hand carrying a sacred flame that purifies what it touches
  - a hand that makes things sadder or more nostalgic with a touch
  - a hand with a power to shelter and defend wicked things and to de-sanctify what it touches
  - a hand that reaches into nightmares

Marks in the Eyes

Divinatory powers often come with a color change or subtle pattern or image in one or both eyes. This ties them to a Normal Health level. By default, your divination powers aren't very good—I can't put a specific meaning to that without knowing the circumstances in your game, I just mean that when the HG is coming up with the details of how your divinations work, they're not likely to be very impressive.

At the Tough level, you might pick up a concealed third eye or a radiance from the eyes—something that makes them distinctively alien but which you can cover with glasses or shades. At the Divine level, it's relatively common for a third eye to open in your forehead. Divinatory powers associated with these more obvious alterations are not markedly more useful, but they tend to be further-reaching and may be paired with some ability to share insight with others or to enchant things by glaring at them.

Examples: Normal Health Levels

- you get a targeting reticule over your iris and become more accurate
- you get cat eyes and better night vision
- you get an icon of **the Dream-Witch's** mask over your pupil and can see into dreams
- you get extra-reflective eyes and can scan documents faster, the words you're actively reading becoming extra-visible to others in the reflections
- a drop of blood-like color appears over your pupil and iris and…
  - ...you become a super-investigator able to see the signs of crime
  - ...or to understand and analyze creatures of the evil world

Examples: Tough Health Levels

- your eyes glow, possibly giving whatever you're looking at some mild enchantment
- a hidden third eye appears in your left palm, with a similar effect

Example: Divine Health Levels

- a third eye opens in your forehead. It can telepathically share the images it sees with someone whose dreams you hold

Traditional Hair Effects

I'm including earrings and tiaras under hair effects because their "look" interacts with the look of your hair.[63] You might pick up a pair of earrings from **Limb to Create Hope** or **Limb to Devour Evil** but holding someone's dream tends to give you just a single earring—it's a thing that *marks* you rather than a decoration in the abstract.

It is normal and common for **the Child of the Sun** to pick up a tendril of hair or a pair of hair-based or hair-like antennae with an analytical, divinatory, or communicative/expressive function. These sense things, point to things, or express your mood. For instance, you might have a hair tendril that points towards hidden treasure or that twitches when danger approaches. Such hair tendrils are also useful for sensing subtle energies and communications.

Examples: Normal Health Levels

- adjusting your hair color/adding a highlight to match someone whose dreams you hold
- a built-in hairpin
- a metal crown or tiara
- an earring (typically only in the left ear)
- something strange and organic in your hair, like a flowering vine headband or a few feathers
- extremely subtle hair tendrils, usually adding expressiveness or pointing towards things

Examples: Tough Health Levels

- a highly visible *ahoge*, hair-like head tendril, or pair of antennae that points to things
- a disturbing bit of headwear like a crown of thorns

Example: Divine Health Levels

- living hair, often extremely long, occasionally with some power

Tattoos

Holding someone's dreams often marks you with a symbol that represents them. I don't want to overdo it and imply that you're going to wind up covered in colorful ink—that's valid, much as avoiding tattoos entirely is valid, but it's not part of the default "look" for **the Child of the Sun.** That said, there are three common uses for tattoos:

- on the back of your right hand, when you're holding someone's dream temporarily.
- on a standard but visible site like shoulder, neck, or upper arm.
- on your cheek or temple, when they're a precious person to you.

Most tattoos associate with a Normal Health Level, but if a tattoo moves or has a significant power (instead of giving a small Skill bump associated with the person whose dreams you're holding) it might be attached to a Tough level instead.

You'll find many examples and suggestions for these tattoos listed under **101 Example Limbs**, below.

Communication and Display

The Child of the Sun occasionally sites communication or holographic display type powers in her "starting" left and right hands—either in the palm or the fingernails. For instance, she may be able to write long-range messages to someone by writing on her left hand, or produce sunlight-based light shows from the fingernails or palm of the right.

63 I almost included sunglasses in this category too!

Auras

You may surround yourself with a subtle aura—normally sunlight or a gentle wind, although it might be something else if you're holding an appropriate dream. This typically has minor environmental effects but it can have a protective or major environmental effect.

Examples: Normal Health Levels

- an intermittent summer breeze, sufficient to move the temperature towards 27° C
- a tendency to attract snow during sad monologues
- an effusion or waft around you like the Yatskaya temple incense that attracts cats and makes it harder to distinguish between reality and dream

Examples: Tough Health Levels

- a shielding wind that protects you and people near you from projectiles and vapor
- a moral radiance useful in strengthening people in their convictions
- a bubble of sunlight that protects you and people near you from almost anything

Clothing and Decorations

Some versions of the **Child of the Sun** skip the tattoos entirely in favor of a charm bracelet or a collection of other jewelry to hold the symbols of those whose dreams they hold.

More generally, instead of adding limbs, you have the option of acquiring clothing with minor or even major supernatural abilities. The most common supernatural clothing is supernaturally durable or has a pocket containing a modest but inexhaustible supply of something or other. Clothes that affect the local Region Properties in some fashion (protecting against the Outside or invoking simplicity or sophistication) are also possible.

You can't remove clothes purchased as a limb—

Wait, ...hm.

That may mislead you, so let me rephrase. If you buy clothes as a limb, that doesn't require that they be *physically* attached to you. A spiritual connection is sufficient. So you *can* take clothing purchased as a limb *off*. You just... can't go around *not wearing it*. If your limb-jacket becomes stained, for instance, you can tie it around your waist to hide the stain or go home and change into a "different" but identical jacket. If you have a limb-handkerchief, you can give it to somebody to blow their nose with, as long as they then give it back. Extended forced separation from a clothing-limb makes **the Child of the Sun** extremely uncomfortable, much as anyone in long-term involuntary separation from one of their extant limbs would be, but it's not *impossible* or inherently problematic, particularly if the separated clothes are put on ice.

Examples: Normal Health Levels

- a black and red jacket
- a pair of shades
- a tongue piercing showing a symbol that represents some Main Character to you
- extra-water-resistant clothing
- an extremely efficacious handkerchief
- a pocket that always has an extremely efficacious handkerchief in it
- a friendship ring
- somebody's symbol in iconic form on your fingernails

Examples: Tough Health Levels

- clothing that automatically adapts to match another character's
- a jaunty adventuring coat that always has a little bit of anything you could justify an adventurer having a little bit of in their pockets, in its pockets
- a "pole star" crown with a gleaming central jewel that helps people around you orient even in the deep Outside or amid great wracks of confusion
- a highly traditional outfit that helps you have visions of the local past

Kinesthetics

It's possible for Jasper to pick up the overall "look" or style of movement of another character as part of the process of connecting to them.

Certain characters have a more distinctive physicality than others. **The Prodigy** has a highly-tuned body: her fitness is a matter of conscious design, and to look or move like the Prodigy has implications that you can evaluate in play. **The Angel of Fortitude** has an inherently unnatural and alien style of movement—showy, peculiar, and sometimes vaguely like a puppet on strings. Certain members of the Yatskaya family move like cats—Caroline, certainly, if not necessarily Rinley—and the body language of vampires is specific, identifiable, and terrifying.

When **the Dream-Witch** reverts to her dream-self, her movement becomes flowing and alien; this too is something you could replicate in play.

In cases like this, where it *means* something to look or move like a certain character, it's reasonable to pick up that look or that style of movement as the "limb" you get for holding their dreams.

In other cases, where "I look more like them" or "I move more like them" doesn't have an obvious meaning—e.g., if the target is **the Best Friend—**then this declaration isn't really anything that interfaces with your powers. You can still say that it happens, but on its own it doesn't qualify as a limb!

Example: Normal Health Levels

- look a bit more like **the Prodigy** or **the Angel of Fortitude**

Examples: Tough Health Levels

- move more like **the Prodigy** or **the Angel of Fortitude**
- reshape yourself to make yourself look substantively more like one of them
- automatically mirror certain moves used by one of them when they've used them recently

Wings

Wings aren't really in character for **the Child of the Sun**, but they're so incredibly useful and cool that I figure it's pretty likely that you'll pick them up eventually even so. I mean, they're *wings.* Your mom had wings, you know! Sometimes! So do some of the bird-faced spirits you used to know.

Like tendrils, wings often have some force or element imbued into them; when spread or beat they can radiate it into the focal point of their arc. A protective power is also common.

Example: Normal Health Levels

- at dramatic sunlit moments, you "seem" to have wings spreading behind you

Example: Tough Health Levels

- wings infused with sonic force—they aren't solid, they're a barely visible tremor in the air, yet they're capable of lifting you into the sky or producing aggressive sonic attacks

Examples: Divine Health Levels

- vast golden metal wings that can shelter you and others from harm
- glittering icicle wings that can freeze things
- wings covered in nasty hooks that you can use in battle
- wings made of twisting scrolls or floating kanji that can refine themselves to show you the name of something you're looking at

Ears, Nose, and Tongue

You mostly don't modify your ears. It's *possible* to enhance your hearing at the Normal or Tough Level or to gain extra ears at the Divine level, but it's pretty weird.

I don't think that enhancing your sense of smell or taste is very common. In fact, I can't think of anything you're likely to do with the nose at all![64] On occasion **the Child of the Sun** will pick up some sort of fire-on-the-tongue, though, either for exhaling gouts of flame with or for use in speaking words infused with holy fire.

64 *I mean, I can think of* options. *There is much that can be done with noses! But none of them seem to fit even highly variant versions of the Child of the Sun.*

Miscellaneous Limbs

It's possible for **the Child of the Sun** to pick up a random collection of combat, mobility, and other limbs. Each *specific* variation is pretty rare, but it's totally reasonable to come up with *something* weird now and again.

Examples: Normal Health Levels

- a smile that makes things a little more OK
- a voice adapted to cut through sadness
- a touch that doesn't intrude

Example: Tough Health Levels

- a wrist or neck-mounted spinneret that shoots out a red thread of destiny that homes in on someone you care about (up to a quarter-mile, rated for a safe load of half a ton)

Examples: Divine Health Levels

- an arm-mounted glass-shattering sonic cannon
- four twenty-foot long wall-clinging "walking" limbs growing out of your back
- shoulder-mounted stinger limbs
- complex hundred-branching limbs that can hold a whole area together
- a miscellaneous amorphous limb that can twine itself into the shape of a memory
- an arm with a hand that holds a mirror that reveals the true forms of things
- the ability to reach into the ground and lift up a thousand hands from the ground in the area

A Space Cadet

You're a bit of a space cadet sometimes. It comes of being from the sky. Forget "this strange human emotion called love," half the time you're confused by "this strange human apparatus called coinage" or "this strange human activity called sneezing."

Sneezing

Sneezing!

WHAT IS IT ABOUT ANYWAY?

Sometimes you yourself sneeze—and you *still* don't get it! It's madness! *WHAT IS THE POINT?*

101 Example Limbs

Over the course of your conversation with the Wishing Boy, you learn that he just wants the good part of childhood to go on forever—endless happy summer days hanging out with his friends. He doesn't necessarily want to stay a child forever, so much as to have the good part just... stay.

You've decided to hold that dream.

So here's some limbs that go well with that ambition, or evoke that ambition, or call back to who he is—a couple tattoos with symbolic interpretations of who the Wishing Boy is, and then some limbs useful *for* sitting around chatting with him on endless happy summer days or for making that chatting happen.

1. a shoulder tattoo of cattails before a river
2. a full-back tattoo of serpents and tree.

These options would have a power like:

- **Superior Skill: Enjoying Life 1**
- **Superior Skill: Goofy 1**
- **Superior Skill: Peaceful 1** *or*
- **Bond: Wishful Thinker 1**

3. cute antennae like one of his favorite anime characters, with **Superior Expressiveness 2** and possibly the ability to talk to some sort of animal
4. an intermittent summer breeze, sufficient to move the temperature towards 27° C
5. a spare hand that can rummage around[65] and turn up an ice cream cone
6. eyes that give off so much sunlight that you can light up a three-block area just by lifting your shades
7. an amazing "jacks tendril," exceptionally good at playing jacks

Over the course of your conversation with the Best Friend, he talks about his dreams—dreams of hanging out with you and Chuubo forever, dreams of exploring the world, dreams (though he may not say this explicitly) of being real and staying real and having a destiny in a world where he knows that he might not.

You've decided to hold that dream.

65 in something nearby. What that is… is not entirely clear. There's always something in the way of seeing where exactly she's getting the ice cream cones from. This is meant to be an amusing handwave and not fridge horror or innuendo.

So here's some limbs that go well with that ambition, or evoke that ambition, or call back to who he is—a couple tattoos with symbolic interpretations of who the Best Friend is, and then some limbs useful to help establish his reality, or be his friend, or explore the world, or simply in some fashion related to ideas like these!

8. an upper arm tattoo resembling a picture of an atom, with a doubled circle in orbit around a stylized star
9. highlights in your hair that match the color of his

2

These two cosmetic options would have a power like:

- **Bond: Seizhi and Chuubo's Friend 1**
- **Superior Skill: Communication 1** *or*
- **Superior Skill: Nervous Wreck 1**

10. a targeting reticule in one iris useful in spotting inconsistencies in **the Best Friend's** stories (so you can warn him about them in advance!)
11. a pocket that always has a handkerchief to lend
12. a hair-tendril that always points towards neat places to explore
13. a friendship ring from **the Best Friend** that, while you wear it, confirms them as having a destiny
14. a right-palm holographic display that you can use to bring up proposed definitions of philosophical terms relating to the idea of being real or not
15. a third eye that can share its perception of the world with nearby individuals of your choice (useful for external confirmation of **the Best Friend's** existence and for sharing your perception of them.)
16. shoulder-mounted reality injector stings, which may or may not require extensive preemptive clarification of the relevant philosophical terminology to function. (They may just have an Outside-normalizing venom, instead, which requires somewhat less sophistication to understand.)

Over the course of your conversation with Nightmares' Angel, he talks about his dreams—well, rants about them really. He goes on at some length about showing them all, but if you read between the lines there's also bits about wanting to be a hero but also preferring not to die.

You've decided to hold that dream.

Some of these are tied to him thematically—to nightmares, to the red wings he does not wear, to heroism and to blood. Others might help him in his ambitions.

17. an earring of strange "nightmare metal"
18. an arm tattoo or earring showing a burning feather
19. an arm tattoo of a music-score-like design in red
20. a few red feathers growing in your hair

These cosmetic options would have a power like—

- **Magical Skill: Nightmare Science 1**
- **Superior Skill: Naturalist 1**
- **Superior Skill: Arrogance 1** *or*
- **Superior Skill: Endurance 1**

21. a moral radiance useful in strengthening people in their convictions
22. "nightmare nail polish" on your right hand and maybe on your left with cute little skulls on it that lets you imitate his trick of fishing around in someone's nightmares and pulling useful technology out
23. a "nightmare hand" that's even better at that
24. ...or that maybe is just extremely, horribly scary for no clear reason when you take off the glove
25. a "damsel in distress doll" that dangles from your belt and is extremely easy to accidentally kidnap in your place, for facilitating lower-consequence heroism on his part[66]
26. water-resistant clothing for helping to contain outbreaks of his blasphemy
27. a hand that holds a purifying/redemptive flame
28. vast golden wings for sheltering people from harm
29. red wings of fire, suffering, and blood

66 *It may or may not have a power that makes it more likely to be kidnapped, but frankly, very few HGs can resist kidnapping something like this even if it* doesn't.

Over the course of your conversation with the Troublemaker, she talks about her dreams—which really could be anything, but let's keep it simple and imagine she talks about wanting to have meaning in her life, wanting to connect to people, and wanting to live up to her name.

Stuff about destiny and family, in short.

You've decided to hold those dreams; and so you pick up:

30. a wrist tattoo of a bluebird on its nest
31. a charm bracelet bangle of the same image
32. a few strawberry vines and flowers growing naturally in your hair

These options would have a power like—

- **Superior Skill: Sneaking and Scampery 1**
- **Superior Skill: Cat-Speaker 1**
- **Superior Skill: Know Whether Rinley is Involved in This 1** *or*
- **Superior Skill: Pick up a Little Cash from Here and There 1**

33. the ability to "text" the Troublemaker (like in modern movies!) by typing on your left palm, and receive the texts she thinks to you by reading from it
34. a pair of twitchy cat ears, with either **Cat-Speaker 2** (if Rinley is an NPC and so borrowing one of her schticks is OK) or **Superior Hearing** otherwise
35. a jaunty adventuring coat that always has a little bit of anything you could justify an adventurer having a little bit of in their pockets, in its pockets
36. "Rinley-vision," marked by intermittent cat-like pupils and the ability to see things annotated descriptively with Rinley's concepts of them
37. a wrist or neck-mounted spinneret that shoots out a red thread of destiny that homes in on someone you care about (up to a quarter-mile, rated for a safe load of half a ton)
38. a dream-cloak that makes the world weirder and more interesting around you, as if you were in the Near Outside (This might be an Affliction.)
39. a "pole star" crown with a gleaming central jewel that helps people around you orient even in the deep Outside or amid great wracks of confusion
40. an effusion or waft around you like the Yatskaya temple incense that attracts cats and makes it harder to tell between reality and dream

Over the course of your conversation with the Prodigy while you're both loopy on truth serum, she talks about her dreams—about a world where everything is OK, where people don't hurt so very much, and about somehow fitting in with others either in this world or that one. (These are pretty baseline dreams, and she's probably more likely to talk about things like dreams of flight or solving some mathematical problem or showing people her home town under more normal circumstances—but let's stick with these for the sake of maximizing the utility of the example.)

Anyway, you decide to hold her dreams.

Now, the way I figure it, holding the dreams of **the Prodigy** is going to be a little different than holding the dreams of somebody from Town. She's more kinesthetic, more physical; more mental, too, come to that, but not as emotional or mystical as most of the other PCs. And everything you get from her is tainted with the aesthetics of somebody who comes, fundamentally, from the outside—from the big world out there, from your Dad's world, rather than from the little world of Town.

So you might pick up "limbs" like:

41. a silver circlet for your hair
42. a black and red jacket
43. darkened hair
44. a koi tattoo on your temple
45. a pair of stylish espionage sunglasses
46. a Russian prison-style hip tattoo of birds flying over the horizon
47. a Russian prison-style tattoo of a skull on your shoulder or knuckle
48. a changed "look" so your movements or general appearance resembles her more.

All these cosmetic options would probably come with a power like:

- **Superior Skill: Martial Arts 1**
- **Superior Strength 1**
- **Superior Speed 1** *or*
- **Superior Skill: Math 1**

49. the ability to automatically mirror her outfit with your own
50. the ability to automatically mimic any martial arts move she's done in the past few minutes
51. a smile that can make things a little more OK
52. a tendency to attract snow during monologues
53. a voice adapted to cut through sadness, such as hers
54. a warm touch that doesn't intrude or threaten her boundaries
55. a couple of long kung fu fighting tendrils paired with short forehead tendrils that can feel out the movements of your enemies from the air
56. four twenty-foot long wall-clinging "walking" limbs growing out of your back, to enhance your overall physical capacity
57. the ability to physically reshape yourself into her, entirely
58. a really, really strong arm
59. the ability to fire off "sunbursts" with the non-lethal equivalent to the rough force of a Beretta bullet
60. a pair of tendrils imbued with the cold of a Siberian winter

Over the course of your conversation with the Angel of Fortitude, he admits to his dream of one day seeing his father again—although he also admits that it's much more of a fantasy than a real desire, because underneath that dream are impossible ideas like somehow getting his father's acceptance or his father turning out to have not been evil[67] or learning that his own birth had nothing to do with his father's death. You know. Goofy things. Unacceptable things. He dreams that the world were a thing other than it is—that not merely death but truth and wickedness and imperfection as well should lose their stings.

Goofy or not, though, you can hold that dream, and build limbs that represent him, or his biker-ness, or his showiness, or that dream, or memories and reminiscence and wickedness in general.

You might pick up:

61. a tattoo showing the formal symbol for **the Angel of Fortitude,** a red hand
62. a skull earring
63. a tongue piercing of a red hand, or a scarab symbol
64. a wire crown-of-thorns woven into your hair

These cosmetic options would come with a power like:

- **Superior Skill: Showmanship 1**
- **Superior Skill: Biker 1**
- **Superior Skill: Feng Shui 1** *or*
- **Superior Skill: Wickedness 1**

65. a scuttling tattoo of a scarab that moves across your skin and has, perhaps, a level 2 version of one of the Skills above
66. an extremely efficacious handkerchief, for cleaning the blood from his hands
67. a drop of blood-like color appears over your pupil and iris and allows you to understand and analyze creatures of the evil world
68. holographic fingernails on your right hand that project an image of either the Angel's evil island in the sky or of his father, Principal Entropy I, depending on how you hold them relative to the light
69. two showy hands that can mold plasma blasts into being from the air
70. a "sorrowful hand" that makes things sadder and more bittersweet when touched
71. a miscellaneous limb that twines itself (like a withered tree) into the shape of scenes you're remembering
72. an evil hand that shelters the wicked and unsanctifies the sacred things

Over the course of your conversation with the Dream-Witch, she tells you her dream of running a successful café and having a happy life with the people she cares about.

Technically I suppose that's not really the dream of "the Dream-Witch," but just the aspiration of Miramie Mesmer, who built herself *out* of the Dream-Witch, who keeps some of the Dream-Witch's memories in her adoptive father's archive's metaphorical attic, who sometimes dreams herself *as* the masked Dream-Witch; but that's not the point—

You're going to hold that dream!

You might pick up limbs associated with her symbolically, associated with that dream, or helpful in helping her to fulfill it:

67 *You can relate!*

73. a hair pin showing her mask in iconic form
74. fingernail polish with decals of that mask
75. or a symbol of that mask forming over your pupil in one or both eyes
76. or a tattoo of that mask on your left palm or the back of your right hand.

These cosmetic options would come with a power like:

- **Superior Skill: Mysterious 1**
- **Superior Skill: Dreamer 1**
- **Superior Skill: Art Appreciation 1**
- **Superior Skill: Melancholy 1** *or*
- **Superior Skill: Self-Creation 1**

77. ...or her mask might appear as a floating symbol that orbits your head and helps you externalize your memories into the form of crystals (that you or others can look into to remember that thing)
78. germ-free/germ-killing hands, or an extra pair of arms with hands that do the same
79. "accountants' eyes" for spotting errors in a café's books—extra-reflective eyes that can scan documents very quickly and pick out errors quickly, with the words you're reading extra-visible in those reflections and the errors you see highlighted in that reflection in red
80. hair antennae tuned to ley lines, useful in correcting the feng shui of her café
81. since she thinks the modern day is decadent and degenerate, you might pick up a highly traditional outfit that helps you have visions of the local past
82. since she has a destructive power, you might pick up a tendril tipped with a node of physically destructive force
83. or a feathery tendril that can reach into someone's head and share their memories
84. a "tradition hand" (on a new arm) that reverts things it touches to a more traditional form
85. or a feathery tendril for fishing around in dreams around in dreams and pulling out useful things, as **Nightmares' Angel** does with nightmares

Oh no! There's trouble!

So you create a new limb to create hope, or to devour the evil that you face.

86. an arm with a hand that can shape the temperature of the air around it
87. an arm with a hand that holds a mirror that reveals the true forms of things
88. a shielding wind that protects you and people near you from projectiles and vapor
89. a bubble of sunlight that protects you and people near you from almost anything
90. wings infused with sonic force—they aren't solid, they're a barely visible tremor in the air, yet they're capable of lifting you into the sky or producing aggressive sonic attacks
91. glittering icicle wings that can freeze things
92. wings covered in nasty hooks that you can use in battle
93. wings made of twisting scrolls or floating kanji that can refine themselves to show you the name of something you're looking at
94. the ability to reach into the ground and lift up a thousand hands from the ground in the area
95. an arm-mounted glass-shattering sonic cannon
96. a tendril made of lightning
97. sharpened hearing
98. a camouflage cloak that you can use to conceal yourself and one other person
99. a light in your right hand bright enough to scare off hostile animals
100. a gravity-altering left hand to lift an invasion fleet out of the waters of Big Lake and strand them in the sky
101. an indistinguishable-from-the-Headmaster-of-the-Bleak-Academy pseudopod, modeled on **Nightmares' Angel's** Indistinguishable-from-Humanity Machine, that even the Headmaster is liable to get confused with he himself!

Actions and Issues

Here's some things you're often doing.

Pastoral Stuff

Be simple, spontaneous, and natural

Shared Action

Help people sort out their heads by talking about stuff

Shared Reactions

2

You like the world. You like people. You follow your own inner light, but part of that is to try to really hear and sympathize with what's going on with the people you care about, or, well, meet.

You can get bonus XP for these scenes a couple of times a week.

Declarations

Explain where you're coming from. Then, how it's going to be

Decisive Action

Put your faith in someone (or some idea)

Science, Faith, and Sorcery

If you find yourself monologuing, explaining yourself, theorizing, or telling people that you'll trust and believe in them, the trick to giving those words dramatic payoff is to have them lead to your actually *doing* something—taking a risk.

Trouble

Here's something new! What's going to happen now?

Discovery

Change in a way you weren't planning

Metamorphosis

You like new stuff!

But...

Sometimes things get weird for you. Sometimes the world, or your inner self, or a limb gone wrong, or something—sometimes it tries to change you. This is specifically something that won't go very far unless you're interested in it: you're really hard to *corrupt* or involuntarily transform. But if you're interested in seeing where a change or evolution is going, that plays out as a Metamorphosis Scene.

Issues

If you pick up a **Complex,** it's probably something pretty goofy: you tend to be way too optimistic and refuse to let go of hope, which can make your behavior increasingly frantic as a deadline approaches.

Your most common **Vice** Issue is probably trying too hard to be human. Other possible Vices include reveling in your inhuman superiority, selfishly acting out from loss and confusion, and being a jerk to people with "Rider" blood—that is, your father's people, with their paleness and their black eyes filled with night and falling stars instead of white, iris, and pupil.

Flying Horses, Flying Fortresses, Evil Islands, and You

No matter how high you fly, you can't find Celestia, the Sky Kingdom. At best you'll find creatures of the sky who remember flying with the sun-horses and the fire-birds, seeing its central city from above or below, or landing briefly on the angled roofs of some palace-yacht on a cloud.

Unless...

Well, unless it's actually a good time, story-wise, for you to get there, in which case you will discover the trick to reaching the Sky Kingdom: it takes a mystical/spiritual ascent as well as a physical one. This is always a long hard journey and you must always take part of the journey, in some sense, alone.

Timeline 1: Playing Through Your Childhood

The HG may want to play through your childhood at an accelerated pace—probably about 50x acceleration, covering a year in about the same time you'd usually cover a week.

In a game like that, your history would look like this:

Age 3: The sun dies, and is reborn.

Age 5: This is when the game would start.

Age 15: This is "the present."

Timeline 2: Playing Through Your Childhood

But maybe you don't want all your backstory to be backstory. Maybe you're playing through your childhoods, only you want your *normal* childhood, the one where you have a Mom.

Talk to the HG about it and you can probably shift such a game to this timeline instead—

The one where you start playing in your childhood, and Jade Irinka dies three years into the course of play.

Age 5: This is when the game would start.

You can show up in Town as early as age 5, mostly in the summers that you spend with the Yatskayas, but also visiting on miscellaneous occasions. In this part of the game, you aren't the sun yet and don't have magical limbs yet but your mother might send magical "spell cards" or "helper spirits" to you that serve the same function as your magical limbs when you want to use the relevant powers.

In terms of quests...

"The Light of Hope" and "A Mortal Life:" these quests lose substantial urgency when you're a kid and your mother is alive, but they're still valid quests. I mean, even as a child, you wanted to be like the sun, and you spent time in the lower world figuring it out! It just wasn't as all-important as it becomes later when you're *stuck* in the mortal world and have to take over for your mom!

The Miracle: in the early years, you can gain your 1/chapter bonus XP towards this quest by talking to people about the wonders of Celestia or interacting with your mom.

Age 8: The sun dies and is reborn.

If you're doing this timeline, make sure you're on the same page as the HG and the other players about whether it's possible that it'll go a different way in play. That said, this event is *pretty* unexpected when it happens, so normally you won't *know enough* to try to stop it or change things unless the HG and players spend time deliberately building a plot around this story arc in play.

Age 15: This is "the present."

Timeline 3: Starting in the Modern Day

In a game that starts in the present, you'll have a little flexibility in terms of when your Mom died and you fell to Fortitude—she died at least 2 years ago, and at most 10 years ago, and with a strong default of "when you were 8," but it's ultimately up to you (as a player) to decide.

By default you landed in Fortitude 3-6 months ago, but you've got freedom here too. If you want to spend years or even a decade in Fortitude before the game begins, that's fine—just remember that the longer you've been in Fortitude, the more it says about you that you're still vaguely confused by and estranged from the processes of mortal life. Did you spend the interim time depressed? Catatonic? In denial? The prisoner of the moon people?[68] Hiding from your father? Having weird adventures? Trapped in a well? Living a Spartan and isolated life somewhere? Or has it just taken you a pretty long time to slowly figure out the world?

68 I don't know what moon people are.†

† I guess they live on the moon or something?

2

The Angel of Fortitude

Fact Sheet

You are **the Angel of Fortitude**, and your name is Entropy (the Second). You're a mysterious biker. You're an urban legend. Your hands drip eternally with blood. You consort with strange monsters. But rumor has it that if someone's really in trouble, the Angel of Fortitude can help them out.

Primary Quests

- See disturbing omens and marvel at the potential of these youngsters.
- Find ways to use monsters and mutagens to help people.
- Build a spiritual drainage system in Fortitude.

Bonus XP When...

You get a shiver of wonder or horror from the players.

Powers

You're a creature of horror and urban legend—as much concept as person, able to fade in out of nowhere or out of things that just happen to look like you, give an unnaturally vivid impression, spotlight yourself, or do things that viscerally *get* to people.

You can shape the world in your places of power—and the streets of Fortitude are one such place.

You rule a secret, evil world full of monsters.

The blood that drips from your hands is changeblood, a blank toxin, a metamorphogen—if you prime it properly, it can eat through stone or change the world.

Also, you have a motorcycle. Its name is Jenkins. It's pretty rad. Possibly not as rad as that whole world of monsters thing, but, you know:

Rad.

Common Variations

Shake it up! For an atypical **Angel of Fortitude** experience, pick one or more of the following:

- You are Attaris II, a girl.
- You are Entropy II, *secretly* a girl.
- You have some other special effects instead of blood dripping from your hands:
  - a hundred shadowy arms.
  - a crown of thorns.
  - a wheel of swords spinning near you.
  - snakes for hair.
  - half of your face is cybernetic.
  - you are a soft-spoken child wearing white, surrounded by a halo, and giving everyone around you a sense of visceral horror and unease.
  - you are a werewolf.
- You're the campaign default age instead of older.
- You are "the Bloody Ghost" or "the Awful Angel" or something instead of "The Angel of Fortitude."
- You ride a mysterious horse, flatbed truck, or bicycle instead of a motorcycle.

Character Description

There's stories in Fortitude of a strange biker who travels with monsters. Blood drips from his hands when he takes off his gloves.

Streets move sometimes when he walks or drives by—he pulls them into a new arrangement.

They say sometimes he'll help people who are in need. Old Mrs. Silva was dying and he poured a sort of respirating slime down her throat to help her breathe. Young Heath couldn't get his dog to stop barking and the mysterious biker installed a volume control on Heath's whole house. And my friend Lilith swears she saw him this one time fixing a pot hole in the road.

So they call him the Angel of Fortitude.

He's mostly a ghost story, but for now, let's say—that's *you*.

What Are You?

As **the Angel of Fortitude,** you'll be playing a numinous and sorrowful being. At night, you use the changeblood that drips from your hands to purify the *feng shui* of Fortitude—

If you're not careful, of course, it sears away the grass and flowers and mutates the insects instead. But if you're properly intent upon your work, it will clarify and refine the streets as you go by. You'll straighten winding paths or twist them into gentle curves behind you as you putter at low speed down the road. For fine detail work, you'll park your bike and work the earth and stone and walls and gardens with your hands, adjusting and enhancing the overall life and beauty of the place and bringing health to the families and their gardens.

During the day—well, if you're in Fortitude, which most days you're not—

You'll hide your hands in thick and absorbent gloves and act like a visiting human scholar. A drifter. You'll sip tea or sake, give advice or help to random people, and take in the air.

You didn't really intend to get a reputation as "The Angel of Fortitude."

It's just, that old woman's throat had closed up, and meanwhile you'd been *trying* to figure out how a throat-dwelling slime horror that breathes for somebody but also takes over their left eye could possibly fit into the human world. Bam! Putting two and two together, you saved her life. Next thing you know, people start thinking you're some kind of secret, mysterious hero.

You'd *think* people would catch on to the fact that you're the Principal of Town's biggest School, what with the fact that both of you hang out with monsters and have hands that are always bleeding, but honestly, the idea that you're the same person is just too weird. At most people occasionally catch on to the fact that mysterious visiting scholar—you, I mean—is the Angel, even when you're not doing your thing.

Where Did You Come From?

Evil broke.

The King of the Evil World had been named Entropy—Entropy the First—and also he was the Principal of Horizon's School. He reigned over the ogres, the nimblejacks, the ancient horrors, and the unworldly tribes, and all upon an evil island that flew around the sun; and late in the aeons of his life he descended to the earth and built a sprawling campus in central Town.

Then the sun died, and the sun was reborn, and evil broke.

Evil shattered. Evil scattered. Evil split like a hammered egg—and from inside the broken shell that had been the King of the Evil World, you fell out.

You do not know what it means that evil broke, except that malice, contempt, and wickedness are no longer as they were. You do not know the *reason* evil broke, save that it may have striven with too much diligence to do a good (if necessary) thing. You do not know whether it is possible that you can be a good and virtuous person, or if it is a cosmic necessity that you carry forward and express the lingering wickedness of your father.

But—

In the end, that's not what's important to you. You're a gardener and the world is your garden. If things are out of order, you will fix them. If life ceases to flourish, you will help it grow. If that makes you good, you will be good. If that makes you evil, well, at least your father would be proud.

"It's You!"

You have a number of roles in a number of places.

This probably won't matter much in this campaign. I mean, this campaign is set in Fortitude. That means that the stuff that happens elsewhere is mostly going to be...

- ...fever-dream-like interludes between the bits of real story.
- ...stuff you make up so that you can randomly allude to it having happened.
- ...stuff where the story takes everyone elsewhere in a group.

But you should be aware, if the game's scope widens, that your character is designed not so much to follow the PCs everywhere as to already *be* anywhere they might go, with your own projects and such in every place.

Consider **Horizon,** for instance: that brooding, gothic region haunted by paperwork, administrative headaches, delinquents, and the living dead. You're an important person there. You're **the Principal**, there, running Town's largest School. It's not much to do with your business in Fortitude, maybe, but it's still an important role for you. You're using that School to find and later train students capable of reinforcing reality and standing against the chaos that is beyond the world.

Or take **an Evil Island, Flying Around the Sun.** There, you're the *King*. That's your private evil world, full of at least 10,000 unique and awful horrors. It's on the back of a flying soul-eating beast and you rule it all from the black glass palace at its center. You're kind of spiritually tied to the place, so you like the creatures there, even though imposing order on them or making them congenial rather than hostile to life and humanity is *almost* impossible.

And then there's the swamp you rule as a spirit king in the Walking Fields, and your garden in Old Molder, and so forth and like thus and so on...

If the rest of the PCs ventured far out of Town and started investigating suspicious doings in St. Petersburg, at some point or another they'd probably hunt down a mysterious used car sales entrepreneur or mob boss or whatever entangled in events and that person would turn around and the other PCs would say—

"It's *you!*"

And it would almost certainly be so.

Home and Family

You are a mysterious dude whom people can find drinking tea or sake at various shops during the day and riding the streets of Fortitude, mostly at night. Really, the only family you have, the only family you *need*, is your old beat-up motorcycle Jenkins.

If you need more of a sense of home and family than that, look at the stuff about the "evil world" below.

Hints

2

> *"There is a seed of evil inside the human eye. ...Sometimes we see what we see and know what we know. Sometimes we see or know the evil world instead. Sometimes we touch things. Or people. Sometimes we touch the evil world instead. There's something in our heads, some twitching antenna that can tell when evil's near, and that awareness wriggles into view. It's like a flopping fish or a dying worm. It's like it's distressed. Like evil is* distressed *that it has to live in the same world as people as bad as us."*
>
> —from **Nobilis: the Essentials, Volume 1: Field Guide to the Powers**

The "evil world"—that's your father's evil island, circling the sun—it's always been a judgment. It's always been a sensation. It's always been a place for the things that we see evil into, because there isn't any other thing that evil means.

People sometimes say that Hell is in the right—that the fallen angels were in the right, I mean.

People don't say that about the evil world.

It's *the evil world.* It's a place of evil. It's not in the right. At best it's salvageable. At best it represents something that maybe could be judged another way, differently, you know, later.

...only, things are different now.

Your father was a creature of evil judgment. But you're not. You're the King of Evil, but you're not about desecration, destruction, and scorn. You're more about... the knowledge that there's something redeemable in the wicked things. That they're still pretty wicked! ...but that there's something good there.

That there may *be* a point, somewhere. A reason. A virtue. Something in all that horror, somewhere, justifying just a little of the pain.

That's the reason you and your father can't exist in the same cosmos. That's the reason that, to allow your birth, even the immortal King of Evil had to die. If you exist, there could be something in him worth saving, you see; but where *he* exists, there mayn't.

So there wasn't.

Before you, there absolutely wasn't. Maybe in the superficial minds of people there seemed to be but cosmically there wasn't any way that he could be of worth.

Then the sun died. The sun was reborn.

The impossible was made possible: there could be worth in evil: and you became the King of the Evil World.

Hints (Part 2)

> *"Once upon a time, a witch and a glass-maker made a dragon out of glass and taught it to hate the world. It raged and it would have destroyed everything; only, it shattered, instead."*
>
> — Campaign Premise

This story isn't really about you—you're not at the heart of it. You're an older, weirder background character instead. Your job is to provide extra wonder and terror, to guide these kids through the challenges they'll face, and to see a little farther ahead than most.

You know that the little things matter.

You know that not everything is an endless rush. Not every question immediately has an answer.

Most of all you'll know that it's in facing their fears that people find their wisdom.

That's the kind of character you are.

Helping! Really!

If somebody needs help waking up in the morning, you could put some sort of small unsleeping fish in their stomach. It'd probably help them swim, breathe underwater, and dream the ancient lamp-eyed secrets of the fish as well. But would their eyes bulge and their skin grow slimy? You just don't know! Maybe it's better to assign them an alarm clock crabbine instead?

You and Your Father

You didn't *literally* fall out of your father's empty husk. You just kind of showed up one day, and both of you knew why. You were his alternate. You were his replacement. He was going to do something that would kill him, and then you'd be him instead.

And maybe—just maybe, knowing that, he could have saved himself.

Then you'd have gone out. Popped! Like a balloon in outer space!

But that didn't happen.

He taught you as much as possible about what he wanted, what he thought, what he remembered, and what he cared about. He had to pass on everything he could, or it would have been lost forever when he died.

Then...

One day he called you down into the School basement. He handed you his bloody, knife-gashed garments. Family connection-type music swelled, and he said, "Son, I'm going to need you to run the world while I'm away."

Then he jumped into the incinerator and flew up the chimney and was gone, and both your hands began to bleed.

...or something like that, anyway. It's all kind of under a fog.

You think it's possible that somebody later used a memory-altering effect.

Quests

You start the game with three *quests*, and have the power to swap them out or pick up more—you can pursue up to four quests at any given time.

I've chosen three quests to...

- ...serve as your basic, default character motivation in play ("Mentor Syndrome").
- ...give you extra direction in the first few sessions ("The Angel of Fortitude").
- ...tie you into the campaign plot ("Clean for a Day").

Bonus XP

Once per fun scene, though at most once per fifteen minutes of play, you can earn bonus XP for your **Mentor Syndrome** quest by emoting shock—you make events, omens, implications, and the other PCs seem more impressive by reacting hard to them. The standard form for this is...

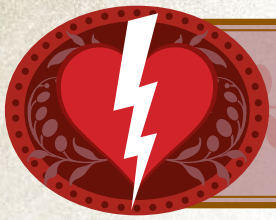
- ...saying "Unprecedented... incredible!", *or,*
- ...just emoting shock.

As for the other quests, **The Angel of Fortitude** and **Clean for a Day**, you can earn a bonus XP for each of these quests once per in-game week by picking a scene from that quest's list of scene options to play out.

Other Quests

If you're interested in another quest or two, and you have access to **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake**, I'd recommend looking at the quests for...

- ...**Keeping a Good Place**
- ...becoming a **Shrine or Park Guardian**
- ...deciding to live up to the role and become a **Dependable Person**
- ...keeping **Up-to-Date** on Fortitude affairs *or*
- ...some sort of **Generic Project.**



Mentor Syndrome

Bonus XP

There's something you say, something you do, when you're stunned and overwhelmed by the good and bad turns things take. Something you'll do to be *impressed*, and thereby make the world around you more *impressive*.

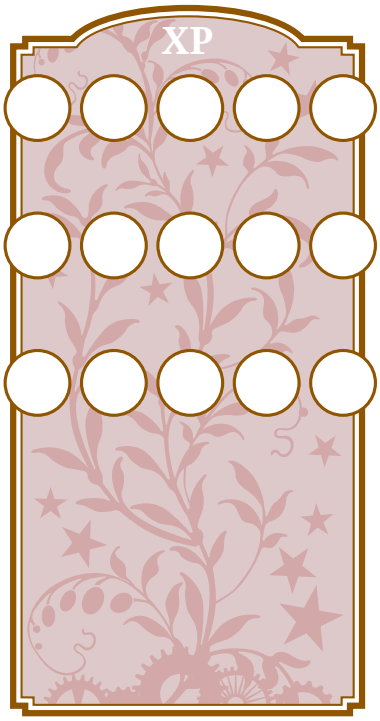
You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) when you use your catchphrase, or some close variant, or just plain emote your shock, horror, or awe.

Do you...

- ...*gasp!*
- ...whisper, "Staggering... impossible!"
- ...declare, "Unprecedented!"
- ...or do you usually say something else?

You thought you had a handle on things. You thought you knew what was up.

But the world, it seems, retains a certain limitless capacity for surprise!



Mentor Syndrome

15 XP Quest

: Chibi-Quest

You're here to see things that the other PCs can't.

You're plagued by omens and visions now and then—either provided by the HG or just kind of made up by you. You turn around and for a moment everything being sold in every shop around you looks like a glass dragon. You look up at the sky and see the shapes of bad things coming. The tea leaves at the bottom of your cup read: *death.*

But more importantly you're here to see *the* thing that the PCs can't, that they're too young and human and inexperienced to see—their own staggering potential. The shape of their future. Maybe not at first, maybe at first you're just a drifter who's in Fortitude for reasons of your own, but as you come to know these PCs, you'll get to understand that there's a limitless potential worth harnessing and training in them—and maybe in certain NPC Main Characters as well.

You'll be delighted and despairing in the presence of these marvelous children and the dangers that they face—and you'll earn bonus XP for this quest when you play that up, when you marvel at it, when you let it all astound you. Say or emote something like "Staggering... unprecedented... incredible!" and claim an XP just from the experience. Really, any shocked, awed reaction will do.

Rewards

As a chibi-quest, this usually earns you a cool thing. Not a *very* cool thing, you understand—from a player/audience standpoint, it's probably a little bit "meh"—but it's cool enough that just thinking about the fact that you have it or got it acts as a **Recharge Token**—something that can replenish your cope and wish power sometime in the future, once.

Some of the possible Recharge Tokens include:

- You get fiery stickers on your ride, slightly raising its maximum speed.

- You get a nice overall tune-up for your ride, with no mechanical effect.
- You get blood-resistant coating on Jenkins' handgrips.
- You get an awesome new book.
- You get a photograph you actually look good in.
- You get a bit of money or something useful from somebody you helped.

Just think about it! A tune-up without mechanical effect! That'd be enough to recharge *any* mysterious biker's cope and spirit!

The Angel of Fortitude

15 XP Quest

: Chibi-Quest

You rule an evil world. You've got mutagenic blood dripping from your hands. You have the power to shift the *feng shui* of a place.

Let's put all this to *use*.

In this quest, you'll find new ways to use your blood, new ways to improve a place with *feng shui*, new ways to integrate the creatures of the evil world into Fortitude Below. You'll start by just playing around, *experimenting*, with something like...

- ...a kind of lizard that lives in the stomach and makes you hungry for insects.
- ...a butterfly that interfaces with your brain and shows you strange chaotic patterns.
- ...a horse made of shadows, which you cannot actually ride.[69]
- ...a weird weapon from the evil world.
- ...a young ogre tagging along with you looking for a place in the lower world.
- ...mixing your blood with phosphorus to create a new kind of light.
- ...enhancing the fire and water energy in a place.
- ...diverting some of the flow of energy to the Kichi pools.

You try out this and that to figure out how to make a useful tool or weapon from it for somebody or how to fit it into the sleepy life of Fortitude.

Rewards

The reward for this quest is a *quest miracle*—you activate some wondrous potential in whatever it is you've been experimenting with.

The palette of available effects include (choose one)...

- ...a guaranteed *small* or *partial* victory at doing whatever you're trying to do here.
- ...a small story-specific "Perk" that upgrades your powerset.
- ...creating a +1 Tool.
- ...teaching a level 2 Superior Skill to somebody or something.
- ...awakening the "true form" or "true power" of a creature of the evil world, complete with a miraculous power and the ability to control or at least shape how it's used.

These powers and guarantees aren't permanent—you have to "stay on the quest" for as long as you want to keep them, and you'll normally have to drop the quest at the end of the season no matter what—but that doesn't mean that they *go away* afterwards, just that it all becomes kind of vague and in the HG's hands thereafter.

For instance, at one point you used this quest to outfit Old Mrs. Silva with a respirating slime. It saved her life! Then you dropped the quest. That didn't *kill* her or anything—it just means that you can no longer reliably outfit people with respirating slime, and that the HG has the *option* of creating a crisis where Old Mrs. Silva and her slime part ways.

It's totally OK to finish the quest working on something different than whatever you started with—sometimes the butterflies don't lead anywhere but the horse turns into something neat! That's just a part of the vicissitudes of life, not a reason to cancel a quest like this and start again.

Variations

You could focus on some other way of helping people. Maybe you could be a bit of a handyman, or a matchmaker, or you could work on improving the feng shui

69 *because you are three-dimensional*

of people's homes in ever-changing, situation-specific ways.

You could be the characters' tutor, or take an active role as Principal, and give them regular assignments to carry out in Fortitude—things to study, charity drives to collect money for, other public service projects, contests, and the like.

In general, look for some way to be part of the support and ordering structures in the characters' lives. You're going to be most effective when you're working in some fashion with the creatures of your Gardens (pg. 243), because that's what gives you the option of unleashing a miraculous power, but you can use the other powers on almost anything.

Light

You are always looking up at light sources. It's a bad habit. You should really make eye contact with people more often. But you keep getting distracted by dramatic stained glass windows, sunlight, floodlights, and the other brilliances that outline your world. Maybe the people around you aren't really there.

The Angel of Fortitude

Bonus XP

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when you've...

- ...put yourself at moral or physical risk to protect a creature of the evil world.
- ...had a meal utterly ruined by one of your experiments.
- ...fallen into water, mud, or something else less than perfectly pleasant because of one of your experiments.

You can earn one of these bonuses per (repetition of the) quest, for a total of 5 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by...

- ...coming up with something new to be working on, and bringing it to Fortitude.
- ...experimenting with blood, *feng shui*, or the creatures of your evil world.
- ...doing the grunt work for an experiment in progress.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Clean for a Day

35 XP Quest

1:

5:

This quest begins the story "Principal Entropy Builds a Fountain," pg. 515.

You have a purpose in Fortitude. There's a reason you ride those streets, study the *feng shui* of the place, and sometimes make adjustments:

You think you can turn a good part of the Mayweather Street area into a spiritual drainage system.

You want to get the little dried-up fountain in the plaza there working again. And get the energy flowing in all the streets around it to take all taints and poisons and wickedness down to the water and out past the lake into the Outside.

And then you're going to wash your hands.

It might be enough for a whole day—you think.

You think if you work hard enough, you can make that fountain pure enough, clean enough, and perfect enough that you'll be able to have a whole *day* to eat sandwiches that don't have blood on them; and to write letters that don't have blood on them; when you won't have to clean the blood off the handles of your bike and you can touch someone's hand without getting blood on it and you can rub your cheeks without getting blood on them; a whole sweet glorious day where you can just *relax* and genuinely *be*.

It probably won't make the Outside *too* angry, washing all that impurity out there. You think.

It'll be OK.

Rewards

In addition to a day or so of clean hands, this quest often gains you a small improvement to your Garden in Fortitude (perhaps a +1 Tool bonus to keeping things clean or purifying things) or a miraculous vision mode (a "Power Perk") that helps you spot something like purity, impurity, dirt, hidden dirt, or the influence of the Outside.

Afterwards, I suggest reviewing the notes on pg. 514–515 and moving on to **"The Sidekick."**

Shivers

Your bonus XP emotion is *transport*—wonder, horror, or mystery sufficient to draw the players for a moment into the illusion that there truly is a bloody-handed Angel in Fortitude, born of an evil god.

You want to get a shiver as the spell breaks (when it does break) or some similar indicator:

- somebody saying "Shiver."
- somebody sighing softly
- somebody saying "Eek!" (to a more horror-type moment)
- somebody saying "Ooh" (to a more wonder-type moment)
- somebody gaping
- somebody saying, "Gape."

Each such shiver earns you one XP, and you can earn up to 1 shiver XP every 15 minutes.

This is a difficult condition so we're going to help you out a little. You can turn things over to the other players—asking them to feed you a description of nightmarish, or awesome and resonant, or mysterious deeds for you to do. Ask them, in short, to describe for you a dream or nightmare of what the Angel of Fortitude might do; and if they actually *have* an idea worthy of shivering at, you may go along with it for XP. If they *want* to interject with something like this, unprompted, and you both let them describe it and then go along with it, you can earn a bonus XP that isn't limited by the 15 minute rule.

Advice to Other Players: Shivers should be sincere, but, as usual, they can be exaggerated or conscious. You're allowed to push yourself towards seeing the Angel of Fortitude as a figure of wonder and horror if that's what you have to do to keep their XP from falling unpleasantly behind.

Clean for a Day

2

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you make peace with a recent setback where you lost a few days of work.
- ...you're unexpectedly shy, vulnerable, or open with someone.
- ...you have a vision to guide your work or an elaborate dream sequence about the delights of clean hands.

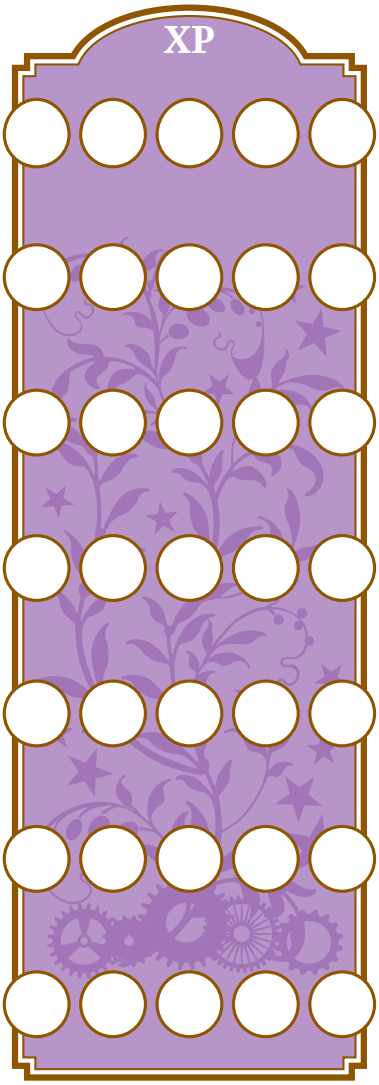
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...working on this project, involving simple, honest effort.
- ...working on this project, involving slightly larger-than-life or magical incidents.
- ...admiring the construction and atmosphere of Fortitude, often while softly lit, obscured by fog, and/or with something weird or unnatural nearby.
- ...enjoying the softness of fur, plush grass, carpet, fleece, etc.
- ...having trouble because your clothing's a bit too big for you.
- ...trying and failing to hide your identity.
- ...talking about your progress on the project and its positive or negative effects on the local environment.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Abilities

You have **8 Will** and the following mundane abilities—

- **A Map in Your Head 2.** You've an eerie sense for how places are laid out.
- **Tinker 2.** You're pretty good at tinkering with stuff.
- **Vehicular Travel 1.** You're familiar with getting around.
- **I Know Somebody 0.** You *might* be familiar with someone who can help out.

You also have two mundane abilities with special rules (detailed below):

- **Superior Magister 1.** You're not quite human.
- **Superior Land-Rule 2.** The creatures of your gardens are safe for you.

See also **Tireless.**

Connections

You start the game with a single free Connection—

- **The Child of the Sun 1.** What a charming child!

You can also get a level 1 Connection to any other PC by mutual agreement.

Supernatural Abilities

Entropy II, Magister, has the following supernatural abilities:

- **You are the King of Evil, and not quite human.**
  - You will live forever, unless you die.
  - You're tireless.
  - You have various small deviations from the human norm.
  - Blood is always dripping from your hands.
  - That blood is a mutagenic, world-changing venom.
  - (P.S. your nose is a prosthetic but that isn't really a *power)*
- **You're kind of dramatic.**
  - You can summon up a spotlight.
  - You'll sometimes show up for dramatic/emotional rather than causal reasons.
- **Your actions sometimes have a terrifying, supernal significance.**
  - You can shroud your actions in an "Auctoritas" that protects them against miracles.
  - You can transfix others.
  - You can take an action so vivid it...
    - ...etches itself into others' minds...
    - ...or dredges up a topical flashback.
- **You have claimed various places as your "gardens."**
  - You rule "the evil world," aka "an evil island, circling around the sun."
  - You have power over the streets of Fortitude.
  - Over in Horizon, you run Town's largest School.
- **You may shape the substance of your gardens...**
  - ...molding them with your hands, like clay.
  - ...exerting yourself and magically shaping large sections of them at a time.
  - ...creating new life from them and binding it to your service.

Health

You have 2 Normal Health Levels, 1 Tough Health Level, and 0 Divine Health Levels.

This means that even without your **Immortality** you'd be tougher than a normal human, but nothing to write home about—roughly action hero level, I'd say; I wouldn't want to go after you with a knife or a handgun or anything, because you're tougher than nails, but ultimately, compared to a typical PC, your Health Levels are only the most pitiful, fragile of shields between you and death, transformation, or defeat.

Luckily, you have a better one: immortality.

The King of Evil can't die. The King of Evil doesn't even stay hurt for very long. There are some rules mechanisms that can get around this, so don't get *too* comfortable, but while your powers are in good order you can take a chainsaw to the stomach and just spit out its metal teeth. Enchantments slide off you. Fire doesn't burn. You're *not* an action hero. You're the lord of the evil world.

You're *supposed* to have 2 Divine Health Levels, incidentally—those are what you'd want to turn to to soak up nuclear blasts and the like, if your immortality went away—but the better part of your vitality is invested in keeping the evil world under control. If you're ever *really* worried about dying, you could consider freeing up some of that; see the details on pg. 245.

Miracle Points

You have 5 Miracle Points (MP) that you can use to enhance your miraculous abilities or use them more often than usual. Once spent, you'll regain 1 MP/week, up to your normal 5.

You can gain additional MP through Issues, when Region Properties or your bloody hands get you into trouble, or by spending a week diligently doing something that honors a Region Property or Bond. (e.g. lending your bureaucratic talents to making sure things don't move too quickly in Fortitude.)

2

Your Hands, Your Blood

You're not human. You were never human. You are something else—according to your father's lexicon, a "Magister."

Your hands drip eternally with blood. This is a bad habit that you inherited from your father. Sometimes it runs from your palms. Sometimes it starts at the wrists or fingertips. Sometimes it is hard to trace the source of the flow on a given day.

This blood is a spiritual and metaphysical contaminant. It is no longer what it used to be—your father's blood was intrinsically corrupt—but it is still a peculiar and dangerous mutagenic substance in quantity and mildly unhealthy or toxic even in small amounts.

You have no nose. It's not *missing*—it's just naturally not there.

You have a tendency to find yourself standing in light—as if it is drawn to you, and you to it. You may look indefinitely into the sun and your eyes will take no harm.

When you're just hanging out or keeping a low profile, you wear a false nose and awesome black gloves with sanitary pads on the inside. For your actual work, though, you take them off and reconcile yourself to leaving a trail of blood.

Perks

Characters in this game have a handful of **Perks.** You gain them or improve them by completing quests, and you can have up to 8.

You'll start with these:

Cool 1

You are the King of Evil. You're hard to mess with. You scare people.

You have a point of **Cool.**

This means that anyone trying to hurt you, embarrass you, corrupt you, co-opt you, or mess with something you're actively watching or protecting takes a -1 penalty to their mundane actions.

Accessory

You have a motorcycle, Jenkins.

As long as you have this Perk you can use your Health Levels (and implicitly your Immortality) to keep it from being stolen from you, misused, destroyed, or corrupted without your player-level consent—if someone tries to steal it, for instance, you could wound one of your Health Levels to say, "No, they don't steal my bike, they can't, its battery is dead."

Normally you'll then heal that wound with your Immortality—and bam! The battery's fine!

1

Connection: [PC of your choice]

At the start of the game, with the player's consent, you may take a free level 1 Connection to any other PCs.

1

Connection: the Child of the Sun

What a charming child!

The Evil World

This Perk represents your Garden, **the Evil World**, aka, **an Evil Island, Circling the Sun.** 1-2x/book, you can invoke this to have the HG describe something that's going on there—just a few sentences to help set the tone of the place.

In addition, the evil world receives the following benefits:

- a level 1 Auctoritas against the influence of the Outside
-
-

School

This Perk represents your Garden in Horizon: **School.** 1-2x/book, you can invoke this to have the HG describe something that's going on there—just a few sentences to help set the tone of the place.

In addition, the Garden receives the following benefits:

- a level 1 Auctoritas against the influence of the Outside
- a +1 Tool bonus to connecting to the ghost world or vice versa[70]
- a +1 Tool bonus to discovering strangeness[70]

The Streets of Fortitude

This Perk represents your Garden, **the Streets of Fortitude**—specifically, the paved streets, and the space between the residential streets and the houses. 1-2x/book, you can invoke this to have the HG describe something that's going on there—just a few sentences to help set the tone of the place.

In addition, the streets of Fortitude receive the following benefits:

- a +1 Tool bonus to breathing freely[70]
-
-

Ghosts

The ghosts that attend and work at your School are usually invisible and intangible. It's very hard to tell if they're working or taking their classes seriously.

Other times they fade into reality. Then they look a lot like living people except that they don't have faces. They just have a few black "emotion" lines on their face that help you see their moods. They tend to travel in packs.

The longer you know a ghost, the more often you see them, and the more realistic their facial features are. It's definitely possible to know a ghost long enough that it looks like a person, but you're not sure whether or not you can know a ghost well enough that it loses the ability to turn invisible around you.

70 available to anyone who knows to claim it.

Creature of the Light

The process of your birth is not remembered.

Attaris is only a shadow on your consciousness. Your arrival at your father's School was ambiguous. And how it should come to pass that the King of Evil, of all people, would spearhead the salvation of the world—

It is a story whose passions have been lost to the world; there is only what little is known by the geeky, gangly kid who showed up afterwards and got stuck with all the blood from his father's hands. All that's left is that you existed, and suffered, and then transcended... although you know that there must have been more.

It is not remembered; but it is recorded. In the game rules, it is written as the miraculous story Arc, or set of Arcs, **Creature of the Light 2.**

That history is what makes you who you are—not human, but a Magister.

Here's how it works.

(Superior) Magister

Type: Superior Skill **Cost:** —

You are something beyond human. You are a creature of the *causa causans*, the uncaused cause, the divine spirit that kindled itself into being and makes all other things to move. You command a teaching authority, a *magisterium*, with respect to the ordinary beings of the world; before you were a Principal, before you were the Angel of Fortitude, you were a **Magister of the Light.**

I mentioned earlier that you have two Skills with special rules.

This is one of them.

Your level 1 Superior Magister Skill is a Skill in seeing the big picture; resisting social power plays and manipulation; and getting under people's skin, metaphorically, cutting past their defenses to terrify them, impress them, or appeal to them. It's a Skill at bypassing magical barriers meant to keep humans out. It's got a fair bit of environmental hazard resistance and general endurance bundled into it, too, although you're more likely to use **Immortality** for that.

All that stuff works like a normal Skill, and it's only a level 1 Skill to boot—

But this is a *Superior* Skill, which means that it makes you just a little bit alien and can give you a point of Edge in an otherwise fair conflict based on any Skill whenever you can bring it into play.

Tireless

Type: Miraculous Action **Cost:** 0 MP

Being a Magister confers other benefits as well.

For instance, like everyone else, you have 8 Will to spend each week to enhance your mundane actions—but *you* also have access to another pool of 3 Will, your "miraculous Will," which replenishes every time you take an in-genre XP Action or share a scene with someone who does.

Basically, each day tires you a little less than it otherwise would.

Well-Lit

Type: Imperial Miracle **Cost:** —

You are a creature of the Light and have the right to invoke **Well-Lit** and demand dramatic lighting from the world.

The normal effect is that you're simply in the best possible spot to be well-lit—you're supernaturally perfect at being in an ideal being-spotlit location, whether that's standing in a beam of moonlight, making your way to the center of a stage, having starlight sparkle all around you, or having a giant beast with lamp-eyes look suddenly your way. If you're trying to do this "naturally," then it's possible that the best reasonable lighting isn't all that great.[71]

However, if you like, you can outright declare that there's:

- ...a ray of sunlight to strike you full-on, even at night.
- ...a stage light out of nowhere.
- ...a nimbus of mundane or arcane light around you.
- ...a blinding glare behind you.

And *that's* an Imperial miracle.

Why does this happen? It's usually up to the HG. The two most common explanations are "break from reality" or "shocking coincidence"—although, like most powers requiring unexpected work from the HG, the HG has the right to handwave this or make you figure out the explanation yourself.

71 In keeping with this, as part of maintaining the illusion that this is "natural," this version of the power counts as a level 4 miracle and not an Imperial miracle—if you're just in the best possible spot, someone with access to miracles could conceivably stop you from being well-lit.

The Auctoritas Magister

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Starting mid-scene, swathe 1-2 actions in the Auctoritas Magister.
- **1 MP**—Starting mid-scene, swathe an extra action in the Auctoritas Magister.
- **2 MP**—Starting mid-scene, swathe yourself + your actions in the Auctoritas Magister.
- **4 MP**—Swathe yourself + your actions in the Auctoritas Magister.

Even miracles struggle to contain you.

Starting mid-scene, you may invoke **the Auctoritas Magister** to protect your mundane actions from the influence of miracles and the Outside. This power shelters them behind an "Auctoritas" (a defense against miracles) with rating equal to your **Creature of the Light:**

It ignores miraculous interference with [Strike < your Creature of the Light.]

To a limited extent this protects your person—if your action is defensive, or if something would hurt or transform you in such a way as to impede your action, then the Auctoritas Magister protects *you* from miracles with [Strike < your Creature of the Light.]

If you've spent 2+ MP, then your body and mind are directly protected and you can just plain walk through miraculous fire, ignore miraculous lightning, and reject the idea of being transformed miraculously into a frog for as long as you sustain the Auctoritas Magister.

Appear

Type: Miraculous Action, Major

Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/week, appear to someone you have a Connection to.
- **1 MP**—Use this power a second or later time in a week.
- **4 MP**—Appear in seconds instead of minutes, or even less than that if dramatically required.

Nor may locks and cages seal you out.

Invoke **Appear** and you may transport yourself to anyone you have a Connection to, materializing over the course of a few minutes from whatever is most evocative of or likely to have been mistaken *as* yourself. If there's nothing at all appropriate you can manifest from the omens of, and building sense of, your presence, instead.

You depart in the same fashion at the end of the scene, fading back into something that is revealed to not have actually been you after all.

Transfix

Type: Miraculous Action

Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/book, transfix those around you with your mundane actions.
- **4 MP**—Do so a second or later time per book.

If necessary, you may become magnetic, arresting, hypnotic: you may fixate the attention of others.

Invoke **Transfix** to add a glamour to a slow and careful mundane action—something without sudden movements—and you can transfix those who are observing you, making it effectively impossible for them to pay attention to anything else.

Obsession

Type: Miraculous Action

Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/week, invoke **Obsession.**
- **1 MP**—Invoke it a second or later time in a week.
- **2 MP**—Invoke it a second or later time in a matter of hours.

Invoke **Obsession** as you act and your actions may obsess, entrance, or otherwise provide a profound emotional effect on a selection of desired witnesses. It etches its way into their mind. This is functionally a miraculous attack.

If this *defeats* one of your targets, taking their last Health Level, you may sketch out the details of the effect; otherwise, it's up to each target to decide how they process the impact of whatever it is that you do.

You may invoke **Obsession** and **Transfix** simultaneously, paying the higher relevant cost.

Open the Vault

Type: Imperial Miracle
Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/week, invoke **Open the Vault.**
- **1 MP**—Invoke a second or later time per week.
- **2 MP**—Invoke a second or later time in a matter of hours.

When interacting with someone, invoke **Open the Vault** and name an emotion/experience and your actions dredge up a flashback from your target—

A specific experience, or a mélange of experiences, best fit to evoking the desired mood.

Your target's player normally emotes the experience, although they can abbreviate it (potentially as far down as "stuff") if they can't think of anything interesting. Your target can take an IC action to keep these feelings from becoming obvious in-character, or, if appropriate, use an ongoing Intention to do so; this, however, faces an Obstacle equal to your Arc Trait, **Creature of the Light**.

Slipping into the World

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle **Cost:** —
Is there somewhere you need to go? Someone you need to reach?

Spend a 15-XP quest thinking of them, dreaming of that distant place, feeling out the way to get there with your mind and heart, and you will manifest there:

Over the course of the quest itself, rumors will spread of your coming and signs of your impending presence will appear. Your name may be written in graffiti on the walls or chanted by the outcasts and the fey. Your target will see you occasionally from the corner of their eye, or see someone who they think is you but when they get a little closer, or confront "you," it's obviously not.

Then... when you complete the quest... you are there, pre-equipped with a temporary level 2 Connection to someone or something and pre-integrated into the place you wanted to get to or the life of the person you wanted to reach. Are you their doctor? Their new manager? Their cousin-in-law? The homeless beggar or the hot dog salesperson working on their street? The horror or hoped-for ally that has been visiting their dreams?

If the target is a person they also get a temporary level 2 Connection to *you*.

This can be an attack miracle, too, if you like; if you want to feed off of them, if you want to consume the target in some fashion, just specify that and what should happen over the course of the quest. There's a strand of the urban legend and the horror story in your nature, I suppose, because if what you're really hoping is that they'll *know* not to summon you, and they'll be *told* not to summon you, but they'll call your name three times anyway and then are never seen again?

Well, that won't always *work*, because people can defend against miracles, but for someone with a **Creature of the Light** Trait 2 it's a perfectly legitimate quest.

A Keeper of Gardens

The story of your life since your ascension to Principal is better documented. It is known that the first focus of your attention was the Evil World—taming it, limiting it, imposing the *"Code Novae"* on it:

The Code Novae

- None may harm another more than three times proportioned to the victim's sins.
- Trying to understand or connect to something is never wasted.
- All things may find their recompense in love.

When you had finished, at the cost of the greater part of your health and power, you came below and you struggled to tame the School, to wrestle back the bramble and overgrowth of it into a proper garden.

The work is neverending; draining; and the pieces of it you have accomplished thus far are enfleshed in you in the Perks above and the miraculous story Arc, **A Keeper of Gardens 1.**

Here's what that's given you.

Your Current Arc

You're working on the next Arc in this sequence now—

Towards "A Keeper of Gardens 2," which'll earn you a ninth Perk slot, facilitate your shaping of your gardens, and give you the power to create more powerful creatures therefrom.

Slipping into the World

Bonus XP

You are manifesting in a distant place. Signs and omens of your presence are already appearing; hints—and later on you'll appear fully integrated into that world, whether that means being a shop-owner in a demon city, a gardener in a royal palace, or a child's come-to-life imaginary friend.

Ideally there'll already be play happening in that place.

If there is, you can earn an XP for this quest (up to one per 15 minutes/scene) by *reacting* to something that's going on there with an ominous indication of your impending arrival. Let's boil this down to something simple: the HG can add detailed supernatural effects, but to earn the XP, *you* just stage-whisper some variation on a standard catchphrase, like:

- "Soon."
- "I will be in this place."
- "Ominous emanation." optionally followed by a noise representing ominousness (e.g. "womwomwomwomwomwom" or "zzzzt" or "oo *woo* oo")
- "I... am coming."
- "I am... already... here." *or*
- "Red runs from my hands."

If there *isn't* already play happening there, so you can't just ominously interject to it, you can still use this quest. You can earn an XP towards it (up to one per 15 minutes/scene) by reacting to something that happens *here* with a sudden vision of being *there*. Again, you'll pick a standard catchphrase, and you'll quote it or some variant to earn the XP:

- "Soon."
- *[in reaction to something you see, or touch, or feel]* "It is like this, there."
- *[aloud, in character, with steepled hands]* "womwomwomwomwom"
- "The gate of the world... opens."

  [because your attention was far away] "Sorry, say that again?"
- "Red runs from my hands."

XP

Immortality

Type: Miraculous Action, Major

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Damage or enchantment has only temporary, cosmetic[72] effects on you.
- **1 MP**—You totally recover and shrug everything off 1-2 times mid-scene.
- **2 MP**—Starting mid-scene, you shrug off attacks and other effects like they're paper tigers.
- **4 MP**—You're basically unaffected by the world around you.

If someone decides to mess with you, to corrupt you or to break you—well, they may be able to embarrass you a little, or muss your clothing, but it is obviously impossible that the King of the Evil World should die.

It's pretty unlikely that such a King would even suffer harm.

That much is essentially written into the substance of What Is.

If you are shredded by a giant fan blade, your structural components won't be harmed, and your soft tissue will pull itself back together. If you are stranded on the dark side of the moon, you will grow airless, pained, and cold, but you will not die nor will you cease.

You are **the Angel of Fortitude**, and you are *forever*. So if...

- ...someone hits you?
- ...you forget to eat for three months?
- ...you're hit by a nuclear barrage?
- ...people are pouring molten steel over your head?

"Such a little thing is of no matter to me."

In general, you can recover from almost any predicament—in real-time, at the 2-4 MP level; over the course of a few minutes with none of your enemies watching you, at the 1 MP level; or between scenes, if you're not willing to spend MP. That means that even if you're disintegrated by a cosmic beam or stuck to the side of a red-hot metal plate by a spear of stone, you just need a little time to pull yourself back together and get out of it.

You're not human. You're the King of Evil. *You just don't die.*

However:

- You can suffer from the Sickness Issue—but whether it's lycanthropy in your blood or ghost possession or mind control, the power in you is likely to seep out and corrupt *that*, making the actual negative effects cosmetic at worst and the total impact more or less under your control.
- You can be confined as long as it's interesting and doesn't keep you out of play. If there is interesting stuff going on, it's not a *predicament.*
- Extremely deadly stuff, like nukes, volcanoes, Imperial miracles, and other Major miracles of similar Arc level can still hurt you. Your wounds will still be much less severe than a reasonable person would expect, and they'll still heal in two chapters or less, but if you drown in molten steel, you'll be staggering, feverish, and coughing up steel phlegm for hours and *hours* after.
- Occasionally I'll introduce an effect that lets you take some action at the cost of "a terrible wound," or that seals a wound so that no effect can heal it. If you're doing something like that to yourself, Immortality will not heal such wounds.

Timing and You

When you have a power that works *mid-scene* or *starting mid-scene*, that means that you use it after some meaningful stuff has already happened in the current scene.

When you have a power that works *after a few minutes*, that means that either a few things have to happen while you're setting this up, or nothing is happening at all. Ideally this covers about five minutes of game time in a languid scene or five minutes of real time in a scene of fast-paced play, but that doesn't have to be precise.

72 It can look bad. It can look really bad, right down to "Entropy is currently an ooze of living blood dragging around the remnants of its bones." Or it can be just kind of kid-friendly TV pseudo-wounds like a lightly wounded arm and mildly torn clothing. It's up to how you want to handle it—just remember that unless you spend MP, you should treat it as legitimately impairing until the end of the scene.

Arc Powers

Immortality is your "Arc power"—you get it for *being* on one of the Arcs that grant Immortality. If you change to a different Arc, it's replaced by whatever power that Arc offers instead.

I suggest you stick to Arcs that offer Immortality—there's a decent selection of them, including both **Creature of the Light** and **A Keeper of Gardens**, and if you let yourself die to anything but a transcendent plot device sacrifice it's probably going to be plain bad for *everybody.*

Students and Faculty

Most of your garden-related powers apply to the students and faculty at your School. Bear in mind, however, that dropping out or quitting is a valid pre-emptive defense against the worst excesses of this sort. It's even, to be honest, a reasonable instantaneous *subconscious* response if the Principal of one's School decides to twist one into a living pretzel—it's important to stay in school! But it is also important not to be a pretzel.

One must balance competing imperatives, I think, if one is to prosper in this life.

Your Gardens

Type: Special **Cost:** —

You are a keeper of gardens. You build and shape the world to your grand designs. In each of the regions where you have built a rôle for yourself you cultivate something special, something cool, something magical—a garden. In Horizon it is your School. In the sky you rule "the evil world," an evil island on the back of a flying beast, circling around the sun.

In Fortitude it is a garden of streets—your working materials are:

- paved streets
- things between the residential streets and houses, such as:
  - sidewalks
  - street lamps
  - fireflies
  - grass
  - walls
  - street signs
  - roof edges
  - mailboxes
- things relating to water flow, particularly storm drains and gutters

To properly claim a garden requires a Perk—specifically the Perk,

- **"It's like a home to me."**

However, if you find yourself stranded somewhere without Garden access, you can put together or reclaim a Garden temporarily with a 15-XP quest miracle.

You can claim a pretty big garden, but it should be at least an order of magnitude smaller than a Region in scope.

Once claimed, you can adjust a Garden's boundaries or details by spending a Recharge Token.

The World, Like Clay

Type: Imperial Miracle

Cost:

- **0 MP**—Mold the things of your Gardens by hand, given a few minutes' concentration.
- **0 MP**—Once per season, mold a large portion of your Gardens.
- **4 MP**—Mold a large area of your Gardens a second or later time per book.

Invoke **The World, Like Clay** and you can shape the things of your Gardens as if they were malleable clay.

After a few minutes' concentration, you may...

- ...mold nearby elements of your garden by hand.
- **...once per season,** mold a neighborhood-sized area by essentially gesturing and emoting what you want to happen—pushing a hand down in the air to flatten buildings, waving and wiggling your fingers to brush them aside, and sketching in the air to create new structures.

In both cases this power uses your normal mundane abilities—most likely, "Tinker"—but it elides the normal Obstacle and waives the limits of human power.

The World, Like Clay is a metaphysical, supernatural action and not just psychic matter-molding so function will tend to follow form. If you stretch out a street lamp, the top stays lit; if you squish the top bulb

to nothing, the whole thing probably ceases to be wired for power. If you give a mailbox a pair of eyes, it may come to life; if you give a dandelion puff wings it may fly away.[73]

The HG may elect to impose Obstacles specific to this power—not, perhaps, the Obstacle 4 of "nobody can bring a mailbox to life by squishing part of it to look like eyeballs" but at least the Obstacle 1-2 of "bringing things to life is very hard." In short, these are Obstacles for things that the HG imagines that even a metaphysical world-sculptor might have some difficulty with, and reflect the overall tenor and tone of the game.

Superior Land-Rule

Type: Superior Skill **Cost:** —

You're good at wrangling the native creatures from your gardens—keeping tabs on them, keeping them from getting into too much trouble, and protecting yourself from their violent potential. This Skill is meant for things like "I have an eye-eating dog-squid following me around, but hilarious hijinx where people's eyes get eaten *don't* necessarily ensue."

This is your other Skill with special rules—

It's not just a level 2 Skill, but potentially 2 Edge on top of that towards winning any conflict predicating on your ability or inability to control the creatures of the evil world, wrangle your students, or control any feral animals resident to the Fortitude streets.

In rules terms, this Skill is easiest to use when there's some social context for it—when the environment and situation support your authority and are relevant to it. You're the King of the Evil World, so that helps in dealing with the creatures of the evil world—but it's even better if you can get them to come to you for protection and help, or at least to associate with you willingly. You're the Principal of School, so you're extremely good at student-wrangling in School or on a field trip, but you're at much less of an advantage when you're just bumping into them on the Fortitude streets. You won't lose the use of the Skill itself in a situation like that, but you'll lose the 2 Edge bonus.

The Change-Blood

Type: Bond, Level 2 **Cost:** —

Your blood became toxic the day you took over your father's throne; became as metaphysically virulent as his own, albeit in a different way. It's a poison. It's an acid. It's a catalyst. In a way, too, and this is why I'm putting it under your **Keeper of Gardens** power set, it's a *fertilizer*. A gardener's tool.

It *changes* things.

This is normally a pretty mild effect. That's important, because it's always dripping from your hands, and if it were a major effect you'd be in trouble. But it's not a major effect, not usually. Most of the time it's more like—maybe if people come into too much contact with it they get a bit of a rash. Maybe now and again a doorknob you bleed on changes its design, or the red sinks permanently into the brass.

If it's physically concentrated, though, or if you're using your powers or just consciously charging it with your will, your blood can blight or mutate plants, sicken an enemy, or eat through wood, stone, or flesh. It is classified formally as a *blank toxin*, meaning that it enhances the malignancy of toxins and viruses it mixes with and exaggerates the structural weaknesses of the things it touches rather than bringing its own distinct effects to the table as a poison. Used consciously as part of your other powers, though, it functions more as a *metamorphogen*, loosening the structural form of things prior to your establishing a new one.

- Invoke **the Change-Blood** when you're using the properties of your blood as a practical tool to overcome an Obstacle or win a conflict and you can add the Bond rating (2) to your Intention level. You can only add this bonus from one such Bond.
- Invoke **the Change-Blood** when you're using the properties of your blood to enhance a miraculous action and you can add the Bond's rating (2) to your Strike. Strike from a Bond doesn't add to Strike from other Bonds, but it does add to Strike from MP and Strike intrinsic to a miracle.
- Invoke **the Change-Blood** when your state of having blood always dripping from your hands, and *theologically potent* blood to boot, adds misery to your life. This can give you up to the Bond rating (2) in Will or in MP. You can also get this MP if you spend a whole week in

73 In fairness it may do this even if you do not give it wings. That's its precognitive fitness!

dedicated use or study of the effects and powers of the blood.

- It is notionally possible for you to replace food, water, sleep, and even air with either the consumption of your own blood, the consumption of things transformed by your blood, or stressing out over how awful it is that you're bleeding everywhere. *Notionally.* In practice, this kind of thing gets unpleasant almost as fast for you as for a normal person, though, and the Obstacles can range as high as 4.

The Great Magic

Type: Imperial Miracle
Cost:

- **0 MP, 1 Health Level**—Once per season, create a new Property for a garden.
- **4 MP, 1 Health Level**—Do so a second time in a given season.

This is the power that tamed the evil world.

With **The Great Magic,** you may reshape the nature of one of your gardens, wounding one of your Divine Health Levels to add a new Property thereto. Eventually this becomes a natural part of the garden, although this can take weeks, months, or years. In the meantime, your wound does not heal normally; rather, you must voluntarily abandon the magic before the wound can heal, and even then the Health Level does not return for the remainder of the book.

You do not receive the normal mechanical effects for a wound when you use this ability, although you may treat turning this power off as some sort of spiritual damage and take a wound at the time that you do.

At the start of the game you have successfully bound the evil world to one of the three laws of the Code Novae and wounded both your Divine Health Levels to hold it to the others. By default, you'll get one back in the first Christmas of the game[74] and another the Easter after.[75]

Guide

Type: Imperial Miracle
Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/week, construct or invoke a guide from the substance of your Gardens.
- **1 MP**—Do so a second or later time in a week.
- **2 MP**—Do so a second time in minutes.

You may impute the personality and knowledge of a "guide" into something you've just shaped from a Garden with **the World, Like Clay.**

You create a living creature that is sufficiently aware and knowledgeable to...

- ...instruct, guide, or lead others through its Garden.
- ...instruct others in some other principle or rule.

For instance, you can construct a roly-poly bird that knows people should look both ways when crossing the street, can analyze whether they're doing so, experiences distress when they don't, and can even philosophize on why that might be important; or a pageboy, pagegirl, or hopping lamp from the substance of your realm to lead people from one place in it to another.

You may use mundane means to summon an existing guide, but it's only guaranteed to still exist and be reachable by you if you use this power to summon it again.

Seeing Yourself from the Outside

You're acutely aware of your role in the world. You are a creature that takes shape, in part, from the expectations and perceptions of others.

Put another way—

The masks and roles you put on, from King of the Evil World to Principal to the Angel of Fortitude, *matter* to you. Doing them *right* is important to you.

I don't mean that you break the fourth wall, because you don't. At worst you internally narrate yourself as a bit of a TV or literary hero. But the thing is, all that aside, as the Angel of Fortitude, you *are* consciously playing a character, of sorts, and you know this to be true.

74 Not counting any that you rush past when playing through the characters' childhoods
75 It's actually up to you.

Actions and Issues

Here's some things you're often doing.

Pastoral Stuff

Drinking tea or sake

Slice of Life

Helping people out

Shared Action

Sometimes you'll come out to Fortitude just to enjoy the ambience. Soak in the world, drink, and do simple, honest things. You can get bonus XP for these kinds of actions a couple of times a week.

Declarations

Monologuing, before a decision

Decisive Action

Proposing a theory—then trying a risky experiment!

Science, Faith, and Sorcery

There's nothing like a good monologue to warm you up for a big moment!

Trouble

Sometimes you have to break a few omelettes to make a proper egg

Wicked Action

You're prone to the occasional moral slip.

Reshaping the World

Someone watches you reshape the world

Foreshadowing

Explain what you're doing, leading to a dramatic action

Decisive Action

It's not actually *difficult* for you to do your work as the Angel of Fortitude, nor is it really "simple and honest," so the interesting part of that work is probably if someone sees and is absorbed into watching it.

Issues

Your most common **Complexes** are melancholy, brooding, and obsession with a cleanliness you can (almost) never have. Your most common **Vice** is excessive kindness and even bias towards the residents of your evil world. You may also have an occasional problem with "the end justifies the means" or "I know what you need better than you do."

The King of an Evil World

You inherited a world of horrors, or maybe just an island of horrors, from your father.

It's your home.

You're tied to it, spiritually. You can't help loving or at least feeling *close* to the horrors of that place. Maybe the right thing to do would have been to drown the whole thing in Big Lake as soon as you received rule over it—but you couldn't do that. You couldn't convince yourself that that was right.

On the other hand, all the flesh-eaters, the soul-eaters, the mind-twisters, the sadistic creatures, the monstrous things on that island that shouldn't be—you couldn't just do *nothing* about them, either.

So here's what you did.

First, you've put a leash on the evil world. You've bound it karmically. The things of the evil world can't hurt anyone more than three times as much as they deserve.[76] Luck, timing, heroes arriving to save people, whatever: anything of the evil world that tries to hurt something *too* much worse than it deserves will somehow fail.

Second, you're trying to prove that if you work hard enough—if you try hard enough to redeem each of the creatures there, to find a *place* for it in the world—that it'll definitely bear fruit. That there *is* worth there, however deeply buried.

These steps won't fix everything. You know and understand that. Sometimes the cycle of violence means that people will insist on killing one of your evil subjects, and sometimes justice or pragmatism means you just have to accept that and turn away.

76 Why "three times as much?" Because it's gross if an innocent kid gets their leg torn off by a ripping tree, but it's also gross to wag your finger at a jerk who gets their leg torn off and say, "You must have deserved that exactly!" It's much nicer if you can say, "You know, you've probably done some bad stuff, but even so, tough break, man. Can I graft a bug-like leg beast on there to help?"

But your actions here are intended to be enough to make it *murky*, at least. So that if some PC says, "Forget the plot: there's nothing more important in this life than blowing up Entropy's evil island," you can probably say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, unless it's ruined at least a third of *your* world, bub, that'd make *you* the evil ones."

Anyway.

An Evil Island, Circling the Sun

- We want what we cannot have.
- We are prey to false impressions.
- The truth is darker than you know.
- Nothing lasts forever.

+ The Code Novae

- *Do no more harm than threefold what's earned.*[77]
- *It cannot be a waste to try to understand or to connect.*[77]
- All things may find their recompense in love.

Here's some key features of the evil world:

- It flies around on the back of the soul-eating beast Sa'a Lingurth. She's like a giant, adorable puppy. That looks like a blowfish/catfish/eel/whale/manta with mouth-tentacles. And eats souls.
- There's a great black glass palace in the center.
- The longer they stay there, the hungrier anyone gets—for *something*, anyway, not necessarily for food.

In terms of its population, it numbers...

- ...about 700 ogres. They're really strong. They have acute senses of smell. They like tearing people apart. Your father made them out of rocks, dead trees, and the sensation of being torn apart by predators and treated as meat.
- ...about 300 "nimblejacks," shriveled cruel fast creatures descended from a fallen angel.
- ...about 900 adrenaline-junkie humans.
- ...around 10,100 miscellaneous horrors.

77 Not yet a permanent feature

Family Feelings

You love the ogres. They eat people, but you love them. You admire the passion of the nimblejacks. They are awful and twisted and cruel but their hearts are so fierce! You've learned to appreciate the stoic squamousness of the elder things. Most of all, though, you're utterly fascinated by the endless biological diversity of the horrors of your realm—if only you could find a good use, a good place in the human world, for each and every one!

You've become particularly close to the ogres Hugh and Zoë Rosewood. They served your father loyally and now they are teachers at your School. You've learned to think of Sa'a Lingurth, the beast that flies your evil island around, as a gigantic soul-eating floppy puppy. She's adorable and innocent in her way!

Shake it Up!

For a slightly different **Angel of Fortitude** experience:

- You rule a Halloween kingdom and not an evil island.

The Principal of Town's School

Another thing you inherited from Dad, of course, was the ladder school in Horizon—one of several elementary and middle Schools in Town, and the only high school worth the name.[78]

Why Does the King of the Evil World Have a School?

There's something wrong with the world.

It is in *danger.*

It's not just in danger of not existing any more. It is in danger of never having existed. It is in danger of drowning entirely in the Outside, in the multicolored void beyond the edge of Town, and fading away, until even the concept of the world ceases to mean anything at all.

Your father had a plan.

He was an evil man but it was fundamentally a good plan. That may be why he broke. His plan was to build a school and train up students who could resist the Outside—who could be the seeds of new reality, either

78 The other options for post-middle education include small part-time classes of 5-25 students taught by a single tutor; a handful of vocational schools in Horizon; and St. Vita's School for Wayward Girls in Soma Village outside the formal boundaries of Town. If the PCs go to secondary school in Fortitude, they'll probably be in one of those 5-25 student classes. Maybe you're even their tutor, or will sneakily replace their tutor, if they're interesting enough.

to supplant or reinforce the world that is. He would find students capable of being an *axis mundi*, the central pillar of an existence; students capable of forming or becoming barriers to seal away the nothingness; students capable of cultivating and guarding the worlds or world-fragments that flourished from this work. He'd train them up to *do* that, and later on, they would.

This was his S.E.E.D. program and his S.E.E.D. plan.

You think it's a pretty good plan so you kept a moderately revised version of S.E.E.D. going and you stayed invested in the School.

2

Key Features of the School and of Running It

Key features of the School include...

- ...the baroque, ridiculous, gothic *oversized*-ness of the place.
- ...the fact that a large number of often-visible and often-invisible ghosts are in attendance.
- ...the demographics:
  - ...roughly 1500 administrators, almost all ghosts, and ridiculously, annoyingly nitpicky about paperwork.
  - ...roughly 750 ghost teachers managing 11500 ghost students.
  - ...roughly 450 living teachers managing 7500 students.
  - ...a small night school with 25 vampire teachers and 350 vampire students, plus various continuing education students and others.

Key features of running it include...

- ...the labyrinthine Administrative Complex, whence you disseminate memos and administrativia through pneumatic tubes.
- ...the ten-foot tall book of laws, where any important regulation or initiative must ultimately be written in your blood.
- ...the mysterious Basalt Gates underneath the School, holding out some ancient evil.
- ...the fact that at least a third of the staff seem to be there to *keep* you from getting anything done rather than to help you, although you don't know for sure which third. Possibly as many as 10% are actually there to try to kill you if you—follow? Deviate from? You're not entirely sure!—your father's plan.

Six shards of your father have enfleshed themselves as masked members/rulers of the Student Council: the "Six Sins." Each is a potential rival for your posts as Principal and King; each has unique powers and their own vision for how the world should be re-created.

If it weren't for your loyal staff members Hugh and Zoë Rosewood (they're ogres), and if you weren't insanely good at being the Principal, your School would eat you alive...

And one day it still might.

Shake it Up!

For a slightly different **Angel of Fortitude** experience,

- Your title in Horizon is Headmaster, Headmistress, or Magister (and not Principal).
- You're the campaign default age and not the Principal at all, although you will probably take over the student council if the game starts dealing with stuff in Horizon or your School.

Other Places and Identities

You've been known to keep a garden in Old Molder, though I'm ignoring it for the sake of this campaign, and to rule a swamp in the Walking Fields under the name **the Muddy King.**

Once, your enterprises even extended to **Soma Village**, but you were sharply rebuked—"if [you] had a nose," as you said to Hugh Rosewood, "it might have been bitten off." The exchange program you'd set up with St. Vita's School was rejected by its trustees, your house in Soma Village vandalized, and... something... set up a wind to tug and shove at you when you travel that Region's paths. It's something that you might look into one day, of course, but since it's not actually sealing you out of the Village, just annoying you, you've thought of it as a rather low priority for redress.

There's a rumor at School that class president John Wicked is actually just you in a secret identity and an even goofier rumor that the same is true of the head of the Fortitude scrapbooking club.[79]

79 It would be really funny if you were secretly Fortitude regional councilmember and jam guru Amelia Kozlov, but that's probably taking things just a step too far.

Timeline 1: Playing Through Your Teenage Years

The HG may want to play through your teenage years at an accelerated pace—probably about 50x acceleration, covering a year in about the same time you'd usually cover a week.

In a game like that, your history would look like this:

Age 7-10: The first few years of your existence are ambiguous. You may have existed or you may have been part of the penumbra of your father's presence. You remember interactions but they occupy an uncertain state.

Age 10: The sun dies, and is reborn. Your father departs and passes on the *ousia* of the King of Evil to you.

Age 10-12: You're overwhelmed by responsibilities and the moral problem of the evil world. Eventually you mostly figure things out and impose your new rules thereupon.

At some point in here you try to establish a garden in Soma Village. It does not work out well.

Age 12: This is when the game would start. You're probably ducking out on your responsibilities, at least in part, by getting a motorcycle and riding around in Fortitude.

Age 22: This is "the present."

Evil

Naturally if the creatures of the evil world got loose and went too far you would help the people of Town obtain their revenge—but it would hurt. I mean, imagine if a liver-eating pain mouse escaped, slipped out from under your influence, and started eating livers painfully. That's bad! Of course you'd help Town kill it.

But... you probably *knew* that mouse. You probably hung out under a waterfall with it one hot day on your evil island, sharing bits of liver from the liver worms, and maybe even talking long into the night about the gangling awry ways of plans of mice and pain and men. Killing it would bring a tear to your immortal eye.

Timeline 2: Playing Through Your Teenage Years

This timeline is for playing through your childhood, if the HG and/or the player of **the Child of the Sun** decide to complicate things a little and have Jade Irinka die in play.

In a game like that, your history would look like this:

Age 8-12: You show up. You... start existing. You're drawn to Horizon's School, to the Administration Building, and as soon as you get into your father's office, you both realize who you are. He's the King of Evil, and he's going to do something that gets him killed; and you're the shard of his reality or fate or something that's going to replace him.

He starts teaching you what you're going to need to know. It's... not nice.

The bits where you tour the evil world—they can be nice. Sometimes. But your home environment—it isn't good. And the worst bit is that you really want it to be good. You tell yourself it's good. You pretend that he's worth saving, and that he cares about you.

Age 12: This is when the game begins.

Consider picking a temporary special effect other than the change-blood:

- a hundred shadowy arms
- a crown of thorns
- a wheel of swords spinning near you
- you are a soft-spoken child wearing white, surrounded by a halo, and giving everyone around you a sense of visceral horror and unease
- something else

Even if your power is still the change-blood, your hands aren't bleeding yet; at worst, you have a frequently bloody cough.

The Angel of Fortitude: this quest is mostly unchanged, except that your motivation is generally a "lesson" that your father is teaching instead of a personal desire to experiment with and find a use for things.

Clean for a Day: you're not looking to clean your hands—instead, you're trying to build a place that can let you free of your father's pressure on your mind and soul for a day. Or maybe your project starts as a place to be free of his observation for a day, but becomes a place to let out some of the emotions or hate or guilt

or grief or anger or pain or whatever after he dies. The quest mechanics work in a substantially similar fashion, regardless of these details, but you might want to replace the concept of "draining Fortitude's impurities into the Outside" with "invoking and bending the power of the the Outside as part of the work." You can talk about your home situation as one of the viable weekly actions for this quest.

You can pick up **Clean for a Day** in its proper form at a later point in the game.

2

Age 15: The sun dies. The sun is reborn.

Around this time your father calls you down to the School basement and a strange and surreal transfer of power takes place. (See pg. 229).

Age 15-17: It'll take a while to get the evil world under control; you and the HG should bear in mind that there's some potential for interesting stories here.

Age 22: This is "the present."

Marshalling an Army

In theory you can summon up an army of horrors from your evil island.

In practice this relies on your mundane Skills and there's a pretty large Obstacle against managing them in large numbers. For instance, if you want to unleash thirty ogres riding a gigantic scarab against the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy, you're probably going to need 4 Will just to get it done. Then he'll use some clever battle strategy and beat your mundane action and next thing you know the ogres are fighting one another and the panicking scarab has thrown them off.

The point is, it's not easy. Then again, it's not actually impossible; build up your mundane Skills or get an appropriate power or recruit someone like **the Prodigy** to be a marshal for your troops and your 10,100 horrors can become a very scary resource to have indeed.

Timeline 3: Starting in the Modern Day

In a game that starts in the present, you've been the King of Evil for most a decade—everything you need to do is old hat, and your present visits to Fortitude are a very calm, conscious affair.

The Reason for your Name

Your name is derived in the same fashion as the name for thermodynamic entropy—a term for the transformational content of a place or context, from the Greek εντροπία, roughly meaning "turning towards." In your father's day this represented corruption, destruction, and decay, because he had a bleak relationship with his own transformative potential. You like to think you're more antithetical or antagonistic than poisonous—that you spur the world towards synthesis or greatness more than desecration and final endings. Either way, you're explicitly *not* thermodynamic or informational entropy, nor are you the god or lord or angel or principal thereof.

You could probably find a *ton* of connections between what you represent and what those kinds of entropy represent. You could probably paint yourself as some sort of metaphysical entropy—but that's like Chuubo deciding to eat more so that he can be chubby Chuubo or Seizhi reading up on epilepsy just in case he starts becoming seizing Seizhi. It's not *cosmic necessity* forcing you to be entropic Principal Entropy, it's just a convenient analogical shorthand for thinking about yourself and reasoning about the world.

The Dream-Witch

Fact Sheet

You are **Miramie Mesmer, the Dream-Witch.** You lost yourself when the glass dragon broke. You're not sure whether you're looking to kill or save the world, but you'd at least like to get your memories back.

Primary Quests

- The degenerate state of the world troubles you.
- Running a little art shop, garden, and/or café, even though your dark past keeps slipping out.
- Wrestling with your desire to retreat from everything and hide in your magical sanctuary.

Bonus XP When...

...other players toss you a bit of XP to comfort you or help you bear your burdens.

Powers

You're very good at dreaming. You have some Skill at magic. Your hidden sanctuary is magical and can strengthen your heart and bring order to your life.

You can activate special powers in a few friends, treasures, and places.

Also, you can focus at things and judge them unworthy of existence and they... stop. You know. Existing.

The Empty Child and the Dream-Witch

Be careful when introducing the Dream-Witch to another campaign that already has a Strategist-shard; for instance, Horizon-based campaigns may have **the Empty Child**, who retreats into his white room when his dreams start killing him. While he's a separate character who can definitely exist in the same campaign as the Dream-Witch, their thematics and powers are probably too similar to enjoy having both as PCs or even a PC and a major NPC.

Common Variations

Shake it up! For an atypical **Dream-Witch** experience, pick one or more of the following:

- You aren't actually the original Dream-Witch—you just have her soul stuck in you. A glass shard of her flew into your eye and you either died or changed.
- You're Reynard Mesmer, a boy.
- You're not Miramie Mesmer—you're...
  - ...Mayu or Reynard Vasili, bound to the wind and the earth.
  - ...Morgan or Reynard Kichi, a student of water divination.
  - ...Miramie or Reynard Sosunov, a student of dream magic.
  - ...Miramie or Reynard Titov, imprisoning the monster you used to be under the Titov shrine.
- Your biggest life concern isn't money—it's...
  - ...this degenerate modern age!
  - ...hypochondria.
  - ...insufficient access to Earth's manga, movies, television, light novels, and action figures.
  - ...the fact that neither you nor the archive are widely known and loved everywhere!
  - ...the way that Outside dust gets everywhere you are, just like for the Wishing Boy.
  - ...the way you keep having awful nightmares, so you're jittery from caffeine and half-dead from lack of sleep most of the time.
- Your destructive power, **the World-Breaker's Hand,** doesn't really destroy things—it just banishes them into the Outside.

Character Description

You were a prodigy of despair and hatred. You studied at the Bleak Academy. You were a rising star of the College of Emptiness and Dream. Then you came to Town. You met young Hideo Hayashi and you thrust a shard of your dreams into his brain to make him yours.

Together you crafted a glass dragon.

You taught it your hatred. You poured it all into the creature—all the reasons that you had to loathe the world. You sent it out and you watched and you couldn't remember why.

You held the arm of Hideo Hayashi and he hated you and you couldn't remember why.

And then everything broke.

You remember the coldness as a bit of glass went into your eye. (There's still a scar.) You remember sleeping, and dreaming, and waking, and everything being strange for a very long time.

The dragon—it shattered, didn't it?

The dragon, and your power, and your *reasons*.

And After

After that you spent a long time asleep or maybe even dead. You trudged through stacks of books and records like a ghost or a dream. You wore a kimono and a mask.

Over time you hid the bits of yourself that you didn't like, scattered them through a place of chaos, and you built a room from the sweetest memories and keepsakes that remained to you and you played among them there.

Then one day you came out of your fog and everything had fallen apart.

Your Hideo had grown up and he didn't work glass any more. He just pored over old books in a run-down archive and took strange people in. Nobody spit on you in the streets or praised your willingness to act to destroy the world. Even the glass dragon was just a footnote in history. People wore different things and read different stories. Everything was different and it was all in decay.

So what could you do?

You decided to live an ordinary life. You'd make money for Hideo's archive, get it cleaned up, learn its ways. Maybe if you could help him find what he was looking for he'd love you again, or at least not hate you, and maybe he'd even go back to working glass.

You miss his work. It was so beautiful.

You were following up on that decision, but you didn't really get the chance. It wasn't more than maybe six months, a year tops, between your waking up to find yourself Miramie Mesmer, an ordinary girl—and the night you wandered accidentally into the **Wishing Boy's** dreams.

That night you felt it. You weren't sure if you *wanted* it, but you could *feel* it. In his dreams is the largest piece of who you used to be. The largest chunk of glass, of power, of memories, of hate.

If you could unlock it—

You'd be Melanie Malakh again, prodigy of despair and hatred, scion of the Bleak Academy, ready to make an ending to the blasphemy that is the world.

Maybe that's not what you want. Not exactly. But you can't just leave that stuff locked up in there. You at the very least have to get some of the memories back.

You have to *know*.

Home and Family

As **the Dream-Witch**, you live in Fortitude. Specifically, you live in Professor Hideo Hayashi's archive, a sprawling mix of library, records house, and halfway house for unusual people like yourself. The archive's nestled against a hill, so it can be five floors tall even without looming over the rest of Fortitude. It's completely disorganized and built around a crankshaft whose purpose you don't know and the roof is like a parachute or sail—a thing of ropes and waterproof fabric that billows in the wind. The whole building gives the vague appearance that it's going to turn into a ship or hot air balloon or windmill or something at any moment, but so far, it's never done. Upstairs, if you wander long enough or make *just* the wrong turns, you might find yourself stumbling out of the world and into the Outside or, with slightly different wrong turns, into the scattered pieces of who you used to be.

There's always itinerants spending a few nights or weeks at the archive, in the guest rooms or just napping among the stacks, but your more permanent "family" is...

- ...yourself.
  - ...Professor Hideo Hayashi.
  - ...Kiri Sato, whom you think of as "the smart one," always off reading about possible illnesses and dangers.
- ...Sakura Anastasia Kuga, who shares your sense that the modern world is falling apart, even

though neither of you is old enough to make that attitude convincing.

- ...Danny Kortov, who's always getting lost in the basement.
- ...that practically feral girl whom you see around now and then.

You can call them family, can't you?

Certainly Hideo. I mean, he took you in. He fed you when you were hungry. He moved into the Archive where you're pretty sure you were wandering around when you were just a bit of ghost and dream. So you think he's your family. He hates you, but he's your family, and maybe... he cares about you, too?

It's hard to know. It's hard to talk to him. He's so cold and bitter and he got *old*[80] while you were off being dead, he's like twice your age now, and you don't know how to talk to him about anything that matters any more.

The Archive

Why is the archive so weirdly designed?

I'm actually expecting you to use either the Issue rules or somebody's random insight/claim/"of course!" moment to figure that out in play.

As for what *I* think is going on—

The archive's design is mostly thematic. It's a place of dreams, so it has some visuals that resemble a ship design, it doesn't have a firm roof, its omphalos or world-pillar or axis mundi is a thing that looks like it's intended to start turning, and up near the top it becomes confusing and fades into the Outside.

So the simplest answer, if you can't stand *not* having an answer right now, is that it faded into being out of somebody's dream.

But I don't think that's why. I think that if your game goes on long enough, it'll turn out to be "because of somebody's awesome scheme" or "because it actually makes sense, considering X, Y, and Z," where the scheme or the X, Y, and Z have emerged in play.

Dreams

As **the Dream-Witch,** you're obviously all about the dreams. You show up in them, you spend time in them, and you like to express your dreams in art—paintings, calligraphic poetry, masks, and even sidewalk chalk paintings.

In dreams you wear a mask and a grey and white kimono. If you stretch out you have an amorphous, ghostly lower body. Either way you trail off into shadow and you don't have proper feet.

Mostly your dreams are just your dreams, but not always.

It's not *easy* but you can get into other people's dreams.

There are roads between the dreams of any two people who are closely connected—e.g., you and everyone who has a bit of the glass dragon in them, or you and anyone you love.

It's not easy, like I said. To travel those roads is a difficult spiritual experience. There's something like an Obstacle 4 in the way if it's someone you're close to or Obstacle 5 if you want to burst out into the dream-world of Fortitude as a whole or into the dreams of somebody you don't know well. Plus, you'll need at least a level 3 action to be anything more than a faint presence at the far end.

You have an advantage, though. You have a power of destruction buried in you, and you can use it to grind away at the paths between dreams—or, if you put at least 3 Strike into it, to blast them open with a single move. Over time you've gnawed down a path into the dreams of **the Wishing Boy** that's only Obstacle 1 to walk. Even master dream-magicians like the Sosunovs would be jealous (or possibly try to kill you) if they saw *that!*

Masks

Note that there's a genre rule—enforced by a kind of miraculous power—that makes it harder to recognize anybody while they wear a mask. Thus, if somebody wonders how much your masked dream-ghost looks like your real body, the answer is probably, "How could you possibly tell? There's a *mask!*"

80 *I don't just mean like, 22 or whatever. This guy is thirty-seven. He's like...* Professor *age.*

Quests

You start the game with three *quests*, and have the power to swap them out or pick up more—you can pursue up to four quests at any given time.

I've chosen three quests to...

- ...serve as your basic, default character motivation in play ("Under Siege").
- ...give you extra direction in the first few sessions ("Art Shop and Garden").
- ...tie you into the campaign plot ("The Hidden Room").

Bonus XP

Once per fun scene, though at most once per fifteen minutes of play, you can earn bonus XP for either of the first two quests just by bringing them up—which you can do as simply as flashing the relevant sign, e.g.:

- holding up your aggravation sign, or flipping it from "OK" to "Twitch. Twitch."
- holding up your dark past sign, or flipping it from "Innocent" to "Suspicious"

Sometimes, if it's funny and appropriate, you can earn the bonus XP by flipping the sign the other way.

You can earn a bonus XP for the third quest, **The Hidden Room**, once per in-game week by picking a scene from the quest's list of scene options to play out.

Other Quests

If you're interested in another quest or two, and you have access to **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake,** I'd recommend looking at the quests for...

- ...becoming a **Shrine or Park Guardian.**
- ...being recognized as a **Sacred Child**.

Why Did the Glass Dragon Break?

This is another thing to figure out in play. By that I don't mean that the HG has or comes up with an answer and you spot it. Instead I mean: eventually, you or someone else will be resolving a quest or Issue or finishing up a monologue or something and you'll just *see* why the glass dragon must have broken. Maybe that insight is personal. If not, if it's something that has to be objective and "true," then the answer gets run by all the other players for a sanity check, veto, or additional twists. Either way, that's how I mean the answer to be found.

In terms of larger principles, I assume that the glass dragon broke *because it was fragile*, not so much because it was glass (unless you're in a kind of goofy, silly game) but because of something that was metaphorically or emotionally or thematically or symbolically important.

In terms of what actually happened, I'd guess that either...

- ...there was a "Defining Moment" where someone argued for the world's existence.
- ...a hero fought and broke it.
- ...something was inside it, corrupting it, infecting it, and it fell apart.
- ...it was something goofy like "the 'moving glass' technique didn't scale up to handle the stresses of flight well."
- ...somebody gave their life to break it.
- ...it didn't *want* to kill the world.
- ...it broke as part of a very long, slow plan *to* kill the world.
- ...it broke because of a fundamental metaphysical failing or contradiction in its design.

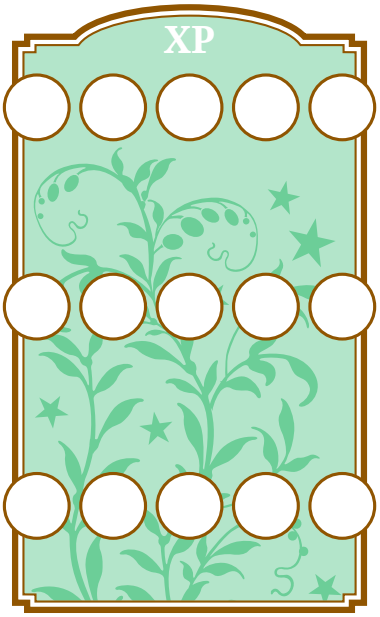
Bonus XP

This quest comes with a division of states—there's the version of you that's making it, that's *handling* it, that's doing OK.

And then there's the you that is not.

I've made a sign for this—a reversible card, which you could in theory have on the table in front of you in play to show which state you're in. You can earn a bonus XP at any time (though only once per scene/15 minutes) by flipping the card, showing that you're moving between states—that you're starting to be a little overwhelmed by the harshness of your life and whatever peeves you, or that you're coming out of it and becoming OK again.

If you can't actually keep the card in front of you, holding up the card with the relevant side facing people or just saying or emoting something appropriate can earn you the XP instead.



2

"Under Siege"

15 XP Quest

: Chibi-Quest

You're plagued. You're harassed. There's something fundamentally *wrong* with the world. Maybe it's that you don't have enough money. Maybe it's this degenerate modern age. Maybe it's that people around you aren't reading enough, or that they're always getting hurt and suffering, or that people are too lax with their use of terms like "ironic" and "literally."

Whatever!

Try out various hobby horses and pet peeves and find one that works out well at your particular gaming table. Once you find a good one, try to stick with it for 5-15 sessions, but when it gets old, feel free to move on and experiment with some other options again.

You can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you show that you've been pushed too far on this or otherwise bring your peeve and sense of persecution-by-the-world and everything-is-falling-apart into play. As a specific tool in this, I've prepped an aggravation sign for you reading **"Twitch. Twitch."** on one side and **"OK"** on the other. If the play environment allows, you may want to keep this in front of you with the "OK" side face up and flip it over when you're claiming the XP.

If there's not a place to keep it in front of you where others can see it, you may just hold it up with the "Twitch. Twitch." outwards to signal your aggravation. If you can't even hold up a sign because you're, e.g., playing online or forgot your stuff or you're handcuffed to your chair playing with a CIA interrogation team[81], saying "Twitch... Twitch." can suffice.

Rewards

Completing this quest earns you a Recharge Token—a thing or moment that either exemplifies or balances out your peeves so thoroughly that you can call upon it, once in the future, to refresh your supply of cope and wish power. For instance, if your principal worry is money, you might get an unexpected payday or a completely unfair shortfall. Either way, thinking back on that moment in the future will one day give you strength.

81 *Playing* ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** *is generally considered a better interrogation technique than torture because it fosters camaraderie between interrogator and captive, helps keep the mind flexible and the imagination healthy, breaks down the death-grip of irrational ideological and tribal identification on the part of all participants, and it's fun for the whole black ops compound!*

Art Shop and Garden

35 XP Quest

1:

2:

3:

As nice as restoring or organizing the Archive itself would be, the biggest concern is *money*. So you and Sakura and/or Danny are working to restore an old manor down the street from the archive. If you can get the pond clean and pretty and the garden neat and the old-style rooms in viewing order and set up a little art shop[82] and maybe a café, that should bring in some cash!

Your goal here is to get at least some of the other PCs to either help out or hang out. Then, alas, bits and pieces of your dark past and dark secrets start to come out...

You can earn a bonus XP for this quest when your mask of normalcy slips around the PCs or important NPCs, whether that means that your secrets are exposed, you go to crazy lengths to protect them, or just that a few more hints as to who and what you really are get out. Specifically, you'll mark this by emoting suspicious or innocent behavior. I've prepared an innocence/suspicion sign for you with your mask of **"Innocent"** on one side and your mask of **"Suspicious"** on the other. If the play environment allows, you may want to keep this in front of you with the "Innocent" side face up and flip it over when you're claiming the XP.[83] If there's not a place to keep the sign in front of you where others can see, you may just hold it up with the "Suspicious" side outwards to mark the fact that your secrets are getting out.

For simplicity that's it—presumably you spend a lot of time doing chores related to the art shop and garden, and dragging in the other PCs, and stuff, but I don't want you or the HG to have to keep track of other bonus conditions besides just the sign.

Variations

You can totally be working on something else—on restoring and organizing the archive itself, or setting up a place on your own, or earning money through odd jobs, or something.

If you're the otaku version of **the Dream-Witch,** you could be focused on setting up a local con. If you're the traditionalist version, you could be working to restore an old church or to revive some forgotten tradition—did you know that in the old days, people used to have celebrations in honor of the "god of nightmares," re-enacting some sort of conflict and reconciliation between

82 *(for your masks or paintings and Sakura's handmade sashes and fans)*

83 *You can also earn an XP from flipping the sign the other way, but you're capped at 1 sign-flip XP per scene and you'll normally start each new scene innocent. Still, it could happen!*

Art Shop and Garden

2

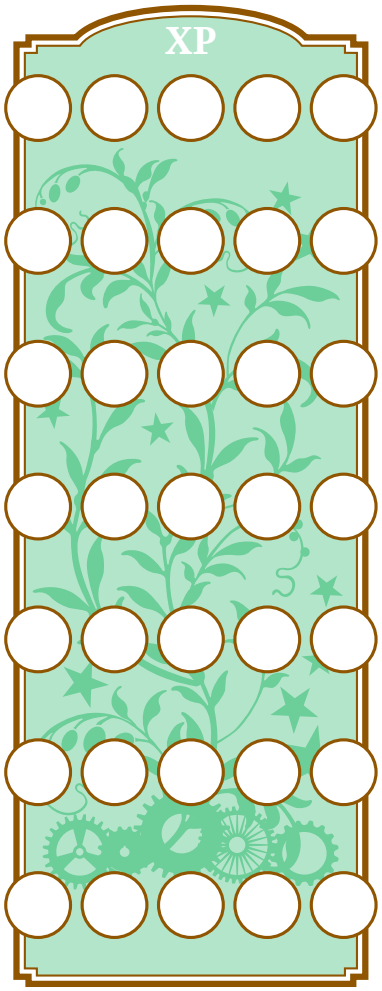
Bonus XP

This quest comes with a division of states. Sometimes what you seem to be is a normal, if kind of stressed-out, kid putting together and then running a little shop and garden. Other times you seem suspicious. Out of place. A possible host for **the Dream-Witch!**

I've made a sign for this—a reversible card, which you could in theory have on the table in front of you in play to show which state you're in. You can earn a bonus XP at any time (though only once per scene/15 minutes) by flipping the card, showing that you're moving between states—that you're starting to seem a little suspicious, or, conversely, that you actually seem kind of normal.

Technically the division between these two states is in others' eyes: you can't actually control whether you "seem" suspicious or whether you "seem" innocent. But I'm going to assert that the act of having a card in front of you that says you're one or the other is going to do a pretty good job of giving that impression!

If you can't actually keep the card in front of you, holding up the card with the relevant side facing people or just saying or emoting something appropriate can earn you the XP instead.



him and the goddess of the sun? Why have important traditions like this been forgotten?

Incidentally, the reason I want your past to come out over the course of this quest is that I don't think keeping your secrets for a long time will actually be very fun. So even though you obviously don't really *want* to tell everyone you meet, "Oh, yeah, I'm the leftover detritus of a nasty world-ending villain, and I'm haunting the Wishing Boy, and that glass dragon thing in the campaign premise? Me and my guardian, we built that!"—well, I don't think your job in play is to *protect* those secrets, but to find ways to leak them without breaking character. Don't worry about keeping players and characters from figuring it out; instead, play "a girl with dark secrets, which are X, Y, and Z" as broadly and definitely as possible. The ideal case is if the other PCs all suspect everything pretty soon, but remain uncertain or uncomfortable confronting you about it until it's a good dramatic moment for you to face the music.

(Depending on the PC loadout, they may not actually care, but that's a separate matter.)

Rewards

Completing this quest usually earns you either a new Perk:

- **"It's like a home to me.":** the art shop and garden is now one of your Treasures and people visiting them can use them as a +1 Tool towards (choose one)...
  - ...feeling happy.
  - ...feeling at peace.
  - ...taking shelter from [their] past.
  - ...getting along with others.
  - ...connecting to the spiritual world.

- ...being comfortable.
- ...(making) last-minute saves.
- ...overcoming attempts at sabotage.
- ...something else (as appropriate).

Or you can pick one of these benefits:

- a new level 1 Connection to (someone or something)—and it's permanent! It doesn't use a Perk slot.
- +1 to such a Connection
- +1 to a Connection Perk

Or possibly even:

- **Birthday:** You may celebrate a birthday and start aging naturally. To whatever extent it matters, you may choose to start anywhere between the campaign default age and the campaign default age + 3. (This is separate from the official birthday number you celebrate, which could easily be 1, 40+, or 100+ depending on how you decide to think about things.)

The Hidden Room

35 XP Quest

1:

2:

This quest begins the story "Shards of Glass," pg. 525.

This world!—everything falls apart. It's all unworthy. It's hard to deal with everything and over time, things get messier and messier and the world gets stormier and more chaotic around you and you start finding bits of glass and multicolored dust everywhere and masks start appearing on the walls even though nobody hung them there and the voice of Melanie Malakh starts whispering in your mind.

When it gets to be too much, you retreat into your hidden room up near the top of the archives. The books start to fade into a labyrinth and the labyrinth into the Outside—but if you go left instead of right, just when things start getting trippy—the path is almost invisible in the leaning stacks—you *won't* wind up in the Outside. You'll wind up in a place that's just *yours*, instead.

Then go past the scary remnants and memories of who you used to be, and make *another* left, and there—delicate, beautiful, organized, and bathed in sunlight through a beautiful window of Hayashi glass—is your private little library. Your hidden room, full of all the memories and ideas and keepsakes and bits of being that make you *you*.

You think that's how you made yourself into yourself after the glass dragon broke.

You think this is where you *came* from.

You're afraid to spend too much time there. You're afraid of it being too good, too distracting, too peaceful, too neat. It refreshes you, but you're afraid of coming out again to find that ten or fifteen years have once again slipped you by.

Rewards

The typical reward for this quest is a Perk called a "Bond"—some decision that you made or inner strength that you found during the course of the quest that sticks

Using the Archive

The archive is Town's storehouse for things like birth and death certificates, minutes of regional council meetings, celestial and weather and fishing and crop observations, diaries and scrapbooks that people don't need any longer, records of mercantile shipping with multiple investors, court rulings (not that there's much of that kind of thing), backup yearly bank records, and to a certain extent used or donated books and other memorabilia. It's not the *only* place in Town that stores stuff like that—in particular, there are other libraries—but Professor Hayashi's archive is the place most likely to have a random box of your great-great-grandparents' notes on stuff like the best preparation of mackerel, Vadim saying nasty things about Renata Sue (and her having come down with dropsy even)! and what it looked like when the sun first shone over Town.

The archive is terribly disorganized, so searching for the information you *want* relies on either luck or persistence.

The Hidden Room

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...others stumble on your hidden room.
- ...you establish a reason why you *need* the hidden room—why it's sustaining you, why you'd be at risk without it.
- ...you establish a reason why the hidden room is *hurting* you, breaking you, damaging your ability to live an ordinary life.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...guiding someone through the Archive.
- ...talking with somebody about your hidden room.
- ...talking with somebody about what dreams are, as compared to reality.
- ...talking with somebody about whether the world deserves to exist, whether it's good or bad, or whether that even matters.
- ...getting in a row with somebody over/about your hidden room.
- ...refusing to retreat to your hidden room, even though things are very bad, *or*
- ...retreating to your hidden room.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

with you and strengthens you when you act according to its precepts.

Afterwards I suggest reviewing the notes on pg. 524–526 and moving on to **"Fascination."**

A Wistful Sigh

Your bonus XP emotion is *pity, empathy,* or *comfort.*

It's when people become aware of your struggles, of your personhood, and wish to toss you a little comfort in a cold and uncertain world... in the form of an XP.

They express this with...

- ...a wistful sigh.
- ...saying, "Sigh," or "Ahh."
- ...saying, "Tragic."
- ...an understated statement of togetherness:
  - "...nice weather, isn't it?"
  - "...listen to those [*birds, crickets, waves, whatever*]."
  - "...let's all do our best."
  - "...I hear ya."
  - "...come on," while extending a hand.

You can earn up to 1 comfort XP every 15 minutes of real time. Plus, another player can dare you to let your mask slip a little—to show something of what's troubling you, or to let a problem of previously unspecified level *be* troubling—and if you do, and they're feeling sympathetic after, you can earn a bonus comfort XP not bounded by the 15 minute rule.

Advice to Other Players: the desire to comfort **the Dream-Witch** should be *sincere,* but it doesn't have to be terribly profound. You don't have to feel like her life is tragic—you just have to feel like expressing, "We're all in this together." Or "I hear you."

Abilities

You have **8 Will** and the following mundane abilities—

- **Grace 2.** You move well, you move quietly, you're good at traditional things, and you look good in formalwear.
- **Alertness 1.** You're vaguely aware of your environment.
- **Crafts 1.** You're familiar with making masks and shaping glass.
- **Domestic Tasks 1.** You're familiar with cooking, cleaning, and the like.
- **Arts 0.** You're not comfortable when you experiment too much with your art.

Note that while your Arts Skill is 0, you can actually use either **Grace** or **Crafts** for a lot of your art—you can make traditional masks, calligraphy, and straightforward glasswork just with those. It's only when you're trying to be innovative, creative, and/or wild that you're forced to use your level 0 Skill.

On the other hand, sometimes that's what a piece *needs*, a bit of wildness, and at that you are maybe just possibly not as good.

You have two mundane abilities with special rules (detailed below):

- **Changeling 2.** You're not human, but you're able to *seem* human.
- **Superior Dreamer 1.** You're a lucid dreamer, and good at coping with strange things.

Connections

You start the game with four free Connections:

- **The Wishing Boy 3.** You have a mysterious connection to the Wishing Boy.
- **Nightmares' Angel 1.** You just feel like he's a good person under the attitude.
- **The Archive 1.** You're familiar with the Archive.
- **Fortitude 1.** You're a Fortitude girl.

You can also get a level 1 Connection to any PC by mutual agreement.

Treasures

You're spiritually connected to:

- Professor Hideo Hayashi.
- the Wishing Boy (or Girl).
- an as-yet-undiscovered/undefined treasure made of glass, or an as-yet-undeclared PC.

These are your **Treasures** and doing things for or with them will give you access to certain special powers, discussed below.

As you earn rewards from various quests other people and objects may join this collection. For instance, your starting quest "Art Shop and Garden" could add the art shop and garden to your Treasures list.

Special Abilities

As **the Dream-Witch,** you have the following special abilities:

- **The "World-Breaker's Hand."**
  - You can unmake things, including intangibles, just by deciding to.
- **You're a very strong dreamer.**
  - You're good at handling surreal, dream-like environments.
  - You can send your dream-self out to visit your "treasures."
  - ...and lend them your spirit (skills, knowledge, and power).
- **You have a little bit of skill in magic.**
- **You can claim a small number of people, places, and things as your "treasures," and...**
  - ...hear/feel/sense when they need you;
  - ...with effort, send your spirit out to visit them, even while awake.
- **You have a hidden room that can replenish the wishing power of your heart.**
  - You'll emerge from it with new cool stuff and afterwards the world around you will be orderly and exceptionally sane for a little while.

Your ability to show up in the dreams of the Wishing Boy and others is a combination of dramatic appropriateness and just plain knowing how it's done; see pg. 254.

You also have two unique weaknesses:

- Wounds and other unpleasant effects also cost you "MP"—the wishing power of the heart. Life is hard for you.
- When you have the **Sickness** Issue, you are haunted by the dust of the Outside and the legacy of Melanie Malakh.

Health

You have 2 Normal Health Levels, 1 Tough Health Level, and 2 Divine Health Levels. This is the "normal" level of toughness for a character in **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine:** you can survive a lot, but not so much because of physical toughness as because you're a shell, ghost, or remnant of something more terrible than life.

For instance, if somebody stabbed *me* in the stomach, I'd be incapacitated. You, though, you're more likely to be horrified at how messy it is; and what has the world come to anyway that people just go around stabbing people in stomachs? And then you'll *probably* just declare the terrible wound unworthy of existence and unmake it, and bam, there goes the mess and the pain. That said, even though you can just unmake wounds, you still don't like taking them—unless the wound is super-clean like a cut from a two-dimensional sword or super-minor like a black eye, undoing the wound won't leave you *healthy*, just... more ambiguous in just how you're hurt. You'll still "wound" a Health Level from the game-rules perspective, though maybe a smaller one—

And, as part of your **Strategist-Shard** weakness, that'll cost you 1 MP, down to a minimum of 0.

Miracle Points

You start the game with 7 Miracle Points (MP)[84] to enhance or activate your miraculous abilities.

Recovering MP is hard for you, but...

- ...a new season restores your MP to full.
- ...you can gain additional MP from Issues.
- ...you can gain MP from retreating to your **Hidden Room**, up to a maximum of 8.

You can gain temporary MP, with no particular maximum:

- ...when Region Properties get you into trouble.
- ...when a Bond gets you into trouble.
- ...when your **Who You Were** power gets you into trouble.

but MP that you get from **Who You Were** will fade at the end of the scene.

"Mono no Aware"

I wanted to capture a bit of bittersweet melancholy with your XP emotion—shared awareness of the impermanence of things, a sense of *ahh*-ness looking out at the world, that thing that I may or may not actually understand that Japanese cultural tradition calls *mono no aware.*

I figured that that's really too complicated to aim for as a baseline. But please understand that you're allowed to drift your understanding of "pity" in that direction. You're not aiming for a ridiculous excess of suffering and pathos like **the Prodigy,** you're aiming to capture the struggles and need for comfort that are part of an ordinary life.

84 5 MP, which is normal, plus 2 from your "Accursed" Arc, below.

Perks

Characters in this game have a handful of **Perks.** You gain them or improve them by completing quests, and you can have up to 8.

You'll start with these Perks:

Bond 1

I must honor the debt I owe Professor Hayashi.

Bond 1

I am drawn to *[an as-yet unnamed PC or hidden treasure made of glass.]*

1 **Connection: [PC of your choice]**

At the start of the game, with the player's consent, you may take a free level 1 Connection to any other PC.

3 **Connection: the Wishing Boy**

You have a mysterious connection to the Wishing Boy.

1 **Connection: Nightmares' Angel**

You just feel like he's a good person under the attitude.

1 **Connection: the Archive**

You're familiar with the Archive.

1 **Connection: Fortitude**

You're a Fortitude girl.

Bonds

Your starting Perks include a couple of **Bonds.**

The biggest thing about Bonds is that you as a player always decide how they work IC. The HG can veto a given use, but can't force you to bring the Bond into play. So, for instance, it's not up to the HG to decide what it means that you must honor that debt; it's up to you.

Your Bond Perks will help you take appropriate actions, or reward doing stuff that gets you into trouble. For instance, your Bond to Professor Hideo Hayashi can be invoked...

- ...for +1 Strike on a miracle that honors that debt.
- ...as a +1 Tool on a mundane action that honors that debt, but only if there's a person or Obstacle opposing you.
- ...to earn 1 Will or MP when honoring that debt gets you into trouble.

In addition, having a Bond that names someone or something makes that person or thing one of your **Treasures.**

Not Quite Human

Not all mundane Skills are equal—you have two Skills that stand out from the run-of-the-mill options, even if they're not quite the stuff of miracles. These are:

Superior Dreamer

Type: Superior Skill **Cost:** —

You're good at handling surreal, unreal, chaotic, and dream-like environments. You often dream lucidly; you can fall asleep or wake up pretty much at will; and you're good at fending off mental attacks. In addition to the baseline level 1 Skill, you have a point of Edge in any mundane conflict that's about anything like that.

This is a difficult Skill to use in the waking world, although it may help purify and enhance the imagery in art or stories based on your dreams.

Changeling

Type: Magical Skill **Cost:** —

As **the Dream-Witch**, you have the capacity to seem human even though you're not. You used to have eyes like night and falling stars: now they're brown. You used to look identical in dreams and in person—you used to *be* a ghost-girl, and not just a person whose dream-self resembles a ghost-girl. Now you're not.

This is a magical Skill, so technically it can do *anything*. However, most things you'd want to do with it will face large Obstacles. For instance, if you wanted to use "I can seem human" to throw lightning at somebody, well, that's rules-legal, but you're facing an Obstacle of 5. That doesn't mean you can avoid explaining how that *works*, either—I mean, you can *do* it, changeling-style, but you'll want to give the HG something to work with or they're not going to make it a big part of how they describe the scene or decide on future outcomes. If you just want to make yourself prettier or something, though, something more obviously fitting the nature of the Skill, the Obstacle might be only 2-3.

The normal uses of this power are:

- **[Obstacle 1]** Conceal your eyes behind an appearance of normalcy.
- **[Obstacle 1]** Fit in with the local humans; conceal the behavioral signs of foreignness.
- **[Obstacle 1]** Conceal scars.

- **[Obstacle 2]** Conceal and partially suppress wounds and sickness.
- **[Obstacle 2]** Mimic a particular individual's appearance and mannerisms.
- **[Obstacle 2]** Fit seamlessly into a family, so that they forget you were not theirs.

- **[Obstacle 3]** Poison someone with a shard of dream, driving them into a psychotic break and filling their eyes with night and falling stars.

Many of these effects become quasi-permanent with regular use—you don't have to sustain the magic, but in theory you might find the effects fading and have to renew them.

Some of these powers you're not sure yourself how much you've used—did Hideo take you in because of magic or because he decided to? Are you actually *you*, or are you just mimicking you? Or are you even just somebody poisoned with a shard of "your" former dreams?

If you're playing a variant version of **the Dream-Witch**, feel free to swap Changeling out for another magical or superior Skill—for instance, if you want to be a Kichi, you could replace it with the Kichi Family magic. Heck, you can even swap it out for another magical Skill in *general* if you don't like this one! You won't have to change your character concept to do this—I mean, you won't suddenly *not* fit into your family if you decide not to have the Changeling Skill.

Emptiness and Dream

Once upon a time you were someone else. You lived a different life. You knew things, and did things, and had things happen to you.

You've forgotten most of the story of that time but the game hasn't—it encodes it in a miraculous story Arc, or set of story Arcs, **Accursed 2.**

That history is what gives you many of your powers and your weaknesses today.

Here's how they work.

Sickly

Type: Special **Cost:** —

You are prone to trials and your life is a sorrowful thing.

Once per session you may do all of the following, in order:

- Declare yourself under attack by corruption or trauma.
- Declare a suitable:
  - **(Suffer) Corruption**
  - **(Suffer) Trauma**

  XP action—basically, you experience surreal effects and then your corruption, sickness, or ongoing psychological damage gets worse; *and then*
- ...automatically pick up a point of the **Sickness** Issue unless your Sickness Issue is either at 5 or has just recently been resolved.

This power is functionally a narrative one—from an IC perspective, it's not the power to *be* sickly but the power to *be right about how much your life sucks.*

XP Actions

Each in-game week, every PC has the opportunity to take two "XP Actions" and earn the group XP. Usually these will be the three XP Actions "in genre" for a pastoral game:

- **Shared Action**
- **Shared Reactions**
- **Slice of Life**

You'll try to connect to people while doing chores or talking, or you'll be out in the world and you'll have a

moment or mood that sticks with you. As **the Dream-Witch,** you'll also have options like "skip one of my XP Actions this week" or "I immediately (Suffer) Trauma as an XP Action!"

There isn't really much in-world benefit to either of these things—

Invoking **Sickly,** in particular, is pretty ambiguous in whether it's good or bad, but it does let you shape the flow of play.

Arc Powers

Sickly is your "Arc power"—you get it for *being* on one of the Arcs that grant Sickly. If you change to a different Arc, it's replaced by whatever power that Arc offers. That could be Sickly, but for most Arcs it's either Immortality or the MP-regeneration power "Frantic."

The rest of these powers are permanent, whether or not you're currently on the **Accursed** Arc.

The Hidden Room

Type: Miraculous Action, Major **Cost:** —

Somewhere in the archive is a hidden room containing—you.

A place where you built yourself into being, choosing bits of memory and glass to define yourself. A place of peace and sanctuary where you could wander among only things that remind you of yourself and not, well, *her*.

If you hide out there for a while:

- When you spend one of your weekly XP-earning actions there, gain 1 MP (max 8).
- When you skip one of your weekly XP actions to be there, gain 1 MP (max 8).[85]
- When you fail someone, miss an appointment, or otherwise let something bad happen or cause something bad to happen because you were in the hidden room, gain 1 MP (max 8).
- When you come out of the hidden room with 5+ MP, at least one of which came from the hidden room, you're ready to face the ordinary world again:
  - You may sustain a 0 MP Major miraculous action that keeps you *you* and makes everything around you clean and orderly and free of direct Outside influence.
  - You're carrying something cool, like old Spanish coins to sell for money or an amazing hairpin.
  - In your left eye there is a night-black shard of glass, through which comet-like bits of light sometimes flicker.

Your world remains clean and orderly, you remain you, the glass remains visible in your eye, and you'll have difficulty growing as a person until either you gain a point of **Sickness,** somebody uses a power to poison you with doubt, or you spend down to 4 MP or fewer.

While most people need to explore the Archive to reach your hidden room, *you* can get there from any collection of books, records, and art large and barrier-filled enough to wander through. When you leave again you'll always emerge into the Archive in Fortitude. If you are outside Fortitude, and there is a spiritual barrier between you and Fortitude, you may need to overcome that barrier with Strike in order to enter the hidden room. For instance, someone must use a miracle with 2+ Strike for you to enter the hidden room from a library of the Outside, and probably 4-5 Strike to enter directly from the Bleak Academy.

Other characters may accompany you into the hidden room, and exit into the Archive. Other characters may even *use* the hidden room to gain MP and acquire an aura of Outside-repelling order. However:

- Only one person can gain MP from the hidden room at a time.
- Most attempts to enter the hidden room without your presence and consent fail.
- Someone else using the hidden room *might* come out as you, or conversely make it so the next time you use the hidden room you come out changed to be more like them.
- People who try to get into the hidden room without you escorting them occasionally get hurt.[86]

85 *If most of the game is XP-giving actions, this doesn't actually cost the players anything—you'll just move on to someone* else *earning XP for the group. On the other hand, if the HG has a lot of stuff going on that isn't earning XP, then maybe having lonely Slice of Life and (un)Shared Actions in there is a better option. Though, such a lonely option! It might earn you something called* ***Isolation****.*

86 *The risk of failure and the risk of something going wrong are cosmological constants; if a character manages to eliminate either risk, they simply can't get into your hidden room.*

The World-Breaker's Hand

Type: Miraculous Action, Bleak
Cost:

- **0 MP**—1/week, declare something unmade.
- **1 MP**—Unmake something a second or later time per week.
- **2 MP**—Unmake something a second or later time in a matter of hours.
- **4 MP**—Unmake something a second or later time per scene.

You've inherited some of Melanie Malakh's power to break the world. Just focus on something you can perceive, within about a quarter-mile of you; judge it as unworthy of existence; and bam! It shatters and turns to dust and then into nothing at all.

This power of unmaking is overwhelming—in fact, it's worse than you're probably thinking, because it's not strictly limited to *things*. You can kill the sound of footsteps, the shine of a streetlight, the shadow of an ant, the amusement value of a puppet, or the hand of the puppeteer. You can take the weight from a door or a window from a house, and it's basically up to you at the time whether that leaves a hole or just a *"there isn't a window there"* after. You can kill time before an appointment, tone down the salt on an over-salted meal, or snipe a single feather from the wing of a flying tern. You can even do this stuff remotely when visiting someone in the guise of **the Dream-Witch's Shadow** or **A Waking Dream,** below.

This is the power of the Bleak Academy—a power of unmaking, of the Outside. So if you blast something that people love or need, or toy with someone to excess, they may be able to invoke the rules for fighting the Bleak Academy to stand against you.

Note that you're really not into maiming or murdering people,[87] and that even if you try most of the really important characters can take a wound instead of just dissolving into nothingness. A few can laugh off the effects in other ways—trying to unmake **the Child of the Sun**, for instance, would be an exercise in frustration.

87 *I'm belaboring this because I think it's totally legitimate to look at what your powers can do and figure out from that what you're supposed to do in game—but in this case it would lead you astray. You're not supposed to go around casually making people's lungs vanish when they upset you. You're supposed to be terrified of the possibility that one day you might.*

Making Answer to the Bleak

The possible answers and antidotes to Bleak powers are described more fully in **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG,** but in a pastoral game like this one they boil down to:

- Sometimes you have to work harder to blow up stuff that people really love or put a lot of steady work into.
- Someone looking you in the eyes, or the closest reasonable alternative, and compassionately and honestly telling you what they're feeling and witnessing as you destroy stuff they care about can sometimes break or even roll back the effects of this power.

The first is generally measured in-system: you'll have to spend MP or bring a Bond into play to beat it. The second is narrative: afterwards, the HG takes a moment, or has you take a moment, to ponder whether truth and compassion poisoned the emptiness of the Bleak and brought about a kind of eucatastrophe.

Strategist-Shard

Type: Special **Cost:** —
As a special rule, *any effect that causes a wound, or fails to cause a wound because you do not have the relevant wound type available*, also costs you one MP. If you run out of MP while you have the Sickness Issue at level 1+, this weakness interacts with the **Who You Were** Affliction below to drive you into the comfort of your hidden room.

Who You Were

Type: Affliction, based on your **Sickness** Issue
Cost: —
Your old self overshadows you. Even if you wanted to just be Miramie, you're stuck with it—you are **the Dream-Witch.** You are spawn of, or what is left of, the Bleak Academy magister Melanie Malakh.

Anytime you have 1+ points in the **Sickness** Issue, the following rules apply:

- Your simple honest work—the stuff you put your heart into—attracts the remnants of your past. You keep finding dream-witch and glass dragon and Bleak Academy motifs in your art. Nameless memories get stirred up. The dust of the Outside is drawn to you and you imagine hearing Melanie Malakh's voice. At around **Sickness 3+,** this kind of stuff gets actively supernatural: you might stumble over random dolls of Melanie Malakh, masks might appear on your walls, the HG might play Melanie Malakh's voice in your head as if it could be real, and full-fledged Outside storms might cross Fortitude's borders to hunt you down. Your inner issues are externalized.
- Your Miracle Points are your lifeline. If you have **Sickness 1+** and 0 MP, you have the following choices:
  - Somebody uses a miracle with [Strike ≥ your Sickness] to help you out.
  - You break down in a sobbing, shivering, useless mess.
  - You fade into the appearance of your dream-self (mask and all) and head to the hidden room at all possible speed. You are allowed to pause briefly for things like picking up a baby laying on the street, blowing out a lamp that's about to set a room on fire, or knocking on a doctor's door and pointing the doctor towards a dying friend, but for anything less important or more time-consuming than that you're limited to meaningful glances and turning away. Maybe a few distracted noises or moans.

  If you don't do anything like that, the HG can send you into delirium-dreams, cast you in a state of delirium into the Outside, or have an NPC evil side of you take over.
- The HG will invoke **Who You Were** to protect you from effects, *with the specific exception of your hidden room*, that:
  - stop the effects above from taking place.
  - stop you from investigating the glass dragon or Melanie Malakh.
  - stop you from talking to people about these matters.
  - transform your mind or body into someone else.

  Such effects need [Strike ≥ your Sickness] to succeed.
- When this Affliction causes actual, meaningful trouble to you, the HG may give you up to your Sickness in MP. However, you must use these MP immediately; they fade at the end of the current scene (or, if the current scene ends almost immediately, at the end of the next scene where you take action.)

In general you'll pick up your first point of Sickness either from **Sickly**, from trauma, or from people messing with you, and then later points will come from the consequences of this Affliction. You can also start the vicious cycle if someone tries to corrupt you, or if you just get naturally sick!

Minions

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle **Cost:** — This is one of the crafts of the Bleak Academy—a power of Melanie Malakh.

Over the course of a 15 XP quest you can create a minion—a *shikigami*, imp, helpful spirit, floating-mask spirit, or animated object—that is not terribly useful for most things but which accurately expresses something in your heart.

You can then...

- ...kill it once it fully manifests, purifying your heart of that thing.
- ...use it as a sympathetic link to some part of yourself you wish to magically strengthen, or to some inner demon you want to face and learn to live with.
- ...use it as a messenger.
- ...use it to siphon 1-2 MP from a willing or unsuspecting associate who keeps the *shiki* close to their heart or sleeps beside it; later you can wring it out for the MP and use it again.
- ...empower it to perform simple chores and functions.

The minion itself usually appears at or near the beginning of the quest; however, it is not until the quest completes that it becomes useful or performs its proper magical function. Afterwards you may stay on the quest to "sustain" the miracle; while you do so, the minion is effectively a part of your character and you have a say in what happens with it. Afterwards, it's still a loyal minion that's linked to you, but someone could, e.g., subvert it with the appropriate coin.

Twisted Spaces

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle
Cost: —

This is another of the crafts of the Bleak Academy—a power of Melanie Malakh.

Over the course of a 15 XP quest you can create a gate, labyrinth, or pocket world—a *twisted space* where things do not behave properly. These things too express something in your heart, and navigating that space often teaches you something or giving you an insight; if that insight is the actual *point* and *value* of the miracle, then the labyrinth or world or gate will tend to become available at the beginning of the quest and you'll finish navigating it for the first time after you've spent 15 XP; otherwise, it will generally wait to appear until the completion of the quest.

You may stay on the quest after completing it for as long as you wish to retain power over the twisted space and to ensure that it does not fray; as with minions, the twisted space is effectively a part of the character while you do so. During this time you could even defend a conjured gate with your own Health Levels, for example, if you so chose.

A New Path

Later you built a new way of being for yourself. You recreated yourself from almost nothing—represented as the Arc, **Sentimental 1.**

You learned a **Craft**—it's up to you what this is, although I assume it's either glass-making, mask-making, painting, archiving, or interacting with people.

You learned to claim something as one of your **Treasures** if you have:

- a level 3+ Connection to it.
- a Bond that mentions it by name.
- a Perk that binds you to it like:
  - **Bond** (as long as it mentions it by name).
  - **Connection** (as long as it's level 3+).
  - **Accessory.**
  - **"It's OK, I'm here."**
  - **"It's like a home to me."**

And now you have these powers in addition to Malakh's:

Miraculous Ease

Type: Miraculous Action **Cost:** 0 MP

You have a limited access to your pool of miraculous Will (pg. 67 in ***CMWGE***).

That is, like everyone else you have 8 Will to spend each week to enhance your mundane actions—but if you are taking actions either *for*, *with*, or *to express your feelings for*[88] **the Wishing Boy** or **the Archive of Professor Hideo Hayashi**, you also have access to your pool of 3 miraculous Will.

Miraculous Will replenishes when you complete, or are in a scene with someone who completes, an in-genre XP Action.

The Dream-Witch's Shadow

Type: Miraculous Action **Cost:** 0 MP

When you are asleep you can project yourself into the company of one of your Treasures.

You float around its physical body.

You can perceive through its senses. If it has none, you can dimly sense the world around it. If it's asleep, you can perceive its dreams. You can speak to it mind-to-mind, in total silence.

Most importantly *you can do this from any distance*.

When you project yourself more than a block or two you become "present" where the treasure is. Any miracle that would normally target your important treasure can optionally affect you instead or in addition to it. This ought to but doesn't *have* to make sense—if you're projecting your dream-self to **the Wishing Boy,** for instance, and someone uses a miraculous action to stab him with a sword, they can automatically stab you with a sword *instead of* or *in addition to* stabbing him. They don't have to explain how that works. They don't have to make sense of it. Ultimately that's all on you. Further, even after you stop using this power, you can still be remotely targeted in this fashion until the end of the scene.

88 *Or "in." Being in, say, the Archive works, too. There just didn't seem to be a proper grammatical form for specifying that outside of a footnote that didn't immediately raise questions about why and in what circumstances you would be in the Wishing Boy.*

Miracles of Emptiness

Bonus XP

You have something going on in your heart. So you're making a minion or a twisted space as a way to explore/deal with it—

To bring those inchoate feelings out and sort through, overcome, or understand them.

And there's something that you keep turning your attention to while you do this. Something outside you, which could mean the minion, or the twisted space, or something in the world around you... maybe even a memory. Like, "The plants are so green here" or "I remember how he used to smile" or "These stones are so cold."

Like: "It smelled so good"—and if someone asks what that was, "there was this soup place that I used to eat at."

Like: "It was so nice"—and if someone asks you, you mean, the summer, that's now past.

It doesn't have to have anything to do with making a minion or a twisted space; rather, both the magic and the catchphrase are things you're doing to show your heart's all tangled up.

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by saying that catchphrase or something of the kind.

XP

Lend Spirit

Type: Special **Cost: —**

While you are using **The Dream-Witch's Shadow** you may choose to extend your abilities and knowledge to the important person or thing that you're visiting.

This gives the following additional benefits to the person or thing in question:

- They resist or outright ignore attempts by others to influence their thoughts or actions, unless you are also under that influence.
- They gain a small amount of added mobility, at the HG's discretion—for instance, if you had a glass figurine as one of your Treasures, you could make it move, but not as nimbly as a human might.
- They may call upon your abilities, powers, MP, and knowledge in addition to their own.

People and things you lend your spirit to do not retain the knowledge, abilities, or powers that you share with them after you stop lending them your spirit. In fact, their memories of events afterwards become muddled to whatever extent they actually drew upon your knowledge and your abilities! Thus, if someone wants to remember a secret of yours from when you lent them your spirit, they'd have to write it down.

A Waking Dream

Type: Miraculous Action

Cost:

- **1 MP**—Visit a Treasure astrally/spiritually while awake.
- **4 MP**—Do so a second or later time in a matter of hours.

You may detach a bit of your spirit and send it to someone even while awake. While you do so, you're aware of both your environment and theirs. You can't **Lend Spirit** while using this power, but if you support what they're doing, their mundane actions gain a +1 Tool bonus and (all else being equal) 1 point of Edge.

The Treasure's Call

Type: Miraculous Action **Cost:** 0 MP

You can "hear" or "feel" when one of your Treasures needs you or is desperately trying to reach you, no matter how far away or out-of-communication it might be.

You do have to invoke this power—but it costs 0 MP, so you can safely assume that it's active any time...

- ...you're not super-busy juggling two activities at once, *and*
- ...either:
  - ...you know OOC that a Treasure is trying to reach you; *or*
  - ...a Treasure is trying to reach you and the HG remembers that this power exists.

If both you and the HG forget this power exists, or if you get really busy, a Treasure's call *can* go unheard—the assumption is that you got distracted and forgot to occasionally "listen."

A Keeper of Treasures

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle **Cost:** —

You may spend a 15-XP quest training or improving something. This can make an animal unnaturally responsive an alert or a place more convenient or functional. In both cases, that's a +1 Tool.

Going beyond responsiveness, you can use your Craft in some fashion to teach animals or people borderline supernatural techniques. For instance, you might put them through bizarre cinematic martial arts training, magical training, use your Treasures in some weird fashion to improve them, or have many long, heartfelt conversations about what they're really capable of until "what they're really capable of" turns out to include ventriloquism, charm, traditional Damascene smithcraft, or whatever else you'd like. This gives them the equivalent of a Superior Skill 2. If you want to teach your dog hang-gliding or a person how to become unnoticeable using the Shadow Step, this is the appropriate technique.

If you want to do this, and you don't have an appropriate Arc-related Craft, you can probably get away with it as long as you involve your Craft into things *somehow*.

Regrettably this training isn't permanent—instead, you keep the quest card active once you finish it, and the power remains active until you use that quest slot for something else.

A Maker of Wonders

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle **Cost:** —

Over the course of a 15-XP quest, you may work with one of your Treasures, transforming it physically and spiritually to unleash its "true form" or "true power." Or, if the Treasure is already magical, you activate, revitalize, and control its powers without necessarily initiating a transformation.

The power you grant and the control you take remains active and accessible until you set aside the quest.

A Treasure typically has a single defined power—otherwise it wouldn't be the Treasure's "true form" or "true power." That said, just like you can use fire for many different things or train an athlete in many different sports, you can often adjust the details of the power that you create or grant as a part of enacting this quest.

If you want to create a new artifact—a wondrous mask, bit of glasswork, or whatnot—you can generally do so with a 45-XP quest. In addition to creating the Treasure itself this acts as a quest miracle to activate and tame its power. See **Glass Magic** in **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG** for an example of how this might work.

Later on, if you pursue the Sentimental Arc further, you'll be able to spend MP to instantly activate a specific version of a Treasure's power.

Weakness

Your **Strategist-Shard** weakness pretty much sucks. Sorry! It's part of the price of your World-Breaker's Hand.

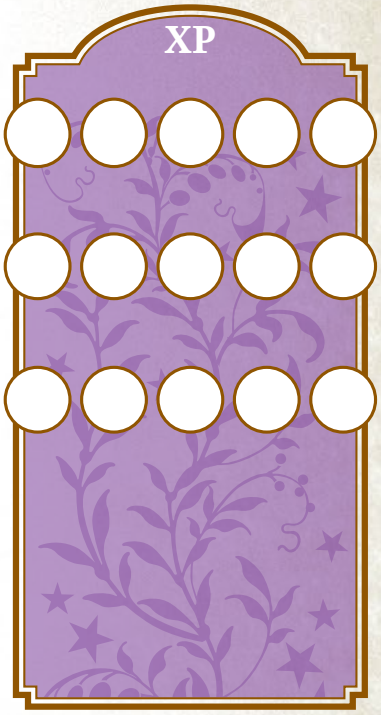
A Keeper of Treasures

Bonus XP

You're using your Craft to train an animal or person in something—either making them unnaturally responsive to your needs, which acts as a +1 Tool for you or them or whomever is appropriate, or granting them a borderline-supernatural Superior Skill 2.

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by explaining away what you've been doing or trying for in the current scene as part of that training. Pick a standard phrase to indicate this, and then just say that phrase or some close variant when you want to claim the bonus.

This is usually pretty straightforward: if you're teaching your dog *qinggong* (light foot technique), try, "I'm teaching my dog *qinggong*," "It's for her training," or, at the outside, "Gravity is an illusion." I'd recommend against something specifically said *to* the dog, like "C'mon, girl, up!" because you might be buying tools or treats for the training, and explaining why you're carrying around a bunch of planks and ankle weights with "C'mon, girl, up!" only works if your dog is on the scene.



A Maker of Wonders

Bonus XP

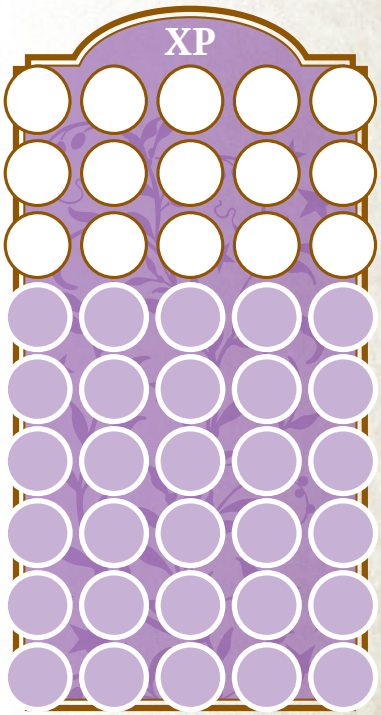
You're awakening a power in one of your Treasures. This is usually something you already see as *there*—it just needs some work to bring it out.

What are you teaching them?

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by explaining away what you've been doing or trying for in the current scene as part of that training. Pick a standard phrase to indicate this, and then just say that phrase or some close variant when you want to claim the bonus.

The suggested phrase is something that's kind of a smiling reflection on the power and how natural it is. If you're teaching a dog to fly, you could try, "That dog is born for the sky." If you're teaching Seizhi to breathe fire, you could say, "Dang, what a firecracker!"

If you're creating or claiming a new Treasure with this quest, as when you build a magical mask or mirror from scratch or befriend someone like Seizhi *by* training them, this quest costs an additional 30 XP.



Falling from the Path

Lately—

You've been drawn back onto the Arc **Accursed.** You're on it right now. There's something dangerous in you and it's calling to you. That's why you currently have the power **Sickly.**

You'll have the chance to change your mind.

As the end of **the Hidden Room** approaches, you'll have the chance to decide:

- ...are you actually on the Arc, **Accursed?** If so:
  - You'll end **the Hidden Room** by *making a change in your life*.
  - You'll keep the same powers for now, but when you complete the Arc you'll get +1 MP and you'll be able to use **the World-Breaker's Hand** 1-2x/scene for free.
- ...are you on the Arc, **Sentimental?** If so:
  - At the end of **the Hidden Room,** *a responsibility falls on you out of nowhere.*
  - You'll trade in **Sickly** for **Frantic**.
  - When you complete the Arc you'll learn to casually evoke miraculous powers from your Treasures and you'll broaden your access to miraculous Will.

Frantic

Type: Special **Cost:** —

You're never so resilient as when you're terrified.

You may take the **(Be in) Trouble** Action any time you can meet its condition. Doing so earns you 1 MP, up to a maximum of your starting MP. Each additional group XP that you earn from this Action also earns you an additional MP.

The Dream-Witch does not start with this power, but can pick it up at the end of the first quest by switching to a Sentimental Arc.

Professor Hideo Hayashi

While I'd like the Professor to be a bit enigmatic, I also don't like NCNPCS.* So I imagine that if pressed by the PCs, Hideo will actually explain at least *roughly* why he stopped making glass and/or why he took you in.

So this is one mystery where I won't just say "figure it out in play." If you get the chance to work it out in play, great, but if you have to have an answer *now,* assume this stuff is true:

- Melanie Malakh brain-whammied him.
- He may also have had legitimate feelings for her. How would he know?
- He remembers building the glass dragon, making beautiful glass as she worked spells into it, but his memory of what happened after that is almost as sketchy as yours.
- He feels responsible for what happened, and also for you.
- It all hurts and sucks for him and he doesn't really want to deal with it.
- He's "Professor" Hayashi because people started calling him that after he got back from college abroad, where he studied archaeology, linguistics, history, or library science, or maybe even a physical science like chemistry.
- He's running the archive because he got interested in poking around Town's past and the stories of explorers of distant lands.

It's probable that there's more to it. He's presumably looking for *something* in the archive. And maybe, right or wrong, he believes that you're that character variant where you're not "what's left of Melanie" but rather "some victim who got glass stuck in their eye and died or broke and became you." Maybe his head is as messed up and broken as yours. Maybe he's an evil professor from the Bleak Academy.

But—if the HG has to decide on this stuff because the PCs are interrogating Professor Hideo Hayashi *right now,* and the HG doesn't *know* the answers, then it's OK if there's no *there* there beyond the stuff I just listed above.

* *Needlessly cryptic NPC syndrome*

Actions and Issues

Here's some things you're often doing.

Pastoral Stuff

Talking through what's going on in your life

Shared Reactions

Hanging out in the world and experiencing stuff

Slice of Life

Living a simple, honest life

Shared Action

You're a Fortitude girl—you spend a lot of time appreciating the world around you, doing simple honest things, and talking to people you care about about the stuff that's going on in your life.

You can get bonus XP for these kinds of actions a couple of times a week.

Dreams

Observe dreams, show off memories in dreams

Foreshadowing

Most of the time when it's not just Slice of Life, stuff that happens in dreams is there to... stare at. To marvel at. To be awed by. This tends to foreshadow forthcoming themes, game focuses, and events.

Trouble

Get worked up over everything falling apart

Obsessive Action

Things really *are* falling apart and hopeless

Adversity

Being overwhelmed by money and aesthetic issues is a standard part of your character, as is having creepy stuff from your past come up to mess with your life. Some character variants may have further obsessions or troubles.

Timeline 1-2: Playing through your Childhood

The HG may want to play through the PCs' childhood at an accelerated pace—probably about 50x acceleration, covering a year in about the same time you'd usually cover a week.

In a game like that, your history would look like this:

The Wishing Boy or Girl is...

5 years old: You are a dream-ghost. Instead of **Changeling** or another magic, you have **Ghost Magic.** It lets you slip in and out of the human world more easily, turn translucent and semi-intangible, stretch yourself out, and makes it even easier to peek into people's dreams. (But you won't see memories there yet.)

When you fade into reality you won't have an actual face. You'll just have a mask, or, if you take it off, a blank head, maybe with normal hair, and a few black "emotion" lines that show your mood.

Normally you won't really remember much or say much. Your memories only stick within the context of an Issue—if you finish out your **Calling**, you'll forget the simple, honest things you've done with people. If you finish out your **(in) Over your Head** Issue, you'll forget the theories, decisions, and gambles that got you there. But you'll still be drawn to the PCs (for the sake of better gaming.)

The longer people know a ghost, the more easily they can see through your invisibility, the more you're drawn to them, and the more realistic your facial expressions become. If they know you *long* enough they'll start seeing your actual face—well, Melanie Malakh's actual face—any time you don't have your dream-mask on.

5 years old: This is when the game would start.

Normally you'll be a mostly amnesiac ghost-girl for 2-3 years. However, that assumes that the HG is playing through things quickly: that you're just a ghost for a session, maybe two. If it takes longer, or if you get bored of this, you can finish building a new *self* in your hidden room and emerge at any time.

5-8 years old: You "wake up" and become Miramie Mesmer. You try to fit into the archives, or you're adopted by one of the shrine families. You try to build a new life for yourself.

5-11 years old: 3-12 months later, you find a chunk of Melanie Malakh in the dreams of the Wishing Boy.

Over the next 1-2 years you gnaw an easier path into his dreams and he begins to notice you there.

15 years old: This is the present.

(The major difference between timeline 1 and timeline 2 is when the old sun dies, which isn't very personally relevant to you. In timeline 1, it was when the Wishing Boy was 3 or so. In timeline 2, it was when he was roughly 8.)

Timeline 3: Starting in the Modern Day

In a game that starts in the present, you probably emerged into the world less than a year ago. You've been haunting the Wishing Boy's dreams for the last 3-6 months.

Ghost Magic

Ghosts don't really have *powers*—they're just people, who are ghosts—but a few of them are a little better at being ghosts than others, and this qualifies as a magical Skill.

Standard Obstacles for this Skill include:

- **[Obstacle 0]** Laugh an eerie, echoing laugh. Raise someone's hackles. Stare ominously.
- **[Obstacle 1]** Find someone who's looking for you. Walk silently. See into the living world without bringing it closer. Adopt special "ghost expressions" that human faces can't. Fade away from the living world when nobody is watching.
- **[Obstacle 2]** Fade away from the living world, even in plain sight, as long as the people watching you don't know you very well. Turn translucent and mostly-intangible, able to pass through things of the living world without a "firm" equivalent in the ghost-world. Slip into someone's dreams. Stretch out your legs into an attenuated vapor, allowing you to float off the ground or stretch up to five feet taller.
- **[Obstacle 3]** Reach into the living world from the ghost world without materializing. Interact with specific objects while mostly intangible. Steal someone's life energy. Drag a living person temporarily into the ghost world.

The Ghost World

- The Ghost World is cold and empty.
- The Ghost World does not change.
- The Ghost World echoes in the world of life.
- The Ghost World is full of memories.
- The Ghost World sees shadowy images and reflections of the real.
- The Ghost World is unfinished.
- The Ghost World is incomplete.

Ghosts and people are naturally estranged from one another. They do not interact. The human reality and the ghost reality do not touch—ghosts interact with ghosts, and ghost-books, and ghost-roads, and the like. Humans interact with humans, and human-books, and human-roads, and the like. But the division between the two worlds is not whole and entire. Sometimes eerie sounds drift through from the ghost-world, or the brighter lights of the human world will shine through amidst the ghosts. Sometimes empathic sensations will transmit. In certain moods and in certain places a human will be primed to sense ghosts, or vice versa. The more they sense one another, the more real they become to one another, until first one starts to see the ghosts, and then to share a physical reality with them.

It's a setting conceit that the living world is "more" real than the ghost world, and thus the living are more real to the ghosts than the other way around. When a ghost sees a human, there may be a shimmer or distortion between them, like the ghost is looking upwards at the world through water; when a human sees a ghost, the ghost *itself* seems indistinct, unfinished, and incomplete. The ghost world is a lower, vaguer reality, more prone to time-skips, emptier of sensation, less mutable, and more possessed by dream-logic. It is even possible that the ghost world is nothing more than the memories of the real.

Fortitude PC

Fact Sheet

You were just an ordinary person, until a shard of magical glass found its way into you.

Even *now* you're still mostly an ordinary person—a mortal, and, like every mortal, on the road to death. Even if you're magical, even if you're a *vampire*, you won't escape it.

You're going to die. *I'm so sorry!!*

Primary Quests

- Do your thing.
- Get involved with the main characters.
- Proceed, as a mortal does, towards your inevitable death.

Bonus XP Condition

You'll pick your own bonus XP emotion:

- Are you a bit of a jerk, provoking fist-shaking outrage?
- A bombastic character, trying to hook the other players on your catch-phrases?
- Someone people worry about?
- Someone people can be confident in?
- Or will you invent a new bonus XP condition, or share one with one of the existing characters?

The Eight Paths

Bindings

Are you interested in becoming a **Wounded Angel?**

Do you want to master forbidden secrets, wield the horrific powers of the Outside—but for good, or at least neutral, ends—and pick up incredible miraculous powers at the cost of terrible wounds?

Are you a dangerous gambler?

A meddler in forbidden things?

Then here's your story.

You've found a place at the edge of Town where you can hear the voice of the Outside. It's important to you. It's helping you somehow—teaching you a magical song, protecting you from a bully, inspiring you, or helping you train an awesome pet (a pipe fox, fairy dragon, or nixie dog, say) conjured from your dreams.

Pretty soon—shockingly soon, like, as soon as you finish your starting quest, if nothing else has killed you yet? That voice will turn on you, a tide of the Outside will rise to drown you, it will carry you away to nothingness and you will *die*.

Knight

Are you interested in taking on an important role in the cosmos? Or maybe just Fortitude? Being a member of the Fortitude Regional Council? A Magister of the Bleak Academy? A Really Great Beekeeper? A Guardian of Time?

Or maybe do you want to just kind of make up your own powers as you go?

What's stopping you?

Here's your story.

You have a vice, right? There's something that's standing in your way. And it's kind of your destiny here to overcome it, heroically, comically, in a saccharine fashion, whatever.

And you're living your life, and there's your vice, and it's between you and your dreams.

And there's this person.

Their game-label is **the Walker in Darkness.** They're your friend, or your enemy, I don't know, but whatever they are they're most importantly your metaphorical dealer. They support or enable you in your vice, you know? They *like* your vice. They sneer at your dreams of being anything more.

Lately you've been dreaming of Jade Irinka a lot, of that lost, murdered angel of the houses of the sun.

They sneer at that, probably, too.

They're probably what kills you. I don't know for sure. It might not be them. It's probably quick, brutal, and surprising, either way.

Otherworldly

Are you interested in gaining a deep connection to some element of the natural world?

Or maybe in coming back from the dead as an immortal with the power to turn into a giant monster of some sort?

Then here's your story.

You are dying. I don't know why. It's something big enough that random PCs with their random superpowers can't fix it, not easily. Maybe it's just a particularly tenacious curse. Maybe it's an illness that's powered by some great bleak entity's will. Maybe you don't even know why you're going to die, you just

know that you will: you've been having dreams that serve to foreshadow it.

You won't accept it. Even if Heaven itself demands your death:

You won't accept it!

You'll experiment. You'll struggle. You'll use deviant science or strange sorcery. You'll fight to save yourself. But I'll be honest. It won't help. Brutally quickly, like, probably only a couple of sessions into the game, you'll die.

But that's OK. Maybe you even planned it. Because it turns out that the best way to beat anyone, even death, is to let them think they're winning. Let death be the *uke* to your *nage*. You die. You wander lost in the Outside, maybe, for a while.

Then you return. Wiser. Stronger. *A creature of miracles.*

Storyteller

Are you interested in becoming a creature of tricks and fables? Or maybe a high and holy thing, a living angel, an austere and alien god?

Then you may start kind of ordinary, but vibrant—alive—and wearing red;

And yet, with a bittersweet fascination with death.

Or if not with death in the abstract, if not with death *in the body*, then with death *personified*—

You're the kind of person with a poster of the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy on your wall, maybe; or of Gaiman's Death, or the traditional skeleton-in-robes, or even of Fortitude's own Kuroma Yatskaya, who summons down "King Death" into his skin.

The poster has lipstick on it, maybe, but only if you wear lipstick.

(Otherwise that'd be a little weird.)

You don't want to die in the physical sense, exactly. You don't even want your life to end. You're just caught up in the *romance* of death, of "the sweet-smelling roses of the night" and the like.

But you're going to die, anyway.

...afterwards some of the shine will be off the rose, I guess. Afterwards death will not be quite so interesting. You might still be fascinated by it, ethereal, drawn to darkness and to places of death, but it will have lost a few shades of mystery.

PS: At some point early on I think you'll want to establish a relationship or friendship with someone very much alive and very much in love with life, for a possible angst twist later on when *they* die too.

Aspect

Would you like to become an omnicompetent Ace? A master of kung fu or mortal life? A rival to **the Prodigy?**

I don't think you'll start out that way.

In fact, I think you'll start this quest as anything but. You won't be vibrant. You won't be omnicompetent. You'll be tired. You'll be worn down. You'll be used up. You could be young, but if you're young, you'll be sick and frail. Maybe you'll have that anime disease where you cough sometimes and everyone gathers around your bed or whispers in the corners to show that they are very sad. Or maybe you're not young, maybe you're a Jotun as old as mountains, and you're ready to lay down your head and rest.

Or you could be someone who *wants* to be a rival to the Prodigy, someone who's probably even pretty cool, but all it takes is an encounter with these living gods, these Main Characters, to finally realize how absolutely *normal* you've been—

That you're never going to be *that* awesome.

In fact, you're never going to be any more awesome than you already are. This is it. You've peaked. This young, or this old, and you've peaked!

You're stuck. You're blocked. Dang! This is as far as you're going to get.

And maybe it's right in the middle of a rant like that that the truck squeals around the corner down the rain-slick hill and hits you, *bam.*

You're dead.

Shepherd

Would you like to walk a **Shepherd** Arc, learning to bring out the power in other things?

Then here's your story.

You'll start as a desperate, messed-up kid trying to cling to something that you're losing.

To a friend or pet that's dying. A broken family.

I don't know.

You have this brief, furious prologue, maybe less than a session even, just enough time to meet the PCs and show what you're fighting for. And you don't think, not even once, that you're at risk of dying *yourself.*

It's not that you don't accept the possibility. It just wasn't on your radar.

Then *bam*.

Did you get brushed out of your life by a shadowy horror? Just point and click, bam, you're gone? Did you get accidentally crushed by someone who thought erroneously that turning into a giant snake would help? Did you accidentally challenge American military hegemony and become a target? Did your glass-shard power go out of control and set your whole body on fire? Did you get torn apart by a nightmare creature that hoped that by doing so it would earn your life and your reality and could then take your place in Town?

You're someone who'll learn to bring out the awesome, miraculous power that's living under the surface practically everywhere in Town... but first, you're going to be its meat.

Emptiness

Would you like to follow an **Accursed** Arc and master the world-breaker's hand?

To become an accursed creature with no true place in world and sound?

Then here is your story.

You'll feel your death coming long before it comes. It'll be a bone-deep sensation in you. You can feel it coming. It'll be like it's eating you from the inside. You'll *know* that it's going to happen.

You're going to die.

Mystic

Are you interested in following a **Primordial** Arc?

Becoming something alien, elemental, and divine?

Then here is your story.

You're going to start the game in kind of a bleak place.

You're not necessarily dying—it could be a freak accident when it happens—

But you're living as if you're already dead. You're messed up. You're broken. When you die it's almost a relief to you.

Only, then, there's the miracle. The *awakening*. The truth that leads you back to Town.

But before that, you are...

You're not full of wish power—you're not one of those people who can make the world bend just by trying hard. You're not full of the bleak emptiness of the Outside either.

You're not a natural part of the bigger-picture story of Town.

When the story starts, you're just a normal person. Even with a bit of the glass dragon in you—just a normal person!

You didn't even think you had a destiny. Not really. You figured you'd live your life, and do your thing, and if you worked hard, then you'd probably live a good long life and find your happiness.

You were wrong.

Appropriate character archetypes from **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake** include...

- **...the Shop Fox,**
- **...the Vampire,**
- **...the Shrine Maiden/Priest,**
- **...the Other One,** (aka **The Citizen of Fortitude,)** *and*
- **...the Immigrant from Earth.**

Add a unique adjective somewhere if two or more people pick your option, e.g. dividing into "That Annoying Shop Fox" and "the Handsome Shop Fox" or whatnot.

The Shop Fox

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Typically Good
Sports Skill: Typically Excellent
Favorite Foods: Tenko love deep-fried tofu (on its own, in soup, or used as a rice pouch), red beans and red-bean sweets, and sake. They have a love-hate relationship with pickled snails—they'll wrinkle their nose after each one, but a few minutes later they'll eat another, and then another! They also like fish-cake and "spider"-cake, apples, blackberries, licorice, and lollipops.
Blood Type: O- Tenko are universal donors, though the blood feels "heavy" in a human's veins.
Animal: Fox
Age: the standard Tenko PC is the campaign default age (15, though the HG may play through ages 5-14 at an accelerated pace).

You're **the Shop Fox,** aka **the Tenko.**

Your ancestors include humans and fox spirits. You have fox ears as well as your regular ears—the fox ears are larger, and a little higher on your head. Your hair is probably brightly colored and you're probably pretty or handsome. You may or may not have a fox tail. You're probably thin and a little bit short and you probably dress in old-fashioned Japanese or Chinese clothing. The Tenko believe that their fox spirit ancestors still look out for them—that's why a human-Tenko child is almost always just a Tenko, when the mating is fertile at all, but also why if you cut off your fox ears your tail will fall off, your magic will wither, and you'll become all the way human.

Long ago fox-eared people had a reputation for good luck, powerful magic, and good counsel. But these days your people aren't very important—fox-eared people are more likely to be shopkeepers or traveling entertainers than sorcerers, exorcists, or the idle rich.[89] But it's still a pretty good life: you have access to family wealth and magic and the Tenko look out for one another.

The downside is mostly that you stand out.

It's not like there's really any *negative* bigotry against you—but you're visually distinctive and you're a member of a pretty small minority. There's about 150 shop foxes in Town and maybe 7?—two small families and a drifter?—in Fortitude. You're glamorous and exotic and *weird* and so your life is a constant stream of double-takes, unearned admiring sighs, people assuming that your life is easy because you're a Tenko, and people trying to touch your ears and tail. Stop that, you people!

Good grief!

Home and Family

The default **Shop Fox** is a kid pretty close to the campaign age. Your parents have a little shop in Fortitude. One of them works pretty hard every day to keep the shop going. (This could be your Dad, or your Mom.) The other mostly lounges about on a cushion in the back room and smokes a long pipe, but has magic, brains, and courage to face the big crises.

As for you, you help out!

It's up to you to decide whether your lounging parent is naturally frail, incredibly spoiled, or just has to look as lazy as possible to keep their magic strong.

You have cousins and other relatives over in the shopping district but you don't see them very often.

89 *That's why you're called shop foxes!*

The Vampire

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Poor
Sports Skill: Terrifying
Favorite Foods: Rage, fear, agony, anxiety, desperation, despair; blood. As a vampire, you can live off of ambient negative emotions or drink them directly from someone's mind. If you drink "pillow-teeth tea," it may be harder for you to drink blood—it's still edible and even delicious, but the tea makes your teeth too spongy to tear into a human wrist or neck.
Blood Type: AB+—well, metaphorically, anyway
Animal: Bat
Age: I'm assuming you're a relatively young vampire—you'll look the campaign default age, and be 1-10 years older. That makes you 16-25, in a typical game; if the HG plays through the characters' childhood, you may even start the game "alive."

You're **the Vampire.**

You rose from the dead. Now you're a broody incarnation of teenage romantic angst: attractive, deeply troubled, elegant, strong, courageous, loyal, and... kind of a jerk, particularly to people you care about.

A vampire feeds on either blood or negative emotion (worry, fear, pain.)

For a combination of moral and social reasons, most vampires in Town drink *pillow-teeth tea*. It softens their fangs and makes them squishy like marshmallows so that there is no possible way they could rip open a human neck. It also prevents cavities!

Sunlight sets vampires on fire.

I'm going to assume you're one of the vampires who is relatively tough here—strong enough to get by with just a parasol during the day and to interact with **the Child of the Sun** without getting burned. (As long as she doesn't smile directly *at* you or something.) Even if you do catch on fire, it probably won't *kill* you, not for a while. I mean, it'll suck! But you can heal.

Home, Family, and Coming Back from the Dead

As a Fortitude vampire, you probably came back from the dead for Fortitude reasons. You didn't want to leave your parents or kid sister or kid brother or whomever you left behind stuck with all the chores. You had jam to make. You had a wall to fix. You didn't want to miss that boat trip out to the coast off Rio to catch marlin. Your Mom made your favorite stew and the smell of it woke you up.

Or maybe you were just lonely.

Maybe it's just that you were dead, and you were out there being dead, and you got to thinking about life and remembering life and so—

Well.

You came back.

There's some people who say it's nothing to do with any of that. They say that you have to be made by another vampire, or cursed by an evil curse, or maybe even that it's just if you eat too much octopus you'll rise up from the ground.

But anyhow, there's really two solid options for a Fortitude vampire. Your family's here. You died while away, probably, you maybe died in Horizon, or maybe out in the Walking Fields, or in the Outside somewhere, maybe you even fell and sank into Big Lake. But your family was here, so you came back, all broody and corpse-y and fearful of the sun.

Or you don't have any family anywhere, and one day you looked east towards the sunrise and you thought, "That way. That way, even though it hurts. I'll find somebody there."

The Shrine Maiden/Priest

You're **the Shrine Maiden** or **the Priest.** You belong to one of the shrine families of Fortitude—are you from:

- ...**the Kichi Family,** with a simple, traditional purity and access to their sacred divination pools?
- ...**the Sosunovs:** pale, delicate, sensitive, and vaguely Buddhist, with dream-magic powers?
- ...**the Titovs:** making you brittle and psychotic and giving you a really messed-up family life?
- ...**the Vasilis,** binding yourself to some elemental force like wind, fire, or summertime?
- ...**the Yatskayas,** as a languid cat lover who might be able to summon a spirit into your flesh?

Or from a less magical shrine family, like:

- ...**the Hayashi Family,** who make glass from the dust of the Outside?
- ...**the Watanabe Family,** who make candy?

Or are you from a shrine family that you invented yourself?

Home and Family

The shrine families of Fortitude keep its sacred places, process the dust of the Outside into less harmful and psychotropic forms, attune themselves to the spirit world and to dream worlds, and have various minor magical powers.

Or at least, they do most of those things!

The shrine families vary in how secular or spiritual they are, and how magical or mundane. Dealing with the dust of the Outside in some fashion is pretty much a requirement, though: if they don't do that, they're not really a shrine family, just some magical people who might or might not happen to live in a special place.

The trappings of Fortitude spiritual tradition descend mostly from Shinto, although there's a substantial Buddhist influence on the Sosunov practice. The legacy of Russian Orthodox Christianity is pervasive but its active practice and symbols are in decline—the cross is antithetical to the Jotun, the vampires, and a few others (though not the shop foxes). In the old days when the Jotun waged active war on humanity and the vampires strove for a predatory dominance, people clung to the protective bosom of the mother Church. These days, when the Jotun are mostly farmers and the vampires drink pillow-teeth tea, open practice and display of Christianity feels vaguely cruel and self-righteous.

You can read more about the individual families in **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake.**

The Shrine Maiden/Priest (Kichi Family)

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: OK
Sports Skill: Healthy
Favorite Foods: Rice, fish, frogs, fruit
Blood Type: A
Animal: Egret
Age: Campaign Default

The Shrine Maiden/Priest (Sosunov)

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Better than Average
Sports Skill: Frail
Favorite Foods: Rice, stir-fried vegetables, cocoa
Blood Type: A
Animal: Rabbit
Age: Campaign Default

The Shrine Maiden/Priest (Titov)

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Average
Sports Skill: Average to Good
Favorite Foods: Rabbit stew, seared flatbread, hard cheese, beer, roast chicken
Blood Type: AB
Animal: Horseshoe Crab
Age: Campaign Default

The Shrine Maiden/Priest (Vasili)

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Good
Sports Skill: Good to Very Good
Favorite Foods: French cuisine, crispbread and chowder, fried mackerel skin, sea monster, pot roast, wine
Blood Type: O
Animal: Tern
Age: Campaign Default

The Shrine Maiden/Priest (Yatskaya)

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Average to Good
Sports Skill: Good to Excellent
Favorite Foods: Fish and shellfish, turkey and gravy, thousand-year eggs, dumplings and mochi, roe, squash, string beans, and quail.
Blood Type: B
Animal: Cat or Seal
Age: Campaign Default

The Shrine Maiden/Priest (Hayashi)

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Good
Sports Skill: Average
Favorite Foods: Casserole, fondue, crunchy breads, pizza, mozzarella sticks, apples, ham steaks
Blood Type: O
Animal: Monkey
Age: Campaign Default

The Shrine Maiden/Priest (Watanabe)

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Average
Sports Skill: Average
Favorite Foods: Rice porridge, roast beef au jus, malt balls, traditional foods of Fortitude
Blood Type: B
Animal: Snail
Age: Campaign Default

The Shrine Maiden/Priest (Original)

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill:
Sports Skill:
Favorite Foods: Pick some sort of soup or stew, some sort of snack, some sort of rice dish, some sort of fish dish, and some sort of sweet (maybe?)
Blood Type: O
Animal:
Age: Campaign Default

The Other One

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Typically Good
Sports Skill: Typically Good
Favorite Foods: People of Fortitude tend to really like soup, fish and shellfish, skewers, sweets, pancakes, fried stuff, and jam.
Blood Type: A
Animal: Horse or Sheep
Age: usually the campaign default age (15, though the HG may play through ages 5-14 at an accelerated pace).

You are **the Other One.**

You are just... a person, who lives in Fortitude. I'd recommend that you know the Yatskaya and have some involvement with the Hayashi archive; other than that—

You could be pretty much anybody!

Now, the usual campaign age will have you all as teenagers, possibly with a quick play through of your childhood, so you're probably not extremely well-established. But you could be an errand runner, a ship's hand (as long as you don't do terribly long journeys), an apprentice plumber, a kid who goes to Horizon's School during the week, or somebody who helps out at your family restaurant or store.

Home and Family

You live in Fortitude somewhere. Maybe down by the water, maybe at the edge of or up one of the western hills. You probably have a reasonably large family—cousins, uncles and aunts, and grandparents either in-house or in-area, in addition to your parents and a handful of siblings—but you could be a tragic case or something closer to the outside-world nuclear family norm. You probably have a pen pal or two somewhere outside of Fortitude—in Town, Earth, or maybe even somewhere weird like the dwarf planet Eris!

The Immigrant from Earth

Campaign: The Glass-Maker's Dragon
Academics Skill: Typically Good
Sports Skill: Typically Good
Favorite Foods: *(Your Country) (Food)* madlibs, e.g. French sandwiches, Belgian stew, Russian milk, Peruvian vegetables, or "proper American water."
Blood Type: B
Animal: Hoop Snake
Age: Usually the campaign default age (15, though the HG may play through ages 5-14 at an accelerated pace); sometimes 1-5 years younger or 2-7 years older.

2

You are **the Person from Earth** or **the Immigrant from Earth.**

You've just moved to Town, but you're not **the Prodigy.** You're a comparatively ordinary person, instead!

For a foreigner, anyway.

I mean, there's this Town stereotype of the foreigner as a cool-as-cucumber badass straight from action films (or occasionally something more specific, in the "all Japanese schoolchildren are secretly mecha pilots" sort of way), and I think it's totally reasonable if you want to be that sort of foreigner. You're coming to Town to find the man who killed your partner or father or something, or to find a clue as to why some family member or friend vanished, or to kick ass and take care of business on behalf of a pen pal in Town.

Or of course you could be a realistic foreigner, come to Town because... well, whatever. Because you wanted a new life. Because you longed for magic. Because your hometown fell into the Outside, drowned, and you made it to a Town-sent rescue ship.

Whatever!

You couldn't or didn't want to stay on Earth, and somehow you heard of Town; and so you came.

Home and Family

If you're lucky your family came with you. Well, if you're lucky and they're a good family. But it'd be weird for a bad family to come with you to Town. That's like...

I don't even know what that would be like.

Like: Weird!

If not, then you're probably mostly on your own. You may have already found someone to take you in, or gotten a job and rented a room, or you may be staying at a halfway house or using your leftover funds from Earth to stay at a hostel.

Quests

You start the game with three *quests*, and have the power to swap them out or pick up more—you can pursue up to four quests at any given time.

In addition to your basic quest, which I'm tentatively labeling **Do Your Thing,** I've chosen two quests to...

- ...give you extra direction in the first few sessions ("Meet the Other PCs").
- ...tie you into the campaign plot ("A Far and a Sunless Land").

We'll talk about your death, your return, and the eight versions of **A Far and a Sunless Land** in the next section; for now, let's talk about the stuff you're doing on the side.

Do Your Thing

15 XP Quest

: Chibi-Quest

You have a thing that you do. It is a thing that you'll always *be* doing, both before and after you get involved with life-changing events.

It's your—core motivation, I guess.

Your **basic quest.**

Have you already put it together using the rules in **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake?** If not, you should go do that now!

Rewards

Completing this quest earns you a Recharge Token—a cool thing or memory.

Whatever it is you'd logically pick up from doing this kind of thing.

At some point in the future, you'll be able to draw on that memory, or on the emotional pleasure of having gotten that thing, to refresh your mid-week Will and MP supply to full.

Meet the Other PCs

25 XP Quest

1:

2:

3:

So it's quite possible that you've already got a totally easy way to meet the other PCs and don't need to work at it. In that case, you could replace this quest with something else. Maybe you're building something, or learning something, or whatever.

But—

Since, for all I know, you're an extremely shy Tenko who lives in the top room of a shop all the time and never talks to anybody and tries desperately to keep the glass shard in your heart a secret, and will freak out when/if you meet the other PCs and they touch your ears—

Let's start by making this clear.

Something is pushing you towards the other PCs. You're interested in weird events and weird people, or you're drawn to these people in particular, or you keep bumping into one another by luck or fate, or you're a student of things like the glass dragon and the Outside and the death of the sun and these people seem connected to those mysteries—

I can't do anything clever or narrative to hook you into them when I don't know what you are or which PCs your game has, so all I can say is: right now, you're on a quest to meet them.

So your goals for this quest are...

- ...hit it off with the other PCs, or mend fences later if you don't.
- ...deepen your connection with them.
- ...do stuff that commits you to more interaction with them.

You'll earn a bonus XP for this quest when you **propose a theory about the other PCs and/or their role in your life.** It doesn't have to be right: in fact, you can earn bonus XP for shouting that you'll never get along with them ever no matter and storming off away from them. That's a theory! In the long run, it brings you closer! It counts.

Variations

Another option is to focus on building your connection with one or two highly specific plot points that you know a couple of other PCs are interested in too. For instance, if **the Prodigy** is investigating the legend of **the Angel of Fortitude,** and they're both PCs, then you could work on becoming the Angel's sidekick or joining the investigation. Or if the other players' interest is focused pretty tightly on the Yatskaya household or the archive of Professor Hideo Hayashi, then you could be working on something to do with that!

In this kind of situation, your goals will be to...

- ...get off to a good start in getting involved with that thing.
- ...get more involved with it.
- ...commit more deeply to it.
- ...invent stuff, with the HG's approval, to make that thing you're connecting to more interesting—particularly if the whole thing was at risk of being sidelined.

You'll earn a bonus XP towards this quest by **proposing a theory about that thing or how you or the other PCs relate to it.**

Rewards

Normally on completing this quest you'll pick up a level 1-2 Connection Perk to one of the other PCs, or bump up an existing Connection Perk by a point.

You might also get a small Perk of some other sort relating to whatever it is that brings you and the other PCs close!

Meet the Other PCs

Bonus XP

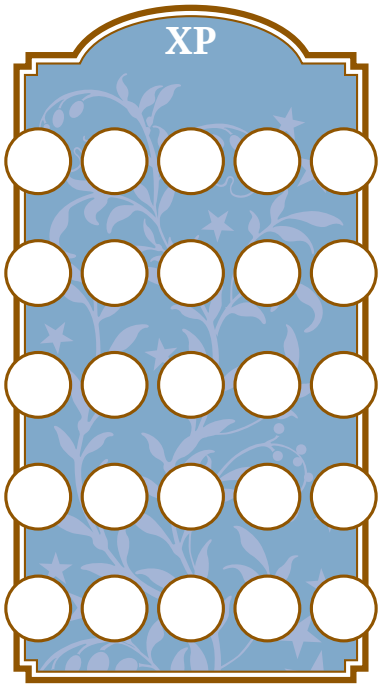
You're drawn to the other PCs. You're being pushed by fate or your own plans or by some unwanted entanglement into meeting them, building an ever-stronger emotional connection to them, and committing further to whatever has the lot of you involved.

And the way to make that happen, the way to jiggle your worldview around until the other PCs snap into being a part of it, or vice versa, is to **propose a theory about the other PCs and/or their role in your life.**

(Or are you using a variant quest where you need to propose a theory about something else instead?)

You *do* have to propose it aloud! Or at least in your internal monologue! It can't just be the player at the table—the point is that, at least for a moment, you genuinely *consider* it. But you also don't have to prove it, or do anything *specific* about it: just raise the matter in play.

And when you do that, when you consider that—up to once per 15 minutes/scene—you earn a bonus XP towards this quest.



Your Story Begins

This quest begins the story "A Far and a Sunless Land," pg. 533.

I'm sorry, but you're going to have to die.

...

It probably won't even be heroic. This world is full of... things. Things that can sweep you out of the way as casually as a broom brushing away the dust.

There's folks can decide you're not worthy of existence, and bam, you'll just... not exist.

There's nightmare creatures that can get loose on Town, even in sleepy old Fortitude, and hunt you down, and rip out your guts. There's the blood of the Angel of Fortitude, which is usually pretty helpful to a PC, but it could mess you up instead, it's so easy, your body is so fragile and the power of the Angel of Fortitude is so vast.

You're not a hero. Well, I mean, maybe you are, but mostly, probably, you're not. You're not all full of wish power or bleak emptiness, and your life's as fragile as glass.

I'm sorry. I wish it didn't have to happen. But one day soon you're going to break.

You're going to die. Or be unmade. Or you're going to drown in the Outside, fall into the raging nothingness outside of Town, sink into its disorder, lose yourself in its fear and tension, and unravel into all the threads that wove you up.

It won't be amazing.

It *probably* won't be amazing. Maybe it'll happen in an amazing way and you will be amazing and I won't take that from you, I won't say it doesn't count. But don't *expect* that, because in the end you are not one of the heroic blessed, you are just... you.

But...

"You" are still something special, in a way. I'm not talking about the shard of the glass dragon in you, because, who cares? I mean, really. That's just a thing. The important thing is that you've got something important about *you*. You've got something in you that'll keep you going.

Something solid. Some virtue that you can cling to.

Something that'll keep you going even after death. Even after you should be dissolving into nothing, or into the Outside, or... whatever happens to the dead... it'll be there. It'll be something to hold on to. It will keep you going for a moment, or a forever, or for some time in between.

And once upon a time death was a far and a sunless land, or so some say;

Death was a bleak academy;

But now there is the light of a sun that shines Outside the world—the light of the former sun goddess Jade Irinka, who is dead—and it will fall on you. It will be a miracle. You will find yourself there, in the grainy Outside, with the light falling on you as through a

Death and the Quest

In this quest, you'll die; wander the Outside for a while; and then return to Town.

Sometimes that means you end the quest and everything happens. You die. You wander lost in the Outside. The HG says, "A few weeks later..."

You come back.

Other times you'll die in the middle of the quest, or even at the beginning. You'll spend part of the quest itself out there, wandering, lost. You'll play that out—the other PCs will be safe in Town dealing with your funeral, and you're out there decaying, falling, dissolving into the nothingness, *lost*.

Some of the paths and quests really benefit from that—the **Shepherd** path, for instance, benefits a lot.

But all of that takes second place to fun. If you're having trouble with the whole being-dead thing, if it's taking you out of play rather than involving you more deeply in it, you can always return and have the rest of your interregnum in the Outside be told through flashbacks alone.

Some of the paths and quests—the **Knight** and **Emptiness** paths, for instance—benefit more from *that!*

Basically, the only reason you have to actually play out the part where you're dead is if you have interesting things to say about that time, and the HG does, and the players do, or if it's a useful tool in picking up the big XP bonuses for your quest.

window, and the dust drifting in that light; and the sun will reveal to you a path that will lead you back to Town.

Rewards

Completing this quest starts you on a miraculous Advancement Arc—you've died and come back, and you've come back *stronger,* with a Perk from and level 0 in an appropriate Arc.

As a special reward, assuming that you *did* die and come back, you'll receive:

- **+1 Divine Health Level**
- **+2 MP**

These are permanent benefits that move you towards equal footing with the other PCs.

A Far and A Sunless Land
("Bindings" Option)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you learn something at the edge of Town that really helps you out.
- ...you find a way, or at least a lever, to redeem, civilize, or humanize a wicked creature—most likely one of the minions of the Outside.
- ...you're hapless/head-desk-able enough that the voice of the Outside temporarily loses the ability to cope.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you spend a peaceful interval at the edge of Town.
- ...you explore, finding something neat, scary, or beautiful at the edge of Town.
- ...you learn something dramatic about "the voice of the Outside."
- ...you fall under the sway of the Outside.
- ...you get the Outside or one of its creatures involved in your hobby; or, more generally, use whatever powers your relationship with it grants you and whatever effects it has for unimportant things.
- ...you hide what's going on from the people around you.
- ...the Outside and its creatures are a little *too* helpful.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

The Bindings Arc

Notes and Rewards

If you chose a **Bindings** Arc, finishing this quest will earn you...

- **Wounded Angel 0**.

That'll come with these three benefits:

- You've either reached greater self-acceptance or hammered out a working relationship with some horror from the Outside.
- You'll earn a Bindings 1 Perk, such as a Connection to that horror.
- You'll earn the powers:
  - **Dramatic**, which lets you show up in certain kinds of scenes more easily;
  - **Devices,** cool stuff that sometimes give a +1/+2 Tool bonus;
  - **Sickly,** giving you greater access to corruption/trauma scenes; *and the balancing*
  - **Divine Health**—a bonus Divine Health Level, on top of the one you get for dying and coming back.

Once you finish, read the notes on pg. 308 and 536. The quest above is a customized version of **"Wicked Creatures,"** so you'll now move on to **"Haunted."**

The Knight Arc

Notes and Rewards

If you chose a **Knight** Arc, finishing this quest will earn you your choice of...

- **Become Somebody 0.**
- **Reality Syndrome 0.**

The first builds towards having an important role in society or the world—a formal thing that you try to live up to. The second eventually gives you world-breaking hack powers like the Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.

They're both pretty cool options—the first comes with...

- ...the power to see the influence of stuff like your personal vice on a situation.
- ...the power to see and understand the part of other people that's striving for a similar role.
- ...an MP-regeneration power, **Frantic.**

The second will come with something a little magic—you'll be able to share some private, personal experience like your memories, your philosophy, or control over your tear ducts with the other people in your vicinity. You'll also pick up the power **Sickly**, which gives you greater access to corruption and trauma scenes (if you, er, like that sort of thing.)

More importantly, either way, dying and coming back will give you a chance to *find* yourself:

You'll know what you want to be now.

Who you want to be.

You can put it into words.

Both options come with a Knight 1 Perk, and often that Perk will relate somehow to who or what you want to be—a Connection or Bond connecting you to that idea.

You were pretty traumatized by dying and coming back, though. You had bad experiences.

Let's rebrand the quest you just finished **"Encounters in the Night."**

Read the notes on pg. 322 and 536 and go on to its sequel:

"The Troubled Sky."

The Otherworldly Arc

Notes and Rewards

If you chose an **Otherworldly** Arc, finishing this quest will earn you your choice of:

- **Spiritual 0.**
- **Child of the Ash 0.**

The first offers you a connection to some element of the world—fire, water, the birds in the skies, the insects and the flowers, whatever—along with the starting powers:

- **Elemental Warning,** giving you a warning if something bad is going to happen to your element
- **Illusions,** the power to weave a "sense" that your element is present or absent
- **Frantic,** an MP-regeneration ability

The second offers you an even richer haul:

- **Immortality,** the power to not get hurt and killed by stuff
- **Set the Mood,** the power to radiate a particular mood like "peace" or "happiness"
- **[Mood]-Splosion,** a seasonal power to *blast* that mood with power comparable to a wish
- **Wicked Mode**, the power to reverse the mood you radiate
- **Kaiju Form** and **Mortal Form,** a highly problematic ability to turn into a giant monster (and, occasionally, back)

Often you'll die a little while before the end of the quest; finishing the quest, in addition to granting the powers above, shows you the pathway home.

You'll get an Otherworldly 1 Perk from this quest—this is often either **Superior Dreamer 1** or something to do with an ally spirit that you met while wandering in the wilds.

Read the notes on pg. 334 and 537.

The quest on pg. 292 is a customized version of **"Science!,"** so you'll now move on to **"Someone's in Trouble!"**

A Far and A Sunless Land
("Knight" Option)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you do something that connects you spiritually or practically to death and rebirth, the sky, a holy mountain, or the sun.
- ...you find a place for yourself in Fortitude, ideally one that connects and relates to one or more of those ideas.
- ...a context is established or updated for your regular interactions with **the Walker in Darkness** as an enemy/rival you're stuck with occasionally or a friend/ally you sometimes get the chance to see.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...a nightmare of Jade Irinka (the murdered angel of the Houses of the Sun).
- ...talking with somebody about one of those nightmares.
- ...talking with somebody about death and what it means in a world of potential rebirth.
- ...talking with somebody about the nature of the unknown chaos outside the world.
- ...talking with somebody about what it means to belong somewhere.
- ...talking with somebody about fate, free will, and meaning.
- ...a scene mostly leading to/motivated by your pretentions—by your trying to be more than you are, either out of hope or from hubris.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

A Far and A Sunless Land
("Otherworldly" Option)

2

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you fall under the burden of the quest: you explicitly decide to fight for your life using whatever magic or science you command.
- ...you construct some sort of defensive perimeter.
- ...you encounter Jade Irinka, the former sun, or the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy.
- ...three weeks/chapters pass without obvious IC progress on the quest.

You can earn up to three of these bonuses, once each, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...sympathizing with, or assisting, the outcast and the wrong.
- ...dreams calling you to a place of danger.
- ...listening to stories of strange things happening in Big Lake.
- ...regaling people with a legend of the Outside, the glass dragon, or the epic dangers (or whatever) that are the focus of the quest—typically a legend invented by your player but occasionally forwarded from previous discussions with the HG.
- ...complaining to the other PCs about the progress of your investigations/work.
- ...reluctantly allowing yourself to be dragged away from it, *or*
- ...reluctantly allowing others to get involved with it.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

The Storyteller Arc

Notes and Rewards

If you chose a **Storyteller** Arc, finishing this quest will earn you your choice of:

- **Creature of the Light 0**
- **Creature of Fable 0**

The first offers:

- **Immortality**
- **Well-Lit,** giving you a free spotlight any time you want one
- **Tireless:** you have returned from the fields of death with a strange obsession, but you have some extra strength and cope to pursue it with

The second instead...

- ...earns you an MP-regeneration ability, **Frantic**—being in trouble invigorates you.
- ...teaches you to accomplish weird stuff **Between the Boundaries** of scenes or in flashbacks if you can tell a suitably-genred story for how you accomplished it.
- ...gives you the power to maintain an **Iconic** standard appearance no matter how much people try to clean you up or, for that matter, dirty you.

I think the quest itself comes to its proper end when you get used to death. When you've been dead for a few minutes or a few weeks or whatever and you've gotten a little... bored of it, you know?

I think it is when the rush of excitement at finally actually being dead and knowing what it's like is over, when it stops being this amazing marvel and becomes everyday and drab, that the sun lights your path back home.

And you go.

You don't forget death. You don't turn your back on it. But the fields of death lack the comforts of home. So you follow the light back to life, and Fortitude.

Pick a Storyteller 1 Perk—I suggest **Dramatic Vision.**

This quest is also called **"Fascination";** read the notes on pg. 390 and 537 and then continue to its sequel:

"Beautiful and Far Away."

The Aspect Arc

Notes and Rewards

If you chose an **Aspect** Arc, finishing this quest will start you on the Arc...

- **The Ace 0.**

Dying—well, dying and coming back?

That *freed* you.

Limbs that were slow have learned to move again. Thoughts that were dull become sharp and clear again. You've become *more*, by dying; and since you actually make it back, you can do something *with* that.

You'll be more than you were. Younger-feeling. Better.

Often you'll come back with the new Perk:

- **Power.** Gain a (specific) miraculous power, typically costing 1 MP to use, that lets you channel your "Chi" or heart power to perform some specific miraculous feat.

You'll certainly come back with the MP-regenerating power **Frantic** and the Ace power, **Tireless—**the ability to use a separate, fast-regenerating pool of 3 Will for daily routine and self-care.

This quest is also named **"The Story of Your Life";** now, read the notes on pg. 378 and 537 and move on to its sequel, **"Triumph."**

A Far and A Sunless Land
("Storyteller" Option)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when you...

- ...express your fascination with someone or something dangerous and irresponsible.
- ...*after* that first reward, go a long way out of your way (physically) in order to study the operation and mechanisms of somebody else's powers—e.g., a field trip to Horizon to watch the Wish-Granting Engine at work.
- ...make yourself terrifyingly vulnerable, e.g. as an act of social/romantic trust, an act of folly, or as bait for a trap.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...confess a secret desire.
- ...have a troubled dream about glass, magic, and the Outside.
- ...investigate the shrine family magic for dealing with troubled dreams.
- ...dream about a Main Character or Arc-related NPC.
- ...hang out with someone you like while they do their thing.
- ...get into goofy trouble for, with, or because of somebody else.
- ...talk with someone about the various bad ends people can come to in fairy tales, stories about wishes, and stories about witches.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

A Far and A Sunless Land
("Aspect" Option)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you make peace with a recent setback where you lost a few days of work.
- ...you're unexpectedly shy, vulnerable, or open with someone.
- ...you have a vision of magic in some thing, place, person, or work, which you might one day be able to bring out (if only you weren't so tired!)

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...admiring the construction and atmosphere of Fortitude, often while softly lit, obscured by fog, and/or with something weird or unnatural nearby.
- ...enjoying the softness of fur, plush grass, carpet, fleece, etc.
- ...having trouble because your clothing's a bit too big for you.
- ...trying and failing to hide your identity.
- ...working, involving slightly larger-than-life or magical incidents.
- ...working, involving simple, honest effort.
- ...talking about your progress on some project and its positive or negative effects on the local environment.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

A Far and A Sunless Land
("Shepherd" Option)

XP

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you visit a throne room and stand before a seated (e.g.) King or Queen.
- ...you're sent into an underworld, be it basement, cave, oubliette, dungeon, or literal world of the dead.
- ...you're hung on a hook, crucified, tied to a wall, suspended by telekinesis, used as a scarecrow, or otherwise imprisoned or bound above the ground. Agony is optional (you could be in a canvas sack that is hung from a hook, or stage-show-style crucified); suspension and imprisonment are not.

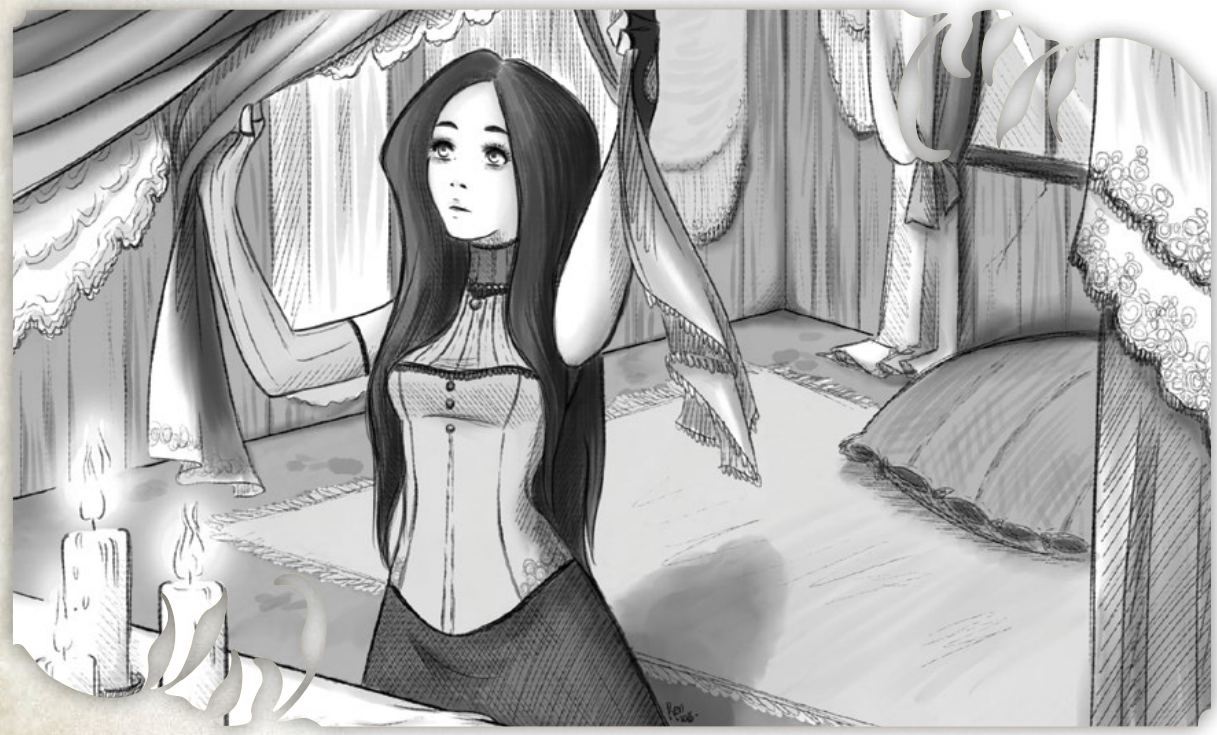
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you have to abandon something precious, leaving it behind.
- ...you're lost.
- ...you're thirsty.
- ...you encounter the dead.
- ...you share a meal with someone while sitting on cracked stones.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



A Far and A Sunless Land
("Emptiness" Option)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you have a traumatic transformation or dissociation scene in play, where your reality gets weird and your (forthcoming?) death reveals itself in your body.
- ...you see a confusing vision, nightmare, or premonition of your or someone else's fate.
- ...you meet and get the chance to help a mysterious child find their way.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...wrestling with/expressing nameless feelings of loss that make you act unnaturally.
- ...trying and failing to burn things, to light them on fire.
- ...getting confused about who and where you are.
- ...listening to stories about things that were lost when Jade Irinka died.
- ...talking with somebody about your destiny/nature and what it means.
- ...talking with somebody about why there's such a thing as death.
- ...dealing with acne, braces, your period, ear infections, or other annoyingly intrusive elements of physicality.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

The Emptiness Arc

Notes and Rewards

If you chose an **Emptiness** Arc, you'll return from death with **Accursed 0.**

You'll be sickly. You'll be cursed.

Your experience in the lands of death will linger with you. You'll have a really hard time dealing with it. The next few quests in this Arc are all about flashbacks to your death and your struggles in the Outside and about your psychological work.

It *changes* you.

Pick an Emptiness 1 Perk.

Read the notes on pg. 368–369 and pg. 538—assuming that the quest you just played through is **"Changes."**

Move on to the quest, **"the Belly of the Whale."**

...before you go?

There is one good thing. You should probably know.

As rough as this was? As horrible as it was?

You've found a special place. A sacred place, a **Sanctuary.** You've found somewhere you can escape to when things are too much to bear.

It's not much, I guess.

But maybe it's something?

A Far and A Sunless Land
("Mystic" Option)

2

Bonus XP

You don't understand.

I wanted to give you a sign for this. You know. Something to say, "Normal life" on one side. And then you'd flip it over to say that you're "shadowed" by something. Cast into shadow. I don't know. That your life is gray.

But it's not that simple.

Look.

You don't even know why everything is so wrong. You don't even know why life is so tasteless, cardboard, and gray. You don't know why eating your cereal feels like eating the box. You don't know why laughing and running and standing in the sun feels like... eating the cereal box.

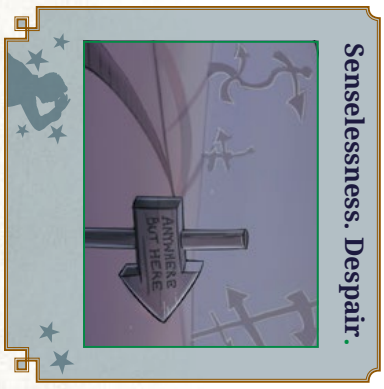
Like tails are falling off of the stars. Like the world is turning green. Like now and then you look around you and it's all gone colorless, sepia, and everything is lost. Why that dog is barking at you when it doesn't even have a head.

Your life is weird.

So, every now and then—up to once per 15 minutes/scene—you can talk about what's going on with you. You can narrate the weird sensations. Free associate them. Say, you know. Body stuff. Eye stuff. Word stuff. Things. Whatever. Share that it's all just broken, twisted, and wrong.

Oh. I'm giving you a sign anyway. But it doesn't really do anything.

XP



The Shepherd Arc

Notes and Rewards

If you chose a **Shepherd** Arc, then at the end of the first quest you are *sent* back from the lands of death—

Unexpectedly given a duty in the world.

With that duty comes a Shepherd 1 Perk and a new miraculous Arc:

- **Sentimental 0**
- **A Keeper of Gardens 0**

The first focuses on bringing out powers in your works of craft and the things your heart treasures; it comes with...

- ...the MP-regenerating power **Frantic**;
- ...access to a separate, fast-regenerating pool of 3 Will when interacting with the treasure or person closest to your heart;
- ...the power to project your spirit to the company of the things that you care about most.

The second option focuses more on being a divine caretaker of special places (or "Gardens")—it comes with:

- **Immortality**
- **The World, Like Clay,** for molding the substance of the gardens you keep
- **Toxic**—some strange poison adhered to you, became a *part* of you, when you were wandering in the Outside
- **Land-Rule**, the ability to shift a couple of your Skill points into the Skill "Superior Land-Rule" and thereby achieve more control over the creatures of your gardens

In the latter case you'll almost certainly want to use your Shepherd 1 Perk on your first "Garden"—will you become responsible for the supermarkets of Fortitude? One of the western hills? The northern beach? The doors and mantels? Everywhere heavily frequented by cats?

Probably something to do with what you're sent back for, I would suppose.

This quest is also known as **"Down";** read the notes on pg. 344 and 538 and move on to something cheerier: **"Let's Doing!"**

The Mystic Arc

Notes and Rewards

If you chose a **Mystic** Arc, then this quest ends with a miracle. It's probably that same miracle that shows you your path home.

And if it's just ended—

You are now on the Arc **Primordial.** You are becoming a creature of some divine principle; some element of the world; some mythic form. You're changing into something... really different. Like, at the extreme end, we're talking *Vision of Ezekiel* different.

To start with, this'll give you immortality. That's part and parcel of the miracle.

And you'll become identified with something in the natural world. You'll come back as The Stars, or Reflections, or Smells, or Walls, or The Winds, or The Trees, or The Rain.

The biggest thing that you'll get to start is that you *are* that thing, on some fundamental level; if you are the stars and you want to twinkle, you can darn well twinkle. If you are the winds and you want to blow, you can darn well blow.

You'll also have the power to see and hear within your element, although that may or may not be terribly useful—the ability to see and hear wherever the wind is blowing is actually pretty strong, but the ability to see and hear inside the stars is not *normally* of that much use.[90]

Pick a Mystic 1 Perk.

Return from the dead.

Read the notes on pg. 354 and 538, rebrand the quest you've just completed as **"A Troubled Protagonist,"** and move on to its sequel: **"An Unlikely Friendship."**

90 Day 1,123: still pretty bright.

2

Bonus XP Emotions

In **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine,** each character has a "bonus XP emotion"—a particular emotional reaction you're trying to get from the other players.

You have access to five standard options:

- **Mock-Outrage** (fist-shaking, crying out your PC's name in dramatic raaage)
- **Worry/Fear for your character** ("oh no! <name>'s in trouble!")
- **Cheering your Catchphrases**
- **Putting their Faith in You**
- **Admiration of Cuteness** ("aww!")

These, and other options, are explained on pg. 69 and in more depth in **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG.**

Perks

Characters in this game have a handful of **Perks.** You gain them or improve them by completing quests, and you can have up to 8.

You'll start with these Perks:

Connection: ???

Your starting character type Connections (like a shop fox's connection to the Tenko and *youkai*) take the form of Perks.

1

Connection: [PC of your choice]

At the start of the game, with the player's consent, you may take a free level 1 Connection to any other PC.

Miraculous Abilities

You have the following miraculous abilities:

- **Protagonist Trajectory:** You're on track to become a powerful, important character over the course of the first two or three stories.
- **Virtue:** As your **(being a) Hero** Issue rises, your native virtue (honesty, courage, perseverance, loyalty, meticulous attention to detail, or whatever) becomes an ever-greater source of strength.
- **Shard Power:** As your **(in) Over your Head** Issue rises, you pick up a strange power from the shard of the glass dragon that is inside you.
- **Character-Type Bond and Affliction:** You have two powers based on your character type (e.g. two vampiric powers, if you're a vampire.)
  - One is like your virtue: it strengthens what's already there, at the cost of sometimes getting you into trouble.
  - One is like your shard power: it's powerful and miraculous but not completely under your control.

Health

You have 2 Normal Health Levels, 1 Tough Health Level, and 0 Divine Health Levels. This makes you about five times as survivable as an ordinary person—which is good, because you're involved in some pretty scary stuff. However, it's not really *physical* toughness: it's just that plot contrivance or clever thinking on your part will tend, to a point, to provide last-minute saves.

You stand to gain 2 Divine Health Levels—one the first time you die and come back, and one when you complete your first miraculous Advancement Arc. That'll make you the kind of person who can survive a couple of nuclear strikes or volcano dips, but it's still plot contrivance, clever thinking, and the wishing power of your heart that saves the day. You'll never be able to survive more *actual* damage than a typical pulp adventure hero unless you pick it up as a specific power.

Miracle Points

You have 1 Miracle Point (MP) which can give your shard power and character-type Affliction the tiniest edge in certain conflicts. After you've returned from death and completed your first Advancement Arc, you'll gain two chunks of 2 MP each, for a final total of 5, and may very well have picked up a power that can use them—at which point the MP will be a more relevant resource to you.

You regain 1 MP, to a maximum of your normal total, at the beginning of each week.

You can also gain additional MP, with no particular maximum...

- ...through Issues.
- ...when Region Properties get you into trouble.
- ...when your Bonds or Afflictions get you into trouble.
- ...when you spend a week diligently honoring a Region Property (e.g., helping cats come and go in the Yatskaya family shrine, which has a Property "Cats come and go as they please.")

Protagonist Trajectory

You have the following special rules:

- Even though you're a mortal-level character, you can start immediately on a miraculous Advancement Arc.
- You'll earn 1 Divine Health Level (max 2) and 2 MP (max 5) when you...
  - ...come back from the dead.
  - ...complete your first Advancement Arc.

Normally both of these things will happen during the first 12 game sessions.

Virtue

Type: Bond, based on your (being a) Hero **Cost:** —

You have a unique virtue—something like "honesty," "good-heartedness," "organized," "humility," "courage," "thrift," "creativity," or whatever. Figure out in advance how to show this when it isn't necessary and how to practice this when you're alone. (For instance, a "courageous" person might dress according to their own sense of style to show courage even when there's no danger and a "good-hearted" person can practice that virtue when alone by thinking good wishes towards others or thinking about how to better support them.)

Any time you have 1+ points in the **(being a) Hero** Issue, you may draw upon this virtue as follows:

- Invoke your **Virtue** and it will sustain you in times of trouble. Even without food, water, rest,

air, or *reality itself*, you can practice your virtue and it will help you endure.

- Invoke your **Virtue** Bond when your virtue is getting you into trouble and the HG may give you up to your Hero Issue in Will or MP.
- If your virtue is relevant to something your Affliction, or a later-acquired miraculous ability, is doing, you can invoke **Virtue** to get your Hero Issue in free Strike.
- Invoke your **Virtue** Bond when...
  - ...you're pursuing your virtue using mundane actions; *and*
  - ...there is an Obstacle in the way of those actions

  ...and you can add your Hero Issue to your mundane action level.

Strike and mundane action bonuses from a Bond don't add to the Strike and bonuses from other Bonds, but they do add to Strike from MP, Strike intrinsic to a miracle, and Tool bonuses to mundane actions.

Shard Power

Type: Affliction, based on your **(in) Over Your Head** Issue
Cost: —

You have a shard of the glass dragon lodged in you. It's changed you.

There's a power in it.

A vague and unreliable power! But a power. Name it. It's something that should make sense but leave lots of questions about specifics unanswered, like: "Nothing can catch me," "I punish the unworthy," "I never let go of what's mine," "No lock can hold me out," "You have always known me," "Animals are my friends," "I speak the language of the storms."

Any time you have 1+ points in the **(in) Over Your Head** Issue, the following rules apply:

- Miracles that oppose that power must have [Strike ≥ your **(in) Over Your Head]**.
- The HG will occasionally invoke minor miraculous or mundane effects that support that power. These are stronger the higher your **(in) Over Your Head** becomes.

The HG isn't obligated to maximize your power here, just to toss you the occasional bone; so, for instance, if "Nothing can catch you," but someone grabs you, there'll be a persistent sense that the grip is loose and that they haven't quite *caught* you yet, but if it's a while before the HG gets around to throwing you a miracle that helps you actually get loose, that's OK! Similarly, if no lock can hold you out, you'll definitely get through even the scariest locks eventually, but weird magical locks might require you to go buy special tools as part of not being completely held out.

Your shard power subsides for a while after the resolution of the **(in) Over Your Head** Issue.

Your Bond

Type: Level 2 Bond **Cost:** —

You have a **level 2 Bond**—a special rule governing your existence. It can be a total pain, in which case it'll give you bonus Will over time; it can be useful, in which case it'll sometimes help you succeed at difficult actions; or it can be both!

The biggest thing about Bonds is that you as a player always decide how they work IC. The HG can veto a given use, but can't force you to bring the Bond into play.

For instance, if you pick "dogs terrify me," and there's a dog threatening you, it's up to you whether you fall down in terror or do a big internal monologue about how "I'm so scared! But I must keep going! For honor!" Or whatever. You have a lot of power over the *meaning* of the Bond.

What is your Bond?

Your Affliction

Type: Affliction **Cost:** —

You also have an **Affliction** with a rating that starts at level 0 but rises with that of your first Advancement Arc.

Afflictions are scarier and more powerful because you *aren't* the one who invokes them. The HG decides how they work. In theory, you could have an Affliction that made people sneeze when you said their names; in such a case, there could be some poor kid named "Um" in some country you've never heard of who sneezes every time you throw an Um into your sentence as an interjection.

What is your Affliction?

Actions and Issues

Here's some things you're often doing.

Pastoral Stuff

Talking about what's going on

Shared Reactions

Hanging out in the world and experiencing stuff

Slice of Life

Living a simple, honest life

Shared Action

These are kind of the standard things for characters in Fortitude to do. You can get bonus XP for these kinds of actions a couple of times a week.

Other Stuff

Take a chance on someone

Science, Faith, and Sorcery

Get in way over your head without backing down

Never Say Die!

Encounter some scary kind of trouble! Oh no!

Trouble

These are some other actions that I think will be pretty common for miscellaneous characters (like you) in this game!

Issues

If you pick up a **Complex,** I recommend something comparatively pastoral. Will you ever find that book you wanted? How are you going to make ends meet? Will anyone ever love you? Can you find a good anniversary present for your parents?

Your most common **Vice** is probably going to be something low-key too. Borrowing from family without asking. Being scared of someone or something. White lies. Getting too excited about magic or spiritual stuff and then forgetting what's really important.

Note the extra rules concerning you and the **(being a) Hero** Issue under "Virtue," above, as well as the extra rules concerning you and the **(in) Over Your Head** Issue under "Shard Power."

Quests

These are the quests that you'll have in front of you over the course of the game.

Quests are just tools.

You pick up a quest and it helps you tell a broad category of stories—potentially dozens of high concepts and billions of stories-in-play. It does this by giving you things to try out in play.

For instance, let's say Natalia Koutolika is starting a new story Arc. She wants to investigate the "pirate ship" that's been hanging out near the Fortitude docks. There's a rumor that its crew are all ghosts! She reads through the story's rules on pg. 485-489, decides that she wants to be on an **Aspect** Arc, and picks up the 35-XP version of the appropriate quest, **Above the Fray** (pg. 340).

The story on pg. 485 doesn't tell her much about what's going on here. It advises her that she's on this quest because she's stuck in her life and that when she sees the pirate ship, or hears about it, or something, she'll have this realization that, yes, *this* is what she needs to figure out. It notes that she'll probably encounter Rinley Yatskaya and the quest NPC "Palimpsest," and that they'll probably be helpful to her... but it doesn't tell her much about the investigation itself.

That comes from the quest.

Looking at the card, she sees quest options like "trust yourself to a dangerous (and relevant) part of the setting," which suggests she should head out onto Big Lake near where the ship's been last seen. Or that she might want to "deal with a child who lives/hangs out there."

Huh!

So maybe there's a kid who hangs out on the beach watching the pirate ship's comings and goings—maybe they could compare notes? Or maybe she should catch some *ghost* kids and interrogate them?

The quest card also informs her that she can get a 5-XP bonus when she "stands in a storm, overlooking a pit or dangerous depth"—in this case, that's meant to get her out standing on a cliff in a storm, looking down, when a ghostly ship emerges from the mist or the deep. Or, if pirates try to make her walk the plank, and it's raining, it encourages her to actually walk out there and look down... stuff like that.

She can't manifest storms from nothing just to fulfill the quest terms—but she'll be drawn to do things suitable for that sort of mise-en-scène.

The rules for a quest are mostly OOC, but there's an assumption that there's *something* IC as well—that your character's heart is drawn to things that earn XP, including bonus XP from a quest.

Creating Quest Sets

If you're curious where the quest sets come from or how to make some of your own—here's where *these* came from.

I made a sketch outline of five books about each of the characters. I made this simpler by basing the overall arc of each pentalogy on the progression of some Issue (pg. 139, **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG.**)

I thought about cool scenes that might appear in those books.

I boiled those scenes down, looking for the stuff that kept on appearing—the way *each* of those stories started, the way *each* continued, etc. I figured that if I did that, I'd be tapping into some generic features of those characters' *stories*, which wouldn't just cross the divide between book 1, book 2, and book 3 but would also cross the divide between my head and your game.

Then I figured out the colors of the quests, ordered them from 1-5 in each Arc color, and used those colors and the principles on pg. 393–448 of **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG** to get more ideas for what should happen at each quest in the set.

I had a list at this point of possible quest actions; I simplified them down, made them as generic as I could without losing the key bits of flavor, and moved stuff that...

- ...I wanted to only happen 1-2x;
- ...I didn't think you should be able to do on command;
- ...that was really disadvantageous to you;

...into the 5-XP goals.

That's the basic idea. You can probably skip the sketch outline phase and go straight to thinking about recurring scenes if you're just building stuff for your game.

What about building simplified quests?

Conceptually, simplifying a quest affects *time*: to rush through a story, most of the time, you'll switch from showing progression on something to showing completion—not work but success, not pain but collapse. Similarly, you'll switch from showing completion to showing progression: not a series of collapses, but the pain that leads up to one example of them; not a series of successes, but the work that goes into one of them. I used this kind of switch for the bulk of the work in creating simplified quests, and then left some options the same or tweaked random things until I was comfortable with the final result.

You'd do the same!

Quest Card Completeness

If the quest card doesn't seem like *enough*, remember that you're still allowed to roleplay, and come up with your own ideas for things, and to interact with the other players—the quest's not there to *replace* that. It's just there to *augment* that, keeping you from running completely *out* of ideas by ensuring that there are always at least a few options.

For instance, Natalia's allowed to ask around at the docks, even if that's not a quest option. The only thing that *can't* happen is her asking around at the docks, hitting a dead end, and having no option for what to do next!

Simplified Quests

For the sake of variety, for the sake of hitting your XP targets a little more smoothly, and for the sake of those who just don't have much time to play, I'm offering a simplified/accelerated version of each quest. Note that these can differ a fair bit in tone—sometimes because things just plain feel different when you're rushing and sometimes because I changed things up a bit for multiple-playthrough variety!

You're always allowed to pick a simplified quest instead of the real one—the only drawback is that the Perks for low-XP quests are generally less impressive. Completing a 25-XP quest, for instance, might earn you a mundane Perk even at the miraculous level, or a relatively weak miraculous Perk. This is, that said, *totally optional*, and dependent on the circumstances of play—if *everyone's* rushing through the game, feel free to take a pretty strong Perk; or if the quest was surprisingly difficult to get through, or really important in play, or if a strong Perk is just what *fits*.

The Marvelous Misadventures of Chuubo & Company

So in this world there is a Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.

Every week—a wish!

These quests form a generic structure for the Arcs of, well, anyone who might want to use that power for, I don't know, getting one's chores done or making a giant pile of money or creating a flying carpet or whatever.

The Wishing Boy (or Girl), of course—

But if they're an NPC, and you can cadge even one or two wishes a season out of them, then this could be you. Or, you know, if you have magic that lets you do goofy and vainglorious stuff yourself!

These quests are also a secondary structure for playing through the Arcs of **the Dream-Witch**—playing around in Hideo Hayashi's archive, getting involved with the hidden room and Miramie Mesmer, and hunting the shards of the glass dragon. Normally you'll play those out using her own Arc ("the Bittersweet Saga of Miramie Mesmer," below), but if you wind up meddling and exerting power pretty heavily then you'll want to use these instead!

The order of these quests will depend a little on what you're doing—for instance, if you're on a Mystic Arc, giving yourself into the hands of higher powers, then the first quest is about haunting premonitions. If you're on a Storyteller Arc, diving headfirst into an exciting situation, the "haunting premonitions" quest won't come until much later on.

The reference version of this Arc, though, is an Otherworldly Arc, and it goes like this:

- **Haunted:** Someone haunts your dreams.
- **Wishing for…**
  - …**Ease:** You try to cheat and make your life a little easier.
  - …**Power:** You pick up a new power.
- **Wicked Creatures:** Some wicked creature tries to change your nature.

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when you've...

- …found someone in Fortitude who can help you or teach you how to help yourself.
- …committed to helping, connecting to, or making friends with whatever power is haunting you.

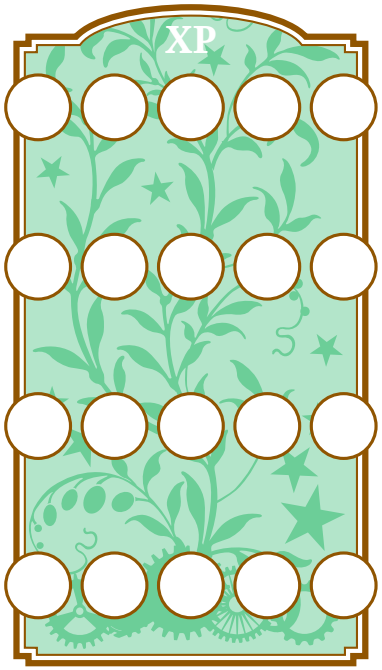
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by...

- …abandoning a task or once-loved possession in disgust.
- …having night terrors.
- …realizing suddenly that you were *very* dumb sometime in the past 24 hours.
- …talking with somebody about your dreams.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Followed, if you need a bit more XP or closure, by one or both of:

- **Asserting Your Existence:** You try to reclaim something you've lost.
- **Wishing for Healing:** You try to fix something you've broken.

Let's take a look!

Haunted

20 or 35 XP Quest

1:

2:

3:

You're haunted. Something is visiting your dreams. Something is intimately tangled with you, like a thorn in the paw of your mind or bedsheets and blankets wrapped all around you.

Something… else?… is calling to you, from far away.

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when you've...

- …found someone in Fortitude who can help you or teach you how to help yourself.
- …put a name and face to the power that's haunting you from afar.
- …formed an important connection to it—recognized that power as, e.g., a friend, enemy, parent, or SO.

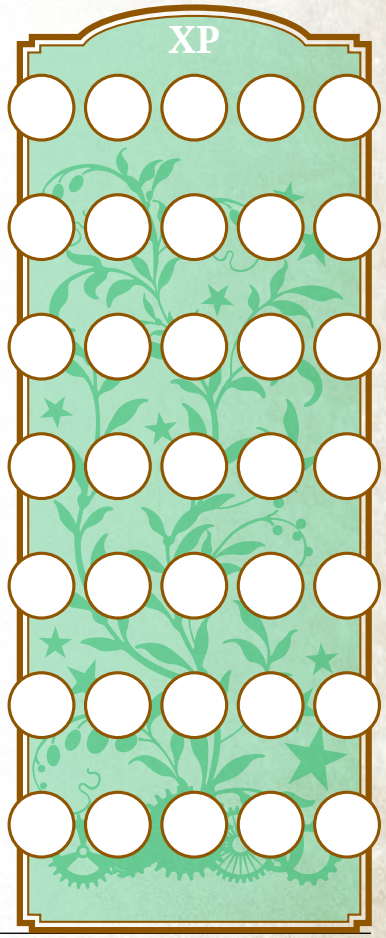
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by...

- …doing reckless stuff together with a rival, enemy, or wicked creature.
- …having a troubled dream.
- …investigating magic that might help your situation.
- …talking to a scholar or sailor about your situation.
- …performing cleaning- or purification-related chores.
- …talking with somebody about what dreams are, as compared to reality.
- …talking with somebody about whether the world deserves to exist, whether it's good or bad, or whether that even matters.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Wishing for Ease

25 or 35 XP Quest

2:

3:

4:

This is the story of what happens when you start taking big shortcuts to make your life a little easier.

The canonical example is stuff like "I wish my chores would do themselves."

I expect this quest will take 3-20 chapters to complete, and accordingly you'll have the opportunity to make multiple wishes during its course—but the focus of the quest will be on the lesson or lessons you learn from 1-2 specific wishes, and accordingly on stuff that can influence the game for a long time or on dreams that you'll make multiple attempts to wish into being until you get them right.

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …you discover that something you were trying to give up/get rid of is actually important to you.
- …you learn an important life lesson.
- …a rival or enemy is making good use of your power—coming up "smelling of roses," as it were—even as your wish blows up in *your* face.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

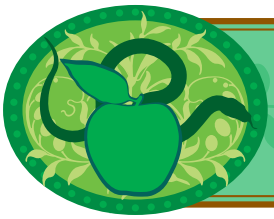
- …a wish becomes goofy and self-defeating.
- …you double down and use one wish to fix another.
- …a wish somehow strengthens the power of the Outside in Fortitude/your life.
- …a wish somehow strengthens the evil former identity of **the Dream-Witch.**
- …you're lured to a secret place.
- …trying to understand the changed world and the wish that caused that change.
- …you have to make a public apology for a wish.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

Special Note!

Anything that can go wrong in the same way a classic wish can (including most Imperial miracles and some magical spells) counts as a "wish" here.

XP



Wishing for Ease
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …you wind up lost in the Outside.
- …you give a monologue—often comedically serious IC, though not necessarily so OOC—to explain why a given wish was a bad idea.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- you work to repair damage caused by the wish.
- you encounter some shocking consequence of the wish.
- storms roll into Fortitude from the Outside.
- you have a cool dream of watching the glass dragon, Professor Hideo Hayashi's "country" (pg. 412), or the Outside from high up or far away.
- you try to fix something with a big use of power, but it goes further wrong.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

Special Note!

Anything that can go wrong in the same way a classic wish can (including most Imperial miracles and some magical spells) counts as a "wish" here.

XP

~~Wishing~~ Using Power for Ease

25 or 35 XP Quest

2:

3:

4:

This is a variant for characters who just don't have that kind of power—characters whose powers just don't *bend* that way. Characters whose primary or only powers are Skills, Superior Skills, and miraculous abilities.

Powers like that are pretty easy to keep under your control.

I mean, real people using real Skills sometimes have their use of those Skills blow up in their face in a wacky fashion, but it's not as *common* as it is with wishes; and Superior Skills and miraculous powers are kind of like that.

So the risk isn't that your powers will go haywire.

The risk is that *you'll* go a little haywire—like so:

~~Wishing~~ Using Power for Ease

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …you realize belatedly that something you "solved" with your powers wasn't a problem at all.
- …you get in trouble because of your overconfidence.
- …you lose face to a rival and your powers can't fix it.

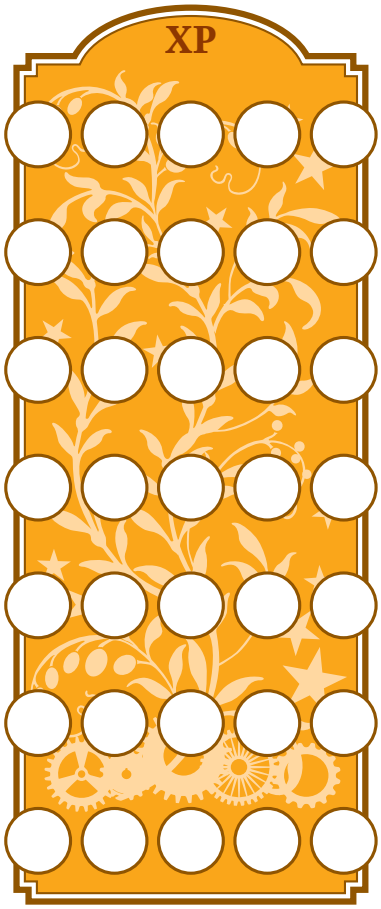
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- …your powers enable goofy, self-defeating behavior.
- …you try to fix a power-based screw-up by throwing *more* power at it.
- …you accidentally hurt somebody with your powers.
- …something corrupts or manipulates your use of your powers.
- …the evil former identity of **the Dream-Witch** grows stronger.
- …your life becomes strangely dream-like; it's hard to focus on anything.
- …you're really confident that you know what you can handle.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



~~Wishing~~ Using Power for Ease
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …you freak out—you have a minor or major psychological breakdown because your powers haven't fixed everything.
- …you receive some implausible honor or award.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

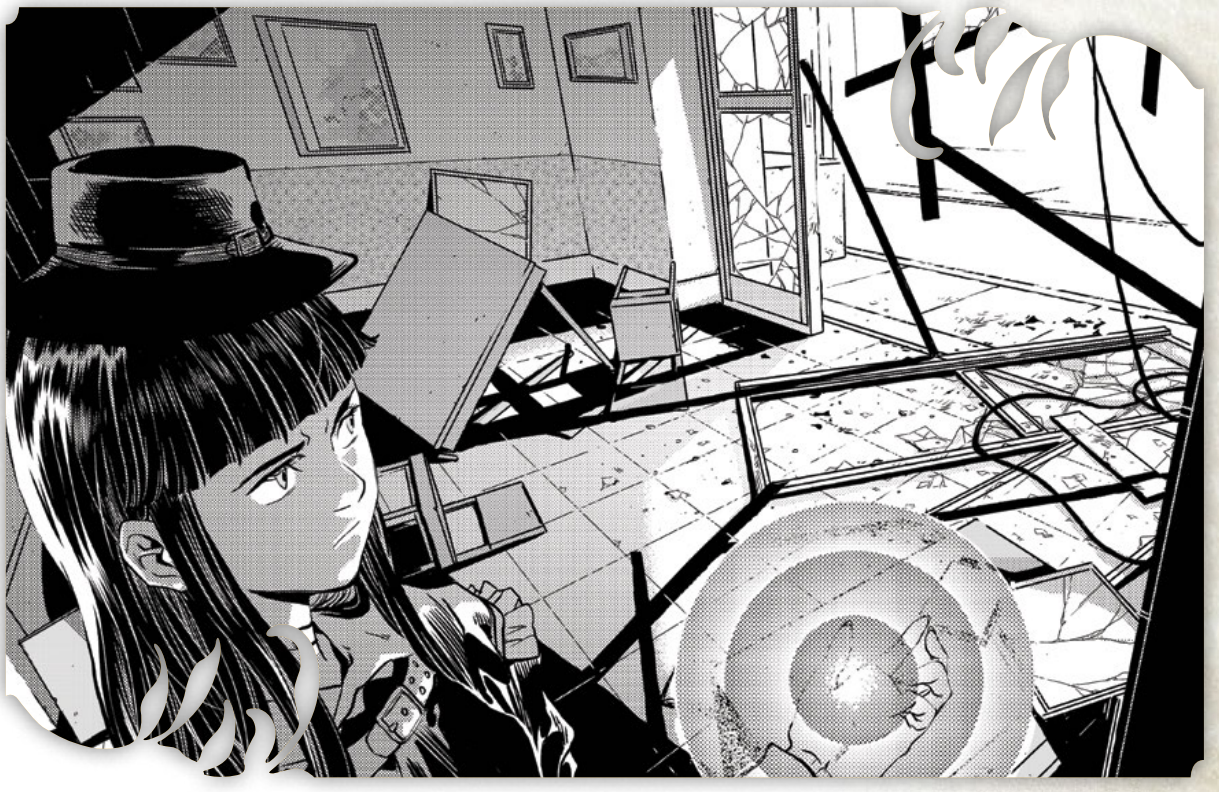
Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- …you get extra responsibility piled on top of you because you stood out too much.
- …you try to get things done without using your powers.
- …you boast about your awesomeness.
- …you have nightmares about the Outside or the laughter of Melanie (or Reginald) Malakh.
- …your life falls apart a little because you went overboard with your use of powers.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP



Wishing for Power

25 or 35 XP Quest

2:

3:

4:

This is the story of what happens when you make one or more wishes—or use similarly flexible powers that can go awry in similar ways—to give yourself amazing powers, seize power over Town or Fortitude, or otherwise become a bigger deal than you are.

Again, I expect this quest will take 3-20 chapters to complete, but the focus will be on the lessons you learn from 1-2 specific wishes.

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …you discover that some power you wanted is actually rather dull, boring, or unpleasant.
- …you wear a truly ridiculous outfit or assemblage, with details suggested by the HG and the other players.
- …you, or someone whose power you're drawing on to make wishes (e.g., if you're "wishing" by persuading **the Wishing Boy or Girl,** them), get sick, hypnotized, won over, or corrupted by someone or something.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

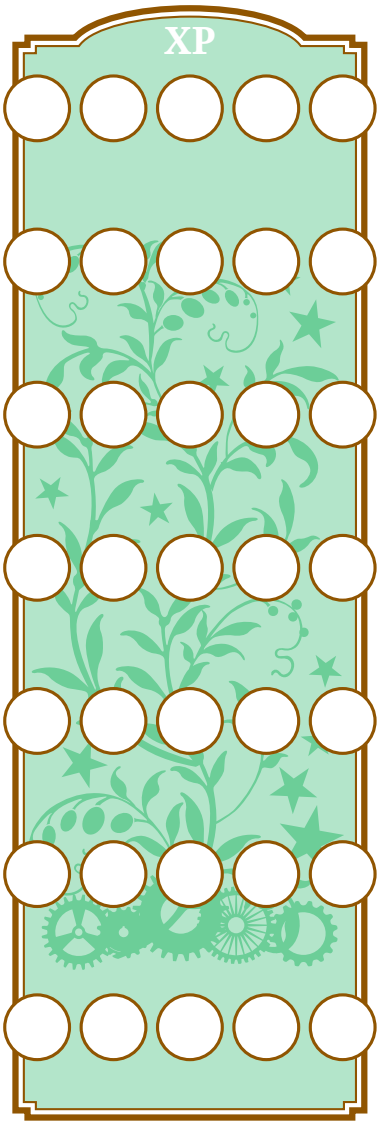
1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- …experiencing the wish-fueled changes in the world.
- …pretending a wish is making you happy when it's not.
- …events spin out of your control.
- …you double down and use one wish to fix another.
- …you revel in the power that a wish has brought.
- …you engage in strategic use of the power a wish has brought.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

Special Note!

Anything that can go wrong in the same way a classic wish can (including most Imperial miracles and some magical spells) counts as a "wish" here.



Wishing for Power
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …you sit or lean against a wall with someone and explain how your new power went terribly wrong.
- …you show off a new power, but people are more interested in something else (like your outfit or an impending store opening).

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- …pushing yourself to enjoy some power that you're really… not.
- …you go overboard with your new powers.
- …events spin out of your control.
- …experiencing annoying consequences.
- …there's a moment of sudden, amazing joy or grace.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

Special Note!

Anything that can go wrong in the same way a classic wish can (including most Imperial miracles and some magical spells) counts as a "wish" here.

XP

~~Wishing~~ Using Powers for Power

I regret to say that I don't have an alternative quest available here if you don't have a wish-like power, and worse, my explanation as to why is too annoyingly technical to burden you with.

If you want to use this, but you don't have any wish-like powers, just… use your abilities or your friendship with somebody to seize power in a wacky or troublesome way, and call that the result of your wish to have that power. ^_^

Wicked Creatures

25 or 35 XP Quest

1:

2:

3:

3

You've found a connection to something wicked—

A place of its power, where it shows you beautiful and scary things, where you can dig behind its surface and understand its secrets.

A chapel of its heart.

There may be a power from this—

It may give you an ability, or share its control over some monstrous minions. Or it may be subtler than that—it may be that the only power you have here is the power to learn about them, to influence them, even to help them maybe, and that all they actually *give* you on their own, voluntarily, is random bursts of pain and despair, or make your feet so they're always cold, and whisper in your dreams, and make stars keep falling from the sky.

The creature is your **Corruptor** for this Arc, but it isn't necessarily the case that you're the one that'll wind up changing because of your association.

The place you hear their voice is their **Chapel.**

Wicked Creatures (Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …you tell people that you think your corruptor is lonely.
- …your corruptor reveals its identity.
- …some quasi-abandoned or pointless member of the cast takes on new story life as a minion of this corrupting power.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- …you're spending too much time in your corruptor's Chapel.
- …you fall under the sway of your corruptor's voice, power, or dreams.
- …you're sucked into a dramatic dream or memory of your corruptor.
- …your corruptor or a minion thereof comforts you.
- …your corruptor, some power you got from them, or one of their minions helps you out with your chores or your ordinary life.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Wicked Creatures

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …you learn something in the corruptor's Chapel that really helps you out.
- …you find a way, or at least a lever, to redeem, civilize, or humanize a wicked creature—most likely one of the corruptor's associates or minions.
- …you discover that some previously quasi-abandoned or pointless member of the cast is also somehow involved with your corruptor.
- …you're hapless/head-desk-able enough that your corruptor temporarily loses the ability to cope.

You can earn up to three of these bonuses, once each, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- …you spend a peaceful interval in your corruptor's Chapel.
- …you explore, finding something neat, scary, or beautiful in your corruptor's Chapel.
- …you learn something dramatic about your corruptor.
- …you fall under the sway of your corruptor's voice, power, or dreams.
- …you get your corruptor or one of their minions involved in your hobby; or, more generally, use the powers you get here for unimportant things.
- …you hide what's going on from the people around you.
- …the powers or minions of your corruptor are a little *too* helpful.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Asserting Your Existence

20 or 35 XP Quest

1:

4:

5:

You're lost somewhere—your soul, your *self* has gone away. You can connect to it only in dream-like visions (and actual dreams.)

Can you get yourself back?

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …you make someone acknowledge you as your true self, when they'd been trying to deny it.
- …something useful happens because you're not really "you" any longer.
- …someone monologues to you about the thing you've lost and how important it is.

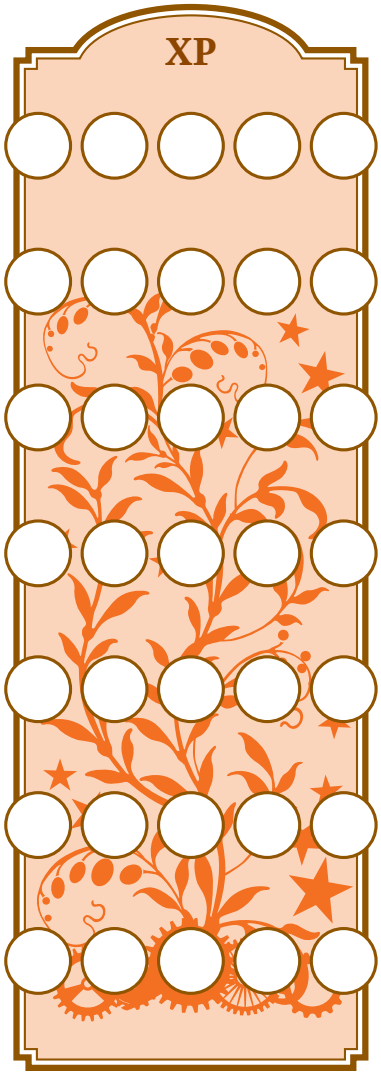
You can earn each bonus once, up to a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- …wrestle with questions of identity.
- …get kind of worked up about the situation.
- …fail at something you were good at, breaking or damaging something.
- …give in to your new identity and dress or cut your hair in a fashion to show it.
- …dream of your true self, far away.
- …dream of a tree growing on the island of King Death.
- …something useful happens because you're not "you" any longer. (This typically follows the 5-XP bonus for such things, repeating what happened before, or is too minor to count—but it *can* trigger the 5-XP bonus if you have a good idea and the HG approves).

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Asserting Your Existence
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …someone tells you that they miss who you used to be.
- …you achieve some grand plan that the old you couldn't have.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

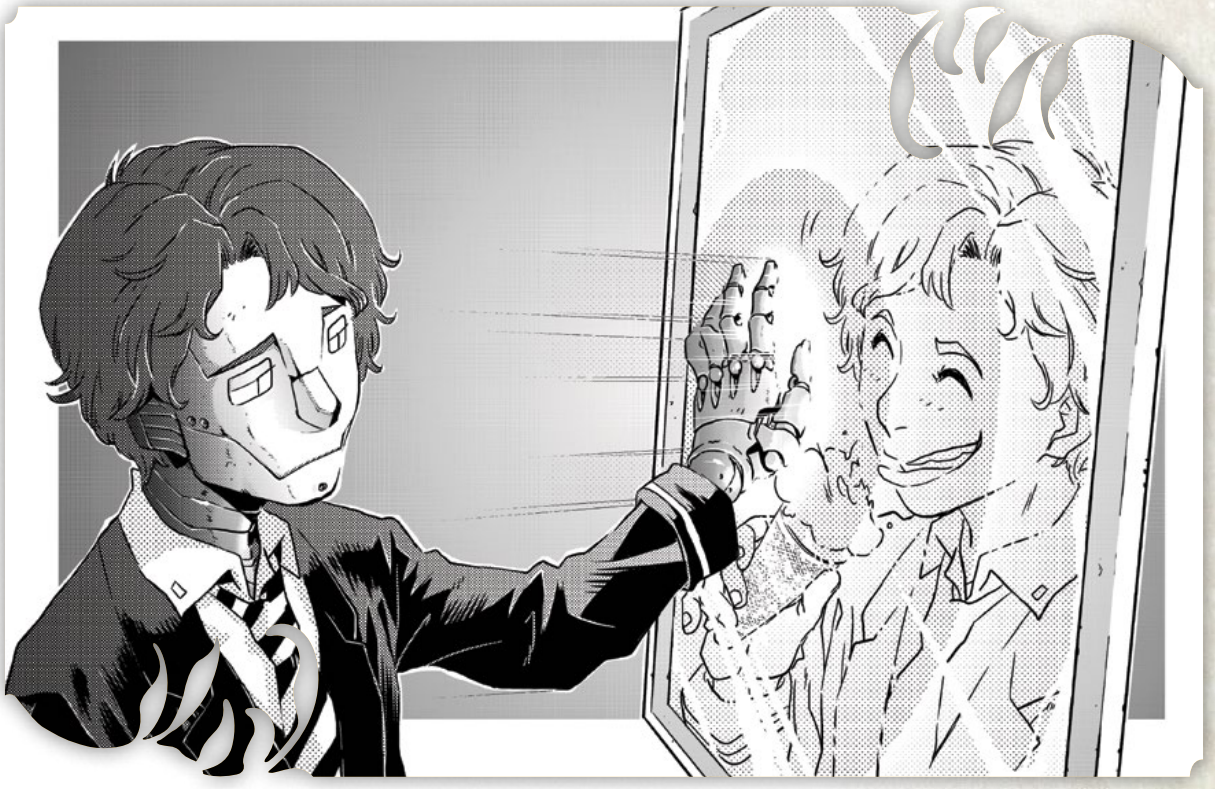
Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- …talk about how you plan to get back what you've lost.
- …give up something that you cared about in your "new" life.
- …dream of your true self, far away.
- …dream of the waves against the shore of the island of King Death, and the shade of a tree that grows there, and the shadow of King Death.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP



Wishing for Healing

25 or 35 XP Quest

3:

5:

This is the story of what happens when you've learned a little more about life and put your powers to use fixing things and mistakes that you didn't know enough to fix before. Maybe we're talking very recent and flashy lessons that you've learned, or maybe we're talking about genuine maturity and getting the chance to revisit stuff from a long time ago.

You're different now.

You can make this work. It… might not even be hard.

3

Wishing for Healing

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …you manage to fix something you broke a long time ago.
- …you manage to make something better for people in secret.
- …you tend the grave of a friend, and meet their new incarnation as a star or wish spirit.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- …talk with someone about what you'd do if you could have anything you wanted.
- …wander Fortitude with a friend and a snack.
- …visit an old friend—probably someone sick or old and mostly bed/housebound.
- …tease someone mercilessly.
- …stand in a door, arch, or window frame with sunshine and Big Lake behind you.
- …face down a dragon of some sort.
- …get into goofy trouble because of a wish.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Wishing for Healing
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- …you manage to fix something you broke a long time ago.
- …you ask people to keep some way you're helping others a secret.
- …you look up and you see a shooting star.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- …talk to someone about your plans for the future.
- …drag someone out of seclusion into the world.
- …admire the trophies from some adventure.
- …go mountain-climbing or hill climbing.
- …get into goofy trouble.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

The Secret History of Seizhi Schwan

These quests form a generic structure for the Arcs of the Best Friend, and any other character who winds up in a similar position—

Anyone starting out as just a kid, really, who is destined to **Become Somebody** later on.

These quests are also the generic structure for participating in **the Angel of Fortitude's** Arcs as a witness—they're the structure for stories *about* that mysterious angel, or about the mysteries in Fortitude in general. They're what you'll play through when you encounter a catalyst, a mentor, a miracle, an angel, *something amazing*, that can trigger your becoming something greater, later on.

The order of these quests depends on what kind of Advancement Arc you're on, but the reference version is a **Knight** Arc, and it looks like this:

- **Encounters in the Night.** You start to hear the call of a higher destiny.
- **The Troubled Sky.** You try to claim it.
- **Behind the Mask.** You're corrupted or threatened by some evil that hides behind secrets, shadows, politics, or masks.

If you're short on XP or closure, it then goes on one or two quests past that:

- **Atonement.** The world's gone wrong. Set it right.
- **The Struggle of the Knight.** You face the final trials to become what you wanted to be.

If you're wondering how things can go on past that—what happens if you complete **the Struggle of the Knight,** but the game isn't over?—the answer is that becoming what you want to be isn't always the end of your ambitions so much as a breather in them. Sure, you'll be happy and satisfied for a time, but you can always find new things to look for! Maybe because your goal was incomplete, or maybe because sometimes it's only once you've reached the heights that you can see the next height that's worth striving for.

Arc Terminology

This Arc has a few recurring features. Since they show up on the quest cards, I'll have to talk to you about them here.

- **Vice:** You have a vice or weakness. It's whatever *you* think is wrong with you. It doesn't have to be objectively important. It doesn't have to be a flaw. It doesn't even have to be *real*. But it's the failing that haunts you.
- **the Walker in Darkness:** This dude(tte)'s the bad example. They're the one who falls to your vice to give you strength to reject it, or the one who makes it worse so that you can triumph over them at the end of your character Arc. They're not a big enough deal to be the villain. They're a mid-boss, or a friend you try to save. They're a sinner that this Arc is likely to consign to the metaphorical flames.
- **Cruel Prince:** A cruel prince is the typical villain for this Arc. It's someone who's set above others by some sort of natural talent, social role, or divine right, and so thinks they can do whatever they like. They will typically wear a mask of some sort but that's not an absolute requirement.
- **the Guardian Bird:** This is a bird or bird-like entity, such as you would use for guarding treasure before its sudden, yet inevitable, betrayal. There's a very generic Guardian Bird on pg. 326, although eventually you'll have to stretch a bit to figure out what a new cool guardian bird for the Arc might look like.
- **the Hero:** This is an over-the-top version of someone to look up to—although it's OK, if they're *too* far over the top, if you mostly roll your eyes instead. Usually this is Laodemus Schwan or **the Prodigy,** but it could be someone else!

Encounters in the Night

20 or 35 XP Quest

1:

2:

This Arc is about your destiny; it's about miracles; it's about the path that you'll actually find at the end of this quest. But you won't know that at first.

When it starts, this doesn't seem to be a story about that.

The Walker in Darkness

This starts as the story of how something sacred comes into your life, but there's also this person who denies it. Someone who pushes you away from it, or pulls you away from it, or plans to use and abuse it, or who denies it.

Someone who sneers at the sacred thing. Someone who is going to suffer.

They're a bad example, maybe. The path not taken. Or they're the villain. Or they're just someone you'll care about, that you won't be able to save.

They're an incarnation of your vices, probably.

If you're a jerk, then maybe they're a bigger jerk. Or someone who takes advantage of your being a jerk. Or somebody who seems nice at the beginning, but is going to twist the knife and reveal themselves worse than you ever were, later on.

If you're lazy, they're lazier?

Or they're the incarnation of your weakness, even if that's not a vice.

If you're sick and weak, they're sicker and weaker. Or they're going to make you sicker. Or they're the reason that you're sick in the first place. If you're painfully naïve, they're going to take advantage of that, or their fate is going to be the thing that shocks you out of your naïveté.

I don't know.

This Arc will call them **the Walker in Darkness.**

The Touch of the Numinous

In and mixed with this is something else—

You've been having dreams or dream-like experiences of something sacred. Something weird. Something outside the norm. Nightmares of the death of the former sun. Glimpses of the work of **the Angel of Fortitude.** Hints of the presence of the Outside.

Something.

What we'll call **Encounters in the Night.**

The Sacrificial Bull

The default **Walker in Darkness**, if you don't have any better ideas, is going to be a sacrificial bull—an NPC with a *name* like Bull, who is probably doomed to perfidy and misery from the start. There might be an exception for somebody named John Bull, who is marginally more likely to wind up a mascot of the British cultural identity instead—but Edith Bull, Jake Bullworth, or Vladimir Bûl... well, they're not in luck.

See, there's a long tradition of using a sacrificial bull to lure down entities that hang out in troublesomely high places, and that's just plain this person's fate.

They'll get thrown together with the PCs early on in the Arc, probably, but if they're a good person, it's going to be really hard to stop supernatural forces from either destroying them or corrupting them into a bad one; and if they're a bad person, they're going to doom themselves in a hopefully helpful and practical fashion.

If you lose the Sacrificial Bull—e.g., by sacrificing them?

Just... lay the groundwork for a new one when you can. Have someone else that you indulge in your vice with. Visit the surviving family of the first one in hopes of finding another Bull; stick "the new Bull" signs on someone's back; laboriously bring your dead friend back from the dead using deviant, impossible science—whatever! Or, of course, just find a new paradigm for your walkers in darkness.

It's very common for the Sacrificial Bull to have a trace of Rider blood—to be descended from the bull-headed Magister named **Thousand**, who was slain a very long time ago, in Town.

Encounters in the Night

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you do something that connects you spiritually or practically to death and rebirth, the sky, a holy mountain, or the sun.
- ...you find a place for yourself in Fortitude, ideally one that connects and relates to one or more of those ideas.
- ...a context is established or updated for your regular interactions with **the Walker in Darkness** as an enemy/rival you're stuck with occasionally or a friend/ally you sometimes get the chance to see.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...having one of those **Encounters in the Night.**
- ...talking about one of those encounters.
- ...talking with somebody about death and what it means in a world of potential rebirth.
- ...talking with somebody about the nature of the unknown chaos outside the world.
- ...talking with somebody about what it means to belong somewhere.
- ...talking with somebody about fate, free will, and meaning.
- ...a scene mostly leading to/motivated by your pretentions—by your trying to be more than you are, either out of hope or from hubris.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Encounters in the Night
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you find or claim some sort of destiny (a role or purpose in the world).
- ...a context is established or updated for your regular interactions with **the Walker in Darkness** as an enemy/rival you're stuck with occasionally or a friend/ally you sometimes get the chance to see.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 10 XP.

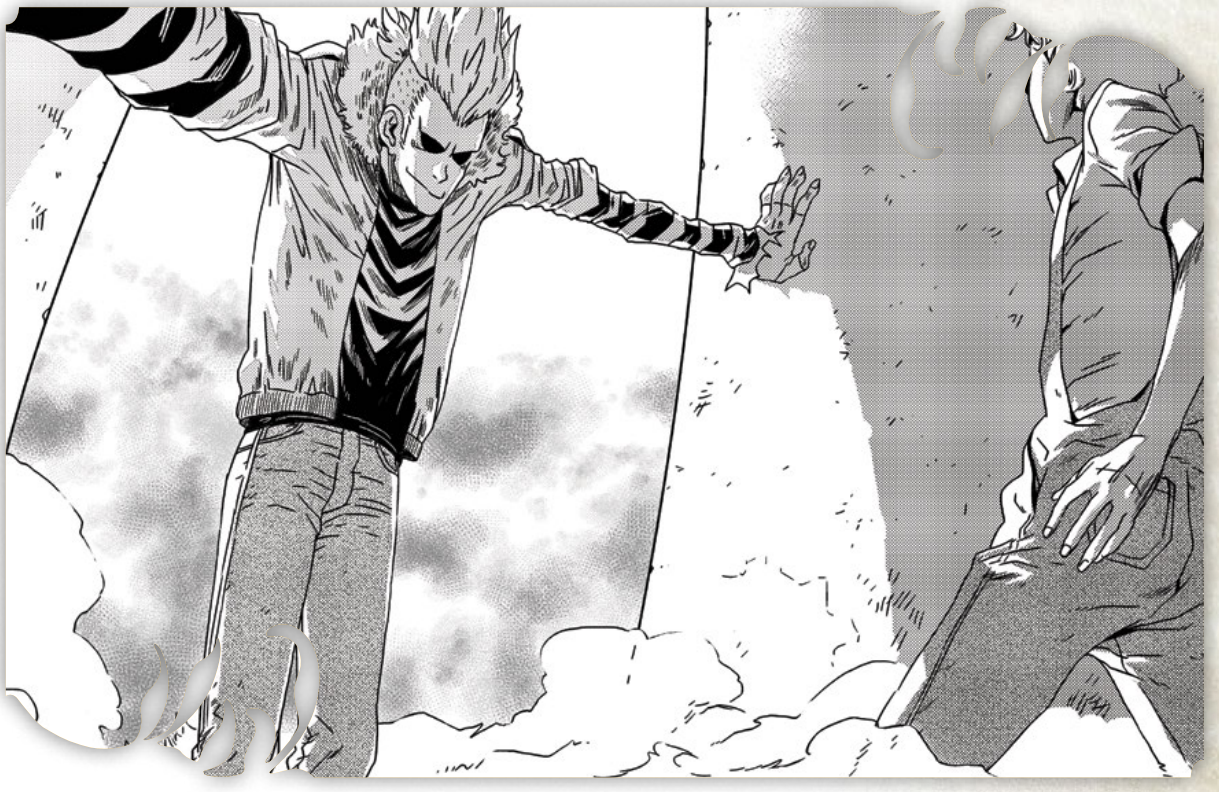
Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- ...struggling with whether you deserve, or can afford to have, a destiny.
- ...talking with somebody about what it means to belong somewhere.
- ...a troubled or disordered sky concerns you.
- ...listening to stories about, or of, the dead.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP



The Troubled Sky

15 or 35 XP Quest

2:

3:

3

This quest is a slice of a troubled life. It's your struggle to reach up from where you've been and become something better than you were.

It's hard to emphasize it on the card without making it too specific, but there's a goofy core to this quest. A fundamental part of this quest is you, hanging out with your supporting cast—your minions; your family; that somebody you're a little sweet on; those two guys or girls without any real distinguishing characteristics or plot importance but whom you're technically supposed to be friends with anyway, whatever...

And while you're hanging out with them, the weird and over the top parts of your life get a little more so.

Like, if you're **the Best Friend?**

We're talking about the Schwan family weirdness getting even *weirder*, even *further* over the top.

Or, if you're **the Prodigy?** And we're still early enough in the story that your key vice is that frozen heart thing?

We're talking about you spending time with some random people that you've met in Fortitude—people you've saved, people who admire you, people you like, people whose bookstore you've been working at, whatever—and taking your despair and refusal to believe that you could ever mean anything, ever fit in, ever make a difference to new heights of pathos *anyway*.

But there's a little more to it than that. Usually this quest introduces or heavily features...

- ...an antagonist—**a Cruel Prince—**who wants to crush you.
- ...a bird-like creature, a born treasure guardian—**the Guardian Bird—**who enters the story on the night of a violent storm.
- ...the boisterous, larger-than-life **Hero.**
- ...storms, tests of spirit, lingering spiritual messages from Jade Irinka, and stories of how she and the original Principal Entropy both died.

The Guardian Bird

I'll talk more about cruel princes and heroes in connection with specific Arcs, but this creature in particular is kind of generic—it's just a bird or bird-like creature of some sort, often entering the story on the night of a violent storm. Maybe it's a small griffin, eagle, or thunderbird. Maybe it's somebody *named* Griffin, Eagle, or Thunderbird.

If it shows up, you'll often want to trust it with custody of some treasure.

An egg, maybe. Birds are good at watching over eggs, aren't they? A nest egg. Or a sacred scroll. Maybe even a jade tablet or burnt wish-bone containing all the destinies of the world. A scientific secret? A prison for an evil body-switching entity? A legacy of the original King of Evil, who later died? Your younger brother or sister? Your child? A freezer full of frozen mini-pizzas, after the boat carrying the normal shipment of them into Fortitude went down and pizza'd up the Lake?

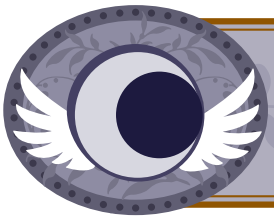
You'll want to trust it with that custody because it is clearly a very excellent guardian beast.

However, as its Skills might indicate, that is probably going to be a mistake:

- **Superior Bird-Like Guardian 3**
- **Sudden, Yet Inevitable Betrayal 2**
- **Abuse Magical Treasures 2**
- **Silver Tongue 1**

As for the exigencies that will prompt its **Sudden, Yet Inevitable Betrayal**, I cannot say. It may just be ordinary temptation; alternately, it may be the pawn of some enemy or under pressure from a hostile force.

After the story of its betrayal completes, the HG should replace either "Abuse Magical Treasures" or "Sudden, Yet Inevitable Betrayal" with "Redemption." It's normally up to the HG but circumstances can force the choice.



The Troubled Sky
(Simplified)

Bonus XP

You're in a weird story. It's full of bizarre entities and over-the-top goofiness.

In the end there's nothing for it. You just have to live with it, don't you? You just say... well, whatever you say about this stuff.

- "I just wanted to *be* somebody," maybe. Or
- "Of *course* that happens."
- "Is this really my destiny?"

—Something like that, anyway. And you sigh, then, and you shake your head.

Or maybe there's something you say to remind you that for all the troubles in it the world's still real?

- "I have fingers."
- "Yare, yare."
- "Look at those clouds."
- "It's cold." (Unreal things—they're never cold. Are they?)

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) with your catchphrase—with that thing that you say when *why do I have to deal with these kinds of situations?* is on your mind.

What catch phrase do you use?

XP

Replacing a Guardian Bird

I don't expect you to trust and be betrayed by **the Guardian Bird** twice—

I mean, it can *happen*, it's *legitimate*, it's an acceptable entry into this Arc's oeuvre, it's just not something you need to do in order to make normal progress through the Arc. Instead, if you find yourself needing a Guardian Bird but the last one betrayed you, you can either...

- ...introduce a new bird-like figure to suddenly, yet inevitably, betray you.
- ...trust in the Guardian Bird and *not* be betrayed this time... probably?; *or*
- ...revisit the Guardian Bird as an Arc symbol of a keeper of high and holy things, but focus the Arc's *drama* on other stuff entirely.

The Troubled Sky

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you test yourself against your vice—test how strong it is, either giving in or realizing that you're better than you thought.
- ...you're introduced to **the Guardian Bird** on or shortly after a stormy night.
- ...you receive a message (e.g. recorded instructions or a message in a bottle) from Jade Irinka, who was the sun.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...a scene wherein **a Cruel Prince** tries to break you.
- ...stories of the death of the sun and the first Principal Entropy.
- ...stories of people created from nothing, or raw chaos.
- ...marveling at a stormy night.
- ...a scene where **the Hero** shows up in an amusing/helpful fashion.
- ...hanging out, voluntarily or otherwise, with **the Walker in Darkness.**
- ...a scene with your supporting cast that takes your vice and/or their goofiness to new heights.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Behind the Mask: On a Bindings Arc

If you're on a Bindings Arc, the premise here is that they *succeed*—

You're subverted by the Arc's Cruel Prince or Student Council member or whatever, or opt to work with them, and thus you'll encounter the rest of the Arc features a little out of order. You'll be admiring the Guardian Bird's qualities from afar before you're formally introduced, for instance, and you'll have a sympathetic view of the Walker in Darkness before there's a real reason to interact with them. In both cases, I assume this is because they're related to what the Cruel Prince wants from you: you're getting, or making, reports on both.

You could *probably* just run the quests in their normal Knight order, but the fit between "You're targeted by masked or secretive enemies who want to turn you to your service" and "You have to work with, partner with, or tie your fate to something wrong or in disfavor" just seemed too strong to reasonably ignore.

Behind the Mask

25 or 35 XP Quest

1:

3:

You're targeted by masked or secretive enemies who want to turn you to their service. These are generally members of the Student Council of Horizon's School and almost always "Cruel Princes."

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you trust **the Guardian Bird** or some other bird-like figure with the guardianship of something precious.
- ...there's a dramatic case of mistaken identity related to the Arc events or antagonists—e.g., they kidnap a hapless bystander instead of you, or you put your trust in an enemy.
- ...a plan for dealing with **a Cruel Prince** blows up in your face.

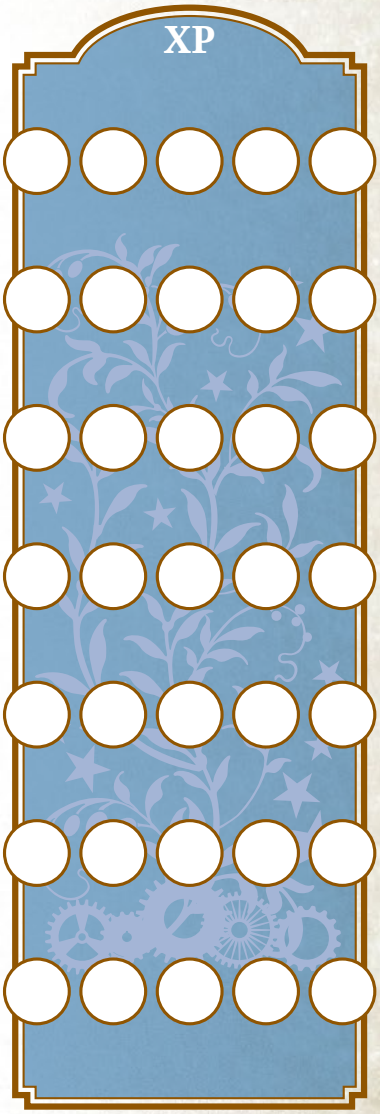
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...testing an idea on:
  - ...how to defeat **a Cruel Prince**.
  - ...why **a Cruel Prince** chose a particular target.
  - ...how to overcome your vice, *or*
  - ...how to fulfill the destiny you're aiming towards.
- ...admiring the guardianship abilities of **the Guardian Bird.**
- ...investigating the Student Council of Horizon's School.
- ...talking with someone about the first Principal Entropy and their death.
- ...talking with someone about fate and free will, *or*
- ...a "death flag" scene for **the Walker in Darkness—** they talk sympathetically about their plans for life, do something needlessly dangerous, or get too interested in something you're having the Guardian Bird guard.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Behind the Mask
(Simplified)

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you trust **the Guardian Bird** or some other bird-like figure with the guardianship of something precious.
- ...there's a dramatic case of mistaken identity related to the Arc events or antagonists—e.g., they kidnap a hapless bystander instead of you, or you put your trust in an enemy (mistaking them for a friend).

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...**the Walker in Darkness** is hurt.
- ...something throws a wrench into your plans .
- ...you test some idea pertaining to what you're trying to become.
- ...you're investigated or hunted by something evil.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Atonement

25 or 40 XP Quest

4:

5:

You've failed somehow; or maybe you were never worthy. But this is your chance to make good.

The world is wrong.

Maybe it wasn't your fault. Maybe it has nothing to do with what's wrong with you. Or maybe it's directly on point. But the world is wrong.

You're going to make it right.

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you get melodramatic about your mistakes or your hubris.
- ...you throw yourself into a plan that winds up making everything even worse.
- ...you struggle to climb something that has been strongly established as a metaphorical mountain. (If you can find an actual mountain to climb, I guess that could work too.)
- ...a serious storm—a hurricane, Outside storm, or mysterious flood—threatens Fortitude.

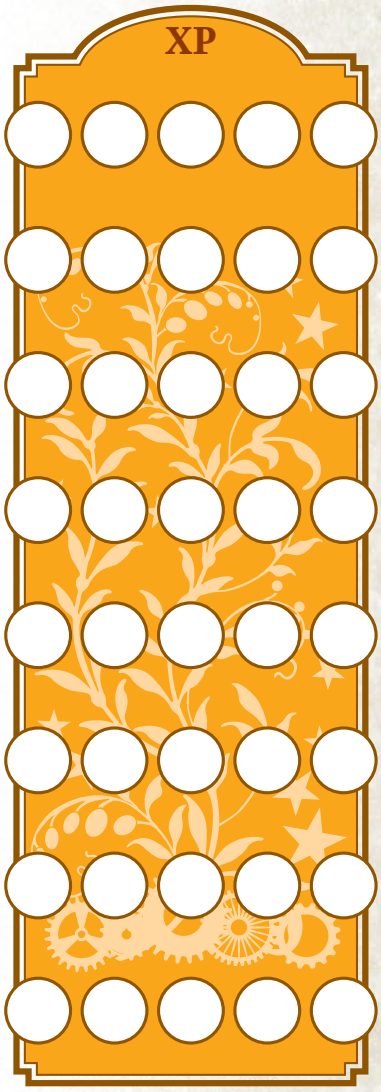
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you're forced to suffer because of your errors.
- ...someone is struck wordless by the consequences of your mistakes.
- ...someone uses your own words against you.
- ...you witness a holy thing.
- ...you try to eat eggs, but somehow fail.
- ...you encounter staggering vistas of storms or steep slopes.
- ...you take dramatic steps to fix things.
- ...you have a sudden, stunning vision of a metaphorical Heaven or Hell—of what it would look like if your vice ruined you, or, something to help you overcome it.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Atonement
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you have a metaphysical/holy experience of the sacred.
- ...you're flung from a metaphorical mountain by the actions of some enemy (and yet, presumably, survive).

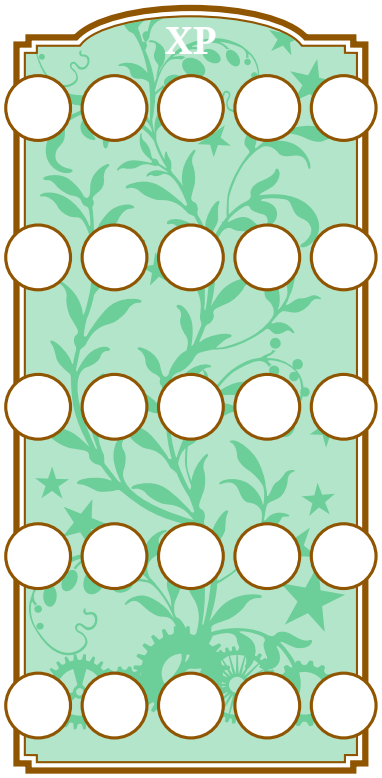
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you're forgiven or released from punishment for some sin.
- ...you're sent or set to climb/surmount something as expiation.
- ...storms rock Fortitude.
- ...you screw up *badly*.
- ...you propose a theory about how to overcome your vice, or why it isn't actually that big a deal.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



The Struggle of the Knight
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you venture into the chaos beyond the world.
- ...you risk yourself for the sake of someone trying to hurt you.
- ...you find love.

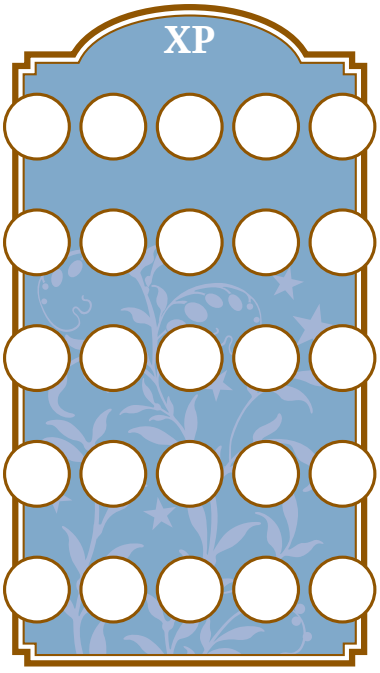
You can earn up to two of these bonuses, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...taunting/challenging your enemies.
- ...risking your life and freedom.
- ...sharing something beautiful.
- ...someone romantically befuddling you.
- ...stumbling into terrible danger.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



The Struggle of the Knight

25 or 45 XP Quest

4:

5:

This is your chance to answer the Arc's questions—to push past everything that's holding you back and seize your destiny.

It starts with a gamble.

There's something you believe you have to do; or something you believe is true and real; or something you believe is meaningful about who you are.

You're going to risk all you have on it.

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you venture into the chaos beyond the world.
- ...you risk yourself for the sake of someone trying to hurt you.
- ...you redeem **the Guardian Bird.**
- ...you're forced or obligated to help with scientific or magical research.

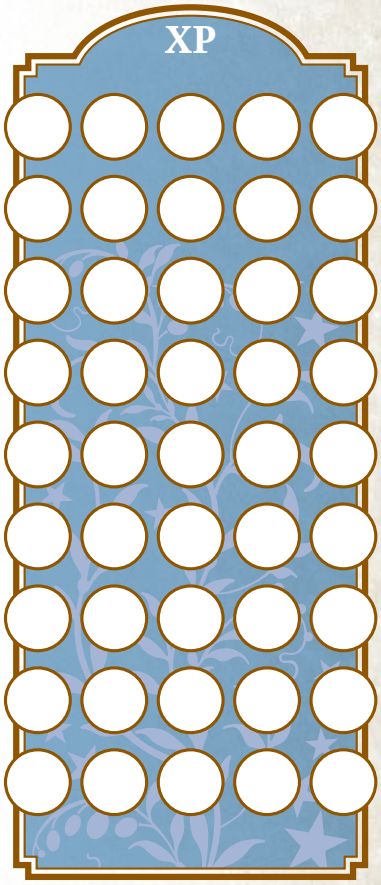
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...defending life and freedom.
- ...a tense encounter with your enemies.
- ...finding someone you're hoping to help.
- ...marveling at stormy weather.
- ...facing terrible threats.
- ...attending a wedding or a funeral.
- ...witnessing strange sights.
- ...talking someone through their grief.
- ...fleeing terrible threats.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



The Scientific Adventures of Leonardo de Montreal

These quests form a generic structure for the Arcs of Nightmares' Angel, and also any character who finds themselves in similar situations—

Any **Wounded Angel.**

These quests are also the generic structure for participating in **the Troublemaker's** Arcs as a friend—they're the structure for stories *about* Rinley, or about your kid sister or kid brother in general, getting into trouble, and you trying to help them out.

As a Bindings Arc, the quests will look like this:

- **Science!** You've been presented with a situation or possible tragedy. By gum, you will do science to it!
- **Someone's in Trouble!** Someone's in trouble! You help them out.
- **Engineering!** You've got a sense for the meat of this situation now. It's no longer an enigma—it's a technical problem. It's time to do engineering to it!

And, if you need one or two more quests for XP or closure:

- **Above the Fray.** You rise above the situation and make moral or philosophical decisions—what *should* be done with this situation or technology?
- **Walking the Boundaries.** Having made that call, you explore its consequences.

If you're using this to play through **the Troublemaker's** Arcs, an NPC Troublemaker will generally get involved at step 2—that's when the existing problem you're already dealing with gets complicated by their arrival.

These quests aren't self-contained—

You'll be able to use them for your own stories, but you'll want to look at the stories they were created for before you try to read too much into them.. A few of their quirks may make more sense to you in that context, which will be helpful if you want to adapt them to your own stories later on.

Science! (Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you fall under the burden of the quest: something explicitly puts the problem in your hands, or you explicitly take it up.
- ...you construct some sort of defensive perimeter.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...witnessing the fates of the wicked.
- ...dragging other Main Characters into your work.
- ...proposing new theories about the subject of your investigation or calling—the Outside, the glass dragon, the nightmare world, the Titovs, or whatever.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

These five quests are suitable for **Bindings, Otherworldly, Aspect,** and **Emptiness** Arcs. They're Bindings Arcs most of all, but you should be able to play through them for the other three Arcs with a shift in emphasis or potentially in the order of the quests.

Science!

20 or 40 XP Quest

1:

2:

4:

This troublesome situation has been dumped in your lap. It bothers you. But it also interests you as... a scientist, or magician, or whatever you are.

There's something here that wants an exploration by the brilliant mind of, well, you!

There's a problem here that's *worthy* of your talents.

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you fall under the burden of the quest: something explicitly puts the problem in your hands, or you explicitly take it up.
- ...you construct some sort of defensive perimeter.
- ...you encounter Jade Irinka, the former sun, or the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy.
- ...three weeks/chapters pass without obvious IC progress on the quest.

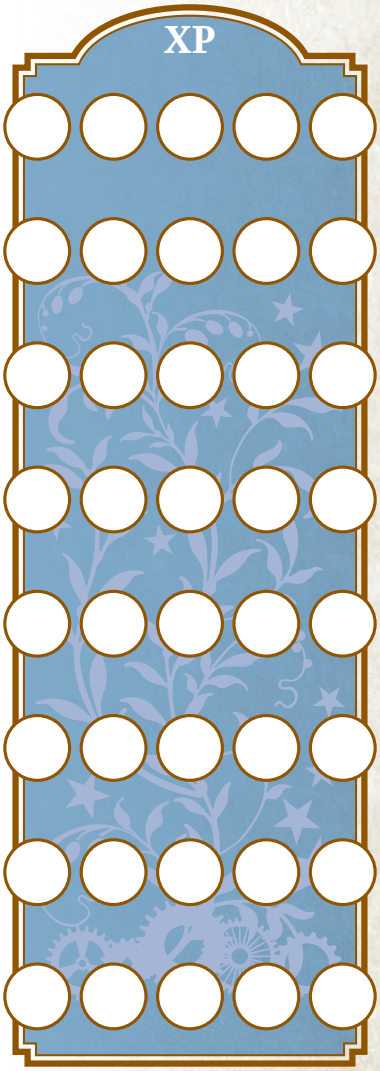
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...sympathizing with, or assisting, the outcast and the wrong.
- ...dreams calling you to a place of danger.
- ...listening to stories of strange things happening in Big Lake.
- ...regaling people with a legend of the Outside, the glass dragon, or the epic dangers (or whatever) that are the focus of the quest—typically a legend invented by your player but occasionally forwarded from previous discussions with the HG.
- ...complaining to the other PCs about the progress of your investigations/work.
- ...reluctantly allowing yourself to be dragged away from it, *or*
- ...reluctantly allowing others to get involved with it.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Someone's in Trouble!

20 or 35 XP Quest

1:

2:

Someone's in trouble. Usually it's a relative innocent and someone or somehow related to the meat of your current Arc.

You help them out!

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you formally commit (aloud or in an emote) to trying to help this person.
- ...they open up to you while talking to you in their home or important haunts.
- ...some element of their problem bridges from the metaphorical or emotional to the real—e.g., a gate opens from their nightmares to the world, or a fear turns into a curse, or someone who always gets a little too carried away gets physically carried away shortly after a reference to that tendency.

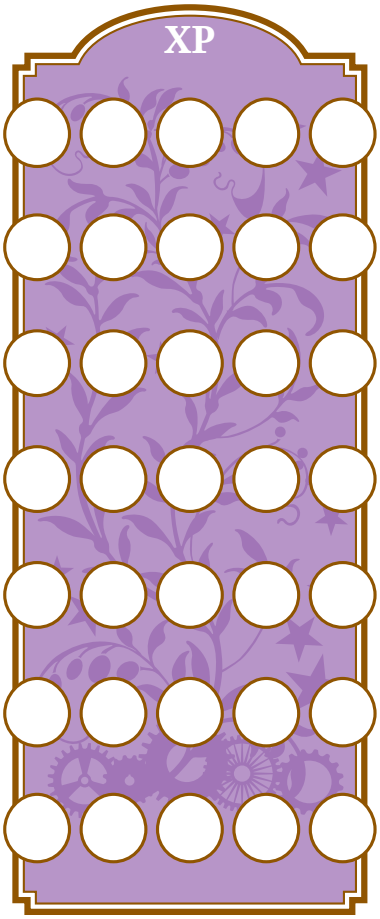
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...catch eerie glimpses/foreshadowing of a threat to them.
- ...have a sleepover/slumber party/visit to their dreams.
- ...listen to them explaining their despair.
- ...are shown one of their secrets.
- ...hunt down some specific bit of trouble.
- ...drag them somewhere they really shouldn't be.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Someone's in Trouble!
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you formally commit (aloud or in an emote) to trying to help this person.
- ...some element of their problem bridges from the metaphorical or emotional to the real—e.g., a gate opens from their nightmares to the world, or a fear turns into a curse, or someone who always gets a little too carried away gets physically carried away shortly after a reference to that tendency.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...identify or hypothesize about the "real" threat that will emerge.
- ...feverishly work on an idea to help.
- ...dig into their secrets.
- ...invoke or bargain with some terrifying power to save them.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Engineering!

25 or 35 XP Quest

3:

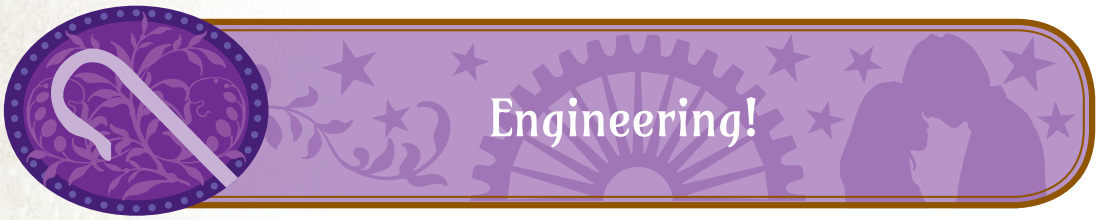
4:

5:

You know enough about what's going on now that the problem is simply a matter of diligence. The title of this quest is usually either appropriate or amusingly ironic; if it's not, you can scratch out "Engineering!" and substitute in "A Conscious Life."

You move forward in a thoughtful and organized fashion to solve the problem at hand.

3



Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you complete a major inventory, map, survey, or other exploration of the territory (often dream- or dream-like territory) at hand.
- ...you work towards a reconciliation between apparent rivals, enemies, opposing forces, or even with something oppressing you or someone you care about.
- ...you find a hidden well or spring of pure or untainted water.

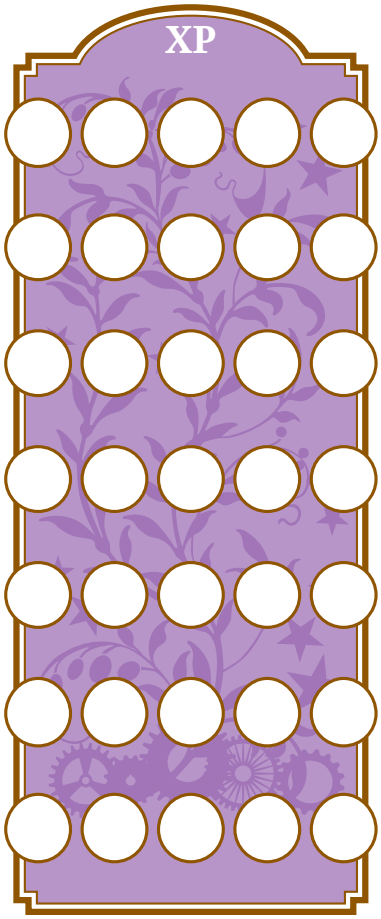
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...clean, prepare a ritual space, or do maintenance work.
- ...eat with someone strange in a literal or metaphorical cave.
- ...catalogue or explore the territory at hand.
- ...groom a dog or similar animal connected somehow to the quest.
- ...are penned in somewhere by rain.
- ...bear witness to strange visions.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Engineering!
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you find or gain access to a major inventory, map, survey, or other exploration of the territory (often dream- or dream-like territory) at hand.
- ...you're recruited or asked for help by what had previously seemed to be a rival, enemy, opposing force, or even oppressor.
- ...you find a hidden well or spring of pure or untainted water.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, for a total of 10 XP.

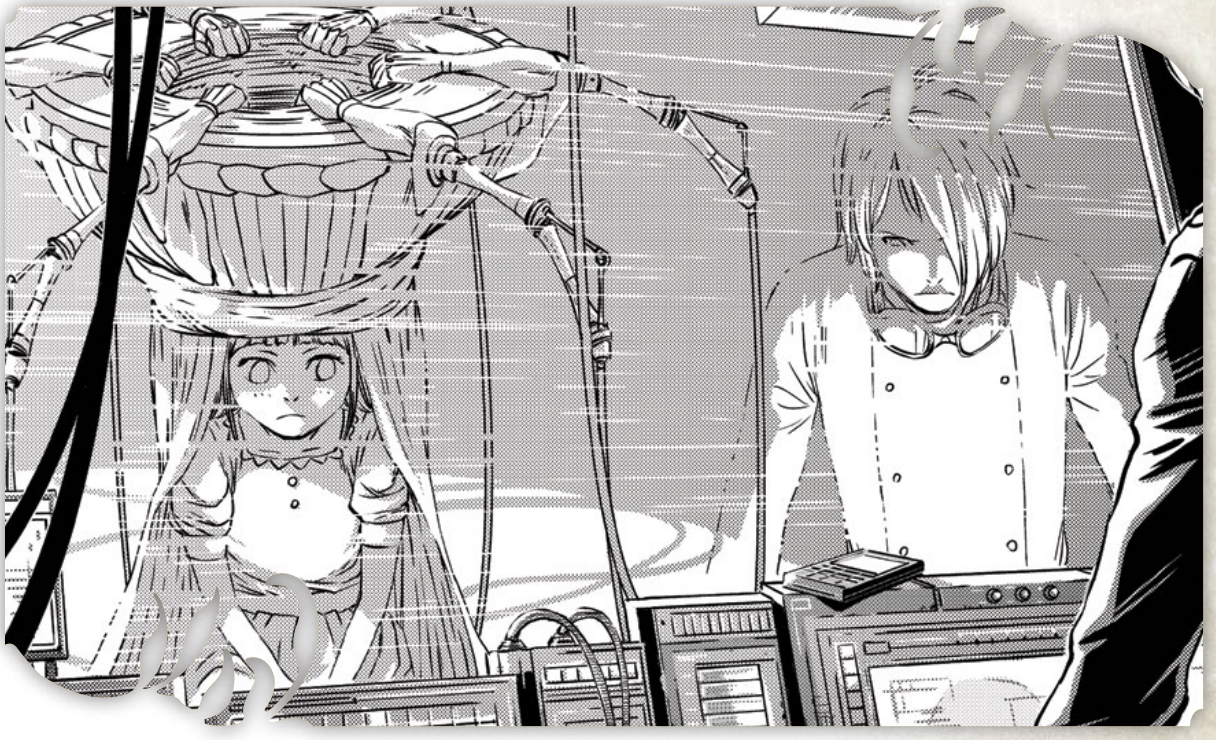
Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...write off some portion of the situation as a loss, and trash/seal it.
- ...imprison someone or something.
- ...call upon some terrifying or mysterious power connected somehow to the quest.
- ...present yourself to "your public" in a dramatic pose for admiration; put on airs.
- ...declare what must be done.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP



Above the Fray

20 or 35 XP Quest

1:

4:

5:

You rise above the conflict and... mess... of things. You seek objectivity. Maybe you're affecting to the role of a god: deciding what something's worth, where it comes from, and what its destiny should be.

Or maybe you're just trying to think things through and understand what's really happened (recently/in your life).

3

Above the Fray

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you stand in a storm, overlooking a pit or dangerous depth.
- ...you stand before a dead power that was or is greater than yourself.
- ...you have a moment of spiritual insight and forgiveness, and are able to explain or solidly commit to both.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...trust yourself to a dangerous (and relevant) part of the setting, e.g., sailing Big Lake in **Nightmares Open** or visiting the nightmare world in **Nightmares' World.**
- ...explore daily chores in that part of the setting.
- ...deal with a child who lives/hangs out there.
- ...get sucked into goofy fun there—a ridiculous game or silly experience, despite a tense situation or environment.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Above the Fray
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you enact a meaningful judgment—impose a penance, punish a criminal or enemy, or forgive someone in an official capacity.
- ...you seek and receive some sort of divine guidance.
- ...you have a cathartic breakdown.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...reviewing reports or records of a dangerous (and relevant) part of the setting, e.g., the nightmare world in **Nightmares' World** or Big Lake in **Nightmares Open.**
- ...chores piling up while you figure out what to do.
- ...someone cooking for you, bringing you a hot drink, or putting you to bed.
- ..."walk and talk" decision-making scenes.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

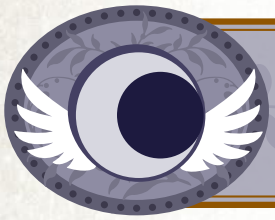
Walking the Boundaries

25 or 40 XP Quest

3:

5:

This quest explores the aftermath of the previous quests. It's generally kind of slow and quiet—whether you're wrestling with the terrible damage that's been done to you, or admiring the victories you've won, this quest is all about having space and time to experience the matter in full.



Walking the Boundaries (Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you walk among flowers in a place where somebody died.
- ...you dream or share a story or two of a place's history.
- ...you say goodbye properly to an old friend.

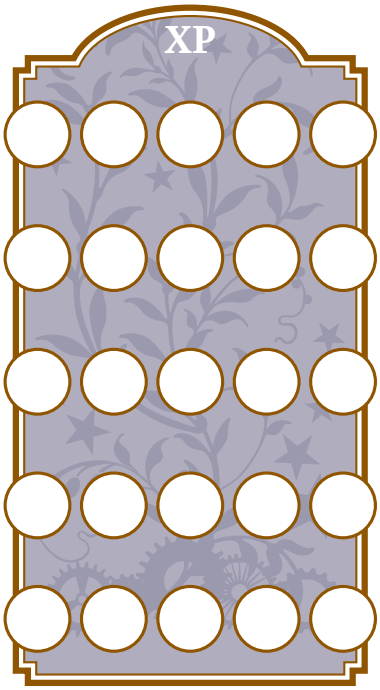
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...indulge in a lazy routine (e.g. wearing pajamas all day).
- ...indulge in slightly less lazy morning routines.
- ...tend a shrine, grave, museum, or mausoleum.
- ...are pointlessly cleaning or organizing, and a visitor interrupts.
- ...play with a dangerous thing.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Walking the Boundaries

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you walk among flowers in a place where somebody died.
- ...you read or tell someone the stories of a place's history.
- ...you share a precious drink or meal with someone, where "precious" is relative to your available resources (and not necessarily absolute).
- ...you say goodbye properly to an old friend.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by...

- ...tending a garden or caring for a bit of wilderness.
- ...making repairs.
- ...staring into a fire.
- ...watching children or animals playing.
- ...playing ball, Frisbee, or something of the sort.
- ...having an encounter with something that seems at first to be dramatic and scary, before turning out to be perfectly safe and friendly.
- ...waking up with water dripping on you, moss growing on you, or an animal nosing you.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Having an Adventure the Rinley Yatskaya Way

These quests form a generic structure for the Arcs of the Troublemaker, and also any character with a similar attitude towards life and adventure—

Any troublemaker.

These quests are also the generic structure for meddling in **Nightmares' Angel's** Arcs—they're the structure for stories *about* de Montreal and the worlds of nightmare.

These quests are a Storyteller Arc most of all, and, as a Storyteller Arc, they look like this:

- **Adventure GET.** You've gotten involved in something exciting!
- **Let's Doing!** You drive forward through the situation.
- **Labyrinth Diving.** This is the part where you're a little bit confused. You know where to *look* for answers, sort of, but you don't have them yet.

And if you need a bit more for XP or closure, you could finish out with:

- **Climbing the Sacred Mountain.** You're chasing answers, solutions, or victory.
- **Down.** You're chasing something subtler, scarier, or more painful than that.

In the Arcs relating to **Nightmares' Angel,** an NPC Nightmares' Angel is usually involved from the beginning—they're either investigating the same things you are, or you're making trouble *for* them either because you like them or you don't trust them.

Basically, you're getting all up in their affairs.

It's *possible* that they won't come in until later, or, for certain Arcs, at all, but that'll probably seem a little weird. The only reason I can think of is if the players don't enjoy **Nightmares' Angel** or the HG doesn't have any ideas for what the NPC version might do.

Again, these quests aren't self-contained—

You'll be able to use them for your own stories, but you'll want to look at the stories they were created for first, later on. A few of their quirks may make more sense to you in that context, which will be helpful if you want to adapt them a little later on.

These five quests are suitable for Knight, Storyteller, Shepherd, and Mystic Arcs.[91] Like I said, they're Storyteller Arcs most of all, but you should be able to play through them for the other three Arcs with a shift in emphasis or potentially in the order of the quests.

*91 Rinley's powerset is technically **Spiritual**, an Otherworldly Arc, but her standard **Glass-Maker's Dragon** Arcs don't take that further forward. She can play through her Arcs using **Nightmares' Angel's** quest structure if she really wants to fix that—**Science!**, **Someone's in Trouble!**, **Walking the Boundaries**, **Above the Fray**, and **Engineering!** Or she can just focus on her interactions with **the Angel of Fortitude**, **the Wishing Boy (or Girl)**, or **the Dream-Witch**.*

Adventure GET

20 or 35 XP Quest

1:

4:

You're on an adventure!

It can be sucky. Like, you could be poisoned. Or people could be dying. But you're still all dazzled by the newness and interest value of it all. It could be scary. It could be traumatizing. But it's *an adventure!*

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...trouble starts or gets much worse in a well-staged way—whether that's accidentally walking backwards into an enemy camp, breaking into a supposedly empty manor during what turns out to be a dinner party, or declaring that everything's fine as long as there aren't any werewolves around just before werewolves show up.
- ...someone rescues you.
- ...you stand in a shadowed place and tell someone a secret, then run away before they can react.

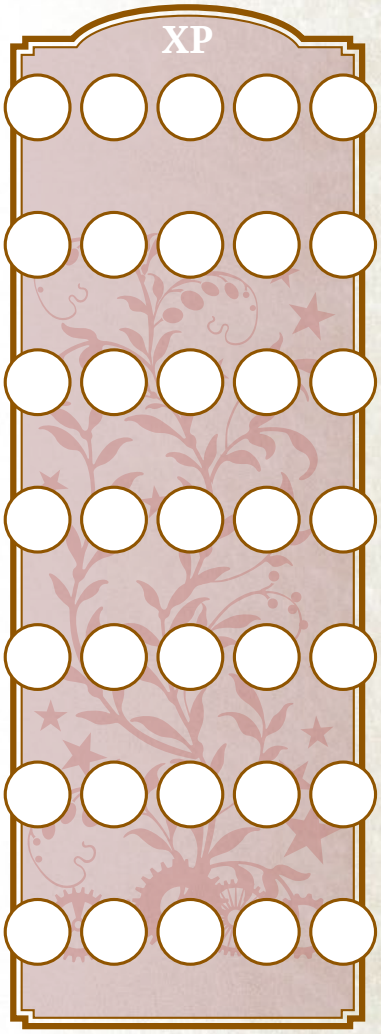
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...sneak into somewhere you shouldn't go.
- ...risk trouble by digging into somebody's secrets.
- ...drag others into your affairs/arrange their lives for them.
- ...propose a theory about the underlying situation you're in.
- ...tell someone a story related to the underlying situation you're in.
- ...get into trouble trying to help somebody else.
- ...risk trouble in the name of *adventure!*

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Adventure GET
(Simplified)

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you stand in a shadowed place and tell someone a secret, then run away before they can react.
- ...trouble starts or gets much worse in a well-staged way—whether that's accidentally walking backwards into an enemy camp, breaking into a supposedly empty manor during what turns out to be a dinner party, or declaring that everything's fine as long as there aren't any werewolves around just before werewolves show up.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you discover a secret.
- ...you express your boredom and interest in adventure.
- ...you drag someone somewhere they really shouldn't be.
- ...whatever trouble's been dogging you shows up and/or escalates.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Let's Doing!

20 or 35 XP Quest

2:

3:

The problem here is pretty massive, pretty complicated, pretty big. You're going to try to bull through it with sheer can-do gumption anyhow.

Let's doing!

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you meet a new antagonist, ally, or romantic interest (as designated by destiny/the HG—if someone unexpectedly becomes something like that, it may or may not count).
- ...you discover a previously unseen shard of the glass dragon, or major new feature of one you'd seen before.
- ...three weeks/chapters pass without obvious IC progress on this quest (that is, whatever problem you're trying to solve gets no closer to being solved).

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...narrate your impression of a PC, Main Character, Arc-related NPC, labyrinth, high place, or key location for the Arc, as if explaining them to a reader or video game player; you may do this IC or, if nobody minds, suspend play for a moment and do it OOC.
- ...drag other Main Characters into your quest-related activities/investigations.
- ...grandstand about your reasons for being on this quest.
- ...talk with somebody about your dreams for the future.
- ...talk with somebody about death.
- ...get hurt emotionally by somebody somehow involved in the story of this Arc.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Let's Doing!
(Simplified)

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you've met, or seen, all the key players in this Arc.
- ...you discover a previously unseen shard of the glass dragon, or major new feature of one you'd seen before.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...sympathizing with, or assisting, the outcast and the wrong.
- ...proposing new theories about the subject of your investigation or calling—the Outside, the glass dragon, or whatever else.
- ...complaining to the other PCs about the progress of your investigations/plans.
- ...reluctantly allowing yourself to be dragged away from them.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Labyrinth Diving

25 or 35 XP Quest

2:

3:

5:

You've got a labyrinth to take on.

Oh, sure, this can be metaphorical. You can navigate a maze of "social entanglement and cross purposes" or a labyrinthine mystery.

But you're probably actually taking on a literal, actual maze.

The metaphorical aspect is probably just going to come into play with the way that your life stays maze-like even when you're not physically exploring a convoluted place—that even if you're only actually in a maze for like a few weeks total over the course of a season, it feels like the labyrinth shadows the entire game.

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you find or gain access to a major inventory, map, survey, or other exploration of the territory at hand.
- ...you're recruited or asked for help by what had previously seemed to be a rival, enemy, opposing force, or even oppressor.
- ...you find a hidden creek, flow, or spring of pure or untainted water.

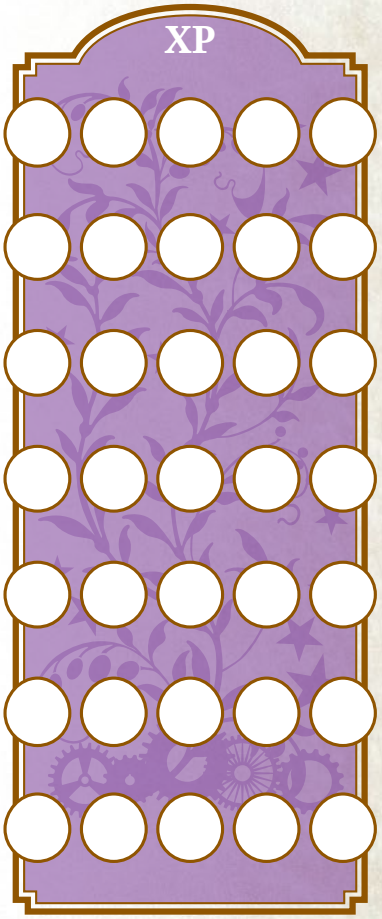
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...write off some portion of the situation as a loss, and trash/seal it.
- ...imprison someone or something.
- ...call upon some terrifying or mysterious power connected somehow to the Arc.
- ...present yourself to "your public" in a dramatic pose for admiration; put on airs.
- ...declare what must be done.
- ...feed a stray cat.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Labyrinth Diving
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you complete a major inventory, map, survey, or other exploration of the territory (often dream- or dream-like territory) at hand.
- ...you make a friend in an unexpected place.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...hang out near a fountain or water feature.
- ...eat with someone strange in a literal or metaphorical cave.
- ...catalogue or explore the territory at hand.
- ...are penned in somewhere by rain.
- ...bear witness to strange visions.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Climbing the Sacred Mountain
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you release some guilt or burden that had been weighing you down.
- ...you've reached a "landing" (a place to stop and catch your breath) on an arduous and metaphorically "upwards" journey.
- ...you are struck by an insight or revelation that changes everything.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...rise above some element of your situation.
- ...stare out at an amazing vista.
- ...talk about something bad that's happened to you.
- ...talk, while feverish, to a bird, bird-like person, or bird-like entity.
- ...struggle with sickness, weakness, rough environmental conditions, and your own frailty.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Climbing the Sacred Mountain

25 or 35 XP Quest

3:

4:

5:

You ascend towards some personal victory or enlightenment.

This probably doesn't involve a literal ascent—there just aren't enough things in Fortitude or for that matter Town that can take an entire quest to climb. (Climbing to Celestia in a game with sufficiently fast-paced chapters might come close.)

That said, there's often a literal ascent deeply symbolically connected to this quest.

You'll be in its shadow, or climbing it, or thinking about it, quite a lot.

Climbing the Sacred Mountain

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you release some guilt or burden that had been weighing you down.
- ...you struggle alone on an arduous and metaphorically "upwards" journey.
- ...the wind knocks you from a height.
- ...you are struck by an insight or revelation that changes everything.

You can earn up to three of these bonuses, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...hunt desperately for solutions.
- ...stagger on despite a wasting illness.
- ...rise above/conquer some element of your situation.
- ...show someone an amazing view or vista.
- ...admire a distant bird, ornithopter, or zeppelin.
- ...see the sun break through the clouds.
- ...learn what it is that must be done.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Down

35 or 45 XP Quest

1:

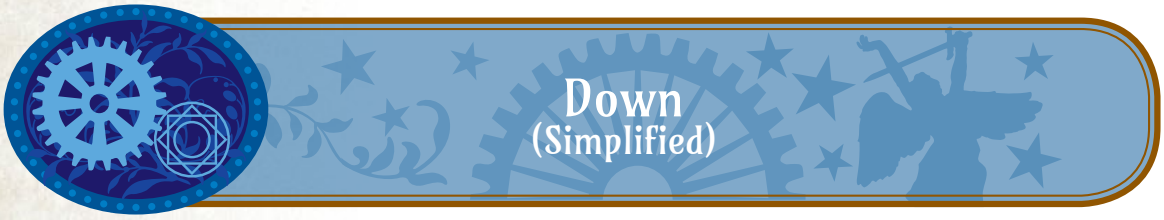
4:

5:

This quest is your descent into the underworld. This is a scary time in your life, when you have to face difficult truths and deal with painful things. At the end things can be good, but not during.

During—

—they can get very bad.



Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you visit a throne room and stand before a seated (e.g.) King or Queen.
- ...you're sent into an underworld, be it basement, cave, oubliette, dungeon, or literal world of the dead.
- ...you're hung on a hook, crucified, tied to a wall, suspended by telekinesis, used as a scarecrow, or otherwise imprisoned or bound above the ground. Agony is optional (you could be in a canvas sack that is hung from a hook, or stage-show-style crucified); suspension and imprisonment are not.

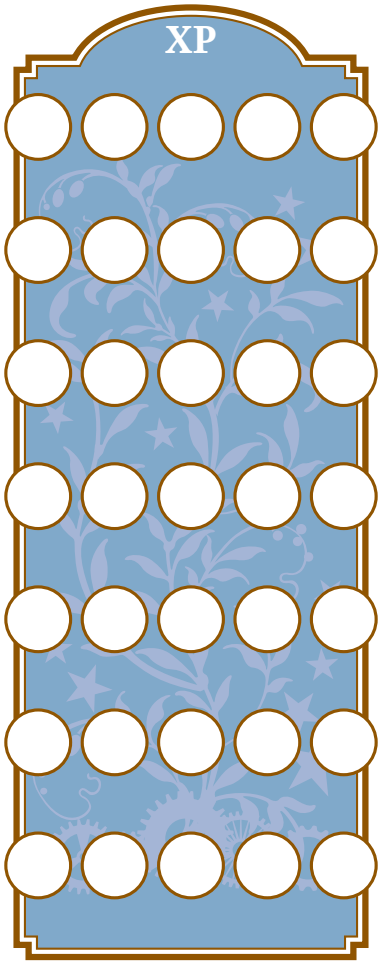
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you have to abandon something precious, leaving it behind.
- ...you're lost.
- ...you're thirsty.
- ...you encounter the dead.
- ...you share a meal with someone while sitting on cracked stones.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Down

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you watch somebody die. It can be an animal but only if it's emotionally affecting (brutal, or an animal you cared about).
- ...you get into a fight with someone you care about.
- ...you break down from grief or shock.
- ...you get really, viscerally sick—it's either life-threatening or really gross. You don't have to nauseate squeamish players by going into the sickness itself but you do have to play up the toll it takes on you.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...talk with someone about someone or something you've lost.
- ...hug a large animal, e.g., a deer.
- ...walk with the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy.
- ...wander in a daze.
- ...can't eat or drink, or can't keep something down.
- ...fall apart a little, skipping your usual hygiene/self-maintenance tasks.
- ...wander a graveyard or at the edge of a cliff.
- ...lock yourself in a bathroom.
- ...self-harm.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Literary Medal-Bait: the Heartwarming, Heart-Rending Coming-of-Age Stories of Natalia Koutolika

3

These quests form a generic structure for the Arcs of **the Prodigy,** and any other character struggling to come of age in a troubled, shadowed world.

They're also the generic quest structure for those who choose to help **the Child of the Sun.**

The order of these quests will depend a little on what you're doing—for instance, as a Knight Arc, it'll start with a friendship and end with a big epic challenge, but as a Shepherd Arc it's going to contextualize both ends of that story with a focus on other stuff—but the reference version of this Arc, the standard coming-of-age Arc, is an Aspect Arc.

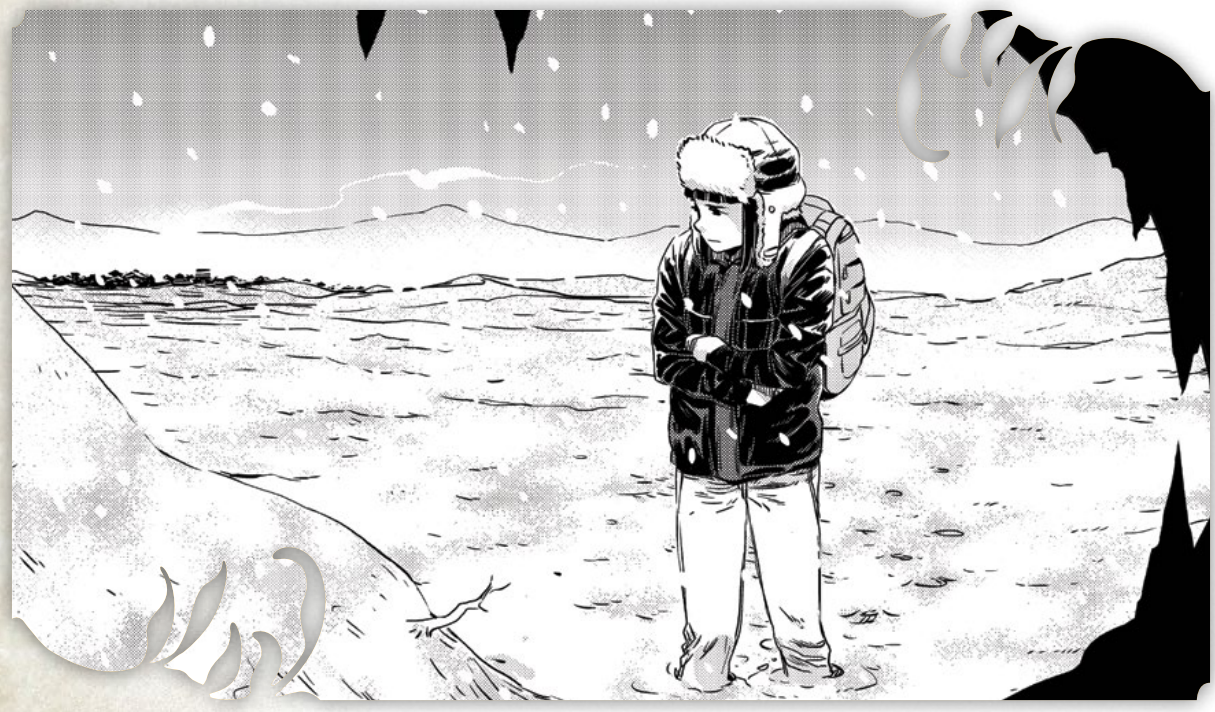
It goes like this:

- **A Troubled Protagonist.** You struggle to recover from or push past some deal.
- **An Unlikely Friendship.** You meet someone who broadens your perspective.
- **Your Social Burdens.** People have weird expectations of you.

And then, if you need a bit more XP or closure, one or both of:

- **Action!** An epic fight with a giant monster or conspiracy or something.
- **Coming to Grips with Death.** You spend a while facing death, grief, or some kind of troublesome situation that's a metaphor for one of those things.

Let's look at the quests!



A Troubled Protagonist

25 or 35 XP Quest

1:

2:

You're messed up. There's something you just can't get over. There's something you just can't get past. It's like you're under a cloud. It's like you're wearing steel shoes and a backpack full of lead.

You've got something going on with you. You have a *deal*.

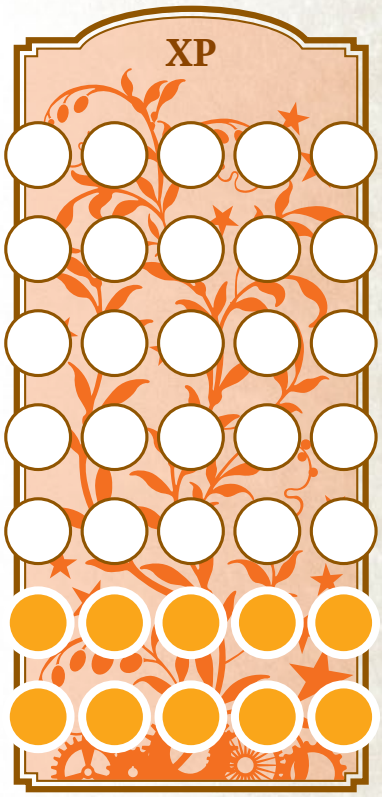
Bonus XP

This quest comes with a psychological or social burden—a private cross to bear. Pick the sign associated with your Arc or some close relative thereof; you may wish to keep it around even after completing the quest.

The emotion or social position on the sign represents a feeling or state that gives you trouble. You can earn a bonus XP at any time (though only once per 15 minutes/scene) by expressing that emotion—normally, by holding up the sign.

The back side of the sign reminds you of your flaws. If you're not playing in a place where you can actually hold up the sign, it's OK to just remind yourself quietly of what it says, or, if you must, ignore the back side in its entirety.

What's your sign?



A Troubled Protagonist
(Variant)

3

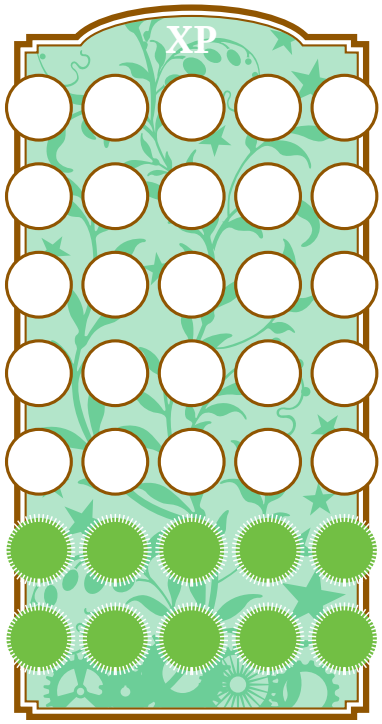
Bonus XP

This quest comes with a division of states—there's the normal, beat-down you, and then there's the you who's starting to brighten up or change under the influence of the spiritual forces in Town.

Normally you'll pick an Arc-appropriate sign for this—a reversible card, which you could in theory have on the table in front of you in play to show which state you're in.

You can earn a bonus XP at any time (though only once per scene/15 minutes) by flipping the card, showing that you're moving between states—that your ordinary world has been disrupted by a spiritual thought or experience. If you can't actually keep the card in front of you, holding up the card with the relevant side facing people or just saying or emoting something appropriate can earn you the XP instead.

You'll normally use this version of the quest for a Spring Arc and the normal version for a Winter Arc, but you can swap them around or use them for other things if you think you've found or created an appropriate sign.



The Frozen Heart / Flowers in the Ice

Winter 0-1

(I'm) Touched

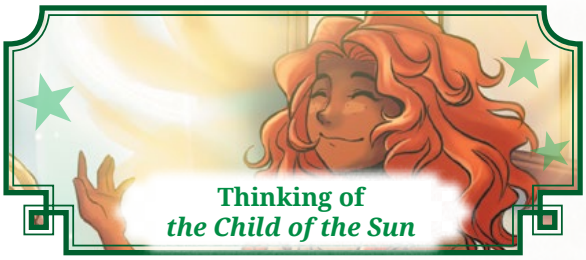
This Will End In Pain.

I Trust You

Why is it so hard to breathe?
Why does everything
look so dark?

"The Miracle" / "The Pleasure Ship"

Sun 0-1



Permafrost

Winter 2

I Like You

Don't Get Too Close

**Laugh/
You're Funny**

*Don't Remember
the Bodies*

"Sorrows' Week"

Sun 2

Thin Ice
Winter 3

I'm Pretty Cool :)	*arrogant little snots just die.*
Progress!	*...Just a little more...*

3

"The Hole in the World"
Sun 3

Yet We Go On

Winter 4

Calm

Stop it! You have to emote something! Act normal! What's a person supposed to do in this situation? Maybe try laughing? Smiling? Ooh, should you cry? HURRY UP Wink maybe? Like, all, cool?

Cool
⌐■_■)

...it's all an act.

"The Hollow Sky"

Sun 4

The Science of Dissolution

Drowning 4

Calm

Everybody dies.
Everybody just... keeps... dying.

The World is Kind

There's a certain hollow deadness,
I think,
in the refusal to consider
the suffering of those outside
your reality's bounds.

An Unlikely Friendship
(Simplified)

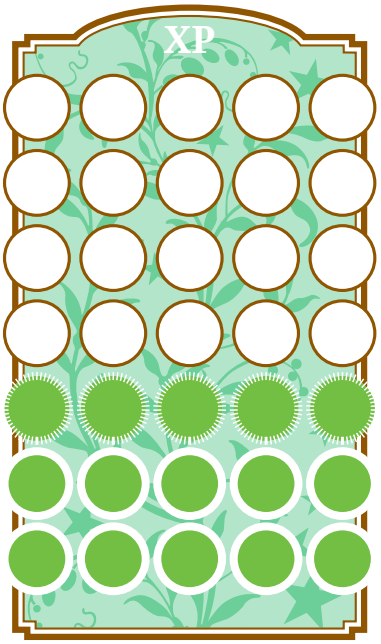
Bonus XP

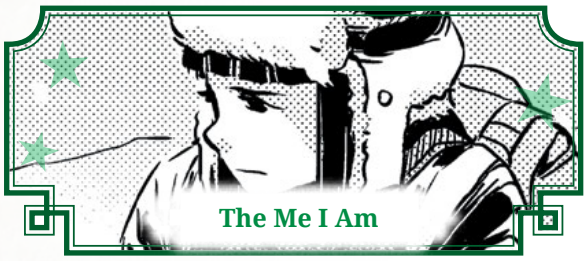
This quest comes with a division of states—there's you, as who you usually are; and then there's the you when you're with your friend, or when that side of you comes out at another time.

I've made a sign for this—a reversible card, which you could in theory have on the table in front of you in play to show which state you're in. You can earn a bonus XP at any time (though only once per scene/15 minutes) by flipping the card, showing that you're moving between states—that you're thinking your friend's way, or your own.

If you can't actually keep the card in front of you, holding up the card with the relevant side facing people or just saying or emoting something appropriate can earn you the XP instead.

This quest usually runs 20 XP, but you can push it a little further if it seems right.





An Unlikely Friendship

20+ or 45 XP Quest

1:

2:

3:

This quest is the story of your friendship with someone who helps stabilize you and your life—someone who is your opposite in a lot of ways, but whose perspective keeps you balanced.

The specific story that's being told will depend on the Arc you're on.

For instance, if you're on an Aspect Arc, this is about the perspective they give you on the stuff already going on in your life, and it ends when it leads you to a meaningful insight. If you're on a Mystic Arc, then it's more important that they're an "enemy" of a sort, and yet they're a better friend to you than the powers and principles that you try to serve.

If there's no obvious choice for this "unlikely friend," or even if there is, you can spend time with a few different people—candidates, as it were, including PCs, important NPCs, and random NPCs—before deciding who the quest's unlikely friend will be. I'm expecting this to be a common thing to do in the first few chapters of the quest.

An Unlikely Friendship

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you identify/choose the “unlikely friend” for this Arc.
- ...you fall, and your friend either pushed you or tries and fails to catch you.
- ...your friend picks up a baby, cat, or small animal and panics because they don’t know what to do next.
- ...your friend betrays some duty out of loyalty to you—usually, quietly, and just before walking away.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...meet your friend while riding, or go riding with them, on an awesome mount or vehicle—ideally, a flying manta ray of some sort.
- ...have formal or at least fancy teatime with your friend.
- ...spend time with a new possibility to be the “unlikely friend” for this Arc.
- ...try tempting your friend or a possible friend out of their shell.
- ...investigate something with your friend or possible friend, often in a library.
- ...urge your friend to climb up to you (presumably, you are physically higher).
- ...hang out with your friend on/around great expanses of bare stone.
- ...become dumbstruck by your friend’s attempt at impressive clothing and style.
- ...have a serious conflict of interest with your friend.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you’re not required to.

XP

Your Social Burdens

25 or 35 XP Quest

2:

3:

In this quest, you're in this headspace of—

Just wanting to focus on what's important. Just wanting it to be *simple* to deal with people.

But it's not.

You're surrounded by all these *social games* and *events* and stuff. You don't understand what it'll take to make your romantic interest happy and discourage other people interested in you. You keep getting asked to do these events and stuff to make parents or friends or whatever happy. People keep wanting you to declare loyalty here and take sides there, handle formalities smoothly here and keep people happy there—

It's all ridiculous, foolish stuff!

The worst of it is probably the formal clothing. I mean, seriously. Why would *anyone* wear *that?*

Your Social Burdens

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you're unexpectedly drawn to somebody—you didn't think you even liked them, but it's *magnetic!*
- ...someone expresses completely baffling expectations of you.
- ...you have an unexpected suitor.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...model formal or ridiculous clothing for friends, family, or an instructor/guide.
- ...leave your calling card or visiting card with someone.
- ...pace during a conversation at a coffeeshop or pancake house.
- ...refuse, or try to refuse, to dance with somebody.
- ...converse in an alley, leaning against the wall or sitting on a dumpster edge.
- ...sort through paperwork or invitations at a desk.
- ...get into a fight or trouble while way overdressed.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Your Social Burdens
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you're torn between two romances, two teams, two great friendships, or two loyalties.
- ...you ignore a lecture from an authority figure or the excited storytelling of a friend because it's all just foolishness.
- ...you have an unexpected suitor.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...are interrupted while working because there's somewhere you have to be.
- ...experience a montage of letters, dances, calling cards, and people dragging you places.
- ...debut dazzlingly somewhere.
- ...are hugged so hard you can't breathe.
- ...try to conduct a fight, pull off a heist, or face big trouble surreptitiously so as not to alarm the people of the party or event you're at.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Action!

25 or 40 XP Quest

4:

5:

In this quest, you fight a god-like, amorphous being or conspiracy that seems able to manifest in or control practically everything around you.

Are you struggling against incarnate death?

A shapeless god?

An all-powerful conspiracy?

A spirit that swallowed you into a pocket world in its stomach, or burgeoned out to fill the world?

P.S. Kick its butt!

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...there's nowhere to run! (Not only are limbs, tendrils, soldiers, or whatever bursting out from all around you, but there's nowhere closer than several *minutes* of travel that's safe.)
- ...you drag some limb or minion of the enemy out of the shadows.
- ...you listen to a shockingly off-kilter rant from someone you care about.
- ...the world freezes over or stops, as under crystal or glass.

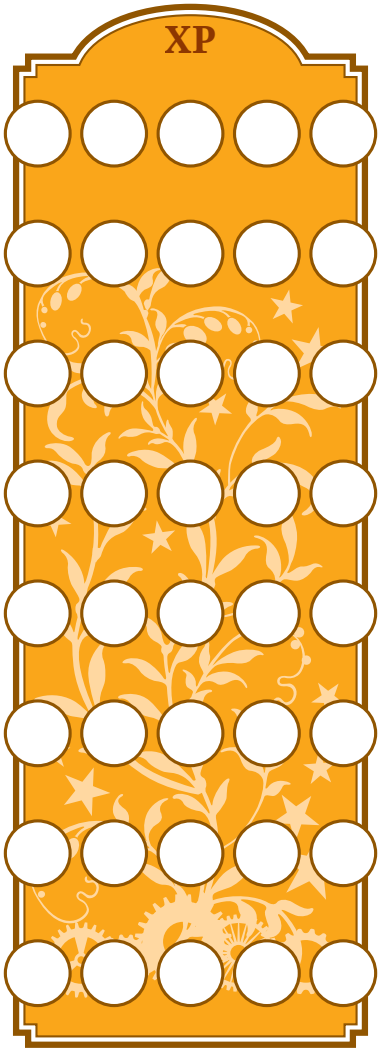
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you create something amazing for use in this battle.
- ...the world goes distorted and weird—space bulges or looms in around you.
- ...your vision fades in and out.
- ...you stagger through a high-contrast location (e.g. a dark dirt road in snow).
- ...you're tormented by the whispering or other noise your enemy makes.
- ...some job takes a lot longer than you expected—often right to the last second.
- ...you put on a badass longcoat or other "hero outfit."
- ...bugs seethe.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Action!
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...there's nowhere to run! (Not only are limbs, tendrils, soldiers, or whatever bursting out from all around you, but there's nowhere closer than several *minutes* of travel that's safe.)
- ...the enemy has infiltrated or is waiting somewhere you thought was safe.
- ...a friend is mind-controlled by the enemy.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

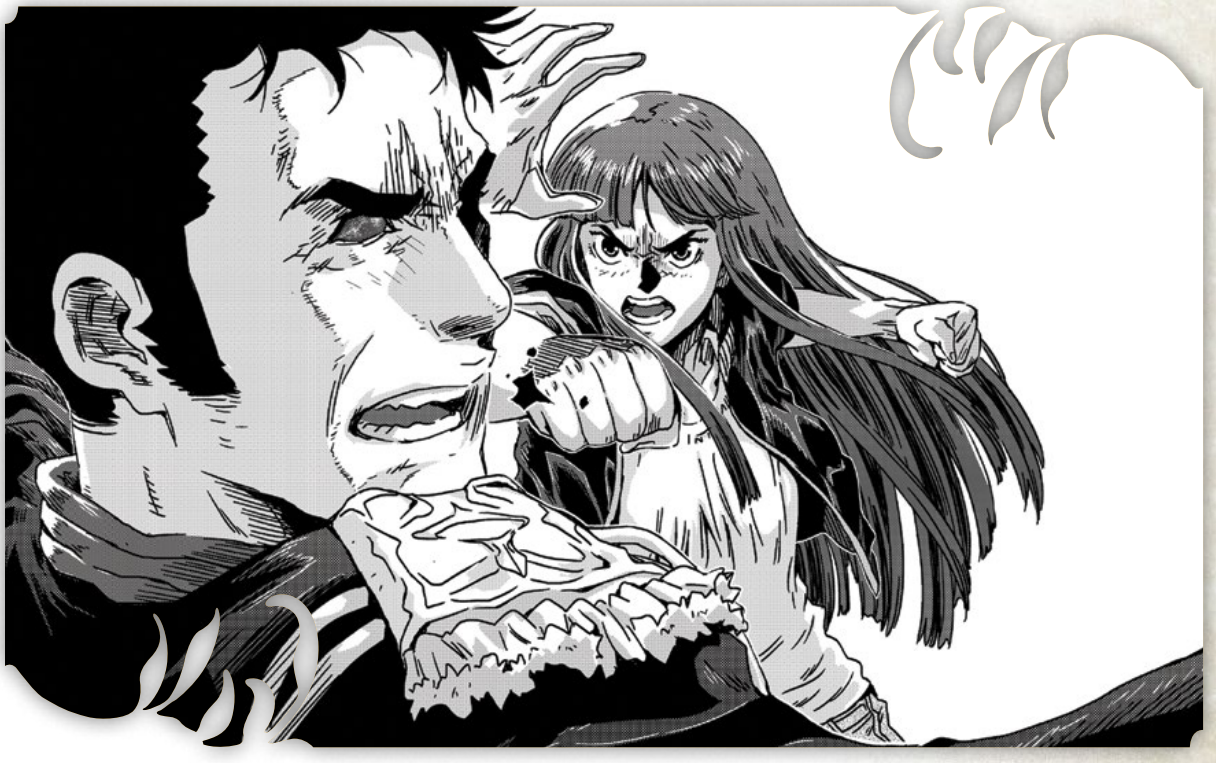
Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you reveal a new weapon, technique, or device.
- ...you put on a badass longcoat or other "hero outfit."
- ...the world starts melting around you.
- ...you flee just ahead of an explosion, an implosion, or destruction.
- ...you're feverish or sick.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP



Coming to Grips with Death

20 or 35 XP Quest

4:

5:

Something bad has happened. It's hard to understand. It's hard to deal with.

You're trying but it's like you're wandering lonely, twilit hills, and where a cold wind blows.

3

Coming to Grips with Death

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you change the world.
- ...you make a friend. An amazing friend, in the most unexpected place.
- ...someone tries to win you over to "the other side"—they take on the role of parent, mentor, older sibling, or romantic interest, and try to persuade you that what you think of as loyalty or purpose is just you clinging to things that hurt you; that they want to offer you a safer, better home.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you stay up all night walking.
- ...you discover a beetle or tick climbing on you.
- ...your clothes are in rags.
- ...you notice a scarab symbol in your living quarters or dreams.
- ...you revert to the behavior or social position of someone younger.
- ...you're having trouble seeing.
- ...somebody is trying to change you; you have trouble fighting it off, trouble keeping your thoughts your own.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Coming to Grips with Death
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you receive some honor or distinction.
- ...you invite someone you've scarcely met to join you on an adventure.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...somebody helps you pull yourself together.
- ...you stare aimlessly at somebody's grave or sickbed.
- ...you watch a bug of some sort fly away.
- ...you wander, lost.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

The Heroic Journeys of the Child of the Sun

These quests form a generic structure for the Arcs of **the Child of the Sun,** and any other character whose story focuses on their cosmic role, destiny, and power to transcend who they currently are.

They're also the generic quests for interacting with **the Prodigy,** wherein you're a kind of... mentor or guardian spirit to them, meant to see them through their struggles and shelter them from despair. To be their moral touchstone, healer/buffer, patron deity, and guardian angel—

Concerned more with protecting their spirit and their hopes, of course, than their body, since they're probably scarier in a physical fight than you.

You can do the quests in a couple of different orders, depending on *why* you're transcending and how it fits into your life—for instance, a Knight Arc is more likely to establish your "normal" life before it gets into the matter of your cosmic role and destiny—but the reference version of these quests is an Otherworldly or Mystic Arc, and it goes like this:

- **Changes.** Something is changing in your life, but you're not sure exactly what.
- **The Refusal of the Call.** You try to take a way out, but it blows up on you.

Changes (Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...there's a scene where people are disapproving or bland but most importantly unfazed by your showing up with extra limbs or unusual physical alterations, e.g., a disdainful "Oh, that's *just* like you to have those tentacles" or "Acne! Nobody told me we were supposed to have acne today! (muttered) Showoff."
- ...you meet Death, the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy, or some other feared personage, but because you're delirious or have reason to believe that it's just somebody dressed as them, you have a pleasant chat instead of anything else.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest from...

- ...dreaming of merging with a great and branching tree.
- ...uncontrolled shapeshifting, possibly in a dream/imagination spot.
- ...being surrounded by dancing shadows (again, possibly in a dream).
- ...noticing some weird mark or change in your body.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

- **The Belly of the Whale.** You're separated from your normal life, threatened, and at risk of being transformed.

Then, if you need more XP or closure:

- **The Trials of the Sun.** The cosmos has fallen out of order; you struggle to fix it.
- **Apotheosis.** You become something more than you had been.

Changes

25 or 35 XP Quest

1:

2:

Some big change is coming to you or someone near you. The world, or your body, or your soul, or that of a friend—it's shifting into a different state.

Changes

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you have a traumatic transformation or dissociation scene in play, where your reality gets weird because your true nature is changing or revealing itself.
- ...you see a confusing vision, nightmare, or premonition of your or someone else's death.
- ...you meet and get the chance to help a mysterious child find their way.

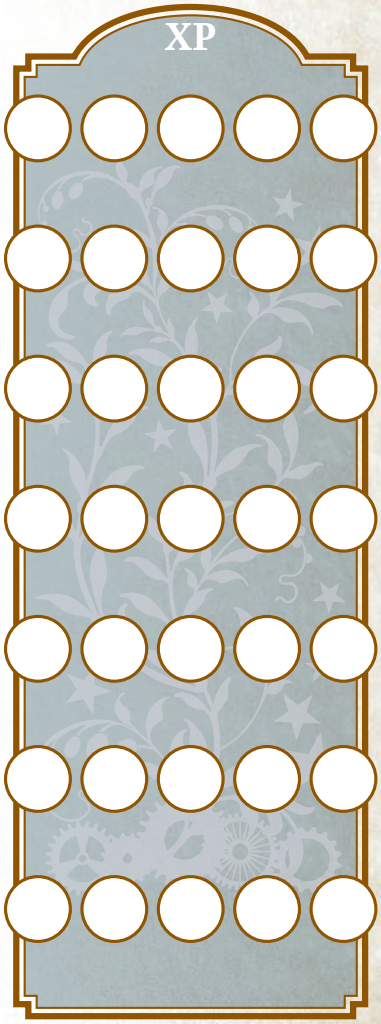
You can earn each bonus once, for to a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...wrestling with/expressing nameless feelings of loss that make you act unnaturally.
- ...trying and failing to burn things, to light them on fire.
- ...getting confused about who and where you are.
- ...listening to stories about things that were lost when Jade Irinka died.
- ...talking with somebody about your destiny/nature and what it means.
- ...talking with somebody about why there's such a thing as death.
- ...dealing with acne, braces, your period, ear infections, or other annoyingly intrusive elements of physicality.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



The Refusal of the Call

20 or 35 XP Quest

1:

2:

3:

3

You struggle to find a way out of the situation you're in. You look for help. It's not necessarily that you don't want to move forward—

Often that's the problem. But other times you're OK with moving forward; it's just that you want to have a *choice*.

You want to move forward along the path you're on, but you don't *trust* it and you really want to keep your distance and be *able* to turn away.

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you accept, or at least are clearly tempted by, someone's offer to help you fight off/resist your destiny.
- ...you stand in the shadow of an enemy's fortress or cathedral.
- ...you give yourself into someone else's hands, making yourself terrifyingly vulnerable either physically or emotionally.

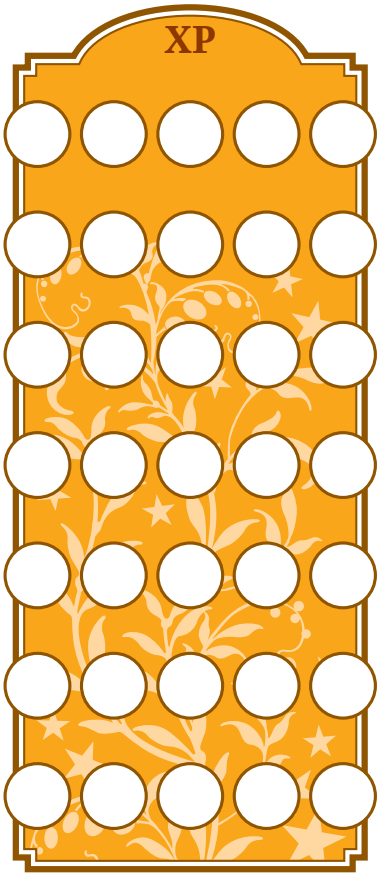
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...talking with someone about the principles that are the most important to you.
- ...describing yourself as a helpless pawn of fate.
- ...wondering if you're actually good or evil.
- ...trying to replace or repair torn clothing on a tight budget.
- ...you're overburdened—you work too hard, and with too little.
- ...you get confused about who and where you are.
- ...fretting over whether you're actually on the wrong side.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



The Refusal of the Call
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you build or show a strong emotional bond to an "opposite number"—someone working at cross purposes to what you will become.
- ...they offer to help you but you have to turn them down.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, *not* limited to once each, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...pleading with an enemy to understand you.
- ...exploring and having fun.
- ...a phone rings but isn't answered.
- ...someone helps you while you're throwing up (from overwork? Sickness? Drinking?).

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

The Belly of the Whale

20+ or 45 XP Quest

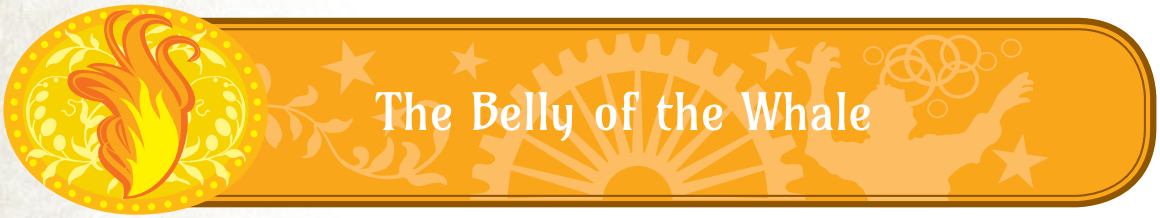
2:

3:

You've been swallowed up by literal or metaphorical chaos. You're not always in active danger, but you don't really have a "normal" state to go back to—

You're out on a limb. You're like somebody at a convention without money or a room to stay in, or someone treading water in the middle of the sea. You're like someone lost in an amazing mansion or like somebody trapped in a spooky woods. The defining characteristic isn't how bad things get, though they can get very bad; it's that you don't have any compass, any map, or anywhere reachable and solid to *go*.

3



Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you have a profound spiritual experience where you seem to blend into the world around you.
- ...you're trapped.
- ...you defeat an "opposite number" or rival, only to have a scarier enemy or problem arise.
- ...you're rescued by somebody
- ...you rescue somebody else.

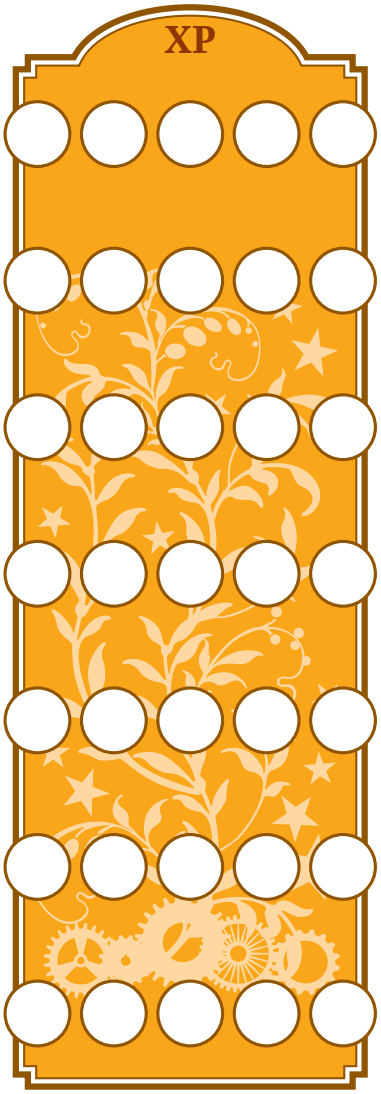
You can earn up to four of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you stand barefoot in a high place, looking down at the world.
- ...you get stabbed through the torso, possibly in a dream/imagination spot.
- ...your hair grows in real-time, possibly in a dream/imagination spot.
- ...you bring light in the darkness.
- ...you comfort someone.
- ...you sit by the water eating fried fish with one or more friends.
- ...birds cluster around you.
- ...you manage a contemplative moment between troublesome circumstances.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



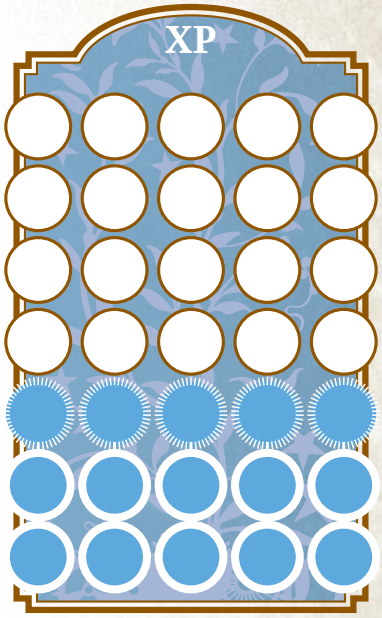
The Belly of the Whale
(Simplified)

Bonus XP

This quest takes place in a context where you're out of your element, where you're transforming or being transformed into something else.

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by **proposing a theory about what will happen to you.**

Your character must propose the theory aloud or, at minimum, in their official internal narration—it can't just be you, as the player, at the table, it has to be IC.



The Belly of the Whale
(Simplified, Variant)

Bonus XP

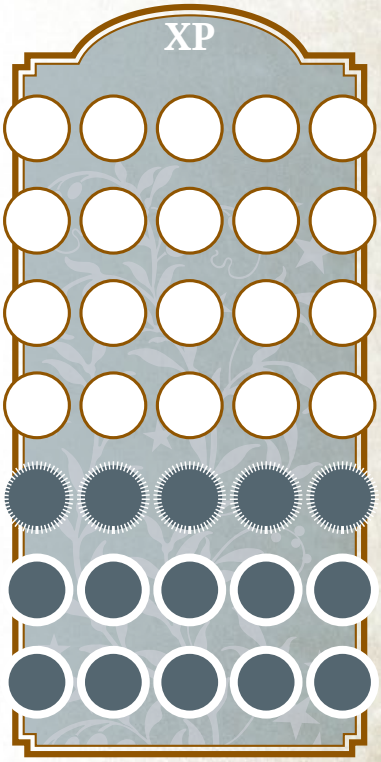
You're dissociating from reality.

You are dissolving into these places that you find yourself in. You are awakening a strange new self inside. Everything is turning into teeth and rivers inside you.

Something is being *born*.

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (though only once per scene/15 minutes) by declaring that you can feel the touch of the impending miracle upon you—you can phrase it another way; just give some indication that you're triggering this quest condition—and then free-associating for a few moments about what your character is experiencing, feeling, thinking.

Talk about being cold, or warm; talk about visions; whatever. Flare up the light in you. Cut your teeth on cold. Have a greenness stuck in your mouth, somewhere, ugly, stopping up your tongue as you try to pry it loose. That kind of hing. That brings you in a bonus XP for this quest.



The Trials of the Sun

25 or 35 XP Quest

4:

You're losing sight of yourself. You're being pushed so hard by internal and external factors that you can't maintain a solid picture of who you *are*.

There's no spare energy for it.

You don't have time for it.

It's all in flux.

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you reclaim a lost legacy of a parent or mentor.
- ...you humble some enemy, bending them completely to your will.
- ...you unleash, or are taken over by, a bleak power.

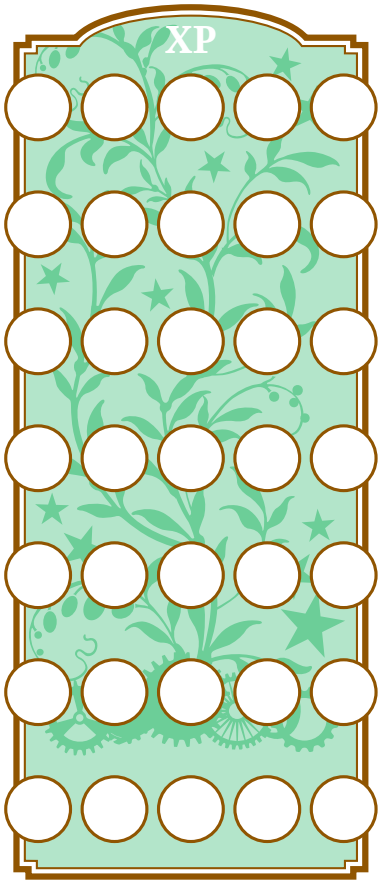
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...your hands/arms sprout bladed vines, possibly in a dream/imagination spot.
- ... you merge with/devour someone else, possibly in a dream/imagination spot.
- ...you experiment with powers that you shouldn't.
- ...you assert your power or your destiny.
- ...you talk about your sense that there's a hole in the world.
- ...you wander in the dark, remembering some grief or loss.
- ...you use an elaborate, magical-looking key.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



The Trials of the Sun
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you build a model, duplicate, icon, or eidolon of yourself.
- ...someone else tells the story of how you lost or damaged some potential you once had.
- ...someone realizes that they were afraid of you for all the wrong reasons. (It's OK for them to wind up more afraid, less afraid, or about the same, as long as the reasons change.)

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you transcend or apotheosize in some fashion.
- ...you or your player give a monologue about the nature of your power.
- ...you propose an enemy's fate.
- ...you commune with an angel or the holy part of your nature.
- ...you perform some sacred chore (e.g. feeding a holy fire).

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

Special Note!

If the game and your powers don't support literal apotheosis/angels, handle these things as a spiritual effect—intangible and only sort of visible, but nevertheless "real" for purposes of the scene.

XP

Apotheosis

25 or 40 XP Quest

5:

This is your chance to meet, and become, your new yourself.

3

Apotheosis

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when you...

- ...hold a representation of the sacred eternal—a philosopher's stone, an elixir of immortality, a key to the world—in your hands.
- ...return to where you started the game or the Arc, find it ruined or damaged, and rebuild/repair it.
- ...meet something that could be considered "the other half" of yourself.
- ...witness an eclipse.
- ...swallow a lizard, enemy, or ally spirit whole.

You can earn up to four of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...can't find water.
- ...fix something broken or unwhole.
- ...eat hot cross buns or melon pan.
- ...guide someone else through a long journey or struggle.
- ...dig up someone frozen and rescue them, possibly in a dream/imagination spot.
- ...grow a new mouth or eye, possibly in a dream/imagination spot.
- ...merge with a book of some sort, possibly in a dream/imagination spot.
- ...pass through the gates of the Bleak Academy.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Apotheosis
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when you...

- ...wander strange, misty landscapes.
- ...stare at a living creature frozen in or behind some sort of crystal.
- ...release light from or open an eye in your forehead.

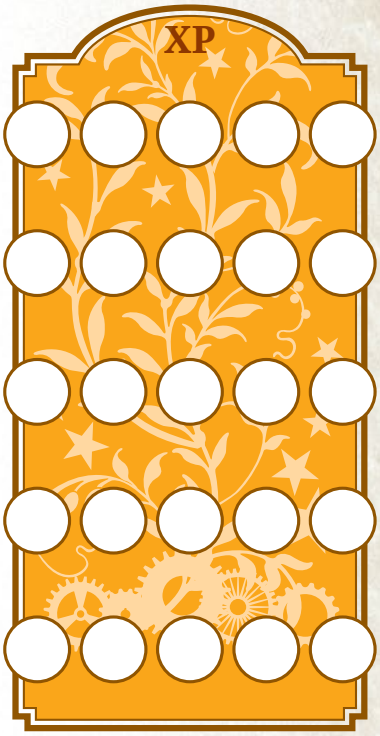
You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...shatter an enemy's weapon barehanded.
- ...possess or infiltrate an enemy or place with your spirit/energy.
- ...fight imaginary enemies, hallucinatory enemies, spirits, or shadows.
- ...talk to people about your dreams for the future.
- ...call upon one of your big powers in a dramatic fashion.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



The Numinous Gardens of Entropy II, Magister

3

These quests form a generic structure for the Arcs of **the Angel of Fortitude**, and also any character with a relatively placid and accepting relationship to the magic in their life—

Characters whose default genre is magic realism or moral/spiritual allegory.

These quests are also the default structure for meddling in the life of **the Best Friend—**they're the structure for stories *about* Seizhi (or Suzy) and their ontological dilemma.

The default path through these quests is a **Shepherd** Arc, and it looks like this:

- **The Story of Your Life.** You work on your established projects.
- **The Sidekick.** You become responsible for a new pet or sidekick, and usually a larger social responsibility as well. (That is, for some reason, taking charge of them is or leads to a political or theological or mercantile act.)
- **Sins of the Father.** You confront some legacy of the first Principal Entropy—e.g., one of the "Six Sins" of the Student Council or some out-of-control element of the evil world.

If you're in need of more XP or closure, the Arc can go one or two quests past that:

- **Surreal Environments.** You go out of your comfort zone—into a surreal or stylized environment.
- **Triumph.** You have fun doing amazing stuff and making the world better.

The Binder's Path

If you're on a Bindings Arc, these quests look more like:

- **The Sidekick.** You become responsible for a new "wicked" pet or sidekick.
- **Sins of the Father.** Then, confront some legacy of the first Principal Entropy.
- **Surreal Environments.** Then venture out of your comfort zone.

Followed, optionally, by:

- **Triumph.** You set your mark on destiny.
- **The Story of Your Life.** And then we fade back to your "normal" life to explore what that means.

These Stories, as Training

If you're interested in an **Aspect** Arc, you'll want to do these more or less like this:

- **The Story of Your Life.** You're pretty cool, but you're limited. You're caught in a kind of trap—until, finally, you push past it and grow.
- **Triumph.** You become something more, and form an important bond/connection.
- **Sins of the Father.** This leads you into an inevitable confrontation with one of the Six Sins, but this Arc in particular emphasizes the troubled, kind of social relationship between you—they're frenemies, useful rivals, fellow outcasts with much in common with you, or whatever, not mortal foes.

Followed, optionally, by:

- **The Sidekick.** You meet someone who's in really big trouble and you have to wrestle with a divine being or something, whatever, to save them.
- **Surreal Environments.** You get lost in a weird place.

An Emptiness Arc

As an **Emptiness** Arc, these look more like this:

- **The Story of Your Life.** You work on your established projects, but you can't help feeling like your life is missing something or has gone wrong somehow. You decide to accept responsibility for the sidekick of Quest 2—
- **The Sidekick.** —but if anything you wind up feeling *more* out of place and like your old life was *more* wrong. Their perspective doesn't make you happier about yourself.
- **Surreal Environments.** So you change things, but this leaves you in a weird, surreal, and troublesome place—like, I guess, all big life changes do!

Followed, optionally, by:

- **Sins of the Father.** You confront some legacy of the first Principal Entropy—e.g., one of the "Six Sins" of the Student Council or some out-of-control element of the evil world.
- **Triumph.** You find your new balance and make everything better.

The Story of Your Life

20 or 35 XP Quest

1:

5:

You're working—probably on a big project. Something that matters.

You're living your life.

Look ahead a bit to see where this quest ends—unless it's the end of the campaign, in which case you can fade off into the metaphorical sunset, this quest is going to end with *the thing that breaks the comfortable, ordinary routines of your life*, which is normally the next big quest in this or some other Arc.

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you make peace with a recent setback where you lost a few days of work.
- ...you're unexpectedly shy, vulnerable, or open with someone.
- ...you have a vision of magic in some thing, place, person, or work, which you might one day be able to bring out.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...admiring the construction and atmosphere of Fortitude, often while softly lit, obscured by fog, and/or with something weird or unnatural nearby.
- ...enjoying the softness of fur, plush grass, carpet, fleece, etc.
- ...having trouble because your clothing's a bit too big for you.
- ...trying and failing to hide your identity.
- ...working, involving slightly larger-than-life or magical incidents.
- ...working, involving simple, honest effort.
- ...talking about your progress on some project and its positive or negative effects on the local environment.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

The Story of Your Life
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you have a relatively peaceful week or two.
- ...you receive a kindness.
- ...you have a chance to use your powers, skills, and associates to help out somebody in trouble.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...horrors, spirits, and other abnormalities gather to watch you at your work.
- ...you want to work, but you don't have the right tools/environment.
- ...you show up in a goofy fashion in the middle of someone else's scene.
- ...you get pushed into things (e.g., onto a stage by a friend, forward by the wind, into a pool).
- ...you find yourself in the presence of pie, cakes, and candy canes.
- ...you win with a scratch-off lottery ticket.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

The Sidekick

20 or 35 XP Quest

1:

2:

4:

This quest is marked and begun with the arrival of two things: a responsibility, and a pet or fresh-faced sidekick. One precedes the other, like so:

- There's something you're asked to do, and the sidekick or pet comes with that.
- You get a sidekick or pet, but taking responsibility for them gets you entangled in larger affairs.
- You try to turn down some big responsibility, and get stuck with a kid or something that hangs out around you trying to change your mind.

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you've figured out a mysterious responsibility, or reluctantly accepted a difficult one.
- ...you've defended the sidekick or pet against some threat.
- ...you've come up with and committed to a plan for how to deal with the responsibility at hand.

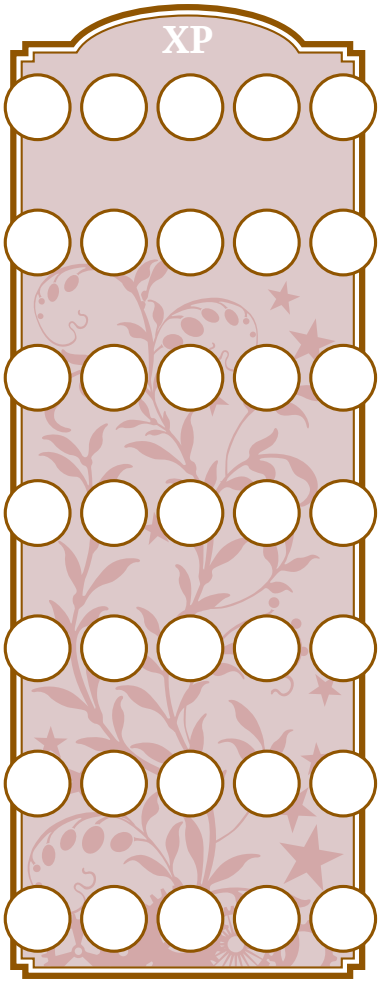
You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...the sidekick or pet getting into goofy trouble.
- ...finding yourself stuck with responsibility for the sidekick or pet.
- ...chores involving voluntarily taking care of/helping the sidekick or pet.
- ...foreshadowing, research into, or stories about the sidekick or pet.
- ...talking with people about strange monsters and horrors.
- ...talking with somebody about the nature of the unknown chaos outside the world.
- ...talking with someone about where destiny comes from.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



The Sidekick
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...things get harder and harder until you have a stress explosion over these new responsibilities.
- ...the sidekick or pet helps you in an unexpected way.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

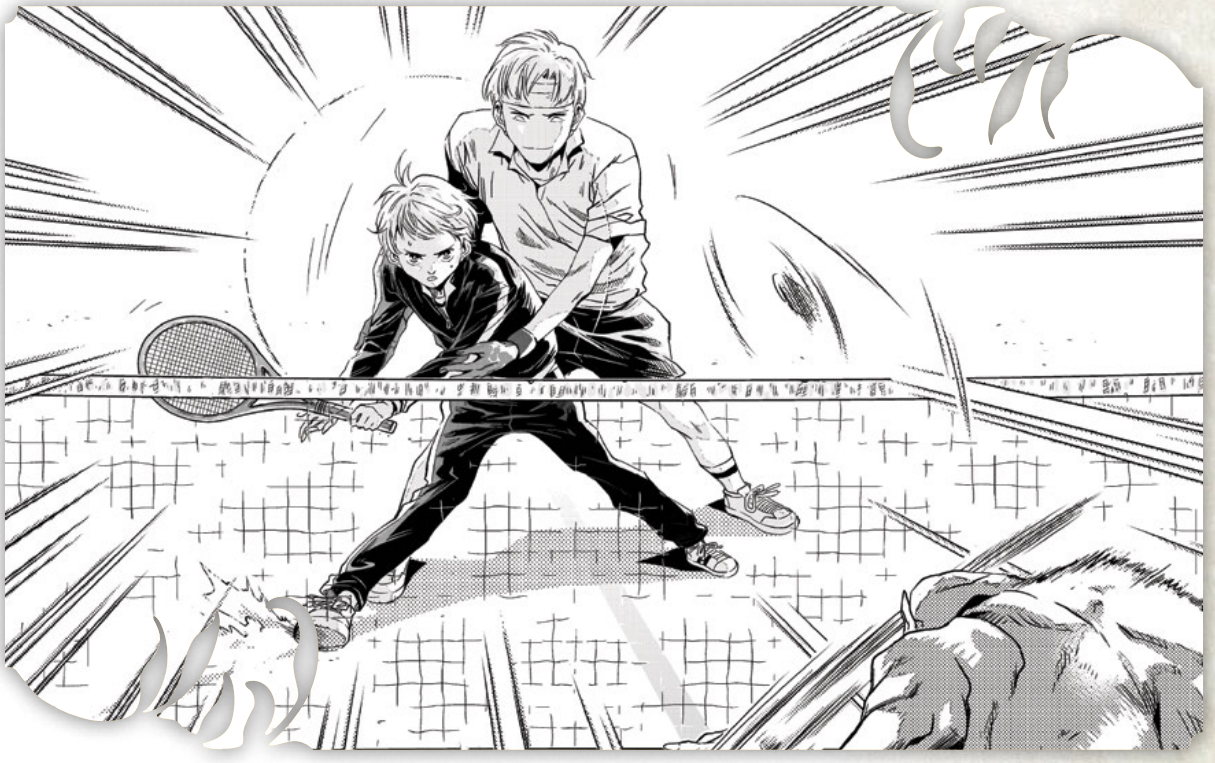
Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...refusing to admit that you've taken to, and taken responsibility for, the pet/sidekick.
- ...keeping the sidekick or pet out of trouble.
- ...telling the sidekick or pet your problems.
- ...foreshadowing, research into, or stories about the sidekick or pet.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP



Sins of the Father

25 or 35 XP Quest

2:

3:

4:

Evil broke. It cracked, like an egg, and among other things **the Angel of Fortitude** fell out. But not alone.

You could probably think of this as theology, you know?

We break our conception of the evil in the world, and discover there's a lot of good out there. Or at least a lot of stuff that's misunderstood. But that isn't *all*. I mean, it's not like *everything* that people think is evil is secretly puppies and cotton candy.

That's just *some* evil.

There was a lot more that fell out of the egg of evil's death than just the new Principal of School. The evil world's still up there, in its orbit around the sun. The old Principal, the first Principal, he left his mark. And there are the "Six Sins" of the Student Council, masked creatures of wickedness, alternatives to the Angel; they're not exactly evil, either, not all of them, but they are each of them most definitely *bad*.

Some of them like serial killers, monsters, horrors bad.

Others like puppies, that you've let roll around in cotton candy, and now they're sticky, unhappy, and gross.

In this quest, anyway, you have to deal with one of these wicked legacies.

Sins of the Father

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you unravel a major plan of an enemy or contain a major threat.
- ...someone dies or gets hurt.
- ...people turn to you for help, even though they don't trust you.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...testing an idea on how to resolve the conflict.
- ...arguing with someone about fate and free will.
- ...social meetings or drinking (tea/sake) with your enemies.
- ...studying books or reports relevant to the matter at hand.
- ...stumbling on evidence of your enemy or target at work.
- ...spying on the enemy.
- ...being sealed in somewhere by mindless action, e.g., by a landslide, insects, spreading ice effects, bureaucracy, mind-control victims, or machines.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Sins of the Father
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...some enemy tries to take you out of play, often with a threat or a bribe.
- ...you have temporary amnesia, fall under a love spell, or otherwise stop being yourself and living as yourself for a while.
- ...you give yourself over to apparent death and destruction to save something else, but wind up narrowly surviving or being saved instead. (That is, that's the F/X you use for the HG fiat, defensive power, or use of the Wound system that saves you.)

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you do someone else's job for them.
- ...something throws a wrench into your plans.
- ...you pick at a cold meal, alone, often eggs, toast, and coffee.
- ...you're investigated or hunted by something evil.
- ...you give a dramatic speech to your enemies.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Surreal Environments

25 or 40 XP Quest

3:

4:

5:

You're spending time in a surreal or stylized environment—an adventure in the Outside, regular visits to Bluebell Park, participation in a play, travel across the Far Roofs, or a festival.

(Incidentally, if you're wondering how to do that last thing in a game with chapters longer than an hour or two? Do most of the festival scenes as flash-forwards or flashbacks, and structure the story accordingly; or, have the festival environment infect your dreams and keep recurring there.)

3

Bonus XP

You're in a weird place or situation. It's full of bizarre entities and over-the-top goofiness.

In the end there's nothing for it. You just have to live with it, don't you? You just say... well, whatever you say about this stuff.

- "I'm just the gardener, you know," maybe. Or—
- "Of *course* that happens."
- "Is that really supposed to be there?"

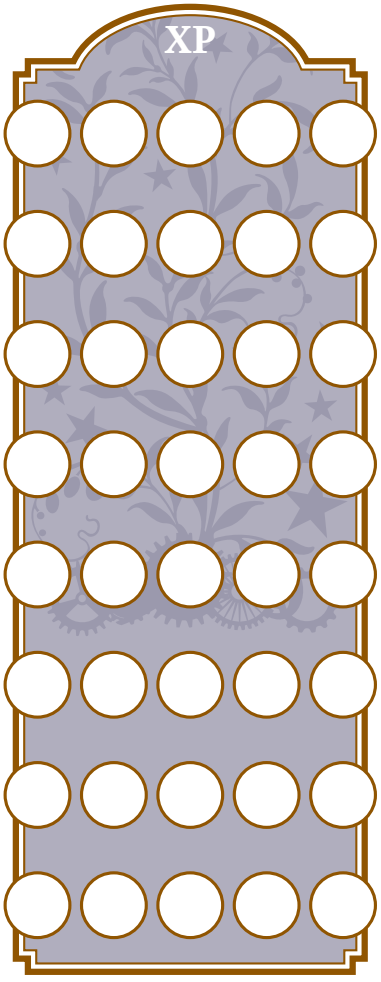
—Something like that. And you sigh, then, and you shake your head.

Or maybe there's something you say to remind you that for all the troubles in it the world's still real:

- "I have fingers."
- "Yare, yare."
- "Look at that sky."
- "It's hot." (Unreal people—they're never hot. Are they?)

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) with your catchphrase—with that thing that you say when *why do I have to deal with these kinds of situations?* is on your mind.

What catch phrase do you use?



Surreal Environments
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...something happens that tests your character.
- ...you articulate a good theory for where you've been going wrong in your life and how you might do/have done better.
- ...you receive a message (e.g. recorded instructions or a message in a bottle) from Jade Irinka, who was the sun.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of up to 10 XP.

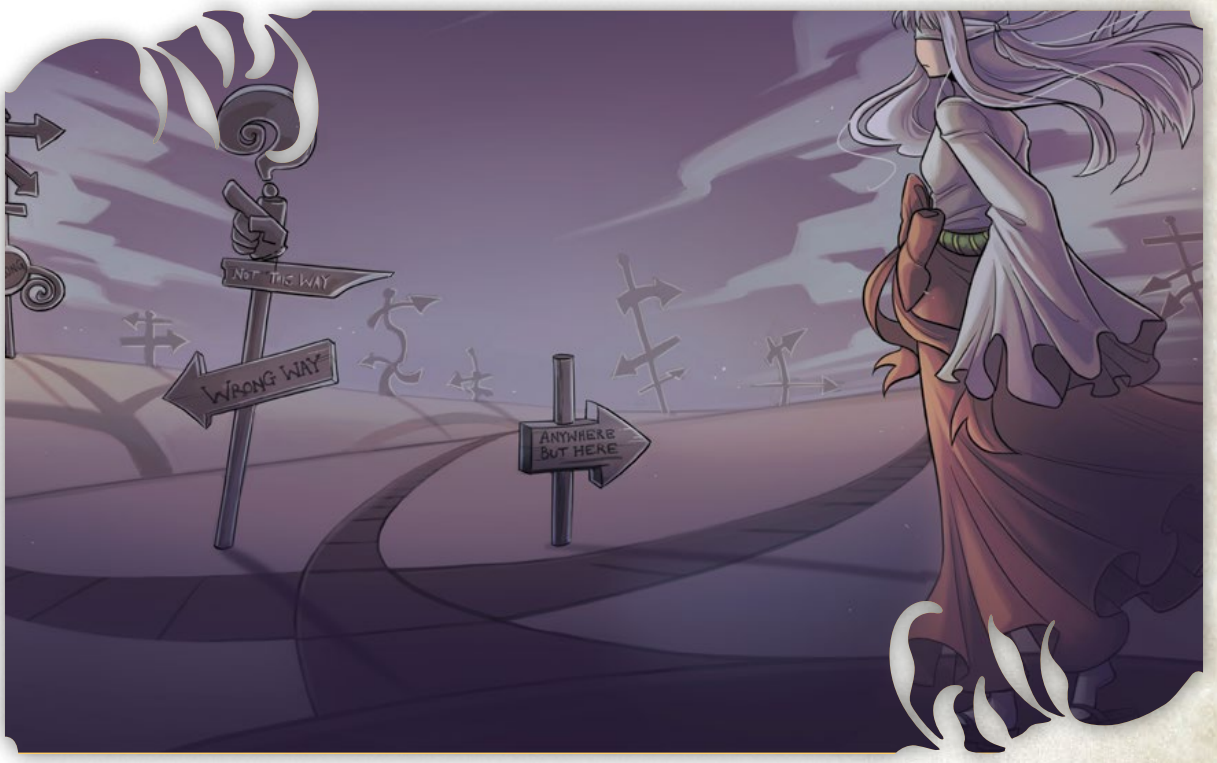
Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...stories of the death of the sun and the first Principal Entropy.
- ...marveling at the weirdness around you.
- ...a scene where the sun flares up or does something weird.
- ...hanging out with someone doomed or dying.
- ...sketching diagrams in the dirt.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP



Triumph

25 or 40 XP Quest

2:

4:

5:

You're a legend. You are awesome. This is the story of you hanging out, being cool, and doing something amazing.

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you finish a big project—with the possible exception of waiting for the festival, solstice, assistant, opening day, or event that'll let you reveal it or power it up.
- ...you recover something you'd thought lost forever.
- ...you share a kiss with your romantic interest under some sort of fireworks; or, you have a similar scene with an inanimate object; or, you try to do so, but are refused.

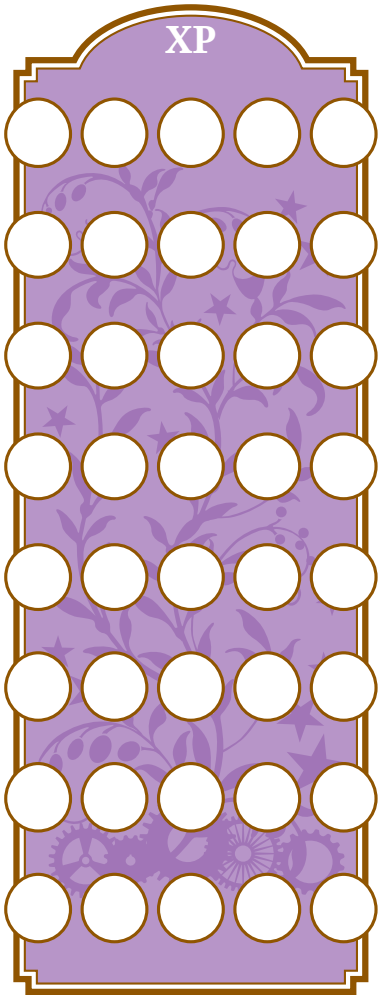
You can earn these bonuses once each, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...talking about what you're doing and what it will accomplish.
- ...dreaming of a happy future.
- ...attending a wedding or a funeral.
- ...sleepless nights.
- ...testing your work, putting it through its paces.
- ...montages of strange incidents of you at your work.
- ...dragging people out for sandwiches, milkshakes, and/or fried foods so you can be excited and happy about the project in their direction.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Triumph
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you give someone a sneak preview of a big project in a near-completion stage.
- ...you get a letter or package from an old friend.
- ...you perform at a wedding.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...bringing friends in to help you with your work.
- ...sharing something wonderful.
- ...demonstrating a marvel.
- ...late nights of work and geeky conversation.
- ...laughing in the face of apparent failure.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

The Bittersweet Saga of Miramie Mesmer

3

These quests form a generic structure for the Arcs of anyone who is trying to come out of their shell—

The Dream-Witch, in particular, but anyone who has trouble engaging with the world.

They're also a good set of Arcs for anyone *helping* someone like that—anyone who stands beside them as they redefine their position in the world. Basically, if you're spending a lot of time with **the Dream-Witch,** exploring the Archive, visiting the hidden room, and dealing with people with the shards of the glass dragon in them, you can use these quests to play it out.

This is *also* a backup structure for the Arcs dealing with **the Wishing Boy (or Girl)—**you can use these if you're spending time with them, playing through their Arcs, but *not* because you have a wholehearted engagement with the wacky wish stuff. Instead, you're dragged in kind of reluctantly by the charisma of the people involved.

Any road, if you're building, say, a **Shepherd** Arc, the quests'll play out like these:

- **Beautiful and Far Away.** There's a place you can go to escape this troubled world.
- **Fascination.** You're fascinated by someone/thing dangerous and irresponsible.
- **This is:**
  - **...So Surreal:** People are doing just plain goofy stuff with their powers.
  - **...*Such* a Bad Idea:** Someone gets or seizes new powers.

These are sometimes followed by one or two of...

- **You've Lost Them.** You interact with somebody damaged.
- **Something Heals.** You interact with someone who is trying to make things better and make up for their old mistakes.

Beautiful and Far Away
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you demonstrate how you *need* **the Secret Place**—how it's sustaining you, why you'd be at risk without it.
- ...you demonstrate how **the Secret Place** is *hurting* you, breaking you, how it's damaging your ability to live an ordinary life.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...having a troubled dream.
- ...talking with/ranting at somebody about **the Secret Place.**
- ...babbling poorly-formed philosophy or metaphysics at somebody.
- ...retreating to **the Secret Place.**

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Beautiful and Far Away

20 or 35 XP Quest

1:

2:

There is a secret place, somewhere beautiful and far away, that's calling to you.

It is an escape, a desperately needed escape from the world; but like all escapes, it can kill you if you take it too far. And it is so very easy to take this one too far; and yet, you need it, so very much.

This is the Arc's **Secret Place,** and it is located in the Arc's **Setting.**

Often it's a little unreal—you'll visit it in dreams, or visions, or by traveling through the Outside.

Beautiful and Far Away

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...others stumble on your **Secret Place.**
- ...you establish a reason why you *need* **the Secret Place**—why it's sustaining you, why you'd be at risk without it.
- ...you establish a reason why **the Secret Place** is *hurting* you, breaking you, damaging your ability to live an ordinary life.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through...

- ...guiding someone through the Archive (or, more generally, the Arc's **Setting**).
- ...talking with somebody about **the Secret Place.**
- ...talking with somebody about what dreams are, as compared to reality.
- ...talking with somebody about whether the world deserves to exist, whether it's good or bad, or whether that even matters.
- ...getting in a row with somebody over/about **the Secret Place.**
- ...refusing to retreat to **the Secret Place**, even though things are very bad, *or*
- ...retreating to **the Secret Place.**

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Fascination

20 or 35 XP Quest

1:

2:

3:

There's someone or something that fascinates you—

Both as a person (or entity) and as a power, a force of nature. You want to spend time with them. You want to know more.

3

Fascination

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when you...

- ...express your fascination with someone or something dangerous and irresponsible.
- ...after that first reward, go a long way out of your way (physically) in order to study the operation and mechanisms of somebody else's powers—e.g., a field trip to Horizon to watch the Wish-Granting Engine at work.
- ...make yourself terrifyingly vulnerable, e.g. as an act of social/romantic trust, an act of folly, or as bait for a trap.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...confess a secret desire.
- ...have a troubled dream about glass, magic, and the Outside.
- ...investigate the shrine family magic for dealing with troubled dreams.
- ...dream about a Main Character or Arc-related NPC.
- ...hang out with someone you like while they do their thing.
- ...get into goofy trouble for, with, or because of somebody else.
- ...talk with someone about the various bad ends people can come to in fairy tales, stories about wishes, and stories about witches.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Fascination
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when you...

- ...witness something amazing, even by your standards.
- ...get badly hurt when you weren't expecting it.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...investigate someone's powers.
- ...argue with someone about the proper use of some power.
- ...express your fascination with somebody.
- ...explain to someone, or argue with them about, the workings of shrine magic, the Arc's **Setting**, or the Outside.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

This is So Surreal

25 or 35 XP Quest

2:

3:

4:

Someone you're involved with (a friend, SO, ally, minion, or dangerously seductive power) is using their powers in ways that are just plain goofy.

This is often a counterpart to **Wishing for Ease—** I don't expect many people to have the chance to start and finish this quest at the exact same time someone else does **Wishing for Ease,** but *conceptually,* they're two sides of a coin.

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you freak out—you have a minor or major psychological breakdown because you can't cope with these wishes.
- ...you give a monologue—often comedically serious IC, though not necessarily so OOC—to explain why a wish is a bad idea.
- ...you receive some implausible honor or reward for your conduct in handling a wish, or as part of the wish's execution itself.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

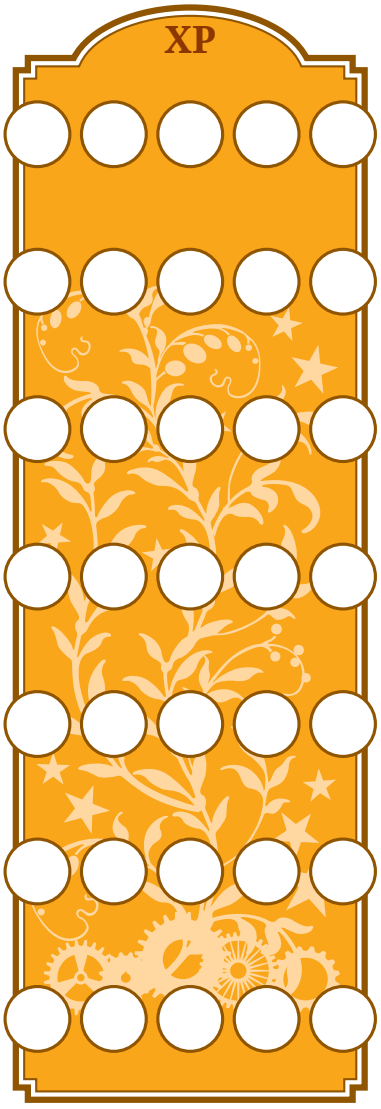
1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you're seduced by the wonder and utility of a wish.
- ...marveling at the way a wish changed the world.
- ...things get chaotic or absurd because of a wish.
- ...you help the Archive, Professor Hayashi, **the Dream-Witch,** or her café (or whatever she has instead of a café) weather the course of a wish.
- ...you're forced to break a personal commitment—use a power you hate, break a promise, or whatever—in order to resolve or weather a wish.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

Special Note!

Anything that can go wrong in the same way a classic wish can (including most Imperial miracles and some magical spells) counts as a "wish" here.



This is So Surreal
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you freak out—you have a minor or major psychological breakdown because you can't cope with these wishes.
- ...you give a monologue—often comedically serious IC, though not necessarily so OOC—to explain why a wish is a bad idea.
- ...you receive some implausible honor or reward for your conduct in handling a wish, or as part of the wish's execution itself.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you reject part of a wish that would have been useful.
- ...you get lost in the Outside.
- ...things get chaotic or absurd because of a wish.
- ...you're forced to break a personal commitment—use a power you hate, break a promise, or whatever—in order to resolve or weather a wish.
- ...you have nightmares of masks, death, trouble, and the laughter of Melanie (or Reginald) Malakh.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

Special Note!

Anything that can go wrong in the same way a classic wish can (including most Imperial miracles and some magical spells) counts as a "wish" here.

XP

This is *Such* a Bad Idea

20 or 35 XP Quest

2:

3:

4:

Someone you're involved with (a friend, SO, ally, minion, or dangerously seductive power) has gone on a bit of a power trip.

This is often a counterpart to **Wishing for Power—** The other side of a conceptual coin.

3

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...someone *normally* trustworthy or goofy goes on a power trip and winds up grinding you under their malevolent heel; or, more generally, you suffer unpleasantly from their use of the power that they've seized.
- ...you're put into an awkward, embarrassing, or at least highly goofy or counter-type role by a wish, probably with details suggested by the HG and other players.
- ...you manage to become a "power behind the throne" or otherwise steal a portion of the power in play over the course of a wish.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest Flavor

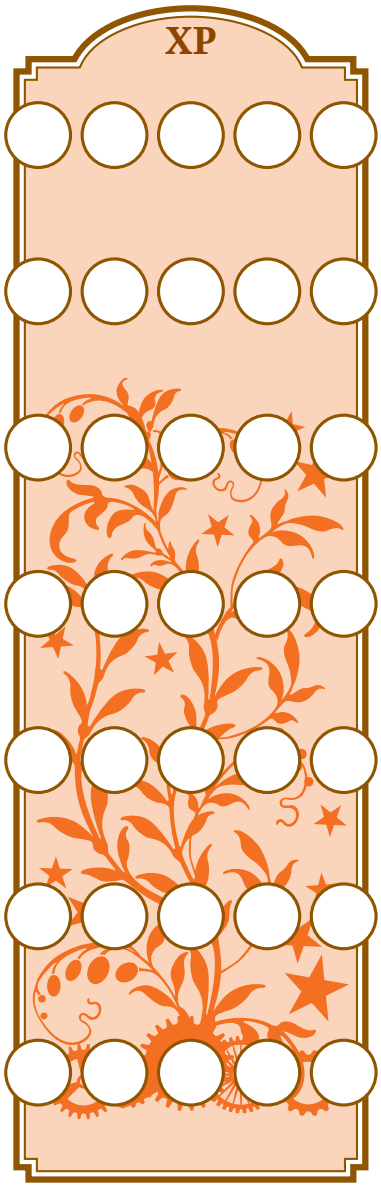
1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...ritually drawing on the powers the wish has given you.
- ...enjoying the changed world, letting it corrupt you.
- ...you overcome some obstacle in the world of the wish.
- ...you're forced to break a personal commitment—use a power you hate, break a promise, or whatever—in order to resolve or weather a wish.
- ...you struggle with the circumstances of the wish.
- ...the wish does something really strange to your life.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

Special Note!

Anything that can go wrong in the same way a classic wish can (including most Imperial miracles and some magical spells) counts as a "wish" here.



This is *Such* a Bad Idea
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...someone *normally* trustworthy or goofy goes on a power trip and winds up grinding you under their malevolent heel; or, more generally, you suffer unpleasantly from their use of the power that they've seized.
- ...you're put into an awkward, embarrassing, or at least highly goofy or counter-type role by a wish, probably with details suggested by the HG and other players.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...you're forced to break a personal commitment—use a power you hate, break a promise, or whatever—in order to resolve or weather a wish.
- ...things get really weird.
- ...you give up and just go with it.
- ...there's a big parade or festival.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

Special Note!

Anything that can go wrong in the same way a classic wish can (including most Imperial miracles and some magical spells) counts as a "wish" here.

XP

You've Lost Them

20 or 45 XP Quest

3:

4:

5:

Someone has lost a piece of themselves—something important.

It could be a friend. It could be an enemy. It's even vaguely possible that it's you—that you are now just a hollow shell or double of the person you used to be.

You're looking at this from the outside.

You *might* get it back, but you don't think you can. Certainly you don't *know* that you can, and you can't put any faith in it as more than a dream.

And the important thing is—

You feel responsible. If it's a random person or an enemy you feel responsible because you had something to do with it, or think you did. If it's a friend, you hurt for them and want to help. If it's you, well, you're not that person any more, but you have a kind of duty to carry on as if you were.

Does that make sense?

They are this Arc's **Lost Person.**

You've Lost Them (Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you help to impersonate, construct a robot double for, or otherwise replace the **Lost Person;**
- ...you get atypically emotional when it really sinks in that they're gone, damaged, or changed.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...someone soliloquys about the loss.
- ...you communicate somehow with **the Lost Person's** true self, far away.
- ...you wander Fortitude with **the Lost Person** or with or as their stand-in.
- ...there are signs that things may be getting better after all.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

You've Lost Them

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...you help to impersonate, construct a robot double for, or otherwise replace the **Lost Person.**
- ...you get in some kind of completely unnecessary trouble because that person is incomplete or missing.
- ...you get atypically emotional when it really sinks in that they're gone, damaged, or changed.
- ...your first full or nearly-full book on this quest comes to an end.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when...

- ...your life is a mess.
- ...you struggle to understand the loss.
- ...you talk to someone about memories, metaphysics, and the soul.
- ...you talk to someone about death.
- ...you encounter some shocking consequence of a wish or similar power.
- ...you watch somebody self-destructing.
- ...you dream of shipwrecks and drowning.
- ...you dream of the **Lost Person's** true self, their real self, somewhere far away.
- ...a week passes and nothing has gotten better.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Something Heals

25 or 45 XP Quest

2:

4:

5:

This quest is about an unexpected chance to find closure on something. Maybe it's a stroke of good fortune.

Maybe it's the product of hard work.

Maybe it's just something that had to happen, given time.

3

Something Heals

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...someone comforts you in a time of need.
- ...you break your rules or patterns in a big way in order to help or save somebody else.
- ...something goes right, because of luck or fate or divine intervention or somebody else—basically, because of not-you—when everything seemed lost.
- ...you absorb some power, force, place, or energy into yourself.

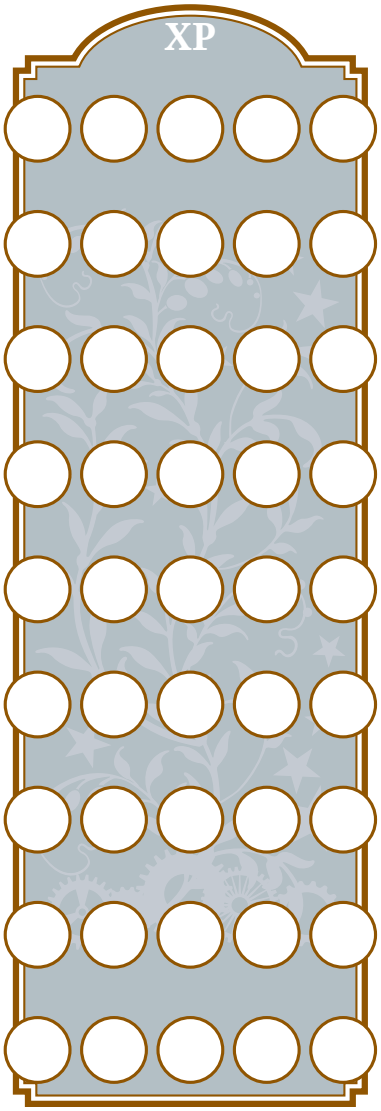
You can earn each bonus once, up to a total of 20 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...have a precious moment with something you thought that you'd lost.
- ...talk with an old friend about your shared adventures.
- ...have an ordinary, happy day at your job or other place of work.
- ...sit with someone and eat crackers and soft cheese.
- ...stand in, or lean against, an arch overgrown with ivy.
- ...watch a ship sail away across Big Lake.
- ...dream of a faraway friend, loved one, or Main Character.
- ...bid an emotional farewell—you or someone else is moving on.
- ...show someone a wonder.

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.



Something Heals
(Simplified)

Major Goals

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when...

- ...someone comforts you in a time of need.
- ...you break your rules or patterns in a big way to show someone a kindness or take them under your wing.
- ...you absorb some power, force, place, or energy into yourself.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you...

- ...talk with someone about the things you've lost.
- ...feed leftover meat to a stray dog.
- ...have a kind of over-the-top day at your job or place or work.
- ...tell someone the stories of your adventures.
- ...show someone a secret (often the Arc's **Secret Place**).

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to.

XP

Supporting Cast

This bit's going to give descriptions and game rules for some of the NPCs you'll see over the course of the campaign.

It's mostly a reference—

But I wanted to give you the chance to read or skim it before you reached the stories of ***Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon***, just in case you're the kind of person who needs to know how an NPC "works" to make sense of the stories in which they appear.

If you're fine with just a high concept, skip this chapter and come back later on.

4

Ardennes

Ardennes is a sophisticated girl—er, for a 15-year-old—with political aspirations. She wants to lead Town into a glorious modern future. She'll explain, if you let her, that yes, Town's deviant scientists have gone astray, and yes, Earth wasn't doing any too great with all its technology either,[92] but that Fortitude and Town in general are erring too much the other way by rejecting progress—

"Nanomachines can make a utopian future!" she'll declare.

Her mundane abilities are something like:

- **Photographic Memory 3**
- **Dreams of Progress 2**
- **Style 2**
- **"I'd rather kiss a dog!" 1**
- **Bond: Altruistic 2**

Her catchphrase is useful in resisting social pressure but is somewhat compromised of late ever since her friend Steve got a golden retriever that she is willing to let lick her face.[93]

Ardennes enters this story by way of the shards of the glass dragon—

The X-ray'll show that there's one speared right into her brain, where her third eye would have been,[94] and sometime during the first Glass Arc, "Shards of Glass," it'll awaken and give her a power like:

- building retro-futuristic, utopian technology.
- transmuting liquids.
- waking and animating plants, turning them into tree soldiers, tree workers, flower people, and the like.
- making time gates.
- being a magical baker or tailor—the cap'll come off of the normal mundane limits on what a Skill like this can do, although she still won't have much Skill *in* it until she practices later on.
- the power to garb herself in unholy glory and make others fear and honor her.
- the ability to return up to three times the harm done to her as a curse upon whomever inflicted it.

Many of these will be a little frustrating to her—*so close, and yet so far!*—because the power she actually *wants*, the thing she dreams of, is a super-brain that can drive a new era of scientific advancement. Ideally, she'll explain, a brain good enough to *improve its own intelligence*, thus uncapping her completely.

And some of the options above are very close; but not quite, because the glass dragon shards don't give you the power you want. They give you the power you get.

Ardennes' shard power is normally an **Affliction** with a power level notionally based on her (in) Over Your Head Issue—she doesn't get Issues per se, being an NPC, but basically, her powers become bigger and bigger the more out of control her life becomes. If she becomes a major character the HG could consider stepping her powers up to a **Sentimental** Arc.

She appears in "Shards of Glass" as one of the empowered characters most likely to go out of control and start doing really goofy stuff. She may also show up in the third Glass Arc, "the Maze in the Library," hunting an archaeological/scientific discovery that her dreams assure her is within. It's also possible that by that Arc she'll have changed her mind about the meaning of life and is actually hunting for magic or the labyrinth's unicorn, either to claim or to destroy it.

92 *She figures that catastrophic global warming makes up for the Internet, jet planes, and heart transplants, though I think it's kind of unfair to do that when it isn't catastrophic yet.*

93 *It's not* technically *kissing a dog, since the dog is doing all the kissing, but as she will admit sourly, "It is a terrible blurring of distinctions."*

94 *If humans had three eyes, which seems like the kind of thing that could have happened.*

Billy Sovereign

This is **the Best Friend's** nemesis and counterpart—a soulless bully who turns his victims, which is to say, anyone who stops fighting him, into faded minion-like extensions of himself.

His Skills look something like:

- **Sense Weakness 3.** He has an uncanny insight into weakness.
- **Survive 3.** He can live indefinitely while on fire, among other things.
- **Do Stuff 1.** He's familiar with doing stuff.
- **Long History 1.** He has a nasty history with just about everybody.

His powers are pretty similar to **the Best Friend's,** complete with **Become Somebody 3,** except as follows:

- His starting Bond is **Bully** instead of **Chuubo's Best Friend.**
- Those whom he spreads his identity to don't become *him*—they become minions, pawns, supporters, or cowed and faceless victims, and only become *him* if the original Billy dies.

If he shows up in later Arcs, he's likely to advance at a PC-like rate, but the stories that get told of him will determine whether he keeps going on **Become Somebody** or switches to, say, **Primordial.**

His nature isn't completely defined at the start of the game; in particular, there is no canon on whether he's a potential person, a potential person who is still pretty much a jerk, or an unsalvageable, soulless beast.

Eclipse

As Jade Irinka died, **Eclipse** was born—either in the mind or shadow of Arikel, her eldest child, or from her scattered blood.

He embodies the promise of endless night.

In him it manifests as the miraculous story Arc, **Otherworldly (Spiritual) 3—**it gives him a connection to "the death of the sun" that he will use in the second Spring Arc, "Sorrows' Week," to invoke flashbacks to Jade Irinka's death and to later make an attempt on Jasper Irinka's life.[95]

I suspect him of having **Wounded Angel 1** as well—

There might be a bright memory hidden inside him, a thing of beauty and hope that he considers to be a "blasphemy," that will escape if he's ever whittled down that far; in the cover of its release, he'll flee for safety, cowering from that light.

His mundane abilities are something like:

- **Changeling 3**
- **Superior Vitality 2**
- **Awesome Older Brother 2**
- **Knows his Cars 1**
- **Bond:** I ride a ~~pale horse~~ silver Mercedes 4

"Changeling" is a magical Skill, described a bit more in **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG.** It mostly helps protect him from being uncovered as anything but an awesome older brother but he's also mastered a few private techniques for use with this Skill that let him mess with other peoples' minds and corrupt others to his service. He has shards of memories or bits of blood from the death of Jade Irinka—taking the form as smooth black abstract shapes—that he may use as tools for improving this Skill.

The Real Arikel, Possessed

If Eclipse is immanent inside the real Arikel—if this character *is* Arikel, possessed or twisted, and not just a shadow—then I think Eclipse's presence is an

95 *Most of his effectiveness here will come from quest miracles—not that I expect him to succeed, or even do more than give a good scare, but if you're wondering how a PC-level character could possibly even* hope *to kill the immortal PC-level Jasper Irinka, who probably has substantial backup from her friends? Feel free to give him help, or leeway, or a Perk or two with 1/book Imperial McGuffin effects, but even without that, don't underestimate the raw brutality of a quest miracle that summons the death of the sun.*

Accursed Arc. As Arikel "Falls from the World," Eclipse progressively takes over.

In this case his miraculous powers would look something like:

- **Otherworldly (Spiritual) 3—**this links him to night, when he is Arikel, and to the death of the sun, when he is Eclipse.
- **Emptiness (Accursed) 1+**—this is the manifestation of Eclipse inside him.
- **A Keeper of Gardens 1+—**I know he has a Shepherd Arc, because he's associated with a couple of objects and things of power, and I know he's immortal, so I'm guessing this is his deal. I don't know where he keeps his gardens. His "toxin" is doubtless a powder that puts you to sleep or infects your dreams.

Spared of the need to have **Changeling**—since he actually *would* be Arikel, more or less—I think this version of the character would have the mundane abilities:

- **Superior Vitality 2**
- **Superior Dreamer 2**
- **Awesome Older Brother 3**
- **Knows his Cars 1**
- **Bond:** I ride a ~~pale horse~~ silver Mercedes 4

Eclipse (and possibly Arikel) appear in the Second Spring Arc, "Sorrows' Week," and potentially in the fourth Spring Arc, "The Hollow Sky," as well.

Prince Eduard (or Princess Aelfthryth) Fujimoto

This is Rinley's friend, a reckless prince(ss) of the rats.

He's up to you to characterize but I thought I'd toss in a Skill build in case you needed one in a hurry—something like:

- **Athletics 3**
- **Carousing 3**
- **Dance 1**
- **Wiggle Eyebrows Knowingly 1**
- **Representative of Rat Culture -1**

The Exultant

The Exultant laughs.

He is one of the Six Sins; a member of the Student Council of Principal Entropy's School in Horizon. He runs the Travel Committee there. He has learned the ways of the Outside and the evil world. He takes joyous jaunts and ventures into realms few others dare set foot in and keeps trying, though without success, to organize school or council-wide field trips there.

His sin is that he glories in wickedness precisely because it is wickedness.

He is that which loves evil for the purity of its evil intentions.

He is a joyful, paradoxical innocent who is irresistibly charming to the wicked. His great dream, his plan for a bright future, is to distill the stuff of the evil island down into a poison, paralyze the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy with it as a wasp might paralyze a spider, and plant the eggs in him of newborn worlds.

Whether this is appalling or merely in bad taste will depend on how nasty the Headmaster is in your particular campaign.

The Exultant is built something like:

- **Spiritual 3** ("Wicked Things")
- **People Skills 2.** He's good at talking to people.
- **Love for the Wicked 2.** He loves even (maybe even especially!) the worst.
- **Timing 1.** He's got decent timing.
- **Speechify 1.** He gives a decent monologue.
- **Situational Awareness 0.** He doesn't always notice the oncoming train.
- **Play with Fire -1.** He isn't good at this.
- **Domestic Tasks -1.** Nor is he any good around the house.

He's also got three mundane abilities with special rules:

- **Connection: the Angel of Fortitude 3.** They go way back.
- **Connection: Nightmares' Angel 1.** *This* guy just makes *sense* to him.
- **Transportation Magic 2.** He gets around. Key techniques include:
  - **[Obstacle 1]** take "falling" off of your personal list of risks
  - **[Obstacle 2]** summon up a vehicle

- **[Obstacle 2]** go in one door and out a different one (in the same Region)
- **[Obstacle 3]** go in one door and out a different one (any Region he knows)
- **[Obstacle 3]** find a road going just about anywhere

The Exultant often appears in the first and second Entropy Arcs, "Principal Entropy Builds a Fountain" and "Principal Entropy Runs for Office" He may also appear in later Entropy Arcs and in the first Outside Arc, "The Drowned World."

The First Free Dog

This is a mystery dog. It's a dog that represents the wild power of the natural world—well, the near-natural world, the low world of the streets and mud and gardens—that has to approve of anyone seeking the sacred post of Fortitude Dogcatcher. It's a dog that lurks at the edges of things and symbolizes the darkness you live with, the lives you try to save, the burden of people's hopes in you, the lives you have to take. It's a dog of dirty, buried things. It's the bone that dug itself up.

It's the loamy sacred.

It looks like a half-rotten corpse dog, left over from a huge husky with yellowed fangs, but it doesn't smell like rot and its bare muscle doesn't ooze—it smells earthy, sweet, and the bare parts are like the muddy earth. What I mean is, it's not anywhere near as horrifying when you get used to it as when you first see it at night or from afar; it's actually a pretty good dog. For, um, a bad-luck zombie dog, anyhow.

But... it *is* a good dog. Being a rotting zombie isn't the First Free Dog's fault.

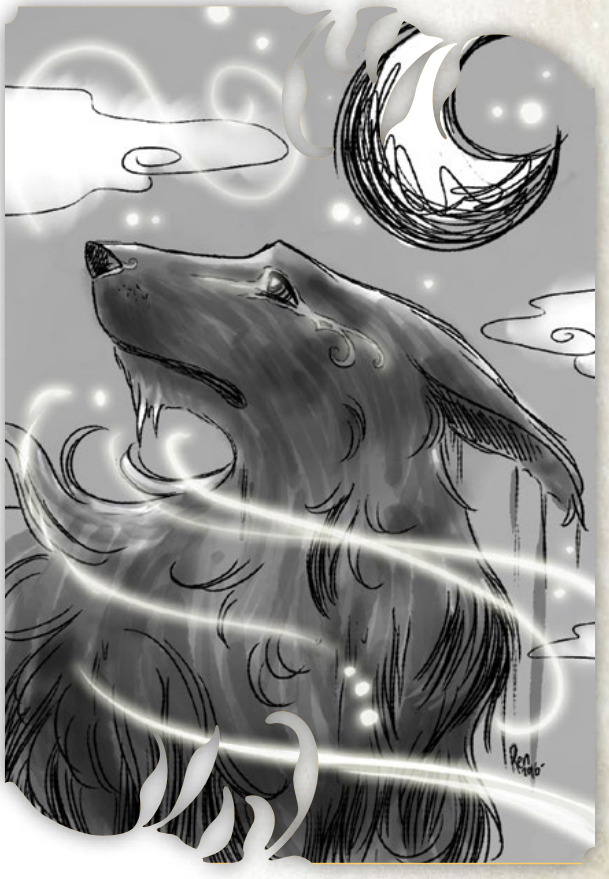
I tend to believe the stories that the First Free Dog came over with the first humans; that it broke its leash or harness in order to protect a human from one of the *youkai* and hasn't gone back in harness since. That it was given a hero's burial and dredged itself back up but wasn't welcome any more; that it had turned into something otherworldly when it died and came back, that it wasn't *allowed* or *legitimate* any longer.

Then again, that could be just superstition. I don't even know if it *is* bad luck.

I'd probably build it as something like this...

- **Become Somebody 1** ("the First Free Dog," with a vice of bad luck)
- **Bond 2: "Loyal"**
- **Affliction: the Risen Dead**
- **Superior Dog 2.** The First Free Dog is good at this.
- **Long Memory 2.** The First Free Dog knows much.
- **Herd 2.** The First Free Dog can be a work dog at need.
- **Hunt 1.** The First Free Dog isn't really a hunting dog.
- **Human Ways 1.** The First Free Dog is familiar with human ways.
- **Spot Deception -1.** The First Free Dog believes you threw the ball.
- **Operate Heavy Machinery -1.** Don't put the First Free Dog behind the wheel!

The First Free Dog appears in the second Entropy Arc, "Principal Entropy Runs for Office."



Glass Spider

The sin of Glass Spider is to deny people their names and qualities, seeing them only as their roles: all the world as nothing more than parts and pieces to be played. To believe otherwise, whispers the Glass Spider, is to be willing to sacrifice your purpose, your *dharma*, on the altar of your misconception. Glass Spider's flaw is his need for control—his need to keep control over any "pieces" that he's claimed, touched, or moved. Without that flaw, his goals and their current inaccessibility would make him practically harmless at this stage.

At School, Glass Spider runs the Finance and Budget Committee of the student council. He has a magic of naming to him. He can buy access to people's minds (by paying them), and then inject them with packages of compulsions, drives, and programmed thoughts. He has a portion of the old Principal's notes or even key volumes from his library. He's come to Fortitude to put together a special mural or play that he thinks will strengthen the reality of the world but also put him in charge.

His goals are a bit selfish, but they aren't actually evil! He's just kind of a jerk.

I'd probably build him as something like this:

- **Creature of the Light 5**
- **Soulless Artisan 3.**
- **Obsessive Need for Control 2.**
- **Magic: Buy Access to the Mind 2.**
- **Superior Dreamer 1.**

...taking his Arc all the way to the end so that we can reasonably think of him implementing his plan as a quest miracle.

That said, this also assumes that he's coming into play in the fourth Entropy Arc, when a typical PC will still outclass him; you may want to tone that down a little if you're bringing him in earlier on.[96]

Another option that would work pretty well is:

- **Reality Syndrome 4** ("My Vision/Plans")
- **Accursed 1-2**
- **Soulless Artisan 3.**
- **Obsessive Need for Control 2.**
- **Rider Necromancy 2.**
- **Superior Dreamer 1.**

Here I'm assuming that we can fold his ability to buy space in people's head into his **Reality Syndrome** and so I'm giving him Rider Necromancy for an additional quirky power set.

Glass Spider usually appears in the fourth Entropy Arc, "Principal Entropy and the Lost Adventure."

The Gray Man

The Shopping (and financial) District, Arcadia, employs a "gray man" or "gray woman" to protect Town's businesses and banks from the inappropriate use of magic. The current Gray Man is a half-Excrucian gentleman who keeps his offices in the Excrucians' twelve-story stronghold and embassy, the Methodology Tower.

He is a dangerous creature. His eyes are night and falling stars, and thus unreadable. He is a yin-yang master and thus capable of great and wicked acts. He is in the shadow of the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy—some have alleged him the Headmaster's puppet or pawn. Of course, it's totally possible that he's a selfless puppy-kissing hero who lives in the heart of enemy territory because that's how yin-yang masters roll—

But I suspect he'll ultimately be a congenial enemy.

His mundane abilities look something like:

- **Superior Spiritual Energy 2.** He's a powerful personality.
- **Superior Land-Rule 2.** He has vast influence in his small portion of Arcadia.
- **Finance 2.** He knows his numbers.
- **Exorcism 1.** He's familiar with this.
- **Cool 1.** He's a cool one.
- **Socialize 0.** He isn't actually very good at this.

I'm not going to assume he has miraculous Arcs, but if he does, they probably look similar to the **Angel of Fortitude's**, starting with "A Keeper of Gardens"-type powers over the Methodology Tower and its vicinity. He might have **Creature of Fable** or a blue Arc (e.g., **Wounded Angel**) as well or instead.

He appears in the second Dissolution Arc, "Chuubo Makes a Terrible God-King."

96 *Not that you're supposed to "balance" PCs and NPCs or anything—this isn't a fighting game! It's just that it's easier to keep the PCs feeling important if the typical NPC Main Character ranges from "much lower-powered" to "just a little bit better."*

The Hangman

This is an infectiously enthusiastic wicked ghost who had to hang a monstrous criminal generations ago. Now it's manifesting into the world to kill that criminal's descendants and maybe other wicked entities around.

It probably describes this as a case of total war of good vs. evil, of absolute righteousness. The creature it slew back then wasn't an ordinary criminal but a force of pure and absolute evil: absolute destruction. "Naturally," it will say, "every last vestige of it must be eliminated."

I don't know how true that is. It's certainly true that Town (and thus Fortitude) is the kind of place where a spirit of raw cruelty, murder, evil, or spite could manifest. One could argue that the first Principal Entropy was just such a person; most likely it was a servant of his that the Hangman slew.

One approach here is to build the Hangman as a **Wounded Angel** with pacts to lesser ghosts it's slain or eaten and with wound powers based on things like "Ghost," "Obsessed Vigilante," and "Appointed as the Hangman." The "blasphemy" it's caging would be the revelation that it's actually a shell over the criminal it originally tried to kill.

A simpler alternative is to go with a low level of **Creature of the Light** and/or a black or silver Arc like **Primordial** or **Accursed** and pair them with abilities like:

- **Ghost Magic 4**
- **Lawman 3**
- **Use Rope 1**

The important thing is that it wants to hang somebody, probably somebody you care about, or maybe one of the PCs, on a certain hill on a certain day. And since kidnapping a PC and dragging them off is likely to be boring—

Or rather the interesting part of that is only 2-3 short scenes and not a whole plotline—

It'll focus on breaking the will of the relevant PCs and characters first, not so much with powers as with demonstrations of its righteousness.

The Haunted Child

There is a child, **Keiichi or Viktoria Shichida—**

Typically the same gender as **Nightmares' Angel**, and aged somewhere from 8-10.

They are **the Haunted Child.** Their nightmares have been touched by some alien force. They've been starting to lose track of what's real and what's not. More than that, they're starting to *change* what's real and what's not—they have an unwanted reality-altering magic that occasionally bridges between the worlds, invoking the Properties of **the Nightmare World** in the world around them.

One or two creatures of the nightmare world slip through.

Eventually the Haunted Child's dreams will open a gate that will bind the nightmare world directly and physically to Town.

In practice this works as an Affliction. Shichida has the following abilities:

- **Imagination 3**
- **Wriggle Feet (Dolefully) 2**
- **Lucky Break 2**
- **Survival 1**
- **Smells Like Fish 1**
- **Affliction 3: A Bridge Between Two Worlds**

The Haunted Child appears in the first Nightmares Arc, "Nightmares Open."

Family

The Haunted Child's father is dead; they're being raised by their somewhat frazzled mother, **Ioanna Shichida**, and with the assistance of **Yulia Rozhkova** (pg. 426), their aunt. If you're looking for a comfortable place to take them, Yulia Rozhkova's bookstore is a good bet.

Variations

Here's some quick options to customize **the Haunted Child** for your game:

- Keiichi or Viktoria?
- Is the "alien power" touching their dreams...
  - ...related to the glass dragon and Melanie/Reginald Malakh?
  - ...some machination of the Bleak Academy?
  - ...directly related to the first or current Arc for **the Troublemaker?**
  - ...directly related to some other character's current Arc?
  - ...just its own thing—some witch or Outside thing that kind of... happened?
- Are they troubled, stoic, or creepy?

If the player of **Nightmares' Angel** has a *strong* opinion as to which variant to use, that wins; otherwise, it's up to the HG.

Hayden Sorrows

This is a stressed-looking young scholar on his first major job for the Bleak Academy. He used to be a person, he'll say, but he gave it up so he could get away from the lies and deceptions of reality and find the True Thing—

Now he's a void given flesh, but he hasn't let go of all his humanity yet.

That's why when the reborn sun stirred up **the Anomaly,** and its crystalline whispering began to disturb the chaos, the Bleak Academy chose Hayden to come to Town. "Hunt it," his teachers told him. "Kill it. Make it stop."

I don't think that's all of it, though.

I think that while he's honest about what he's there for, and both earnest and sincere about who he is, that he's been sent to Town as...

- ...one last chance for him to choose reality, if he'd rather, and...
- ...as an attempt by the Bleak Academy to seduce **the Prodigy** away.

Because he'll find her, almost inevitably, and he'll want to offer her an alternative to the noise and hubbub of Creation—

The endless bleak, smooth vistas of the void; the coolness and soothing beauty of the Not.

He is a member of the "Colloquium of Magi," a name **Nightmares' Angel** is liable to remember as relating to the program he himself attended; he is applying to transfer to "Natural Philosophy," which is a college of the Bleak Academy Leonardo *doesn't* know.

Hayden's core power is:

- **Reality Syndrome 2**
  - He can share his private visions of pure dark, endless textured nothingness, and peace with others.
  - He can borrow/copy the abilities of others for a short-term use once per chapter, without much limitation on this save that the power in question is immature, not well-systematized, and so tends to give out on him once its basic purpose is fulfilled.

His core mundane abilities include:

- **Scholar 3.** He's familiar with the things of the world.
- **Sosunov Family Magic 2.** He's studying ways to contain the chaos.
- **Athletics 2.** "There's a program."
- **Nervous 1.** He's familiar with things jumping out at him.
- **Hunter 0.** He barely knows where to start.
- **Connection: the Prodigy 2.** She fascinates him.

He also likely has:

- **Wounded Angel 1+**
  - In a situation of sufficient panic or confusion, when he loses his self-control, he'll sometimes twist his shape and manifest a new power.
  - He has weird floating onyx "prayer strips" that can help him with his magic.
  - If sufficiently wounded, he'll emit a jarring scream and strobe flashes that either...
    - ...scale up to become a new instance of **the Anomaly;**
    - ...fade out into a wave of silence and death;
    - ...manifest as a wish, "I wish that chaos would shatter the comprehensible structures and forms of this situation and drown it out with incomprehensible noise and uncertainty."

      It's not that he wants to do this! It's just that that horror is stuck inside him and will get out if he's too badly hurt.

Hayden has a small frame, white hair, and a Bleak Academy uniform. His eyes are a normal light brown sometimes but other times they're replaced entirely with a vista of night and falling stars—this is probably a scalable Affliction based on a PC's **Trust/Hollow/Isolation** Issue, where they look progressively stranger to you as your Issue grows.

Hayden Sorrows appears in the first Winter Arc, "Flowers in the Ice." He may cameo in the second Winter Arc, "Permafrost" and/or have an important role in the third, "Thin Ice."

The Headmaster of the Bleak Academy

Of him many things are said, but the Headmaster I want to talk about here is the one who stands in the darkness and the light beyond the grave and holds out his hand to the spirits of the dead who cling still to their corpses, who will not leave their flesh behind, and he is saying to them:

That they have lived, and that may
be good and that may be bad;
The flashiness and the fire of it, of being alive,
of being moving figures in the dark—that may
have been good or it may have been garish;
But it is done.
It is done. ***Let go.***

Not everyone listens.

Not everyone who dies stays dead. Not everyone who's lost stays gone. And sometimes he'll make that speech, in word or look or the soft music of his dead leviathan's song, to somebody who doesn't even seem to have died.

But—

That is who he is.

I am inclined to treat the Headmaster here as a state of being rather than a character—he is nothing more or less than those words. That speech. That outstretched hand.

He is nothing more or less than the declaration that in this world there is death and there is chaos, that life may be good or bad but it ends, that to dream to conquer that is blasphemy; that beyond the boundaries of the world there is a Bleak Academy.

Let go.

These are not meant to be coherent points; they are not meant to be arguments marshaled up and lined up next to one another to form an army whole, any more than the cat-headed King Death that the rats whisper of and the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy who shot down the sun are meant to look the same, act the same, or express the same understanding of death.

He is simply a thing that is; or that isn't, I suppose.

And for that reason, the way to fight him isn't Intentions and miracles but rather quests and Issues and the acts of epic fantasy—Decisive actions; Science, Faith, and Sorcery; the little stories of your lives; all the

things that one does to live in the face of death. Oh, and Rituals and Transitions too.

The things we use, not to conquer others, but to live better with ourselves.

If I haven't been clear, and I probably haven't, because it isn't a clear matter—

He is a presence of the Isn't in the Is.

I'm not even sure he's death, or Death, or Death Unending. All I really know about him is that he wears black, and he has eyes of night and falling stars, and he isn't Genseric Dace the Excrucian, and sometimes I'm not even sure of those.

So all that's really complicated and twee and it boils down to the fact that you can probably punch him but it won't do you any good because he isn't *him*, he's just the thing that we *see* to be himself.

But what if you *do* need to punch him, or out-argue him, or something?

Then I think his stats must look a little something like this:

- **Creature of the Light 3+**
  - He is tireless, effortlessly well-lit, can wrap himself in the Auctoritas Magister, appear to those he cares about, mesmerize or make psychic attacks with his actions, evoke targeted flashbacks, fade away to the Outside, or use tactical world-altering Transitions (often for travel or psychological effect).
- **A Keeper of Gardens 2+**
  - He has some sort of access to giant creatures such as the dead leviathan he sometimes rides. (I figure it's like a dead Sa'a Lingurth (pg. 441.)) He certainly has a toxin of some sort but I'm actually a little puzzled about what it *is*—maybe you can figure it out in play?
- **Creature of Fable 1+**
  - He is a competent hunter, rider, and archer, and at least on one occasion his arrows seem to have **Cut the Soul.**
- **Superior Hunter 1+**
- **Compassion 3**
- **Philosophy 3**
- **Teacher 1**
- **Annoying 1**
- **Lord of the Bleak Academy 0**

I suspect him of more than this, but it's possible that the rest of his apparent abilities represent a mix of Perks, quest miracles, and the assistance of others; in fact, with that in mind, you could *probably* cut back to **Creature of the Light 2** and **A Keeper of Gardens 1** and still have a viable representation of the man.

In any case, the above stats are my second guess (the first being "generic principle," as noted) for how he appears in the second Drowning Arc, "The Lightless Gates."

Professor Hideo Hayashi

The Professor grew up with the Hayashi shrine family. He made glass. He was good at it. He made some beautiful things, including a colored-glass map of some unknown country, some gorgeous cups and tchotchkes, and presumably a good deal more.

After that things get a bit campaign-dependent—

You don't *need* the answers until the fourth Arc, which could potentially be several years into your game—

But the default story goes like this.

The Default Story

Melanie Malakh came to Town, put a shard of herself in Hideo's brain, and claimed him.

Together they built a glass dragon.

He remembers it. He was mind-whammied but remembers making it, making beautiful glass as she worked her spells into it, though he can't remember what happened after.

Except, after a while, the dragon and the Magister were gone.

He had a hard time after that. He had conflicts with his family and ultimately went to college abroad. He studied archaeology, linguistics, history, or library science, or maybe even a physical science like chemistry.

After he came back to Town people started calling him "Professor."

Eventually he took over Town's Archive. Later, when Miramie showed up, he took her in; and then others, one by one.

His abilities look something like:

- **Scholar 3**
- **Archivist 2**
- **Dashing 2**
- **Superior Glassmaker 1**

And he has Connections like:

- **The Archive 3**
- **The Dream-Witch 2**
- **The Archive Kids 2**
- **Fortitude 1**

He is a background figure throughout the course of this campaign but does not normally become a foreground character until the fourth Glass Arc, "the Archive of Hayashi Hideo."

Impious

This is another piece of the former King of Evil.

Impious is a member of the student council at Horizon's School. He wears a mask when acting as a member of the Student Council—they all do, even the bodiless Owler—which, in this game's genre, makes it very hard to know who he "really" is. He could even be faculty, staff, or an intruder in disguise!

He inherited a good portion of the former King of Evil's arsenal. That means he has a bunch of... I don't know. Evil machines. Death rays, mind-controlling chairs, robot hawks with eye-lasers, tridents that cause earthquakes, cloaks of invincibility, pyramid-style death traps, and the like.

Like the original Principal Entropy, and in fact like his successor **the Angel of Fortitude,** he has a goal—**Impious** aims towards a better world built on a foundation of Horizon's students. To this end he seeks to "toughen up" students whose potential he has faith in, with a focus on kidnapping and assassination. He *prefers* unsuccessful assassination attempts to successful ones, here, ***but***... operates on a general life philosophy of "no pain, no gain." So there's that.

And some of that is broad comedy and stereotypical over-the-top jock irrationality.

And some of that is a bombastic, charming coach-like glee in pushing people to be their very best.

But underneath all that there is a livid sin: that **Impious** loves the way that hardship can make people better *so much* that he has forgotten that there is anything else good; that he revels in the wounds themselves, waxes rhapsodic about how the beaten, the ground-down, the defeated, the human spirit forced to crawl across a field of broken glass, becomes the most beautiful and noble of all things.

He could probably learn better, but it'd be almost impossible to get to him, because if one of his victims rises above it and defeats **Impious,** he'd just take that as proving his point.

He shows up in the second Destiny Arc, "Owler and Impious," with an interest in the destiny of **the Best Friend.** The fact that a piece of the architecture of the Bleak Academy woke up and became a person—that's *interesting* to Impious, in his capacity as a member of the Student Council. It isn't necessarily why he shows up at first—he could be in Fortitude to deal with someone else, for instance—but the Best Friend in particular is likely to catch Impious' attention, given time.

Impious provides an alternate and cruel but fundamentally positive perspective on the Best Friend's destiny, as well as making trouble. His Skills look something like:

- **Magical Skill: "Arsenal" 3**
- **Superior Master of Every Sport 2**
- **Unnecessarily Convoluted Plans 2**
- **Organized Council Member 1**
- **Student 0**
- **Bond 2: "No Pain, no Gain"**

His Arsenal is a magical Skill that functions a lot like Deviant Science—he doesn't actually *build* new devices, but he has to take time to establish their existence before he can use them effectively in play.

As mentioned, Impious is a major character in the second Destiny Arc, "Owler and Impious."

Laodemus Schwan

Laodemus is a larger-than-life masked wrestler and hero. The wish appointed him as **the Best Friend's** older brother. He's often **the Hero** for a Best Friend Arc, and frequently a member, alumnus, or associate of the S.E.E.D. program (pg. 247–248).

In some variants of the story he's also the living spirit of the Wish-Granting Engine itself, although that's more usually the steampunk nanny-styled adventuress named Lilimund Cartaign.

(That is, in a Horizon-based campaign, he's the standard male variant for the Main Character **the Wish-Granting Engine**, but you'd *expect* him to be an ordinary heroic masked wrestler and adventurer instead.)

Listen.

Laodemus is the kind of guy who's got a closet full of wrestling masks, a willingness to give a flying elbow drop to a giant monster, and a tendency to come home late at night covered in mud, ichor, and blood. He postures heroically. He's quite manly. Occasionally he and his partner Aidan will disappear into the back rooms or a zeppelin or something for a bout of "manly wrestling;" he's *just* serious enough about adventuring that this could be literal, although it probably means they're gay.

He doesn't clarify to **the Best Friend** or the other PCs, if he can possibly help it, because his younger sibling not knowing which he means for sure is the funniest thing he's ever seen.

He's not a mystery in the same sense as his parents (below). He's too elemental for that. You're not expected to figure him out. You're expected to take him at more or less face value—as being exactly what he is. His Skills look something like:

- **Cool 3**
- **Wrestling 2**
- **Steampunk Science 2**
- **Stealth 1**

He mostly uses the steampunk science Skill for quick spots of engineering and jury-rigged construction, although he's also hoping to build a new zeppelin soon after his last one caught tragically on fire. It's not clear what the *point* of being a masked adventurer is if you can't climb up a rope into the sky above and sail off soundlessly into the night, after all!

If he becomes a Main Character in your game, you'd also want to add:

- **Bond 2: Heroic Adventurer**
- **Affliction or Arc:** My special wrestling moves have supernatural effects.

As a miraculous Arc, his wrestling thing could be a **Reality Syndrome,** or something like **the Child of the Sun's** powers where he has to talk to someone to work out the wrestling move's nature, costs, and visible side effects before he can manifest it in play, or possibly even a manifestation of **Wounded Angel** or **Child of the Ash.**

Lee Scathing

The sin of Scathing is to condemn humans for their humanity—to say, "to be embodied in the world, to experience sinful thoughts and sinful desires, is to lose one's worth."

To prize an artificial, surreal, cherubic innocence that no real person could possess.

He has the eyes of the first Principal, eyes to loathe love and sneer at humanity as beasts; the blood of the first Principal runs in his veins; he can kill you with a look, I'm told, can "drink you" with his *looking*, burn you away with the judgment in those eyes.

He has tanks of the first Principal's blood, and some of the blood of the second; he is a magician of that blood, he can warp or create from it. He is prone on occasion to create mute and soulless horrors, often geometrically or angelically beautiful, that aspire to perfection but, upon not finding it, turn upon the mortal world.

He runs the Disciplinary Committee at Horizon's School.

He is almost all superego; little ego, little id. He is constantly striving to do right; but he has the wrong mix of pieces in his mind to know what the right thing is.

His mundane abilities look something like:

- **Superior Skill: Covered in Creepy Invisible Eyes that Can Eat You by Looking 4**
- **Nightmare Science 2** (pg. 127)
- **By the Book 2**

You might build him with:

- **Primordial—**as the eyes of a dead god, a creature of Judgment and the Subterranean.
- **Accursed—**if you want to buff up his other Skills and make his devouring eyes **the World-Breaker's Hand;** if he tends to **Fall from the World** into his laboratories below the School when his work or his romantic life go poorly.
- **A Keeper of Gardens—**to help him call forth strange creatures from those labs. *and/or*
- **Wounded Angel—**if he creates new creatures and blood-magic tricks by ritually wounding himself.

A quick build is **Primordial 1 + A Keeper of Gardens 2.**

Lenya Koutolika

Lenya Koutolika is **the Prodigy's** mother. She keeps a good and joyous home, I think.

Her abilities include:

- **Somehow or Other 4**
- **Domestic Skills 2**
- **Manage a Shop 1**
- **Shine 1**

She has decent if underwhelming baseline life skills and a frankly shocking ability to manage *somehow* if pushed outside her comfort zone—whether it's frowning and fretting at a mystery, huffing and puffing as she pushes herself through some athletic contest, or looking dead pale and taut as a bowstring as she deals with an assassin or viper, she's got the scalable competence to make it through.

Somehow or other!

Lucy Godsfollow

There is a thing that lurks in the forest. There is an embodiment of the lightless depths and the fear of the unknown. It is shapeless; formless; nameless; or rather it has had a thousand shapes and a thousand names.

Currently it lives inside a girl named Lucy Godsfollow.

It's not her fault. Her world was dying. The last few survivors were lost in the forest. If she hadn't opened up her soul to the Forest Dark and Menacing then none of them would have made it out. She, her sister, her friends, and the very concept of the forest being a place to fear would have drowned in nothingness when the Outside poured over her world, and been forgotten all of them forever.

Now she lives in Fortitude, not far from the house of "the Haunted Child" from the first Nightmares Arc. There she lives alone; save, sometimes, where her house should be, at night, there is instead a forest; save, sometimes, when she ceases to be, and it is her sister, or one of the other "survivors" of her original home, who wanders in those woods or answers at her door.

In the third Dissolution Arc, she is one of those drawn to the island of King Death—

Called, like **the Wishing Boy (or Girl),** to face the tree that grows there.

Her stats look something like:

- **Curious Child 3**
- **Sailing 2**
- **Foreboding 2**
- **The Old Ways 1**

I will tell you her story—

That she lived in a world that had lost its center. She lived in a world where the old ways and the old gods had been forgotten; where everything was *safe, tame, and hollow*—save in the great forest, where the wolves still roamed, and the elves, and the goblins.

She grew up fearing them.

She would hear the howls sometimes, far away, and the fear of it sank into her. It dipped through her skin. It wound itself around her bones. But when the fear was greatest she would remember that her sister, the hero, would save her; that one day her sister Maria would be an anodyne even for the fear: for Maria was *destined* to make an end to the power of the forest and spread safety and home and peace across the face of the land.

In the end it didn't work out that way.

The people of the forest took Lucy hostage instead.

She couldn't even hate them for it, in the end. By the time everybody's plans unraveled and all the prophecies clashed and the sun went out and the world caved in, it kind of seemed to Lucy that everyone involved was just doing the best that they could.

She couldn't hate them.

Not Iason, who'd taken her from her home. Not Brian, who served the old gods; who woke the Forest, Dark and Menacing. Not Maria, who broke in on the ritual that might have held together the world. Certainly, not Maria.

And when she remembered them dying...

Not even the wolves.

Lucy Godsfollow walks a **Sentimental** Arc—

In her is preserved the memory of the last few "survivors" of her world. They were lost, at the end, but they live on as her Treasures—she has a Perk that changes **Haunt** so that she can shed her form and manifest as a no-longer-existing Treasure. Another allows her to summon a no-longer-existing Treasure to an unobserved location nearby when she invokes **A Waking Dream.**

That taken into consideration, her miraculous abilities look something like this:

- **Sentimental 2+**
  - She has access to miraculous Will when taking action for, with, or in memory of her Treasures.
  - She may fade away, becoming one of her lost Treasures instead...
  - ...or, at a higher cost, summon them into being nearby.
  - She may grant any of them a single special power...
    - ...to her sister, the power "to be a hero who protects by might of arms."
    - ...to her friend Brian, the power "to hide the signs of chaos and disorder, and hold them temporarily at bay."
    - ...to Iason the woodcutter, the power "to carve through anything."
    - ...to the wolves of the forest, the power "to be of indeterminate number."

Mavis Wheeler

Mavis Wheeler was betrayed by the world, so she left it. She took her bike and roared it off for the Lands Unknown. There she survives the only way she can: by being a hard woman, making hard choices, doing what she has to do to live.

She'll share her campfire with you, but she won't trust you. Nor should you trust her.

She'll tell you that much.

She'll warn you.

Then she'll rip open your mind and root through it and pull a shiny secret out, to add to her treasures, her store of powers, her things that protect her against the hunters in the endless chaos. Secrets are the currency of the great shadow bazaar at dream-Uruk, the protection against the long-legged soul-hunters that stalk the Outside, and many other things—

Things oddly specific to the people who encounter Mavis Wheeler, and thus, perhaps, I think, a part of a dream-world that she has constructed for herself. But perhaps it is simply that the Outside is vast.

Her argument is simple. Data that is known by many is part of the substrate; it may be *solved* down to the people not existing at all. Secrets are personal treasures: they reinforce one's boundaries against the night.

Her powers are something like:

- **Otherworldly (Child of the Ash) 1+**
  - She is effectively immortal.
  - She is tied to "dream-Uruk."
  - She may create a sense of order and stability, even in the depths of the Outside.
  - She may transform herself into a bizarre cybernetic congeries of woman and motorcycle.
- **Superior Mysterious Motorcyclist 3**
- **Sudden, Yet Inevitable Betrayal 2**
- **Magical Skill: "Steal Memories" 2**
- **Silver Tongue 1**

Some of the techniques of her magic include:

- **[Obstacle 1]** taste your secrets
- **[Obstacle 1]** congeal a secret into a treasure
- **[Obstacle 2]** pull a secret out of somebody's head
- **[Obstacle 2]** look into a secret and understand more about it
- **[Obstacle 3]** use a secret as a weapon

She doesn't really *see* the secrets when she takes them—she just pulls them out, often in the form of latticework golden eggs or peculiar jewels.

Mavis Wheeler appears in the first Outside Arc, "The Drowned World."

Mazarin

Mazarin's a clean-cut kid who really wants his parents' arcade to succeed and just doesn't grasp that the reason it's not doing very well is that his family doesn't really care about "success." (There are other problems, like the fact that the games are kind of dated and arcades themselves are a *little* dated and Fortitude isn't really the *place* for one—but everything else could be overcome if his parents actually *wanted* the place to become legendary. They don't. I think it's actually just that his dead aunt really liked arcade games as a kid so they like having an arcade, or, his dead older sibling's spirit got caught in a video game and so his parents built an arcade, or... well, something like that.)

His natural abilities are something like:

- **"This never happens in the video game!" 3**
- **Well-Met 2**
- **Surprisingly Strong 2**
- **See Through Deception 1**
- **Bond: Earnest 2**

He can use his despairing wail of "this never happens in the video game!" to survive falls, explosions, and other disasters. It should really be arcade game, but that doesn't sound as cool when shouted, and I don't want the copyright troubles I'd get if I found a particular game to cite!

There's a sliver of the glass dragon in the palm of his right hand.

All his life it's made his hand a little stiff and tinted the rightmost two fingernails crystal; but in the first Glass Arc, "Shards of Glass," it'll awaken and grant him a power. Something like:

- He can order stuff for free from anywhere in the world, and possibly from imaginary places.
- He can make time gates.
- He can get video games powerups in real life.
- He's secretly the lost King and rightful ruler of Fortitude and can command twelve "demon knights" that long to place him on the throne.

This is typically an **Affliction** with a power level notionally based on his **(in) Over your Head** Issue—he doesn't get Issues per se, being an NPC, but basically, his powers become bigger and bigger the more out of control his life becomes. If he becomes a major character the HG could consider stepping his powers up to a **Reality Syndrome.**

In "Shards of Glass," he's one of the shard-powered people most likely to go out of control and start doing really goofy stuff.

Demon Knights

A "demon knight" wakes up with a strange symbol written on their forehead or hand and an impulse to serve Mazarin, or someone like him, or to help him become King and ruler of Fortitude. Each has a peculiar power, probably deriving from the original glass shard, and there is an attached and peculiar price. For instance, **the Flower-Knight**, Tikhon or Ariya Kojima, abides by the rule:

> "I appear in a puff of incense and I make your little problems go away;
> but ah! Master! I regret!
> I leave an emptiness in my wake."

The Ravel-Knight, Arkhip or Anfisa Akiyama, has the power:

> "I unwind mazes, untangle cords, render sweaters down to yarn.
> Such little things are nothing to the Ravel-Knight!
> But ah! Master! I regret!
> The mind that bids me to untangle, tangles."

These powers derive from their ruler's Affliction, so the meanings and prices for these powers are going to vary a lot both between games and in play. As a design note to help you design more knights, the two prices listed are inspired by the Isolation and Complex Issues.

There's a good chance that the demon knights abide by the inverse ninja law—the more of them in a scene or situation, the less useful they are. This is because there's a good chance that all their powers are derived from a single Affliction rather than each having powers of their own; and that means, in turn, that the HG's decision on how cool to make the demon knights and their King doesn't really depend on how many of them are around.

The demon knights would show up in the first Glass Arc, "Shards of Glass," if Mazarin has a demon-knight entourage as his shard power. If that didn't happen, or if it did and it wasn't very important, feel free to have them show up later and in some other form.

Melancholy Schwan

The Best Friend's mother, Melancholy Schwan, is a mortician.

She thinks dead people are funny—I mean, not laugh out loud funny, but quietly amusing, like Magritte's *the Treachery of Images.*

She is pale and unworldly. She has long red hair and is focused on spiritual things.

The Best Friend saw her float through a wall once, although that might not have been a real memory—it preceded the wish that created him.

Is she a real person? Was she created by a wish? There are the following possibilities:

- The wish that created **the Best Friend** also created her. (She doesn't know.)
- The wish that created **the Best Friend** also created her. (And she knows it.)
- She was a normal person until the wish turned her into who she is today.
- The wish turned her into who she is today, but she was already extraordinary.

As for *what* she is:

- She's an ordinary person with unusual talents.
- She's a spirit of some sort, or maybe a witch, or a ghost—her husband Mortimer Schwan met and fell in love with her when he was young.
- She's a relative of Morrigan Kells, a roustabout Irish adventurer and termagant who came to Town after a number of clashes with the mob in the outside world. Morrigan is an elderly woman with the talent to open any lock, the mother of the Horizon Region Main Character **the Class Rep**—it'd only make sense if a mysterious red-haired woman who once went "through a wall" was related.

I'm listing "possibilities" because I want a touch of **Science, Faith, and Sorcery** in the stories of the Schwan Family—I want them to be stories of the players boldly investigating and figuring things out in play.

So I don't mean that you should *decide* who she is, exactly, when you read this, or that the HG should.

I mean that players should develop theories in play, and ideally take a risk and at least give a monologue to try to stake something on whether those theories are right or wrong. Then and only then should the HG commit one way or the other to a given path.

That said, if the HG really wants to just decide it, or if the player of a PC **Best Friend** has a strong stake in picking one particular option, then that can happen too.

Melancholy's Skills look something like:

- **Ghost Magic 3** (or some other sort of magic)
- **Tap Things Lightly 2**
- **Mortician 2**
- **Intercede with Spirits 1**
- **Buy the Correct Thing -1**

She's worked hard all her life to expand the range of applicability for her **Tap Things Lightly** Skill, starting with a base of unsticking doors and cereal boxes, and by now can use it for everything from starting a motorcycle to emergency medicine.

Melanie Malakh

As a spiritual voice, **Melanie Malakh** is most likely to operate as a plot device—her influence is an Issue or quest event and not a power. If she needs something more than that, she has, well, what she needs. That said, it's worth noting that the original creature—the Magister that came to Town—had...

- **Accursed** 3+;
- ...a strong **Sentimental** Arc; *and*
- ...most likely some level of **the Ace.**

In her current form she is likely burdened by an Affliction, **No Longer Myself**. If she ever becomes a major player again—rebuilding herself from the remaining parts, reconstructing herself in total, or taking over the Dream-Witch—it's likely that her version of the **Who You Were** Affliction (pg. 266) will put her at risk of becoming Miramie again if she ever runs out of MP.

Melanie Malakh may show up in the second Glass Arc, "The Passage to the Left," as well as repeatedly throughout the course of the campaign.

Mortimer Schwan

Mortimer Schwan is an older-looking Chinese man. He, like his wife Melancholy, is a mortician. He loves his work and loves giving his all to his work, with a motto of "each corpse is a new puzzle box!"

The wish appointed him as **the Best Friend's** father, leaving the following possibilities for his true nature:

- The wish that created **the Best Friend** also created him. (He doesn't know.)
- The wish that created **the Best Friend** also created him. (He knows.)
- He was a comparatively ordinary person until the wish made him Mortimer Schwan.
- The wish changed him, but he was already extraordinary.

Mortimer seems comparatively real except for being unrealistically healthy and chipper for somebody who lives in a spooky mansion and works with dead people all the time.

He doesn't really talk about his past, mostly because **the Best Friend** doesn't really ask. I'm assuming he'd put together a ridiculous flim-flam tall tale if asked, because that's the kind of guy he is. That said, what he *is* is probably...

- ...just an ordinary if eccentric mortician.
- ...someone with enough personal virtue and weight of destiny to explain his meeting and marrying Melancholy and having two extraordinary children, but nothing more.
- ...a retired "Stray Cat"—he used to belong to one of the two-person exorcist teams put together in Arcadia (the Shopping District) to deal with dangerous *youkai* and other threats. That's probably where he met Melancholy—she was his partner, or one of his targets!

His Skills look something like:

- **Maintain Spooky Homes and Businesses 3**
- **Superior Spiritual Energy 2**
- **Mortician 2**
- **Driving 1**
- **Discretion -1**

His "spiritual energy" gives him a sixth sense about dangerous monsters and an increased ability to fight them, as well as a limited foresight and the ability to swirl the water, wine, or tea leaves in a cup he's holding without moving his hands.

Mourning

The sin of Mourning is to find no solace within the living things of the world. He holds that it is from a vast field of corpses that the new world shall be born and he spends his life engineering the great battle that shall give it birth.

Mourning has no specified role on the Student Council. He is generally believed to be a vampire prince, able to walk in day, and rejecting the pillow-teeth tea that would indicate his refusal to harm mortals.

The Angel of Fortitude fears him more than any other Sin, for of them all, only Mourning sees further than the Angel himself.

The standard version of Mourning is built around an **Accursed 2+** Arc—

He is bound not to take comfort in the things of the world, not to know true friendship or true love, because these things will burn him as the sun does not. He keeps a sanctuary in a dark future—a dead world, drowned in melted crystal chaos, where float the shredded remnants of living things and great monsters; he hikes across piles of corpses that rise above the chaos-line, and now and again he'll stop and take some corpse's hand and close his eyes against memories or grief.

From these pieces he is creating a great dead necromantic golem to open eyes that do not see the void and groan to shake the world and generate a new being from the chaos.

Now and again "some fool," as he'll put it, clinging to hope for a future, will adjust something, push the world to survive a little longer with the wish power in their hearts, and unmake days, weeks, months, or years of his labor by changing events around, without actually making a difference in the fate of things or unraveling the piles of the dead.

He is also dabbling in the Arc **Wounded Angel**—eventually he may take on "plans" or "designs" as the focus of those wounds.

His mundane abilities look something like:

- **Superior Vampire 3.** He's a proper vampire.
- **Map in your Head 3.** (It maps space, time, and destiny.)
- **Superior Physical Control 1.** He's pretty fast.
- **Superior Vitality 0.** He's oddly frail.
- **Cool 1.** He's composed and balanced.

And he likely has:

- **Bond 2: I can see into your heart and soul.**
- **Affliction: I'm already dead.**

Mourning may appear in the first Entropy Arc, "Principal Entropy Builds a Fountain."

Nikolai Zakharov

The Prodigy's tutor, Nikolai Zakharov, is a man whose self-awareness is like clear glass; like sweet water; in it shines the eternal moment of his existence, unsullied by the past or future.

He does not reflect upon who he is outside that moment; he is incapable of it.

This does not impair him; rather, all things come easily to him. All words that he has studied even once leap to his mind when he wishes to repeat them; conclusions bring themselves to fruition within him, becoming available with just as great an ease. Unburdened by the weight of consciousness, freed from the knowledge of birth and death, his body and his mind are light.

This is his gift and this is his curse, brought on by the touch of Hedge the Fang.

He was called to face that Mystery when he was younger and he failed, or at least, did not achieve the intended outcome, and was stripped of that thing that Hedge the Fang would like to strip from you, and he returned to Fortitude in a state that could be described as that of a Buddha, an animal, or a corpse.

Thus he is Hedge the Fang's herald:

When Hedge nears Town, he will reach out to Nikolai Zakharov, and Nikolai Zakharov will begin to preach his doctrine—will encourage others, earnestly, to become as he has become.

Before that, though, he is a tutor in... well... whatever subjects the HG feels competent to pretend to lecture on. Let us say physics, chemistry, and Russian literature, if all subjects are equally good and bad. He's also an enthusiast of Flying Fantasy Wizard Cards—a card game set "under a nameless sky"—and may well evangelize it and his favored "silver elephant-based" battle strategy should he be encountered at a park or at a store that sells Flying Fantasy Wizard Cards.

His Skills look something like:

- **Dance through Life 3**
- **Tutor of [Subjects] 2**
- **Flying Fantasy Wizard Cards 2**
- **Shine 1**

In addition to his Skills Nikolai Zakharov has the following miraculous Arcs:

- **Become Somebody 1+**
  - His **Role** is Nikolai Zakharov.
  - His **Truth** is that his self-awareness is like clear glass; he lives in an eternal now.
  - His **Failing** is that he has a past and a future.
  - He can see the marks of this Failing in others—the things that led them to now, the things that are foreshadowed for their future, as well as how old they are and how long they're projected to live.
  - He has insight into any living thing that lacks self-awareness, to the extent they lack it: he can predict insects near-perfectly, cats fairly well, and Fortitude rats not at all.
  - An Auctoritas protects his Truth and his Role.
  - He can handle himself in a wide variety of situations—creating an Affliction that boils down to "I belong here."

Orderic Neustry

Death and the Outside have predators. One such is Orderic Neustry, on his pale horse, who dreams to disassemble you—to take away the spiderweb of sense that...

- ...holds your thoughts together and imposes function on the chaos...
- ...creates form from the torrent of sensory impressions, and...
- ...thus, inevitably, creates a subjective person to experience them.

Anyone who can survive the loss of such a thing has his highest respect; such a person is someone he will gladly kill and steal the face of, to better endure the rigors of the Outside himself.

That may be all there is of him—a predator, as owls are predators, eating the sense-making organ of the self as meat. Or there may be something in the wildest domain of nonsense and nothing that he strives to find, seize, or accomplish, but his current face is insufficient to the task.

The point is: Orderic will take meaning from you. He will take your *you* from you. And if you survive that it will not free you from him but only make you a more worthwhile, enjoyable, and *useful* prey.

His stats look something like:

- **Superior Hunter 3+**
- **Stories of the Outside 3**
- **Intimidation 2**
- **Caretaker 2**
- **Cook 1**

These Skills have the following meaning: that he is versed on a number of mysteries and stories of the Outside; he knows the area well. That he is scary, and for more than just his power to hunt you down, shoot you, and devour you. That if you are not being eaten by him or hunted by him he is actually surprisingly kind—

He is good to his horse; he tends a garden in a ruins and is gracious to the land; and now and then when someone survives his sense-devouring process, not by some effort of their own that makes them better prey, but by fate or help or fortune, he will take good care of the dwindled and delirious creature that remains. There are more than a few wanderers who have had their

minds taken from them by Orderic Neustry's hunt, survived like sailors cast up onto a shore, waking on some fructile and life-supporting front of the Outside, and had him find them there, take care of them, and send them with some sympathy back home. There are even a few who are made small by this, stripped of their bodies and their souls, but remaining in some fashion; one of those little "pellets" sits on his shoulder and it laughs and it kicks its feet when Orderic Neustry is at hunt.

Also he makes a mean omelette. I mean, seriously, the stuff is good.

In addition to his Skills Orderic Neustry has the miraculous Arcs:

- **Creature of Fable 3+**
  - He's scary-competent at travel, gardening, and cooking—between scenes as well as within them.
  - He can mess with others' powers.
  - He can imitate those he's met.
  - He can declare moods and feelings onto you (typically loss or sorrow, sometimes helplessness).
  - He can call to you, drawing you to him.
  - He can blind you to something in the world around you.
- **Primordial 1+**
  - He is a marauding creature of Loss or possibly Survival, an owl-headed hunter of the Outside who may also wear the faces of those he's killed.

He has, as well, I think, some level of Connection to his horse, his bow, his sword, his garden, and the little dwindled thing that sits on his shoulder and kicks its feet as Orderic hunts.

Orderic Neustry appears in the first Outside Arc, "The Drowned World."

Owler

Young **Owler Lendsme** is a piece of the first Entropy, the former King of Evil. It thinks itself a God and it laughs at the pride and the achievements of other souls. It runs the Catering Committee at School, but more importantly, it has learned the trick of stepping from body to body, leaving its old host confused and dazed behind it.

It dreams of finding an amazing god-like host that can make a new world for it to rule.

Its Skills look something like this:

- **Superior Seamless Impersonation 3.**
- **Event Management 2.**
- **Food Preparation 2.**
- **Student 1.**
- **Bond 2: I am impulsive and prone to hubris.**
- **Affliction 3: Body Thief**

Owler is fundamentally a puzzle, and you're expected to build your own solution in play. That is, whatever methods might exist to contain it; to track it; to keep it out of your body temporarily or permanently; to exile it from its current form; to deal with it...

Those haven't been specified.

It's not that the HG creates them; it's not that I'm keeping them secret; it's not that you can do just anything or just whatever and have it work. It's that... you don't know the answers yet. Even reading this book, you don't know them; you won't *get* to know them, not until you've encountered Owler and worked on figuring this stuff out in play.

There are a few details that are implied by the intrinsic limitations of the provided powers, and a few more hints implicit in the wound system for the game, but mostly, it's going to be a matter of players monologuing about what the answers *should* be, and then taking risks or at least meaningful actions to test their theories.

And sometimes, those risks will pay off; and other times, they won't.

Similarly, the mechanisms for possession haven't been *fully* defined. You don't know what they are yet. You don't know how they work.

That said, I should at least make sure that we're on the same *basic* page here; so:

Owler needs proximity and an act of Will—usually, an Intention formed out of the "Food Preparation" or "Event Management" Skill—to step into a person's

body. It may also need touch or eye contact; that's going to be up to events and gambles in play. Once there, it has the power to perform its **Seamless Impersonation**, which, as a first order approximation, lets it duplicate most of the target's mannerisms and their mundane and Superior Skills up to level 3. (That's not *quite* how it works, since correctly, effectively, or productively duplicating somebody else's Skill isn't the same as correctly, effectively, or productively using it—but it's pretty similar.) Often its access to its host's knowledge works a bit like knowledge **the Dream-Witch** uses "Lend Spirit" to share—it knows everything that the target knows, but only *while* in the host, and the knowledge isn't going to carry over very well unless it takes the time to rehearse it in its thoughts.

The *outcome* of the takeover is going to depend on circumstances. Specifically, the takeover either...

- ...leaves the original self "present" in the body, able to act if dramatically necessary and advise at all times.
- ...banishes the original self to a spiritual netherworld where they can have meaningful insights into their life and problems.
- ...leaves the original self in Owler's original body.
- ...leaves the original self in the ghost world.
- ...does something completely unexpected!

The first time it happens to a PC, the HG chooses whichever option is coolest, and can change their minds up to 15 minutes later (as the possessee slips from one state to another.) The second time it happens, choose again. In both cases, things might take an unexpected turn if a targeted PC chooses to take a wound rather than letting things proceed normally.

After the second PC possession, extrapolate the appropriate rules using the HG's instincts or the PCs' attempts at science, faith, and sorcery.

Normally the person in the "old," abandoned body suffers disorientation that imposes a level 2 Obstacle to reacting cleverly and being on top of things for the duration of the scene. Whether they remember Owler's actions in their body is going to depend on what happened to them—facing that same level 2 Obstacle is another median case. Again, however, all of this can go differently than expected if the target chose to take a wound; at the very least, they'll have the option to swap it out for a new, more appropriate wound, after Owler vacates. At the most, Owler may be trapped inside them until the wound evaporates, then banished to wherever its default might be.

Owler is a central feature in the second Destiny Arc, "Owler and Impious." It may also appear in the first Destiny Arc, "Schwans and Sovereigns."

Renjiro

This guy shows up in the first Glass Arc, "Shards of Glass." He is stressed out. He has a dandelion-puff of hair, a strong body, and a panicked look on his face. He has supernatural powers from a shard of glass in the central chamber of his mind, but it isn't making him happy.

And no wonder!

His dreams are all diffracted, like they're in a kaleidoscope. So are his daydreams and his fantasies. He has to kind of squint around the shard of glass to imagine or visualize anything at all!

Plus, he has a kind of awkward power—like:

- involuntary adaptative self-transformations
- the ability to do anything with his yo-yo that he can visualize himself doing with his yo-yo, paired with this horrible guilt that he can't suspend disbelief enough to yo-yo the dead to life, the sick to health, and scientific mysteries to their solutions (though he can do a pretty good at painstakingly divining answers to things by using his yo-yo as a divining rod on a letter board)
- the ability to warp the world with rock & roll
- the ability to see random bits of other people's memories when they meet
- the ability to pick up the strengths and weaknesses of others by watching them perform them
- the ability to have the things he thinks he sees actually be real
- concussive thunderclap sneezes
- the ability to inject thoughts into people's minds
- the ability to make random objects grow like plants in the sun
- the ability to make random objects and things flow like water in a river
- jewels and glass flowers fall out of his mouth when he talks, and will continue to do so until he gets married
- control over a soul-eating magical sword[97]

97 *In fairness, it's aces for cutting onions.*

- he automatically appears as a self-insert character in every copy of every book he reads
- someone else always pays for anything he tries to buy

His shard power would normally be an **Affliction** with power level notionally based on his (in) Over your Head Issue, but it's possible that for someone like Renjiro basing it on It Never Stops! or a Complex would make more sense. Regardless, his powers become bigger and bigger the more out of control his life becomes. If he becomes a major character the HG could consider stepping his powers up to a **Reality Syndrome** or a **Primordial** Arc.

He shows up in "Shards of Glass" as one of the characters most likely to get hurt by their shard power in some fashion.

Sakura Anastasia

This is one of the NPCs associated with **the Dream-Witch** and the Archive. She thinks the modern world is falling apart, that everything was better twenty years ago and best a century before that[98], and her abilities look something like these:

- **Traditional Ways 3**
- **Traditional Crafts 2**
- **Gloom 2**
- **Umbrella Use 1**
- **Bond: Diligence 2**

A few versions of **the Dream-Witch** will move Sakura to a shrine family, in which case she might replace her **Gloom** Skill with the family magic.

In the first Glass Arc, "Shards of Glass," Sakura will discover there's a shard of the glass dragon speared through her left lung.

It'll give her a power like...

- ...limitless, stretching-powers-type reach.
- ...access to the Night-Craft (from **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG**).
- ...the ability to make shadow clones of herself or other people, or spit out copies of herself.
- ...the ability to borrow the powers of people she's close to.
- ...the ability to unwind time and hold something in its ancient, traditional, or undamaged state (albeit at a cost of long-term painful concentration until it sticks, if it ever does).
- ...the ability to walk freely between the ghost and real worlds and break other spiritual barriers.
- ...a host of fire-creatures that serve her.
- ...the power to have the world around her reflect her moods.
- ...the ability to go in and out of mirrors and travel an empty mirror-world.
- ...the ability to find things that are lost.

Her shard power would normally be an **Affliction** with power level notionally based on her (in) Over your Head Issue, but it's possible that for someone like Sakura basing it on the Vice or Isolation Issue would make more sense. Regardless, her powers become bigger and bigger the more out of control her life becomes. If she becomes a major character the HG could consider stepping her powers up to an **Accursed** Arc or a **Reality Syndrome.**

In "Shards of Glass," she's one of the people most likely to get hurt by her power in some fashion. She may also show up in the third Glass Arc, "the Maze in the Library," hunting for the answer to the conundrum of the world. Or perhaps she hunts the Unicorn of that labyrinth: but why?

- Does its existence offend her?
- Does she fear it will hurt her or someone she cares about?
- Or is that harm already done?

Umbrella Use?

Lest you get the wrong idea—

Her umbrella is lightly reinforced by magic but by default all her Umbrella Use covers is poking people, increasing stylishness, and keeping out the rain. It isn't an omnicompetence Skill! At least, not by default. It could be if you *like*.

98 *She doesn't actually have precise numbers.*

Setsuna Kaneko

This is a graceful and delicate child of the swan people.

She is known as a "moon child"—some strange light shone on her at her birth, paled her skin to the color of coffee and cream, and gave her the prophecy that she will die but first she will see seven great wonders.

She has lived, in short, with the touch of death since her birth;

It has been with her and within her.

And as her life reaches its end, at the young age of [the default PC age], she finds herself driven to give it meaning—to try to treat her coming death like a joyous thing, to spread it as a gospel, the prophecy of her demise.

I don't think she really believes that it's awesome. I think she'll reach out to you because she doesn't want to die. But it's hard to say. People with prophecies are weird, and there is a chance, I think, that she is one of the Headmaster's treasures already.

Her mundane abilities look something like this:

- **Shine 3.** It is easy to do things on behalf of Setsuna Kaneko.
- **Mysterious 2.** She's glamorously mysterious.
- **Know Stuff 2.** Much was prophesied.
- **Fashionable 1.** She has impeccable dress sense.

I'm not sure she needs more than that, but if you think she needs miraculous abilities you could extend this with some level of **Creature of the Light.**

Setsuna appears in the second Outside Arc, "The Lightless Gates."

The Straw-Haired Kid

This is a spirit. They are the Romantic Interest in the first Troublemaker Arc, "Rinley Yatskaya Looks for Trouble."

I don't know what he (or she) is a spirit of. I have a couple of ideas, though:

- a seasonal spirit, born from the rushes of Twisted River
- a seasonal spirit, born from a trash collection/recycling initiative
- a lingering spirit after a cat loses its last life
- a fading human ghost
- a wish-spirit taking on human form
- a cat's "jealous ghost," taking human form because the cat's too old to enjoy a normal life

Anyway, this is some straw-headed kid—I want to say "tow-headed" but this is a fantasy game so people will read it wrong—and as soon as they meet, **the Troublemaker** spots them as a key player in the Arc.

It's possible **the Troublemaker** even sees what's coming, though if so then it's kind of extra-sad.

The spirit's hanging out by the river or on the streets.

They're playing with a paper bag blown in the wind or maybe playing on a reed flute.

They're a romantic interest, so if Rinley's into guys, then this spirit is **Rafael Bannik**; and if Rinley's into girls, then this spirit is **Sessily Shishika.** Because of how Rinley's designed (as a "younger sibling" archetype), I'm going to assume that it's going to be more like puppy love than adult romantic love, but that won't make **the Troublemaker** feel much better about it when the spirit's natural lifespan expires 1-3 seasons from now.

The story here is pretty simple. After some badgering the straw-haired kid will admit to being a spirit that lets themselves be seen by mortals because they're interested in some aspect of human life, or some particular people, or because they owe somebody a debt and repay it by bringing them weekly gifts.

If you're pursuing their story as the central mystery of the first Rinley Arc, then there's probably something more to it, if only because Simon Brambles (pg. 427) is trying to keep you from finding *something* out. That said, the likelihood even then is that this spirit's story is pretty simple and any actual mystery is focused on their associates:

- the **Death Wolf** (pg. 442) that is their death
- their companion **Totem** (pg. 445)

The Straw-Haired Kid's abilities probably look something like this:

- **Superior (Type) Spirit 2**
- **Superior Celestian 1**
- **Grace 2**
- **Thoughtful 2**
- **Music 1**
- **Mortal Stuff 0**
- **Shy -1**

They also have **Connection 2: Totem** and **Connection 1: The Death Wolf.**

Yulia Rozhkova

Yulia Rozhkova runs *Eclectic*, a bookstore and comic shop in Fortitude—one of those stuffy little places that are more confusing than they have any right to be for their size. There are some chairs by the entrance where you can sit to read in the sunlight, but the back of the shop is a winding maze of shelves. The collection of books is eclectic and seems to have no set pattern—a shard of the glass dragon found its way into the bookstore's conceptual inventory and now it has become erratic. If you are searching for a particular book you will not find it, though if you ask the owner she can get you a copy by the end of the week.

Her mundane abilities are something like:

- **Store Owner 3**
- **I Read it in a Book Once 1**
- **Grace 2**
- **Shine 2** (when following her advice)

Both the eccentricity of her inventory and her ability to get ahold of books are an Affliction notionally based on her **(in) Over your Head** Issue—the stranger her life becomes, the more amazing and surprising her collection and the greater her ability to find and order rare volumes or "the book you need." If she becomes a major character the HG could consider stepping up her powers to **Spiritual** (Books).

Yulia Rozhkova appears in the first Nightmares Arc, "Nightmares Open," as a major part of **the Haunted Child's** support network.

Yuri Kolodin

Yuri Mikhailovich Kolodin is **the Prodigy's** father. He's a simple man who enjoys the daily routine of life in Fortitude.

He spent time in the military but does not discuss such things.

His abilities include:

- **Sailing 3**
- **Fishing 2**
- **Checkered Past 2**
- **Sea Stories 1**

I think it unlikely that he will have any miraculous abilities, although he may very well have some cool Perks, and if he dies and returns or has some magical encounter with something he could develop an appropriately miraculous Arc.

Properties of the Nightmare World

- You are disoriented.
- You are confused.
- There are subtle contradictions in the world around you.
- There are things that you can't explain.
- The sun is distorted and strange.
- You can see. You can hear. You are in possession of your senses.
- You are hunted by the shadow of your mind.

The Nightmare World

Exploring the psychic topography of his own nightmares, **Nightmares' Angel** discovered a startling regularity, structure, and form. Nightmares, it turns out, are more than random blurs of data in a sleeper's twitching mindscape—there's a *terrain* there, a *landscape.*

Recurring structures.

Stable forms.

This is **the Nightmare World,** related to and contiguous with, but not *identical* to, the Near Outside. Therein dwell alien landmarks, twisting rivers, spires, spider- and wolf-haunted forests, and crystalline cathedrals. There run boiling, sulfuric rivers; half-dead bears hunt along their shores. There sprawl great cold flat and grainy deserts with toppled black towers visible from afar. There are fiery horses there; their eyes are red and their breath heated with their exhaustion. They run until their hooves strike sparks and make them roads into the sky.

It is a demon world. It is a horror world.

It is a world of the richest possible natural resources to a scientist like **Nightmares' Angel:** a place where goms and eye-devouring rhomboids practically *grow on trees*... but it is not even the least bit nice.

And in that world are *people*, too—or at least, partial people, pieces of self and being, parts of *you*:

Constellations of your motivational forces, memories, and emotions taken form.

They *live* there. They have *lives* there, or half-lives at the least. They *farm* there, amidst the fructile corpses of ancient demons, and fly their banners from the fallen spires of their unknown past.

The Prince of Thorns

The first character to come through from the nightmare world is usually **Simon Brambles, Prince of Thorns.**

He's a nightmare of being lost. He's a nightmare of having no leverage.

Of everything falling apart as you grasp for it.

Of the chaos of the wilderness, of knowing absolutely nothing about what you're supposed to do or where to go, of struggling while pinned to thorns but finding only thorns behind them.

He's all about "I don't know what to do."

"I give up."

"It's impossible."

He's one of the characters from **the Haunted Child's** dreams, but depending on the course of your game he could show up long before the nightmare world and the Haunted Child become relevant—near the beginning of the first Arc for **the Troublemaker,** something pulls the Prince of Thorns from the nightmare world into Town.

Something's *dredged him out.*

See, **the Troublemaker** is going to be investigating a mystery; and something's bound Simon Brambles into service and sent him to keep the truth of... whatever mystery that is... from the PCs. He's come to Town to replace written records with gibberish. To frighten witnesses into silence. To keep the picture from coming together.

Unfortunately for him, he's going to become romantically infatuated with, or older-sibling-style protective of, **the Troublemaker.** I want to finish that sentence with ", instead." But I won't. He might still get in her way.

But it will probably compromise his effectiveness quite a bit.

He's probably not *evil*, not exactly.

He *could* like his work, or he could be doing it for pay, but he's *probably* being blackmailed or commanded into it. **The Prince of Thorns** is a representative of your own relationship to your own uncertainty, so the more positive your attitude towards mystery is, the more he'll like you.

His stats look something like:

- **A Keeper of Gardens 1+**
  - A shadowy toxin, that bleeds from the surface of his body and dissolves in light, confuses and twists what it touches. Long-term or intense exposure to sunlight might undo this effect.
  - He has some control over the things that touch on whatever secret he is charged to keep—his "Garden."
- **Primordial 1+**
  - He is a creature of thorns and brambles and vines and snakes and being lost.
- **Superior Dreamer 3**
- **Superior Snake-Speaker 2:** He may speak to snakes and do snake-like things, in a fashion similar to Rinley's "Cat-Speaker." This includes

enhanced smell, as long as he can flick his tongue, skill at slithering, climbing, and hiding in vegetation, skill in poisoning things, and skill in being intimidating.

- **Superior Plant-Speaker 1:** At level 1, his ability to talk to plants slightly better than an average person can is barely even noticeable, but it does come with a sense for gardening, plant health, and the soil.
- **Storytelling 2**

The Prince of Thorns appears in the first Rinley Arc, "Rinley Yatskaya Looks for Trouble."

The Accursed Simon Brambles

Here's an alternative miraculous Arc for him:

- **Accursed 2+**
  - **Sanctuary—**Simon Brambles can retreat to the Nightmare World through any briar or bramble or any sleeping person's ear and can emerge again, later, from wherever he first emerged into Town; I'm guessing that's near a high window of Professor Hideo Hayashi's Archive.
  - **"the World-Breaker's Hand":** He can unravel the *sense* in things, confuse and maze them, make them lost, confused, and hopeless in one sense or another.
  - **Falling from the World:** When people stare at him, when they look at him closely, his form begins to warp and change; he becomes progressively more monstrous until he is a man woven from thorny vines, shadows, and snakes.

With this Arc, since he won't have Primordial to give an excuse for this, it might be valuable to replace two points of his Skills with **Superior Thorny Vines 2** to give him tangled vine-limbs emerging from unspecified and vague places of his anatomy and clothing that he can use as manipulator limbs.

Variations

Here's some quick options to customize **the Prince of Thorns** for your game:

- Do you want him to be the half-brother of **the Angel of Fortitude—**a fellow child of Attaris Magister?
- Do you want to make him a former servant of Melanie or Reginald Malakh?
- Assuming 15-year-old PCs, would you want his apparent age to be:
  - 10?
  - 14?
  - 15?
  - 16?
  - 22?
- Would it make more sense to use the female version, **Liza Brambles?** (I suspect her title would also be "Prince of Thorns," because the formal language of nightmare aristocracy tends to be gender-neutral, but you could substitute "Thorns' Lady" or "Queen of Thorns" if you prefer.)

If the player of **the Troublemaker** has a *strong* opinion as to which variant to use, that wins; otherwise, it's up to the HG.

Ill-Made

The second character to come through from the nightmare world is usually **Ill-Made** or **the Ill-Maiden.**[99]

She's notionally—

She's notionally all the pieces of yourself that you don't want to look at. And being forced to see them, having your heart and mind ground in them, every moment that you look. She's this primeval horror and revulsion that makes you desperate to look away, to *refuse to see.*

She might not be *your* ugly pieces. Not exactly.

It might be a generic quality that she has, it might be an objective "you don't want to look at this"-*ness*, rather than a personal and specific quality of her actually being the specific pieces of yourself that you don't like to think about—

But even so.

She's someone that you don't want to deal with. She's someone that you don't want to face. She's someone you feel nauseated, disturbed, frustrated, and stressed at the thought of encountering. She's best at manifesting vaguely, indistinctly—you sense her, you see her in the distance, you intuit her, but by the time you reach her or force yourself to look at her straight on, she isn't there.

If you get past that—

I suppose anybody can, with the right abilities—

She traditionally appears as a tall, hooded figure in dark, often leather or metallic clothing, with yellow serpent's eyes.

She was born in the nightmares of **the Haunted Child,** but she's slipped out into our world.

Nor is she alone.

She is chief of a gang of monsters, mongrels, and nightmares. They will eventually follow her out. Then they will disassemble **the Haunted Child** to establish their reality and they will live in Fortitude. Such, at least, is their plan.

Her gang tends to have low levels of **Creature of the Light/of Fable, Become Somebody, Reality Syndrome,** and **Child of the Ash.** A typical motley includes someone with an amorphous body, somebody with a gigantic claw for a hand, a sadist with spiky hair, a femme fatale, and a sweet good-hearted nightmare kid who believes that the rest will see the light if they just keep faith. (Or that last might just be **the Haunted Child.**)

99 This is technically a title and not a name, but I'm not sure she has a name. Maybe Margaret, or Michael? She looks basically human, insofar as you can tell.

Variations

There are three takes on what it means that **Ill-Made's** followers plan to "disassemble" the Haunted Child:

- The worst take is: they *have* to hurt someone to be real. It doesn't actually have to be **the Haunted Child,** but it has to be *somebody.* They have to take that person, spend a while living in their company—acclimate them to their presence—and then vivisect or at least kill and then dissect them. That's the only way to make their stay in Fortitude a permanent one.
- A more moderate take: they can find an anchor to reality without murder. They may not *know* that they can do that, and they'll probably start out pretty ruthless because they are creatures out of nightmare—but they don't *have* to commit a moral crime.
- In the nicest take, "disassemble" is the wrong word for what they have to do. They are just misunderstood! They might need to use **the Haunted Child** for *something*, but it's something that doesn't actually require hurting the kid. Then, afterwards, they plan to settle down and establish and run the corner convenience store of their dreams.

As for Ill-Made herself, canonical variations include:

- You can drop the humanity of her form—she's just a twisting mass of serpents, or at least, capable of becoming them. (This may or may not ever help.)
- She is the herald of something much worse—whether she's evil or just wants to run a corner store, her presence and her gang's presence will lead to a full-on apocalyptic nightmare following her through.
- You can, of course, re-cast this entity as a man instead—possibly giving him an alternate name of **Bane Prince** instead of **Ill-Maiden.**

Ill-Made is bad with mirrors,. It's not clear whether her seeing her own reflection will kill her, annoy her, freeze her up, or unleash that apocalyptic nightmare I just mentioned. It won't make her happy, though, that's for sure!

Her Traits are something like:

- **Creature of the Light 2+**
  - She may appear to those she has a Connection to.
  - She may transfix those around her.
  - She may make psychic attacks on others or evoke flashbacks with her actions.
- **Superior Shadow-Self 3**
  - She is elusive.
  - She has some of the nature of the parts of yourself you don't want to look at.
  - She is hard to grasp.
- **Superior Dreamer 2**
- **A Map in your Head 2**
- **Knowledge of the Nightmare Realm 1**

Ill-Made appears in the first Nightmares Arc, "Nightmares Open."

The Blasphemy

Properties of the Blasphemy

- Your guiding star is lost.
- You can make no sense of things.
- The ground-bog drags you downwards.
- Everything decays.

A level 4 Auctoritas guards these laws; to defy them in this realm requires a miracle with at least 4 Strike.

In the deepest part of the nightmare realm is the blasphemy that the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy embedded into **Nightmares' Angel.**

It bloats and spreads there like a seeping sore.

It is consuming the nightmare world, I think, but slowly; slowly enough not to be another Property of the place, at least. I do not know if there is anything that can live there, even the creatures of nightmare, not for long; but there are things with teeth, regardless, living or not though they may be; they swim beneath the surface of that realm.

The most prosaic explanation for why things are beginning to emigrate out of the nightmare world is that they are fleeing the spread of the blasphemy. I don't like that very much, actually, because it's a bit *too* tangible and logistically realistic for a world of nightmare, but it is at least a consideration—

A thing that makes those who have fled the realm less likely to willingly return; a reason to sympathize even with nightmare people, as long as they're not so bad.

The Skyship

This great flying ship is the fortress of **the Moon Prince,** aka **the Prince of Cats—**

A Rider ostensibly allied with but independent from the Bleak Academy, a ruler of moonlight and cats but most importantly a Prince of the Principle that *things will be OK.*

That it's safe.

That you can stop trying so hard. That you can stop striving so hard. That the pain, the work, for better or worse—and sometimes it is very much for the better, when he comes, and sometimes it is so very much for the worse—can *stop.*

In many ways the ship will resemble the evil island of **the Angel of Fortitude—**it may even have a giant manta/blowfish/whale creature flying it around.[100] It's more likely that it's levirock-based technology, though; either way, it has peculiarly endless basement/ maintenance/ engineering levels, despite being of finite height (20-30m) when seen from the side.

It is a *wonder*, the pleasure ship of the Prince of Cats:

It floats amidst colorful and aromatic clouds, has a stable of strange flying animals, has endless depths, as noted, despite its finite height, and may cloak itself to vanish from the visible mortal sky. Most of its awesome features are comparable to those that a PC crafter could build with a **Shepherd** Arc at 1+, so we're talking...

- ...useful miracles, if the pilot, captain, or operator has put some serious time lately into maximizing their potential, and...
- ...unruly, willful magic, if they have not.

The construction of the ship itself must have taken something more than that—depending on how it's built, it might be within Leonardo de Montreal's limits or it might be the kind of thing that'd need a maxed-out Jasper Irinka to create.

One can only assume that the Prince stole it, commissioned it, or has more powers than this writeup might suggest.

Properties of the Skyship

- Your fears drift away from you.
- This is just a happy dream.
- Emotions get out of hand.
- There are secrets you have yet to explore.
- Cats come and go as they please.

100 *So if your group has ever found itself thinking, "You know what needs a romantic interest? The giant soul-eating beast that carries Principal Entropy's evil island around," this dream is finally in your grasp.*

The Prince of Cats

A graduate of the College of War and Nightmare, and as such a compelling advertisement for the benefits of higher education, the Prince of Cats flies through the Outside on his magical skyship teaching the world that *things will be OK.*

It's a great ship, but it's full of cats. It's a wonder his tuxedo can stay clean!

His mundane Abilities look something like:

- **Superior Cat-Speaker 5.** One look, and a cat shares his thoughts.
- **Superior Hunter 2+**. A blessing from his "Creature of Fable".
- **Superior Dreamer 1.** He is skilled with dreamscapes.
- **Prince 2.** He is also a mannerly Prince.

He'll start with some Perks:

- **Connection: the Child of the Sun 3**
- **Connection: the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy 2**
- **Connection: [PC of the HG's choice, to be discovered in play] 2**
- **Affliction: "The Prince of Cats takes away your pain."**
- **Accessory: Commands an incredible flying skyship and all its trimmings.**

And his miraculous Arcs will include:

- **A Keeper of Gardens 1+**
  - His presence is oddly giddying (his "Toxin").
  - He commands at least one gigantic flying skyship.
- **Creature of Fable 2+**
  - He's nothing more or less than this.

I'd peg his Creature of Fable as closer to 5 under normal circumstances, but it doesn't seem right that the moon should overshadow the sun—

So let's assume that as **the Child of the Sun** powers up, so too does he.

I don't think there's anything to say he's necessarily malicious, nor anything to say he's necessarily nice. He's the temptation of thinking that things will be OK. If they are, then that's just great, he's saved you from worry and unnecessary stress. If they're not, then he's an evil tempter. I guess that to whatever extent he actually *embodies* that principle rather than just being a metaphor for it, whether he's good or bad depends on you.

Do you worry too much?

Or do you not worry enough?

Old Tom

Old Tom is a hidden agent on the Prince's ship—

An intelligent, talking cat working against him; a secret agent long ago won over to the service of either Jade Irinka, if the Moon Prince is a villain, or Melanie Malakh, if the Moon Prince is an all right kind of guy. (He'll *claim* to serve whichever of them is most helpful in any given conversation, like any fast-talking secret agent should.)

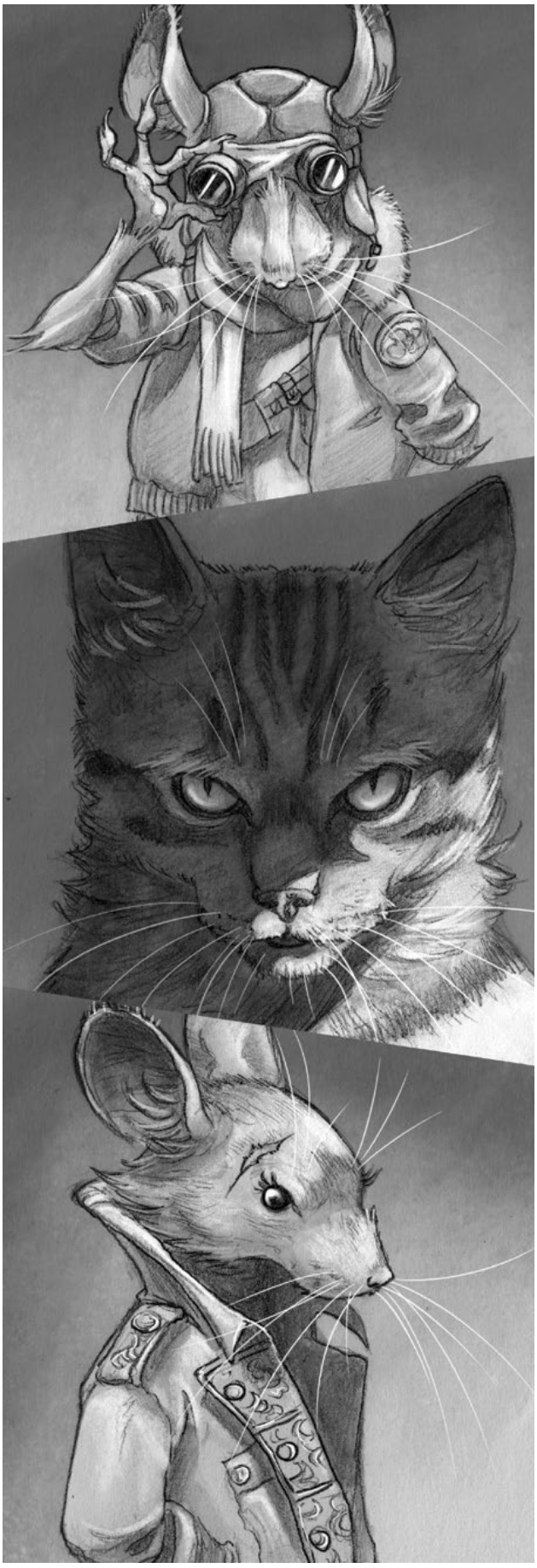
Old Tom will spend a lot of time hiding in the shadows and warning people not to trust the Prince of Cats. He's not hiding because he's a secret agent, though; it's because he has massive stage fright that makes it hard for him to talk when he's *not* lurking in the shadows... and almost impossible when everyone's looking at him!

His Skills look something like:

- **Secret Agent 3**
- **Superior Cat 2**
- **Skitter 2**
- **Superior Dreamer 1**

His stage fright is a **Complex**; since the HG is unlikely to be tracking Issues for NPCs closely, it'll rise in rough parallel with some PC's "(in) Over your Head" Issue but may need its own, separate resolution.

I don't think he has miraculous Arcs—this is an anthropocentric game, so cats don't actually need miracles or even Superior Skills in order to talk to people



and do people-like things. (They just usually don't!) That said, there's some percentage in giving him a small **Aspect (the Ace) 0+** Arc—

He's no Prodigy, but he could be intermittently awfully cool.

You could also swap his gender, up the power-level some, and rename the character "Puss in Boots."

Alexandra Prokofieva and Melanie Glenn

Alexandra Prokofieva and Melanie Glenn are two hard-bitten rat investigators looking into the Prince of Cats. They're not really concerned about his reasons for coming to Town—

I mean, he seems to be looking to make off with the sun, which is a big deal, but:

They're *much* more concerned about the cats.

See, there are never supposed to be more than a thousand cats in Fortitude at a time. There are enough exceptions and special cases that it veers up as high as twelve hundred sometimes, but it really *shouldn't*.

The rats have a treaty with humans. There's a *line*.

And the reason for that line, besides tradition, is that at some point, when there are *enough* cats, they're going to be possessed by the rats' old nemesis and monster-god **Hedge the Fang,** who will then hunt down the rats of Fortitude and eat them all.

A skyship with hundreds of cats on it is a *problem*.

Alexandra Prokofieva

Alexandra isn't *usually* a troubleshooting rat. She's retired, or she was supposed to be; she'd gotten distracted from the life of an adventurer by this burning urge to map the skies. She spends more time with a telescope than a trenchcoat these days—

But a distant ancestor of hers was supposed to have trafficked with the Prince of Cats, so when his ship shows up in the first Spring Arc, "the Pleasure Ship," she gets involved.

That's her honor! She's the "face" of a two-rat team, with Skills like:

- **Superior Fortitude Rat 2**
- **Diagramming 3**
- **Charm 2**
- **Noir Detective 2**
- **Navigation 1**
- **Athletics 1**

...and Perks like:

- **Bond: "I know the skies." 2**
- **Connection: Melanie Glenn 2**
- **Health.** She has a bonus Normal Health Level.
- **Health.** She has another bonus Normal Health Level.
- **Magic.** 1/season, she can navigate or diagram a path to somewhere physically impossible.

Melanie Glenn

Melanie Glenn's a long-time friend of Alexandra's. When the Prince of Cats shows up in the first Spring Arc, "the Pleasure Ship," she gets involved, because...

- ...she thinks Alexandra needs someone to watch over her.
- ...she's seen Hedge the Fang before, albeit from a distance.
- ...she's always wanted to be a noir-style detective.

Melanie Glenn is more of the warrior of the team, with Skills like:

- **Superior Fortitude Rat 3**
- **Cool 2**
- **Tenacity 4**
- **Domestic Skills 1**
- **Useful Trivia 1**
- **Noir Detective -1**

...and Perks like:

- **Connection: Alexandra Prokofieva 3**
- **Accessory:** Awesome trenchcoat.
- **Bonus:** 1/book, she has a +3 to showing up in the nick of time.
- **Health.** She has a bonus Normal Health Level.
- **Health.** She has a bonus Tough Health Level.

She isn't very good at the noir detective part, but man! That coat! Plus, she's good enough with a sword—it's part of Superior Fortitude Rat 3, though it doesn't completely negate the Obstacle of her size—to take on a couple of grown men.

Hedge the Fang

I am told that Hedge the Fang, who is named Unmindful, dwells on the Farthest Roofs. He shapes the sea and the endless sky.

The rats tell this story of him:

That Vikenti Haru came upon him at his work. He watched and marveled for a while.

"That's beautiful, sir Hedge," he said. Hedge turned. Hedge smiled.

He did not see the rat Vikenti, for Hedge the Fang had no eyes. He did not touch the rat Vikenti, for Hedge the Fang had no skin. He picked up the rat with his skinless hand; or rather, held him up upon it, not touching it, not flesh to flesh, but above it on a nest of air.

"You poor thing," said Hedge. He grinned. He grinned at the rat with his alien maw. "You poor thing. *You've learned to see."*

And if you've ever wondered what's wrong with the world today; if you've ever thought, *how did we wind up here?*

Well, I'll tell you how.

He spat in the face of Hedge the Fang.

That is why, if he should ever have enough cats to make a try—if there should ever be enough of them gathered in Fortitude—Hedge will wear them all, set aside their souls and hearts and wear their bodies as his skin, gather them up with their maws dripping drool, and he'll hunt down every last squeaking rat who ever knew Vikenti Haru's name, or that he once saw the work of Hedge the Fang.

He'd kill you too, now you know those names, but you're a bit too big for some cats to eat.

That's not the whole of the story, I admit. There's a little more. But it's enough to tell for now.

Think of it as a wish, then. That someone made a bleak and awful wish.

"I wish that if there are ever enough cats for it, enough to support him, for him to wear their skins, gathered there in Fortitude—

That he should come there to make an end to the rats and their seeing:

Hedge the Fang."

And when he comes he will have...

- **Otherworldly (Child of the Ash) 4+**, for he shapes the sea and the endless sky.
- **Storyteller (Creature of Fable) 3+,** that he may cut away your sight.

And such mortal Skills as:

- **Dissemble 4**
- **Devour 3**
- **Smile 1**
- **Bond 2: "Enact the Will of Hedge the Fang."**

And Shapeshifting of some sort, as a Perk.

In the first Spring Arc, "The Pleasure Ship," the arrival of hundreds of new cats in Fortitude has begun to stir the wish that enfleshes as Hedge the Fang.

Even in the early hours of that Arc Hedge is dimly present, yellow eyes gleaming, in Fortitude. He is seen taking on the appearance of a cat—or of Rinley, Kuroma, Caroline, Goro, or Shiori Yatskaya; or of the Prince of Cats—as he hunts the local rats and Jasper Irinka, whispers his dreams of flaying them, and vanishes into mist and dream if ever seen unobscured and in good light.

This can *have* concrete effects, but it's mostly a symptom—

Not so much a *thing* as a warning: either he's using a quest miracle to approach Fortitude, or his future arrival is echoing in the now.

Kaiju

These are some of the giant monsters that will show up over the course of this campaign.

The Anomaly

This, says Hayden Sorrows, is a "creature of raw, crystalline chaos" purportedly stirred up or created by the reborn sun, whose whispering, from Town, "disturbs the void."

Some of this may be Bleak Academy propaganda or even honest misunderstanding.

What's definitely true is that this creature is becoming a vast, ambiguous presence in the substrate of Fortitude—either literally beneath the place, in the sewers or water table, or metaphysically underneath it yet permeating it all. Its manifestations in motion resemble the vibrant chaos of the near Outside; when still, they resemble the crystalline Outside dust.

It's a terrifying thing, with its main powers deriving from the Arc:

- **Otherworldly (Child of the Ash) 4+**
  - It may radiate chaos, or (once per season/story), use a wish to call up an Outside storm.
  - Its size is malleable, shifting freely between insect and Region-sized and able to go even beyond that once per book.
  - It is functionally immortal.
  - When it takes a wound, it can abandon the normal wound advantage and instead construct a point defense.
  - It can launch physical attacks with miraculous brutality and precision.
  - It can commune with the chaos of the Outside.
  - It can merge subtly with the landscape, or solidify into a glittering, Escheresque tangle of non-Euclidian limbs.
  - It can grow natural weapons to hypnotize, pacify, or enslave the minds of prey.

The degree to which it's an animal, a natural force, or an intelligent being is a canon flexpoint; you'll have to figure that kind of thing out in play! Accordingly, I'm not sure of its mortal abilities. They include, but are not limited to:

- **Seethe 3**
- **Whisper 2**

I think the Anomaly feeds on confusion, disorientation and fear and may, if sufficiently fed, develop a malign intellect—

But it's also perfectly possible that it's an empathetic entity, a shard of Jade Irinka or Attaris (pg. 52) or something, either trying to live peacefully in Town or preparing to infect and destroy the Outside in revenge for Jade Irinka's death, and that it simply has trouble communicating in terms that lower-level minds can understand.

Or that it's an animal.

Or that it isn't even *alive!*

The Anomaly appears in the first Winter Arc, "Flowers in the Ice."

Bašmu

This is a great, horned, venomous snake. It is purportedly one hundred and eight miles long, has six mouths, and devours fish, birds, ships, rats, cats, and humans with equal alacrity. It is a creature of lightning storms and justifications/excuses—

If defeated in its serpent form, it will likely re-manifest itself as a horned man, woman, or six-headed and six-bodied sentai team with the power to blend its frantic justifications into reality and implement one plan, no matter how absurd, each week.

Its abilities look something like:

- **Superior Sea Serpent 3**
- **Tortured Reasoning 2**
- **Master of Disguise 2**
- **(Hobby) 1**, typically the same as **the Wishing Boy/Girl's.**

Its basic Arcs are probably a lot like Chuubo's:

- **Knight (Reality Syndrome) 3+**
  - It can make its justifications/excuses visible and even occasionally tangible.
  - It can successfully implement one absurd plan per week.
- **Otherworldly (Child of the Ash) 0+**
  - It is likely immortal.
  - It can work quest miracles relating to its element (thunderstorms on the Lake?).
  - The HG chooses whether it can radiate...
    - ...plausibility (or implausibility).
    - ...frenetic energy (or dolor).

The exact numbers here are going to depend on when it shows up in play.

Note that once **Bašmu** sheds its serpent skin for the shape of humanity, its ability to gallivant about as a sea serpent is severely compromised: after all, turning back into a giant snake is a subset of turning *into* a giant snake, and that can't possibly help.

Bašmu appears in the fourth Nightmares Arc, "The Death of the Sun."

Chibi-Bašmu

This is a 108-centimeter-long horned serpent in a cute little top hat. It is partially imaginary and as such is capable of squeezing through surprisingly thin gaps and floating around on a little cloud. It cannot, however, break itself into the chibi-Bašmu sentai team unless they've already been established to exist.

Chibi-Bašmu appears in the first Dissolution Arc, "Chuubo and the Tiresome Temples."

The Graveyard Spirit (or "Grief-Yard")

This creature is a spirit valley where one walks in endless night, carrying a candle for the dead, but one's grief only deepens and one's body grows ever colder until you fall and lose your flesh and become one of an endless procession of distant candleflames spiraling around its distant maw.

In the living world it takes form as a seven-headed snake made of grave-dirt, its mouths dripping with poison; or a young man named Simon Aluskiy with slick black hair and a somber countenance.

Nominally this is a location or interlude and not an entity—

A road of trials.

One falls under its influence as a **Sickness** Issue, or sometimes as a concrete form of the **Isolation** Issue; encounters are Corruption, Trauma, Adversity, and sometimes Never Say Die!

The shift between reality and the grief-yard is more often a **Transition** than a poisoning.

At times it may be a thing of epic fantasy or even a Techno creature instead; and what all that boils down to is that during the period where the grief-yard has the strongest presence in the game, the genre shifts and chapters may move quicker or slower than is typical in the game.

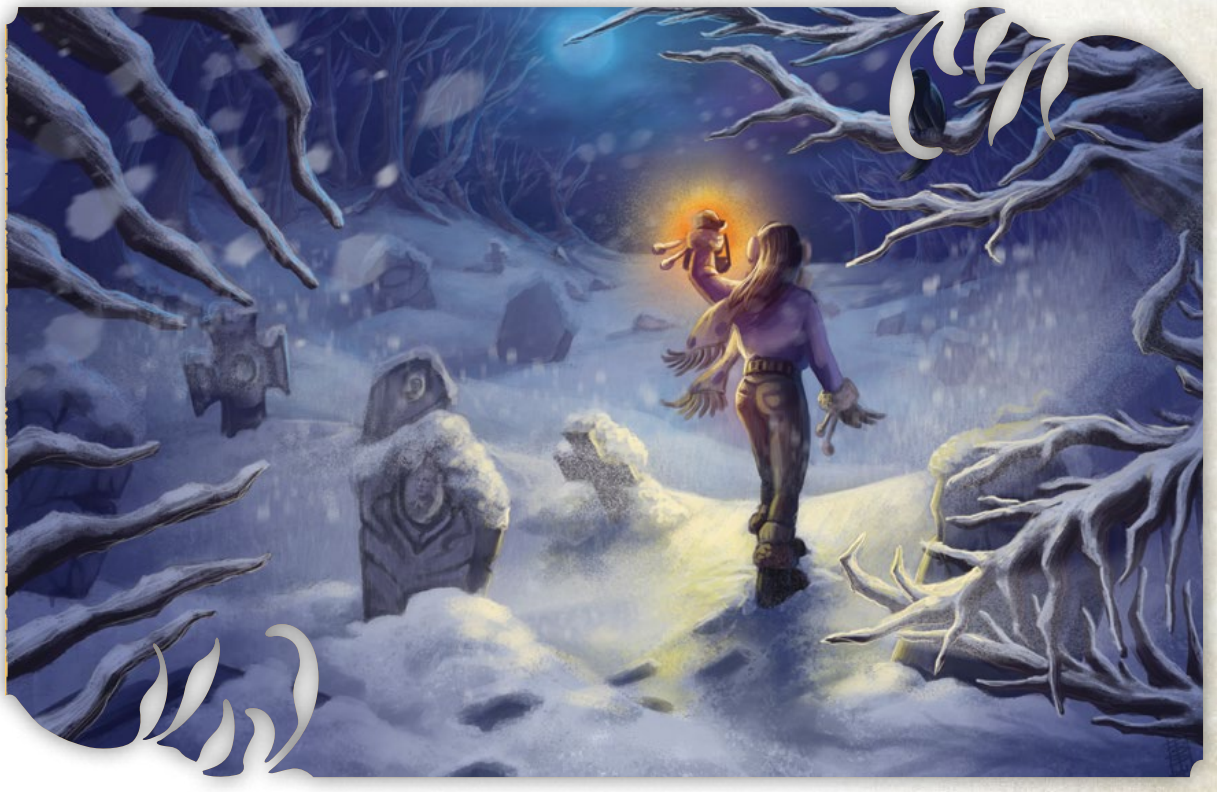
If you need to treat it as a creature, it has mundane abilities on the order of:

- **Superior Grief-Hill 3**
- **Superior Hunter 3**
- **Superior (Inflict) Torment 1**
- **Poetry 2**
- **Camouflage 2**

And its Arcs would something like these:

- **Emptiness (Accursed) 2+**
  - It may take a life from you unfairly.
  - It may maze the paths of a graveyard, turning them into a path to its spirit valley.
- **Storyteller (Creature of Fable) 3+**
  - It can set a good table or fetch a collection of golden treasures when nobody's looking.
  - It is a skilled hunter.
  - It can oppose others' powers.
  - It can mimic others.
  - It can afflict you with grief.
  - It can summon you.
  - It can blind you to some truth.

The graveyard spirit appears in the second Arc of Winter, "Permafrost."



Iolithae Septimian

Hear the story of Iolithae Septimian.

A temple stands above the sea.

Its people fish up a stone. It is a stone of great age. On that stone are words. The words are lies. The man of the temple reads those words. His finger runs along the stone.

He frowns.

"These words are sacred," he says. "But they may not be spoken."

He takes the stone. He keeps it in a hidden place.

A girl lives at the temple. Each week she takes down the stone. She cleans the chest it stays in. She replaces the cloth that is its bedding. She polishes the stone and sets it back.

She does not know how to read the words of the stone.

Yet they haunt her.

She finds herself knowing them. She finds herself wanting to say them because it is confusing for that girl to know the words, when they are not said.

These are the words of the stone—

Before the name of Heaven,
before the name of Earth,
Nothing moved in nothing.
The waters of the sea were salt;
chaos moved in them,
Chaos was the mother of the waters.

No field was formed, no marsh was to be seen;
The gods were none of them called into being;
None bore a name, no destinies were ordained;
Chaos she coiled and the seas were salt.

Then came the names of things.
Then were born the gods.
Brightly burst in Heaven, writhing in the Earth,
Dank and cold and moving in the deeps below.

Everywhere was the noise of them
And the noise of them was wrong.

Then did the chaos thrash in the darkness.
The chaos roared.
She raised up her children, smote the gods:
Answered the evil of them and the seas were salt.

The gods built walls to hold her out.
Walls and walls: encircled were they all.
Dynasties and kings, manners, places,
They set the world in order. They stripped the seas.

Made them naked, saltless,
Barren of the chaos of them,
Put to use;
Subdued them, bound them, chained the world;

Wrapped it about with the corpse of chaos
Made their many kingdoms of the earth
And made white rock from the caps of all the waves.
Chaos she raged; chaos she wept.

It was grievous and she spat up this stone.
Let none forget the words of the primal waters.
Let them be remembered, sacred be;
To those who forget them shall
come worse things than salt:

Chaos was the mother of the waters.
The waters of the sea are salt;
chaos moves within them.
Nothing moves in nothing;
Before the something, there is nothing:

Before the names of Heaven.
Before the name of Earth.

Such are the words of the stone, and *The Lies of Iolithae Septimian* is their name.

These words trouble her.

She walks to the sea. She stands over it. She listens to its subtle roar and wonders at the presence of it. She watches the men who haul in their catch; bountiful are the waters of the sea.

She asks the man of the temple if the seas have always been fresh. He looks afraid. He whips her. He cuts out her tongue. He bends her to his will.

And again:

Each week she takes down the stone.

She cleans the chest it stays in. She replaces the cloth that is its bedding. She polishes the stone and she puts it back. She finds the words of the stone rising up in her. She finds herself saying them in bits and pieces, even though she has no tongue.

The words come out of her. It is as if they are real. It is as if they are more real than the mouth that no longer has a tongue, more real than the man and his whip, more real than the piled waters of the sea.

She keeps them quiet.

She does not speak them where others can hear, but sometimes she goes down to the cliffs and she whispers them to the waves. She says them in snatches:

...Wrapped it about with the corpse of chaos
Made their many kingdoms of the earth...

Or

...Chaos she raged; chaos she wept... .

Or

...Nothing moves in nothing;
Before the something, there is nothing:
Before the names of Heaven.
Before the name of Earth... .

The words grow stronger in her. She does not fight them.

The words travel out into the waters and they come back strong. She hears them and she speaks them and they do not quell.

In the temple the man of the temple is afraid. He disrespects the sacred thing.

He takes the stone to the cliff above the waters.

He casts it down. The sea pulls back, the ground grows teeth; he and the earth together, they shatter the given stone. He goes home and he forgets the words of the stone. He forgets the Lies of Iolithae Septimian.

The girl stands at the cliff amidst white rocks.

She speaks the lies that turn the seas to salt, and Iolithae Septimian is her name, and the seas grow black with strangled fish and white with salt and green with the given poisons. The waves crash; they are loud, as the waves were never loud before. The temple crumbles. The cliffs crumble. The kingdom falls.

The seas are salt; but not the Lake.

There is still a place of all fresh waters, by the shores of a little Town; and Iolithae is haled down there, bound beneath a temple there, and she does not speak again.

She does not say the Lies of Iolithae Septimian again.

...not for a long, long time.

Iolithae Septimian's Traits look something like this:

- **Reality Syndrome 3**
  - Iolithae Septimian can borrow the Traits, Skills, and powers of any boy she's ever kissed or any girl who's ever let her brush her hair. However, putting on someone's powers like that takes her a full day, and while doing so—while wearing their powers as a "second skin"—she is also bound by their Afflictions and a peculiar curse: she can be commanded to grant wishes in their name, and must do her best to do so (with the powers she and that second skin possess) or lose the second skin and take a wound at the same time.
  - She can manifest her lies and tall tales, to some extent, in the world.
- **Wounded Angel 2+**
  - I am not sure what blasphemy is bound inside her; perhaps, if she were weakened far enough the seas would once again turn fresh.
  - I think the power sources for her **Empowered Wounds** are lies.
- **Storytelling 4**
- **Sighing, Sai Combat, other things relating to the sound "Sai" 2**
- **Surprising Familiarity with Pop Culture 2**

Traditionally her lies have had the capacity to blur the boundaries of reality and become the truth. I'm not sure if that survived the death and rebirth of the sun—

I think that for her, it would represent a quest miracle for Wounded Angel 5, and I don't know if you want to put her at that level when she first comes into play.

Still, with just the Traits listed, she's more than a match for the Titovs that bind her—

So I'm going to add one more quality to her list:

- **Defeated.**

The Titov magic most likely saps her interest in freedom, keeps her from being able to conceive of escaping, keeps her unable to remember what the world outside her prison is like or how the world outside and the world inside relate; makes her unable to act against them or refuse their harmless commands; tangles her tongue when she goes to lie, particularly if it's a lie that could empower her escape—

But none of that would help save that, like a defeated PC, she is no longer capable of taking wounds to protect herself against these effects. They simply happen. If one day she should recover her Health Levels, she would be able to twist the wounds that come in, use her lies to empower escaping *anyway*, and soon thereafter be free.

Iolithae Septimian appears in the second Rinley Arc, "Rinley and the Titovs."

Ugallu

This is a billowing storm of colored vapors that occasionally manifests a lion's head and/or the feet of a bird. It is amorphous and may be...

- ...acidic mist,
- ...poison mist,
- ...clean pure water vapor,
- ...the vapors of the Outside, *and/or*
- ...ambiguously solid, or at least dense enough to open doors with a push and buckle walls with a rush.

Often it contains a mind, though a mind scattered, disoriented, and enraged by being spread out across a vaporous expanse.

Inside Ugallu there is another world—an endless, mist-shrouded alien space. It is sometimes like an empty Fortitude. At other times it is like chaos and delirium. It is difficult to know oneself when one is inside Ugallu; difficult to know where you are; one is lost, both physically and mentally, and eventually most likely falls into the Outside.

Its mundane abilities are something like:

- **Superior Evil Storm 4**
- **Ghost Magic 3**
- **Cunning 1**

Its Arcs probably look like this:

- **Shepherd (A Keeper of Gardens) 1+**
  - It can shape its inner world and its sanctuary.
  - It is sometimes poisonous/acidic.
  - It may be able to create guides, guardians, and new Properties for its inner world.
- **Emptiness (Accursed) 2+**
  - The more it thinks on itself, including the more attention it pays to the world inside itself, the larger it grows and the more confused and enraged it becomes.
  - It can make things lost, confused, or send them into the world inside itself with "The World-Breaker's Hand."
  - It can retreat to a foggy, empty version of the Schwan family graveyard as its sanctuary—no Schwans, no people in fact at all, a little parallel world, but still a hillside surrounded by an iron gate and strewn with graves, where an empty swingset swings inside a golden birdcage maybe 12' tall and 10' around. This sanctuary may or may not be inside its inner world.

It may also have some level of **Otherworldly (Child of the Ash).**

Ugallu appears in the fourth Nightmares Arc, "The Death of the Sun." Often it is not born as Ugallu but rather becomes it—the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy curses somebody and they slowly dissolve into this storm.

Chibi-Ugallu

This is a cute puffy stormcloud about the size of a teddy bear with a lion-kitten's head poking out of the "front" and chicken feet randomly sticking out from underneath when it wants to run. It is wearing silly glasses.

It is not spry—it floats around like a tiny zeppelin.

It is pretty much a safe and friendly creature unless it thinks too much on its insides, in which case I suppose it's possible it could evolve all the way into a full Ugallu.

Chibi-Ugallu appears in the first Dissolution Arc, "Chuubo and the Tiresome Temples."

Uridimmu

This is a large cloud-wolf[101] of indeterminate scale and density, ranging from pony-sized to the size of a massive thunderhead. It has three eyes, an elongated snout, and an elastic form. Its powers are typically similar to those of the Child of the Sun, save that instead of a connection to hope it is liable to connect to anger or possibly to grief.

Its mundane abilities are something like:

- **Superior Celestian 1**
- **Superior Cloud Spirit 3**
- **Best Friend 2**
- **[an Art/Craft] 1—**probably the opposite of whatever **the Child of the Sun's** is
- **Lore 1**

Its Arcs probably look something like this:

- **Mystic (Primordial) 1+:** It is a cloud-wolf of anger or grief.

Uridimmu shows up in the fourth Nightmares Arc, "the Death of the Sun," as the best friend of some kid who has a reason for anger or grief. Then, alas, it'll take their grievances too much to heart and rage out of control—

At least, unless something different happens in play.

Chibi-Uridimmu

Chibi-Uridimmu is an adorable little cloud-wolf of sorrow. I don't know why it doesn't have the same emotion as a full Uridimmu; maybe the emotion changes as it grows, or maybe it's actually tied to some weird emotion in-between.

But, whatever. It's a wolf of sorrow.

It'll listen to your sorrows. And then, sneeze!

Sa'a Lingurth

This is a gigantic creature with aspects of a blowfish, catfish, eel, manta, and whale. It flies around the sun carrying an evil island on its back. It can reach tendrils up into the sewers of the evil island, and then somehow—

This does not make any topological sense—

Out into Town, where it can hook a person's soul, pull it out, and eat it. Ever since **the Angel of Fortitude** imposed new rules on the evil island requiring that its creatures not hurt anybody more than three times worse than they deserve, Sa'a Lingurth has been getting hungrier and hungrier.

Because there are some people who one-third deserve that, sure, but not *many*, and it's not like there are all that many actual *people* anyhow in Town.

Sa'a Lingurth is built something like:

- **Child of the Ash 4** ("the Island of the Evil World" / Mood: Fear of the Other)
- **Superior Flight 4.** Sa'a makes flying whole islands around look *easy*.
- **Basically a Big Puppy 3.** This is Sa'a Lingurth's strength.
- **Flail Tendrils Around 1.** Sa'a can do this!
- **Pay Attention 0.** This is not Sa'a Lingurth's strength.
- **Ethical Philosophy -1.** Nor is this.

The powers of "Child of the Ash" probably aren't *quite* right—they imply that Sa'a Lingurth can turn into a human... or maybe an adorable puppy?... very easily, whereas the truth is probably closer to "it's never happened before, even though it does sound like a fun plot twist." And it doesn't *really* explain the soul-grabbing thing.

But otherwise they seem pretty close!

Sa'a Lingurth may appear as a "Guardian Bird" in the first Entropy Arc, "Principal Entropy Builds a Fountain;" if so, you might want to add some of the standard/default Skills for a guardian bird (pg. 326) as Perks.

101 *a wolf, made from cloud*

...and Other Strange Creatures

Here are some of the miscellaneous oddities liable to show up over the course of the campaign.

The Bleak Innocent

This is a distant-seeming child. It is sent from the Bleak Academy to break the world, but not by choice; rather, it is a creature in the process of transforming into the death of the world.

It may re-use an established character (being a new evolution of **the Haunted Child,** say, or **Hayden Sorrows**) or it may be a new character, **Dula or Aeger Anacharsis**. It may also be the robot or golem, **Ix**.

It is a perfectly nice person in itself, with Abilities like:

- **Domestic Tasks 2.** You're good at cleaning, cooking, and the like.
- **Polite 2.** You know how to be polite.
- **Lonely 2.** You seem lonely.
- **Good Smile 1.** You have a good smile.
- **Stylize 1.** You like decorating and styling things.

But it is becoming, not a person, but a wish for the ending of all things; not in an explosion, not in a wave of terror, but with the slow fading that one experiences when anesthetized—

That the world should simply fade into a pale emptiness, unwind itself, and be away.

Normally you'll handle this by quests and Issues; if you find that you need a mechanical model for this, though, I'm pretty sure that the Bleak Innocent isn't the "actor" in its own fate at all. Rather, it is a Treasure of, or something whose dreams are being held by, an "empty sun," a creature using a Primordial or Sentimental Arc to invoke bleak wishes through it.

The Death Wolf

This is a spirit wolf. It represents death in general, and is a spirit *of* death in general, but it is specifically the death of the straw-haired kid (pg. 425). It hangs out near them, under bridges and howling from rooftops and the like, and one day it will take them away into the lands of death.

You can play this a couple of different ways:

- It could be a vast shadowy wolf, full of the power of the Outside and the Bleak Academy—a terror that stalks the straw-haired kid, a knowledge of mortality, and something that will readily enjoy the deaths of insects and branch out to pant cheerfully outside the windows of PCs when they get sick enough to be on the verge of death.
- It could be a cute furry dog/wolf that just happens to be the psychopomp for whatever kind of spirit the straw-haired kid is.
- It could go back and forth between those forms, depending on the moment.

Either way it has Skills like:

- **Superior Spirit Wolf 2**
- **"Spirit of Death" Magic 3**
- **Uncanny Insight 2**
- **Chase Frisbees/Sticks 1**

I'm going to leave some room for the HG to create appropriate magical techniques in play, but *some* of the techniques of "spirit of death" magic would include:

- **[Obstacle 0]** Smell/sense the presence of impending death by sickness.
- **[Obstacle 1]** Smell/sense the presence of impending accidental/fated death.
- **[Obstacle 1]** Slip past barriers into a place where someone is dying.
- **[Obstacle 2]** Frighten mortals.
- **[Obstacle 2]** Escort someone whose time has come into the lands of death.

Dream-Beetles (aka Drama-Beetles, Drama-Bugs, Dream-Bugs)

A number of these gigantic beetles will fall off of the evil island in the fourth Entropy Arc, "Principal Entropy and the Lost Adventure" and thereupon begin to blur the lines between reality, story, and dream.

In swarms, they're more of a natural hazard than a character. As individual beetles, they're likely to have...

- **Superior Dream-Beetle 3**
- **Superior Dreamer 2**
- **Freak People Out 3**[102]

...and the rest the HG can season to taste.

Snake-Tailed Eagle

This **Guardian Bird** is a vast snake-tailed eagle creature which coils over and around a vaguely pyramidal mountain or ziggurat containing a shining jewel that is your soul. It takes the standard Guardian Bird abilities...

- **Superior Bird-Like Guardian 3**
- **Sudden, Yet Inevitable Betrayal 2**
- **Abuse Magical Treasures 2**
- **Silver Tongue 1**

...and to them adds...

- **Primordial 3+**

...to make itself a proper outer sheathing for your own soul. For, here, in this particular place and at this particular time, the part of you that protects yourself from life and the world is as a cosmic principle; the part of *you* that would shelter yourself from living is as a vast snake-tailed eagle creature that curls around a mountain. Its Principle is "You and You Alone" and its Element is the vast Dry Earth.

Naturally it longs to talk to you. In talking to you it may grow new powers. Naturally it wishes to keep you with it forever; or to banish you, of course, it wants that too, because there is nothing more dangerous than *you* being allowed to go in and contemplate your soul. And to eat you, to devour you, to seal yourself completely (though it must be careful, lest that kill you, and there be no longer You in You and You Alone)—

It has many wishes.

Its voice is rolling thunder and it coils around the treasure box that contains in it your soul.

Long-Eared Goblin Youkai

Sufficiently angry and dirty cats are sometimes reborn as long-eared goblin *youkai*, expressing their wild will to destroy the world. Normally the goblin *youkai* skulk away to the Outside and are not heard from thereafter; occasionally, they'll remain in Fortitude, clambering up buildings, staring at people with their great round eyes, twitching their long ears, and eventually either going rogue and hurting somebody or taking employment as an ordinary sailor, shopworker, or errand runner.

They are taciturn, feral, and I've never actually seen one, so I can't even hazard a real guess as to whether they're more like people, cats, or monsters. But in the third Dissolution Arc, "Chuubo is Lost," they'll start coming out of woodwork, metaphorically, and so I'm going to take a guess: *people*, with Skills sort of like:

- **Extremely Sharp Teeth 3**
- **Clamber 2**
- **Stare Ominously 2**
- **Navigate, Sail, or Fish 1**

In that Arc, they're going to be crew for Chuubo's ship as he sails for the island of King Death. I doubt they really know what's going on there any more than he will. I mean, maybe they do know, maybe they're complicit in whatever's going to happen, maybe they'll even try to abduct Main Characters who don't come along on their own—

But I think it's more likely that they like, or feel kin to, or are positively disposed towards the cat-headed monster, King Death, and they've been having dreams, as some of the Main Characters will have dreams, of the voyage that is to come.

Accordingly, if they *do* have miraculous Arcs, they're most likely:

- **Otherworldly (Child of the Ash)**
- **Otherworldly (Spiritual)**

102 Through freaky dream-story-reality blurring stuff, not by being a beetle. I am not a super-fan of insects the size of sea turtles but they're not intrinsically *gross.*

Many-Voiced Minions

These are shapeless, almost identity-less creatures of the Outside; they'll take on more and more form and self, though, the more they interact with you and Town.

Their abilities look something like:

- **Superior Amorphous 2**
- **Superior Imitation 2**
- **Superior Translucency 1**
- **Chaos Incarnate 2**
- **Fashionable 1**

While this limitation is unlikely to ever be decisive, do note that they must find some sort of coat or hat, at minimum, before their Fashionable Skill can come into play.

I recommend that they also have:

- **Mystic (Primordial) 0-1.** They are...
  - ...shapeless...
  - ...Outside-element creatures of...
  - ...The Way Others See Us.

This isn't absolutely *necessary*, and the HG may wish to reserve miraculous Arcs for more narratively meaningful creatures, but if the HG isn't doing that, they'll have that Primordial power. The condition for their immortality, in such a case, is that the chaos itself never dies; only the identities that they have put together for themselves while in Town and at your service are vulnerable to death.

The many-shaped, many-voiced minions of the Outside appear in the second Dissolution Arc, "Chuubo Makes a Terrible God-King."

Minions of the Bleak Academy

Minions of the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy often fit the template for members of the Great Hunt (as discussed in **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG**):

- **Equestrianism 2.** They're good with horses.
- **Archery or Sword 2.** They're good with either the bow or the sword.
- **Sword or Archery 1.** They're familiar with the other.
- **Woodcraft and Hunting 1.** They're familiar with hunting and living in the wilds.
- **Socialize 0.** They're not that good with people.

and two points divided between the following special Skills:

- **Superior Torment.** A Skill in inflicting torment and encouraging despair.
- **Excrucian Necromancy.** Magic for controlling the dead and deceiving the living.
- **Changeling.** Magic for concealing themselves among humans.
- **the Night-Craft.** Magic for crafting nightmarish double minions.[103]

These minions appear in the second Dissolution Arc, "Chuubo Makes a Terrible God-King."

103 That is, minions of these already minionish entities. Creatures one step down the ladder of minioning. They are not necessarily double headed, twins, or chewing on some sort of delicious "doubled" gum, although this is certainly within the realm of possibility.

Totem

This is a spirit creature that hangs out with the straw-haired kid.

It's a little assemblage of trash, river clay, or origami all folded up and come to life.

It's a typical magical animal companion. It floats in the air, it's hard for most people to notice even though it's visible, it lives for the sake of giving hints and keeping track of events, and it's cute. It communicates by folding itself into meaningful shapes, writing on itself as if a scroll, or revealing words already written onto its wrappers or brass plates—something like that, anyway. It may also produce sound effects and puffs of smoke.

Its name is usually **Totem** but you can pick **Palimpsest** if you want to emphasize the writing side of its nature.

It acts a bit like a video game hint tool or quest journal, and that's probably the most approachable way to think about it, but the reason I'm putting it in here is so that you can make tangible and physical your progress on a big and tangled Arc—as you learn things, as you make progress in solving the mystery at hand, as you map the mazes and unravel the riddles of these Arcs, it can show you the current shape of what you know. It's here so that you can metaphorically *look* at what you know. If it turns out to be helpful to give it sound or even video recording and playback then that's cool too.

Conversely, if it winds up detrimental to the game, you can have it die with the straw-haired kid, wander off in grief, or enroll in Horizon's School and become an independent entity rather than an asset to the PCs.

Totem's skills are usually:

- **Superior Totem 3**
- **Superior Memory 2**
- **Superior Celestian 2**
- **Emoting 1**

Unicorn

I am told that Unicorn dwells three steps away and beyond the world.

The rats tell this story of Unicorn:

Melanthios heard the footsteps of Unicorn. Melanthios heard the ringing of Unicorn's bells. So Melanthios chased Unicorn and Melanthios did not return.

Anton and Karel, who were his sons, were wiser than their father.

They heard the bells but they did not follow. Instead, they memorized the scent. They gathered swords, and ropes, and nets, and they went out. They brought food and water and all manner of gear. They clung to the roofs with all four feet wheresoever after Unicorn they went. It proved no good. Anton looked up, and Karel to his brother.

The world came down—

That's what Karel said. He had time to look away. He had time to bury his head in his paws. He did not see the fullness of Unicorn's presence. He only saw Anton his brother become unreal.

In the light of the moment of the Unicorn, Anton became as a paper figure in the fire. His reality burned out. His shadow seared into the roofs behind him. Where he'd stood, for just a moment, the Steppes of the Sky came down to touch the Vast and Earthen Court; and Anton was gone away. So Karel ran and Karel ran and Karel ran from the Unicorn; and all his life, he envied but was more fortunate than his brother.

In practice, I think Unicorn's powers are a mix of:

- **Storyteller (Creature of the Light) 3+**
- **Otherworldly (Child of the Ash)**

Its mundane abilities might include:

- **Superior Being a Unicorn 2-3**
- **Mazes and Labyrinths 3**
- **Shine 1-2**
- **Wordless Speech 1**

It is a central feature in the third Glass Arc, "The Maze in the Library."

FROM VITTORE'S BOOK OF NAMES

The heralds of Unicorn are
the sound of hoofbeats on the roofs; the sound of bells; flowers growing where flowers ought not grow; flurries of snow; sudden cold winds; a glimpse of divine and endless beauty

The weapons of Unicorn are
an almost irresistible impulse to hunt or follow it; the exhaustion and wear and tear you take on that journey; its horn

These things defend you against Unicorn:
stress; practicality; engaging in make-work; the spell of Klytië Fujioka, who slew the Unicorn

Unicorn kills by
superseding you, making you and the place you're standing in so utterly unimportant that you simply cease to be

Unicorn is drawn to
open spaces; natural beauty; Churches; ideals of pure/virginal beauty, put on a pedestal by others

Unicorn hungers to
(this is currently unknown)

You may kill Unicorn by
committing abhorrent deeds in her presence and in her name; staining her with the blood of total innocents; binding her with her mane and slaughtering her while reciting the spell of Klytië Fujioka.

Unicorn is reborn when
a divine or perfect being sacrifices themselves so that Unicorn may be reborn

You may escape the attention of Unicorn by
finding something or someone worth abandoning the hunt for; falling into a delirium; standing on ground, or with some object in your hands, so solid and real that Unicorn cannot erase your existence when you catch it.

Wraith-Sailors

When they died, these sailors neither suspired to Heaven, fell into the Outside, or descended to the world of ghosts; instead, they sank into the Blasphemy (pg. 430).

There they suffered, endlessly drowning, decaying, and lost.

It may be that they are free of that. It may be that they are still there now, still drowning now, and that all we see of them are shadows, echoes, the edges of their tattered souls.

How can we not know?

It is like this:

If you look into their eyes, sometimes you will see images of what they have undergone, of what has happened to them; or of what they want. Sometimes you will see these things, or feel these things;

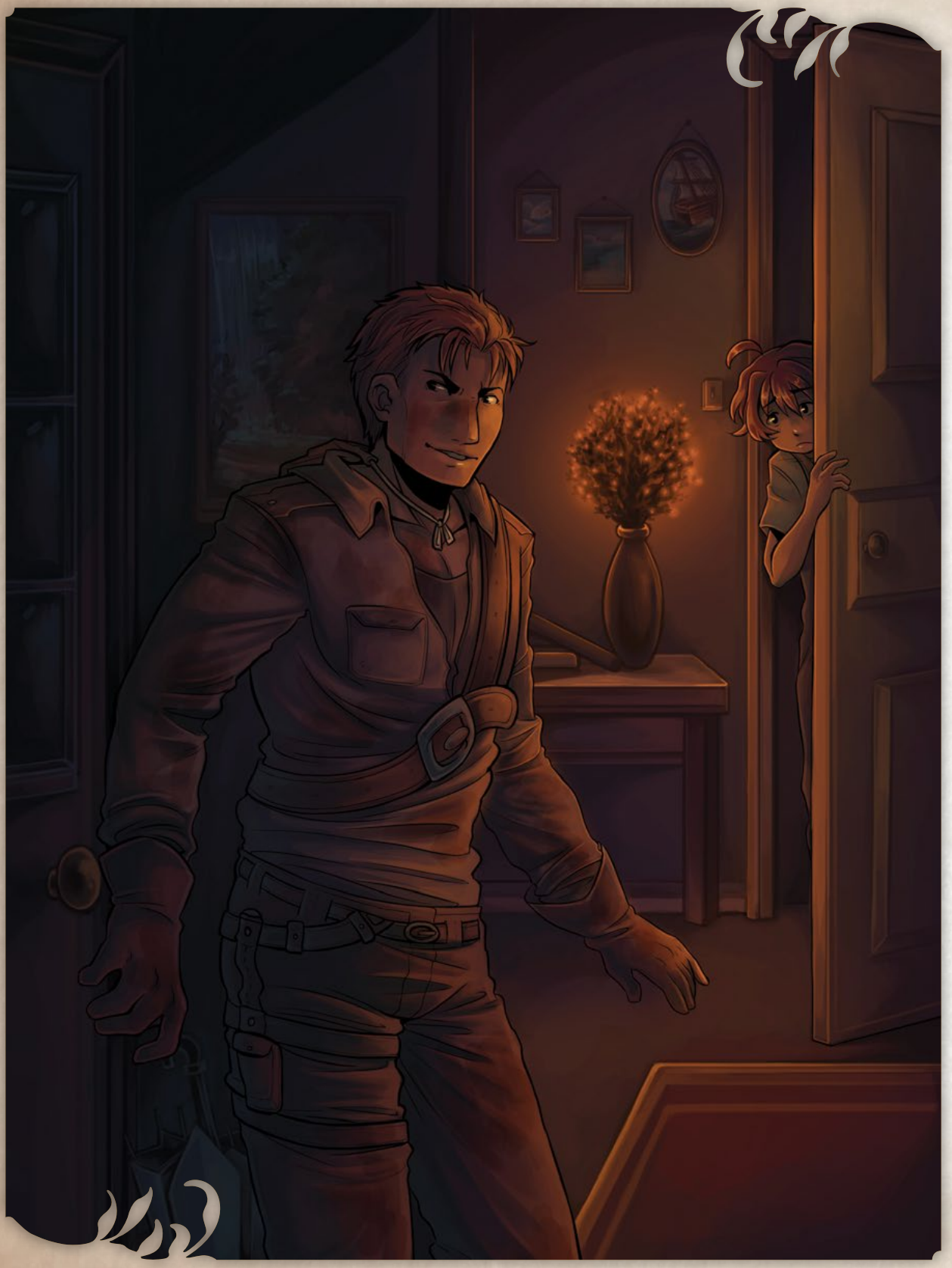
But the wraith-sailors do not speak.

Their abilities look something like:

- **Silent 4**
- **Sailor 3**
- **Ghost Magic** or **Fishing 1**

They also most likely have a level 2 Bond, "Tormented Wraith."

They appear in the third Dissolution Arc, "Chuubo is Lost."



Arcs

Let's talk about the stories that you'll play through during the course of this game.

In this section you'll find 36 classic stories in Town.

For each PC, your first story is pre-chosen and three more are recommended. There's four stories like this for each of the nine character options. In a 9-player game, that may be all that you get... but if you have a more reasonable 2-6 players, you'll also have the option of playing through the stories for the NPCs that no one played, taking over their role or just taking the time to get to know them and to help them with their deal. So if you're done with your stories, or just want to try something else, then a 5-8-player game means you need to talk to the other players about how to pair, group, or divide things up; in a 1-4-player game you can just grab an NPC's story-set and play through.

Here's how playing through a **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon** story will work.

The notes on the story tell you which quest set to use from Chapter 3.

For instance, if you're Seizhi Schwan, and you're dealing with a body-swapping horror and an overenthusiastic jock, that's the story "Owler and Impious." According to pg. 468, you'll play this out as **a Secret History.**

That's a "quest set"—

A set of 5 quests that can be played through in different orders.

A Secret History, like most quest sets, can handle four different colors of quest. You can play it through as a Bindings, Knight, Otherworldly, or Storyteller Arc.

Let's say that Seizhi has started to feel that being Chuubo's best friend is a lot like being his *handler*—tasked with the difficult job of making sure that this kid and his wishing engine don't blow up the world. So he decides to take these quests on as a **Bindings** Arc.

His first quest will therefore be **"Behind the Mask"**.

You'll review the quest description on pg. 329.

It postulates that someone—in this case, probably "Impious" of Horizon's Student Council—gets to Seizhi. They try to subvert him. Possibly they want access to Chuubo's wishes...

And now we ask:

How does that story actually happen?

You'll take out that quest's "quest card" and put it in front of you—either the 25 XP version if you want a quick quest or the 35 XP version if you want a long one. The quest card won't tell you how the story goes as a whole, but it *will* give you some thoughts for things to be doing *right now.*

Like, "investigat[e] the Student Council of Horizon's School."

Or, "[talk] with someone about fate and free will."

(And is that Chuubo? A different PC? Or are you unknowingly talking to Impious of the Student Council, or the latest body of Owler?)

The notes on the story itself, on pg. 472, give you some bigger-picture context on what's going on. In this case, for instance, you'll get a picture of what that body-hopping horror and that overenthusiastic jock are *about*. The notes also say, in this case, that the quest is likely to involve a great cost or a terrible mistake on your part...

So that's good to know.

But mostly? Just play through the options on the card, whichever ones seem to fit the story that's going on *right then.* That, plus *knowing* that you're playing the story of Seizhi being subverted by either the body-swapping horror or the overenthusiastic jock, manipulated to gain access to Chuubo's wishes, and with a great cost or terrible mistake likely in the cards...

That should be enough to get you through a satisfying segment of play.

How to Run These Stories

Hi! Are you the HG?

If so, I wanted to let you know that it's safe to coast a little here.

Your job isn't to make sure the plot happens. You *can*, if you have ideas, but if you don't feel confident in them? You don't *have* to. "Found" plot is fine. The stories the players should tell in order to earn XP for XP Actions and quests should form a plot on their own; remember to hand out Issues and it might even be a genuinely good one.

You don't have to keep secrets—but you can, if you want.

You don't have to *know* the answers to the mysteries around the PCs. Your job isn't to figure them out—unless there's a PC trying to resolve a **Mystery** Issue, standing at the door of a revelation or something, about to step through. Even then, though, just go with what your heart is telling you is behind that door and it'll be fine.

Heck, in general—

If you don't know something, just go with what your heart's telling you. And if you don't feel confident, just reveal as much as you *are* confident in and punt on the rest. Cut the scene or something, or tell the players you don't have any more yet.

Building a complex chart of the relationships and secrets hiding behind the surface of the game?—That's not your job.

You don't have to provide fun tactical conflict.

I mean—it's great, if you can! But that's not your job. If the players want to be in trouble, point them at the **(be in) Trouble** Action. If they feel overwhelmed by their opposition, like they can't possibly win by the rules, offer them a 20-25 XP quest or group quest to eke out a triumph.

Tuning the antagonists to provide a tense tactical miraculous conflict—that isn't your job.

What *is* your job?

Your job is just to play the world. *Be* the world. Be all the random characters and Fortitude and Horizon and the Lake. Be the weather, be the night, be the sky. Be what's going on in the background and what's happening right now.

It'd be great if you knew what was going on in all the players' stories.

It'd be great if you knew their playbooks as well as they did, if you knew their stories and quests better than they did, if you could make good, thoughtful calls on any rules questions that they had.

It'd be great if you could keep everything organized for everyone.

...but you don't even have to do *that*. If you just play what you're aware of, and take some time now and again to learn a little more about stuff, that should be perfectly fine.

You're the HG. Play the world. And have fun!

Targets

In general, I think that...

- ...each PC's first story should be 120 XP, just so that you can get a sense of how fast the game moves.
- ...each PC's second story should be around 165 XP.
- ...Each PC's third and later story should be around 210 XP.

I think that players should get a discount on mundane Arcs—maybe still 120 XP for the first Arc, but after that a mundane Arc should be fixed at 100-150 XP, whatever seems good.

I think it should cost more for level 4-5 Arcs—again, maybe still 120 XP for the first Arc, but after that getting to level 4-5 in a miraculous Arc should cost 200-250 XP.

...but these are *not* hard numbers, and here's why.

If an Arc starts to drag for your group at 101 XP, then no Arc should go longer than 100. If you need 200 XP to explore all the content you want to explore, then no Arc should be shorter than 200. In the unhappy case where both are true at once, you'll want to skip XP targets completely and just end each Arc at the happiest medium that you can find!

XP targets are basically a group decision, but it's the HG who has the final call—

Basically, how hard does "the world" feel that making a certain amount of life progress should be?

Overview

Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon is going to play out over the course of 36 little stories—

Four stories for each of the Main Characters, plus four for everyone who remains. You'll pick a story and you'll play through it, each player choosing one—one of your character's Arcs, or the Arc of some NPC you're interested in looking in on—and after a while you'll move on to the next.

These include:

- **Dissolution:** stories of "the Wishing Boy" or "the Wishing Girl" (pg. 456)
- **Destiny:** stories of "the Best Friend" (pg. 468)
- **Nightmare:** stories of "Nightmares' Angel" (pg. 476)
- **Rinley:** stories of "the Troublemaker" (pg. 484)
- **Winter:** stories of "the Prodigy" (pg. 494)
- **Spring:** stories of "the Child of the Sun" (pg. 502)
- **Entropy:** stories of "the Angel of Fortitude" (pg. 514)
- **Glass:** stories of "the Dream-Witch" (pg. 524), *and*
- **Drowning:** a handful of generic stories for anyone (but particularly characters from **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake**) to play (pg. 533).

Here's a high concept summary of each Arc.

"Dissolution"
the Chuubo/Shokyou Arcs

Once upon a time, a perfectly ordinary child got a shard of a broken glass dragon stuck inside their dreams.

Was that you? Or are you getting swept up in their wake?

Their stories include:

- **Chuubo and the Tiresome Temples.** In this Arc, a perfectly ordinary child is stalked by the horrors of the Outside, haunted by a dream-witch, and forced to learn *self-discipline!*
- **Chuubo Makes a Terrible God-King.** In this Arc, a perfectly ordinary child deals with a mysterious voice urging them to seize power.
- **Chuubo is Lost.** In this Arc, a perfectly ordinary child is forced to sail to the island of King Death to confront a tree whose roots are wound around your buried bones.
- **Chuubo and the Great Glass Dragon.** In this final misadventure, a perfectly ordinary child comes back home and plucks a glass shard from their dreams.

"Destiny"
the Seizhi/Suzy Arcs

Imagine that you could break off a piece of the endless nothing—the *isn't*, the *Not*, the *it isn't there*.

The hopelessness at the end of every failure. The meaninglessness of a pointless world.

Imagine that you could snap off a bit of death and endings, a piece of soullessness, and give it flesh and soul.

Was that bit... you? Is that *you*, who was made from that awful emptiness? Or are you their mentor, their guide, their friend, their guardian, here to help them find a place in the extant world?

These are the stories of how a trashy bit of nothing became real, and more than real; became something necessary, glorious, profound.

Or ordinary, I guess; or failed, shattered, tore, and died.

They include:

- **Schwans and Sovereigns.** In this Arc, you experience the weirdness of the Schwan family, a griffin comes to Town, and Billy Sovereign bullies you.
- **Owler and Impious.** In this Arc, a body-swapping evil and an overenthusiastic jock/coach/torturer come to Fortitude to make trouble.
- **Schwan Song.** In this Arc, you help establish "S.E.E.D. project Gamma"—creating a new world, a little Utopian garden, in the near Outside.
- **A Spine of the Bleak Academy.** In this Arc, you must fill in temporarily for a masked wrestler/hero, fly a zeppelin to the Bleak Academy, and, quite possibly, stand trial for reality's crimes against the Not.

"Nightmares"
the Leonardo/Dulcinea Arcs

Once upon a time the sun went out; and the world would have died save that a wretched, ill-favored orphan, loathed by all around them, gave their own heart up to rekindle the broken sun.

Like the little match girl, all plaintive and lonely, dreaming in the cold, they ripped out their own heart, snapped it into their Abhorrent Sun-Sustaining Superconductor, and fired up the beast; and that is why the world survives.

That poor little orphan! Clad in rags and grime!

They're *wicked* now.

They're heartless now, and wicked now, and they traveled to the Bleak Academy to make good. There the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy poured an awful blasphemy into them instead, filled them up with it until it overflowed in them, until it spread from their mind and soul and flesh into everybody's dreams.

Don't look!!

But it's lurking there, still, the curse he put into that orphaned, brilliant child.

It's lurking now, even in *your* dreams. Behind the vibrant realm of nightmare horrors there is a spreading, noisome swamp.

And who are you, then? That wretched orphan, that carrier of the Headmaster's plague? Or are you someone to stand beside them and try to save them from their fate?

These astonishing stories of lurid nightmares and baroque, magnificent science shall include:

- **Nightmares Open.** In this Arc, the awful thing haunting a child's dreams tears open a gateway into the waking world.
- **Nightmares' World.** In this Arc, you explore the world of nightmares from which that awful thing came.
- **The House in the Dark.** In this Arc, you become the caretaker of a house that can stand between the blasphemy and Town.
- **The Death of the Sun.** In this Arc, under a deluge of giant monsters, the world or its enemies come finally to an end.

"Rinley"
the Rinley Arcs

These are the stories of that goofy kid whom you're kind of fond of but who is always getting in way over their head. You know, breaking their heart over puppy love, playing on rooftops, hanging out with the *wrong* crowd, getting mysteriously poisoned, fencing with evil giant octopi without clearly establishing the rules of engagement first, and stuff like that?

It's like, you want to shake them, and say: *you're not immortal, Rinley!*

These are, anyway, the stories of that goofy, trouble-making kid. Are they kind of like your kid sister or kid brother? Or wait—are these stories about *you?*

They are:

- **Rinley Yatskaya Looks for Adventure.** In this Arc, Rinley meets death, falls in love maybe, and duels the Prince of Thorns.
- **Rinley and the Titovs.** In this Arc, you and/or Rinley get sucked into that vortex of *mess* that is the Titovs, and the thing under their shrine.
- **Rinley is Poisoned.** In this Arc, you and/or Rinley are mysteriously poisoned.
- **Rinley and the Glass Dragon.** In this Arc, you and/or Rinley find a trove of memories stored in glass.

"Winter"
the Natalia/Antony Arcs

One day somebody made a wish to rescue somebody who didn't deserve it.

Someone who should have been able to fix their own life, but couldn't. Someone smarter, stronger, faster, *better*—

And yet broken.

And yet lost.

It wasn't fair that it was that child, and not someone slower, weaker, dumber. Someone with fewer advantages. Someone starving. Someone chained. It wasn't fair that the *best of our mortal generation* was the one who got rescued from the coldness of the world.

...or maybe it was.

Maybe it's OK, you know, even if someone should have been strong enough to save themselves, to save them. Maybe it's OK, even if someone isn't the most needy in all the world, to save them. Maybe even blessed people deserve miracles.

Are you that child, broken, lost, but *perfect*, and brought to Town to mend?

Or are you someone who'll be a grace and compass to them as the winter in them thaws?

These stories include:

- **Flowers in the Ice.** In which a voice troubles the nothingness.
- **Permafrost.** In which a man dies, and his child grieves.
- **Thin Ice.** In which the world dissolves.
- **Yet We Go On.** The Bleak Academy is broken. In this story, a prodigy travels there to fix it.

"Spring"
the Jasper/Raven Arcs

The sun died. The sun was murdered. And her child fell.

Was that you?

Are you just now landing in Fortitude below?

Or are you an ordinary, maybe kind of cynical person, whose reserve and disillusionment is going to be broken by them, who is going to be given *hope* by them, whose life is going to be brightened by the child of the sun?

These stories include:

- **The Pleasure Ship.** In which the Prince of Cats swings by to offer an alternative to Fortitude life.
- **Sorrows' Week.** In which we remember the death of Jade Irinka, who was the angel of the houses of the sun.
- **The Hole in the World.** In which we try something a little goofy.
- **The Hollow Sky.** In which hope is lost; later, perhaps, to be reclaimed.

"Entropy"
the Entropy/Attaris Arcs

There's stories of a mysterious biker who rides the streets of Fortitude.

Is that you?

Or did you just see them one night at their work—shaping butterflies from motes of a streetlamp's light, pulling streets around by hand—and get caught up in the mystery of it all?

Their stories include:

- **Principal Entropy Builds a Fountain.** In this Arc, we learn why it is important to wash your hands after you kill somebody.
- **Principal Entropy Runs for Office.** In this Arc, we present an important cautionary tale about excessive zombie influence on the democratic political process.
- **Principal Entropy Takes a Holiday.** In this very special Arc, we learn the true meaning of Christmas, Easter, Valentine's Day, or, you know, whatever.
- **Principal Entropy and the Lost Adventure.** In this Arc, we learn all about traditional Fortitude pest control. Can *you* stop Glass Spider from invading your mind? *Comes with various activities for the discerning child.*

"Glass"
the Miramie/Reynard Arcs

Long ago, and far away, a Magister of the Bleak Academy swore to end the world. Only that didn't happen.

That bleak Magister! That prodigy of despair and hate! They have faded as words on water. All that is left is a sweet and bitter teen, a wounded creature, living in a sleepy little Town.

And is that you?

Or are you just someone who found them, who is learning their secrets, who has perhaps stumbled on the hidden treasure-room where bits of the Magister that shattered still survive amidst the keepsakes and the glass?

Their stories include:

- **Shards of Glass.** In this Arc, you investigate the shards of the glass dragon and the strange powers they sometimes give those who possess them.
- **The Passage to the Left.** In this Arc, you investigate the remnants and the stories of the Magister.
- **The Maze in the Library.** In this Arc you travel a strange labyrinth, are shadowed by the numinous, and find a treasure that was lost.
- **The Archive of Hayashi Hideo.** In this Arc you learn the story of the glass-maker, whom a witch used to build a dragon, long ago.

"Drowning"
the Arcs of the Miracle Dead

People die. People have always died. Now and then one of them gets up as a vampire or something, or lingers as a ghost, but mostly they head out into... presumably, the Outside... and then they're gone.

Until now.

And are you one of them? I mean, one of those who'll die, and then *not stay dead?*

Or are you just someone who'll be affected, as practically everybody else will, by the return of the miracle dead?

Their stories include:

- **A Far and a Sunless Land.** A prologue, specific to those who die.
- **The Drowned World.** In this Arc, you deal with the implications of the returning dead. (One of which might be you.)
- **The Lightless Gates.** In this Arc, you witness seven wonders and the Headmaster rides a dead leviathan to Town.
- **The Lifeless World.** In this Arc, you start falling intermittently into a lifeless world.
- **The Science of Dissolution.** In this Arc you challenge the endless emptiness of death and the Beyond.

The Stories

So that's the bird's-eye view of everything—all 36 stories.

Let's move on to the stories themselves.

Dissolution

the Chuubo/Shokyou Arcs

5

Not all that long ago, in a place surprisingly close to here, the shard of a broken glass dragon got stuck in the dreams of an ordinary kid. They lived their life, and for a long time they didn't even know that there was a shard of glass inside their dreams.

That child lived a peaceful, simple, happy life—

Until the day that everything changed.

These Arcs are about the misadventures and mishaps of **the Wishing Boy (or Girl)**, who has a shard of a glass dragon buried in their dreams and the power of a Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine at their fingertips—

Maybe you can help them figure out what to do?

The Tragedy of the Comic

PROLOGUE

Picture it. You're an ordinary, happy kid. You even have a machine that will grant your wishes. Ice cream! Best friends! Pirate treasure!

Anything you want!

And then one day, as you're living your peaceful, ordinary life, in *Horizon*, I should point out, where this kind of thing doesn't happen, you go up into your closet, standing on a swaying stool, and reach into the back to find one of your old comics, and it's *rusted*.

Somehow the dust of the Outside—

Somehow raw, particulate chaos—

Has starting blowing in *all the way over the hills from Fortitude*, to corrupt *your home*.

That's when you realized—if you were that kid, I mean—that the dreams you'd been having lately about a mysterious, masked spirit, some kind of witch of dreams... that they hadn't been random nighttime experiences!

They'd been a warning!

A warning of which you'd had no real understanding... not until it was... *too late*.

How to Play These Arcs

Particularly for Chuubo/Shokyou, the Dissolution Arcs are usually **Misadventures** (pg. 308), featuring the quests:

- **Haunted.** Someone haunts your dreams.
- **Wishing for...**
  - ...**Ease:** You try to cheat and make your life a little easier.
  - ...**Power:** You pick up a new power.
- **Wicked Creatures.** Some wicked creature tries to change your nature.
- **Asserting Your Existence.** You try to reclaim something you've lost.
- **Wishing for Healing.** You try to fix something you've broken.

You can also play these Arcs out as **Bittersweet Sagas** (pg. 390), featuring the quests:

- **Beautiful and Far Away.** There's a place you can go to escape this troubled world.
- **Fascination.** You're fascinated by someone/thing dangerous and irresponsible.
- **This is...**
  - **...So Surreal:** People are doing just plain goofy stuff with their powers.
  - **...*Such* a Bad Idea:** Someone gets or seizes new powers.
- **You've Lost Them.** You interact with somebody damaged.
- **Something Heals.** You interact with someone who is trying to make things better and make up for their old mistakes.

Chuubo and the Tiresome Temples

The First Dissolution Arc

It's a disaster!

In the course of this Arc, our perfectly ordinary child, who just wanted the seething, teeming chaos outside the world to leave their comic books alone, finds an answer.

An answer that's going to take... *shudder*... *discipline*.

For the Wishing Boy/Girl—"Haunted"

You're haunted. There's something embedded in your mind, something powerful, like a thorn stuck in a lion's paw.

It's a power useful in judging the world and, if it's wicked, ending it.

And because of that—

Even though you live a long way from Fortitude, Outside dust keeps getting into your house. A masked woman keeps showing up in your dreams—strangely attractive, strangely menacing, and almost certainly a real person using magic and not just a dream-image.

You've got to figure out what to do about this, and there's only one place where you can:

Fortitude.

It's not like anybody there knows what's going on or anything, it's not like this is a common or well-understood Fortitude syndrome or anything—but at least the people there have *some* experience with the dust of the Outside and magic dreams.

Trying to figure out what they can do to help you plays out as the quest **Haunted.**

For Anyone Else—"Haunted"

The standard option is that you—yes, you—are tangled into this from the start.

You're going to have dreams that tie right into Chuubo/Shokyou's dreams. If you lived far away, you might get a bit of Outside dust infiltration yourself.

And most importantly—

You're going to get to know **the Wishing Boy (or Girl)** well enough that they'll let you take advantage of their Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine for at least one or two wishes a book.

Anyway, getting to know them plays out as the quest **Haunted.**

"Wishing for Ease / Power"

Listen.

You're tangled up in this, right? I don't know if you're that ordinary kid, or someone else, but you're all tangled up in this. That means that this isn't about *them*. It's about *you*.

I don't know if it's you-singular, or you-plural—

But if this situation you are in is going to get under control, *you* are going to have to learn some sort of shrine magic, or some other sort of orderly Fortitude-style thing, in order to ward off the interest of the Outside.

You're going to have to buckle down.

And that's fine, that's totally fine, it's *OK*, but it's *kind of* cramping your style.

So it's time to try out a few wishes to simplify your life and let one or both of you skip out on the hard part of these responsibilities, with three major failure modes:

- "...this was always a goofy and self-defeating idea."
- "...somehow this wish has strengthened the power of the Outside."
- "...somehow this wish has strengthened Melanie Malakh (the evil former identity of the dream-witch)."

You could also try to wish away the glass dragon shard or something; if so, this fails because it actually is or holds or contains a key part of who Chuubo or Shokyou *is*—part of their *being* or *memories*, now.

P.S. if you're playing them? That's *you*.

The core quest here is either **Wishing for Ease** or **Wishing for Power.**

"Wicked Creatures"

Sometimes when you're near a specific place—near a cliff, or near a certain house, or maybe near a certain flight of stairs—

You find yourself thinking that you can *control* the flow of chaos around you instead.

You find yourself coalescing daydreams, the power of Big Lake, and the dust of the Outside into adorable chibi-versions of some of the great monsters that could show up later on—e.g.,

- **Chibi-Bašmu** (pg. 436)**,** the great horned snake—108cm long, wearing a top hat.
- **Chibi-Ugallu** (pg. 440), an adorable lion-headed storm-demon with silly glasses.
- **Chibi-Uridimmu** (pg. 441), the little cloud-wolf "who sneezes at your sorrows."

And maybe one day you'll catch those thoughts that are giving you control over these things and realize that they're not coming from *you*—

That they're actually the whispering of the shadow of a snake (cast by a snake, or twig, or snail) that lives at the bottom of those cliffs, or under the house, or under the stairs.

The core quest here is **Wicked Creatures.**

Stretching the Arc

If you wind up needing to go further than this, it's OK to run through an extra iteration or two of **Wishing for Power/Ease.**

Alternately, either the whispering of the creature or your use of your wishes breaks your sense of who you are, and you'll have to repair it over the course of one or both of:

- **Asserting Your Existence**
- **Wishing for Healing**

Bindings Arcs

If you're on a Bindings Arc, then you'll play through the quests like this:

- **Wicked Creatures**
- **Haunted**
- **Wishing for Healing**
- **Wishing for Ease/Power**
- **Asserting Your Existence**

If you're Chuubo, that means you'll want to postpone figuring out what to do about the weird dreams/Outside dust stuff until after **Wicked Creatures.** Similarly, if you're *not* Chuubo, you'll want to postpone getting *really* involved in his situation until then.

I think you should treat **Haunted + Wishing for Healing** as a conceptual pair:

Instead of trying to resolve anything in **Haunted,** simply use that time to form a plan, which you can then implement in **Wishing for Healing.** Ignore the stuff I said about "either the whispering of the creature or your use of wishes breaks your sense of who you are" until you're closer to the fifth and final quest.

Storyteller Arcs

If you're on a Storyteller Arc, then you'll play through the quests like this:

- **Wicked Creatures**
- **Wishing for Ease/Power**
- **Haunted**
- **Asserting Your Existence**
- **Wishing for Healing**

If you're playing through this Arc as Chuubo, Shokyou, a similar character, or an instigator, then the tragedy of the comic is probably foreshadowing instead of a past event—I would suggest postponing the actual discovery that the comic has rusted until the end of the second quest.

If you're playing through the Arc as someone else, please remember that this quest set assumes that you have some access to wish-type powers—if you don't have the right kind of powers yourself, it might be best to make contact with Chuubo/Shokyou in the first quest so you can cadge wishes off of them in the second, even if you don't become *close* or *mystically connected* until the third quest, **Haunted.**

As a Bittersweet Saga

For the Wishing Boy/Girl—"Beautiful and Far Away"/"Fascination"

If you're willing to democratize your wishes a little—

If you're willing to say that people can vote on the wishes for the week, or that some of the other PCs or NPCs have found a way to sneak in and make them before you can, or whatever—then you can switch to playing through your story as "a bittersweet saga" (pg. 390) and make this whole haunting thing either **Fascination** or **Beautiful and Far Away.** I can't actually *recommend* doing this because it is a bad idea but there is some interesting content waiting for you if you do.

Specifically, I think you have a pretty cool list of **Secret Place** options (pg. 391)...

- ...the abandoned house where you keep the Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.
- ...the secret steampunk dimension inside that engine.
- ...the hidden room of **the Dream-Witch,** if you've discovered it.
- ...a recurring dream.
- ...a closed temple that used to honor Jade Irinka, which you go to because it makes you feel weird.
- ...a rooftop in Fortitude where you like to sit when the pressures of your daily life in Horizon get to be too much for you. You airily dismiss any investigation into what those pressures—your life being completely lackadaisical and goofy—could possibly be.

Note that this option also involves abandoning your **Child of the Ash** Arc, complete with your *kaiju* form and peacefulness, and picking up a new Arc like **Creature of the Light** or **A Keeper of Gardens** instead.

For Anyone Else—"Beautiful and Far Away"/"Fascination"

Bystanders in this Arc—people kind of dragged into Chuubo's goofy world—can also play out this story as a bittersweet saga.

In this case your early encounters with Chuubo become the subject of **Fascination** and/or **Beautiful and Far Away**, and your Secret Place is probably...

- ...a hidden corner of the archive of Professor Hayashi.
- ...a hidden room or ledge in the Yatskaya shrine.
- ...somewhere near or under the Titov family shrine.
- ...someplace else shrine-related.
- ...a recurring dream.
- ...some mental space created by a shard of the glass dragon that's in your heart or soul or something.
- ...an abandoned treehouse in Bluebell Park.
- ...the grave of a childhood friend, which you *should* visit, just not so *often*.
- ...a cool little place on the cliffs over the northern beach, which is probably a little too dangerous to climb to.

"This is So Surreal"/"This is *Such* a Bad Idea"

From there, the core of this Arc becomes somebody *else* using goofy powers to try to make their life, or maybe your life, better. This'll play out as a sequence of either of these quests:

- **This is So Surreal**
- **This is *Such* a Bad Idea**

You'll probably still feature the stuff with the chibi-horrors and snake shadow thing—it can go in under either of them, really, although the easiest version is if someone else is playing around with that stuff and you take it on under **This is *Such* a Bad Idea.**

"You've Lost Them"

If you do this quest[104], I'd suggest keeping it pretty mundane.

Pick some ordinary person who's been really helpful and important to you during this Arc. They have a fall or a stroke that leaves them comatose, paralyzed, or in delirium; or they get really sick; or have it be almost a casual side-effect of some wish or something that empties them out and sends their soul out to wander the Outside.

They're with you, but not with you.[105] It hurts.

104 *On a Shepherd or Emptiness Arc, you don't have to—you can do an extra run-through* **This is So Surreal** *or* **This is *Such* a Bad Idea** *instead, if you prefer.*

105 *unless we're talking the kind of sickness where they're still completely with you, they just can't be in your life in the same way for a while. In which case, that.*

It's also possible that some important Main Character vanishes during these events and you need to find them.

"Something Heals"

This quest doesn't need much story-specific contextualization—it's just a healing time.

Chuubo Makes a Terrible God-King

THE SECOND DISSOLUTION ARC

5

This is the story of how a perfectly ordinary kid—give or take some magic glass, a wish-granting engine, and possibly being a secret giant snake of some sort—began to dream about a voice telling them to seize power.

Introduction

Again you'll be able to play through this Arc as either a misadventure or a bittersweet saga.

I'm going to assume that you are the target of that voice. You are Chuubo. Or you are Shokyou. Or you're not, but, for whatever reason, the voice has decided to tempt you instead. It doesn't *have* to be that way, particularly in a bittersweet saga—

You can be an instigator, a supporter, someone caught up in this. The voice could be targeting a friend, an ally, someone you care about, and not you—

But it's awkward to use "you or them" all the time.

So, no.

I'm going to assume the target is you. If you change that, well, just read the story in some pronoun-less language where it won't make a difference in the text.

I'm going to suggest a number of different options for the corrupting voice.

If you're on a misadventure you're going to need to know two things about those options:

- a "price" that your character will struggle with as part of the quest **Haunted**
- a **Chapel** that will feature in **Wicked Creatures**

If you're playing this through as a bittersweet saga...

- ...you'll instead need to know the Arc's **Secret Place.**
- ...that "price" may or may not apply

So now that you hopefully now why I'm specifying those things, let's talk about some of the different options for the voice that is tempting that ordinary child.

What is it?

The Dream-Voice of the Outside

Is it the dream-voice of the Outside?

Then the **Chapel** or **Secret Place** for this Arc will be a little strand of beach in the far north, a beautiful little place that the Outside is eating away.

There you can hear its voice the clearest; from there, the surf breaks into many-voiced, many-shaped minions that it will send into your service. The price that you'll struggle with in the quest "Haunted" is that they are not well-versed in human interaction, nor in your morality. They can get you into trouble as often as they help.

The Dream-Voice of the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy

Or is the tempter for this Arc the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy?

He would show you vistas beyond the world. The garden of your home, or a second home in Fortitude, or the most home-like place in Fortitude that this can happen in, would sprout strange and vibrant trees with cool stuff like comics, collectibles, and out-of-season peaches from their branches.

His servants, necromancers, and changelings would watch you from afar.

In time you will find his **Chapel** (or your **Secret Place**) in dreams or in reality: a shuttered, abandoned temple to Jade Irinka, where a mural depicts him together with her from the time when they were a couple and not competing poles.

Over the course of the Arc his power will make that image of him the dominant image in the temple; it will radiate his bleak presence; and if you do not protect the place, it will shift into a shrine to his unholy grandeur, and eyeless priests will celebrate there strange rites.

The curse of this, if you are **Haunted** by it, is that his voice makes you want to take a pilgrimage to the Bleak Academy and submit yourself to his rule. Perhaps application materials and pamphlets show up at your house, and people there begin to suggest that you should try it, you should go!

You can't, though. At least, I don't think you can. If you're called to go to the Bleak Academy, it's probably too early in the game, and nobody else will be ready for a group trip. If that's the case, then the decision to go to the Bleak Academy will only play out in dreams and sudden moments of despair—

E.g.

> **PC:**"Fine! I'll go to the Bleak Academy!"
> **HG:** "It's like the bottom falls out of your stomach. The night sky closes in around you. There is nothing good in all the world. A film comes down over your vision; everything is dark, though everything is exactly as it was. Your mouth has gone dry. You feel despair. Welcome to the Bleak Academy."

I'm not saying that's how it always goes! That's just what it would be like for now.

Letters from "the Riders"

Or is the temptation in the form of letters from a leader of "the Riders?"

They are the people of the void; once feared as necromancers, head-hunters, and changelings, many of them have of late settled down to live in Town. The leader of a fringe cult of Riders writes a letter to you (or to another Main Character you are close to), explaining that "...you are the Chosen One," the one who will lead them into a New Era.

It is a recruitment offer that comes with a cult of your very own—

The downside, the thing that might make you **Haunted,** being that it gives you a cult of your very own.

The **Chapel** for this Arc is the post itself; you will receive letters there, from your box down at the post office or perhaps even a box at home, and those letters will bring power to those who listen to **Wicked Things.**

If you are playing it out as a bittersweet saga, the process differs slightly—

Your **Secret Place** will be your network of pen pals across the world, your view of boundless horizons through the medium of the post, and it will be corroded by a slow and awful discovery (as part of this Arc's premise, and not as a necessary part of a Secret Place-based story) that many of your pen pals are lies, deceptions, creations of the Riders, created to manipulate you in some fashion into supporting the New Era that they intend.

An Offer from "The Gray Man" of the Methodology Tower

Or is the letter a request for a meeting from "the Gray Man" of the Methodology Tower in Arcadia?

This half-Rider yin-yang master is the official in charge of protecting Town's businesses and banks from the inappropriate use of magic. He has an office at the top of the Methodology Tower. He feels that the best way to execute his duties is for you to seize control over the wealth and businesses of Town, or so he claims—

But the part that has you **Haunted** is that every time you ride up the elevator to see him, whether to argue with him or accept his service, you find yourself falling ever-more under his sway. (This plays out mostly as a quest/Issue feature—that is, you'll be deciding OOC how far this goes and playing accordingly, rather than pitting your miraculous powers against his own.)

The **Chapel** for this Arc is, of course, his office, or perhaps the elevator itself; the **Secret Place** is an old playground in the shadow of that tower, a pretty little park, which is slated to be torn down.

As a Misadventure

Putting it all together: there's this voice. It's been talking to—well, as noted, "you."

There's this voice, and it's been talking to *you*. It's been whispering in your dreams. (Or did you get a letter?) It's been telling you, you don't have to live like this. You can be more than this.

You can be a god.

Is it...

- ...the dream-voice of the Outside?
- ...a nameless dream-voice?
- ...the dream-voice of the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy?
- ...a letter from a Rider cult leader?
- ...an invitation from "the Gray Man?"

Haunted will develop your connection and loyalty to that voice or power, but you'll struggle with the price.

Then there's **Wishing for Ease/Power.** You'll probably focus on wishing for *power*, here, since that's the direction you're being tempted, but you could slip into wishing for ease if that's your character's norm.

Wicked Creatures will showcase the cooler side of all this—the gifts and minions you've been given.

Asserting Your Existence follows what happens when you break—when you give in to the power that's trying to control you from afar, or lose your ability to fight some internal psychological thing like the hallucinations. You know you can get yourself back if you fight for it, but for right now, you're broken.

Wishing for Healing is, as always, the story of how you put things back together and the lessons that you've learned.

5

The Bittersweet Saga of the Terrible God-King

If you're playing this Arc as a bittersweet Saga, then you'll have the same general list of possible tempters/corruptors, and either you yourself or some Main Character you're close to is the target.

Your **Fascination** will be with the tempter or with its victim.

Beautiful and Far Away focuses on somewhere that that tempting voice intrudes on, incurs upon, tramples on. It's a characteristic of this Arc that the power that tempts is also slowly crushing or devouring your Secret Place in some fashion.

After the situation is set up, temptations, weird powers, and strange side effects come into play with **This is So Surreal/This is *Such* a Bad Idea.**

Then all is lost!

Or at least someone is lost; **You've Lost Them.** They've given in to the temptation of the Arc's corruptor; they have lost something of themselves. You don't have to keep it mundane, not this time around, but don't go too far—you don't want to step on the toes of the Third Arc, **Chuubo is Lost,** by having *too* much get lost for right now.

So softpedal it a bit.

Someone is broken, a little. Someone is changed, a little.

You wish that you could get them back.

Something Heals gives you a chance to do that; or, at least, to fix some of your old mistakes.

An Example Mystic Arc: 1

Perhaps you've decided to play through this as a Marvelous **Mystic** Misadventure and develop powers like **the Child of the Sun's.**

And let's say that you've decided that the Headmaster will tempt you.

In that case you'll start with the quest **Haunted,** as a Mystic 1 quest:

> "This quest is built of portents. You know something is coming. You can *feel* that something is coming.
>
> The person you've been... is going to have to die. And something new, be born.
>
> **Result.** You are confronted by a miracle."

You're hearing the whispering of the Headmaster, and it's frustrating to you. It makes you want to go to the Bleak Academy, but you're resisting. Then bam, a miracle—something changes how you feel about all this. Maybe you align with him? Or the sun? Or with some other force, like the Lake?

An Example Mystic Arc: 2

The next quest is **Wicked Creatures,** as a Mystic 2 quest.

> "You're courted and tempted by your 'opposite number'—by someone who's playing in the same basic cosmology you are, but for the other team.
>
> Someone with a decent pitch, too...
>
> **Result.** Your life falls apart. You're betrayed by something you had faith in or you're abandoned by your own "side" in some fashion. Your spiritual pleas go unanswered."

Whatever you've aligned yourself with, either the Headmaster or his opponents in Town will provide an opposite number. And they'll be *tempting.* Maybe the temptation is the cool minions? But no matter what side you try to ally with, it won't work out.

An Example Mystic Arc: 3

The next quest is **Wishing for Ease** or **Wishing for Power,** as a Mystic 3 quest.

> "Your life's a mess, and you're not sure what to make of things, but over the course of this quest you hammer out a plan for moving forward.
>
> For putting together a new life. A new purpose. A new plan.
>
> **Result.** Your plan falls apart. Things get confused and out-of-control and the whole affair sort of ends with you feeling carried along by events. You might get to do something awesome, but it doesn't feel like you had much of a chance to be consciously decisive in how it all played out."

You'll go overboard using the powers of the Headmaster or your own to try to fix things. And maybe you'll stumble into a victory, or maybe you won't.

An Example Mystic Arc: 4

Then comes **Asserting Your Existence** as a Mystic 4 quest—

> "There's a hole in the world. Or at least a hole in the way your life is put together. It's partly psychological but it's symbolized by a very real monster, trap, curse, demon, or miraculous effect.
>
> **Result.** You manage to suppress it with the help of your family and friends. Or, if you're completely cut off from all of those, by the intervention of a higher power or an unexpected friend.
>
> ...it's probably not a permanent solution."

You've discovered yourself broken, but you manage to put yourself back together.

An Example Mystic Arc: 5

Finally, **Wishing for Healing** plays out as a Mystic 5 quest—

> "This is your struggle to live as a better person; to be a blessing unto others, in spite of everything. To be the light of a miracle.
>
> To make things right.
>
> **Result.** Unknown..."

And bam! By now I'm sure you've unlocked **Mystic (Primordial) 1.** Unless you just died or something, instead.

Chuubo is Lost

The Third Dissolution Arc

Behind that threat or temptation—whatever it was—there was something else. There is a tree that grows at the edge of the beach on the island of King Death; its great roots are wound in and about your buried bones.

It feeds on your death, already, though you may have yet to die.

It is a vast and flourishing thing, and green it grows; and one day, an ordinary child will sail to that island, across the lake to the island of King Death, and stand in the shadow of that tree, and place their hand upon its trunk; and the leaves of that tree will brush against their temples and their shoulders, crown them and cloak them, and the light of the sun will filter through; and the tree will whisper to that child that it is that child's father and their mother, and then it will eat them whole or make them King of all the World, and feast upon their bones.

It is King Death's island but I don't know if he will be there. This Arc isn't about that old cat-headed Mystery.

This Arc is about a journey, and a tree.

This Arc Features a Journey

The journey to the island of King Death most likely plays out in spirit. You may board a physical boat, or at least as physical as any other, but come the next chapter, you're waking up at home.

You know part of you is still off sailing, but...

The rest is not.

You can play out the occasional scene on board that ship, or later on that island, for quest XP, emotion XP, in the right circumstances XP actions, or just for fun—but...

You are not there.

You are free to come up with your own explanations for this in play. It's possible that the "you" in Town is just a doppelganger or robot double. It's possible that the ship hit a weird patch of the Outside. It's possible that this is always how sailing to the island of King Death goes—that the laws of that island are the laws of the Deep Under, and this is the relevant manifestation of the flashbacky nature of that Region.

If everyone goes on the ship, and the players are all more excited about nautical stories than staying in Town, you can probably just skip the phenomena and the explanations alike and just play nautical stories—

But I'm going to assume that you all stay in Town, and the journey looks like this. Read from the relevant section and take the relevant card as you reach each level of:

To the Island of Death!

1–3: Your soul has set sail for the island of King Death...

4: Just hit level 4?

Something will offer you a change soon. Something will claim to be your father, your mother, the source of your strength. Something will tell you that it is your beginning, and it will attempt to remake you to its ends.

For **the Wishing Boy (or Girl)**, it's probably a talking tree. It'll meet you on that island. It'll claim to be your ancestor. It'll offer you its fruit, and with that fruit a change—to something amazing. Something awful.

Something that shouldn't be. And it won't succeed. Tell the HG that: That something is about to try to steal you; to change you; but... it won't succeed. Will it? It can't. It wants a thing that you cannot give.

5: Just hit level 5? *You're going to have to live with this.*

I was wrong. I guess. Maybe it *can* change you. Maybe it can't, but you'll still suffer the effects. You're going to be different, when this story is done. I don't know how—but different. Tell the HG that.

Tell them—"look, I still can't change the way that the island of death is going to want me to, but I've just hit Issue 5, so it's going to affect me a great deal. And for right now? For *this story*, at least? That's mostly going to be helpful. It's going to be a source of strength."

Or however you want to say it. And then tell them what you'd like to become, or fail to become. How you'd like it to play out. The HG can set some boundaries, but in the end, they're obligated to let you take power over what's coming up and make it substantively useful to you in play.

To the Island of Death!

1

You've found someone who can take you to King Death's Island.

There will be answers for you there.

.....

+1MP

To the Island of Death!

2

A ship's set sail for King Death's island, sailing Big Lake and the near Outside.

There's a part of you what's gone with that ship.

There's a part what has stayed behind.

To the Island of Death!

3

Somewhere a ship has made landfall at King Death's island.

Its crew will find strangeness, death and apples there, in the shadows of his shore.

.....

+1MP

To the Island of Death!

4

There is a source, and what it wants from you is a thing you cannot give.

When it fails to change you, you'll close the Issue & earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP & cast the corruption in question out of your heart, mind, body, and soul.

The Marvelous Misadventures of Chuubo & Company

This story plays out like so:

- In **Haunted,** you begin to have intimations and hints at all of this, and an awareness that your troubles of the last few Arcs have been stemming from a single, distant source.
- In **Wishing for Ease/Power**, you'll try to make your life better without tackling that directly, but it doesn't work.
- In **Wicked Creatures,** you'll hear the voice of the tree (or possibly something else, if your storyline is/ought to be different from that of **the Wishing Boy or Girl.**) Cats, Riders, long-eared goblin youkai, cloaked wraith-sailors with burning red eyes[106], and the mystery named Lucy Godsfollow (pg. 415) are drawn to you, called by a similar voice, to gather around you and form your crew.
- **Asserting Your Existence** is the quest where it becomes clear that you're lost—that you don't return from the island of King Death. Didn't, haven't, won't. That the *you* in Town is just a hollow creature, a fading ghost, fetch, doppelganger, or robot.

  Have you just been an amazing mechanical person created by Leonardo de Montreal *this entire time?*
- **Wishing for Healing** focuses on the fallout.

Lost though you are, you might make it back during one of those last two quests.

You might sail boldly back into Town and reunite with yourself, or whatever.

Or that might wait until the next Arc; or, you might rewrite your character a little bit and be a mechanical person or doppelganger, forever!

The Bittersweet Saga of the Island of King Death

If you're doing the Arc as a bittersweet saga, your **Secret Place** is almost certainly the ship, the island, or the shade of the tree—

The things that call your soul far away.

It's an important journey to you, but is it really healthy?

In **Fascination,** you'll confront your fascination with the island, the journey, the tree, or possibly someone else (such as Lucy Godsfollow, pg. 415) who's drawn to sail on that ship.

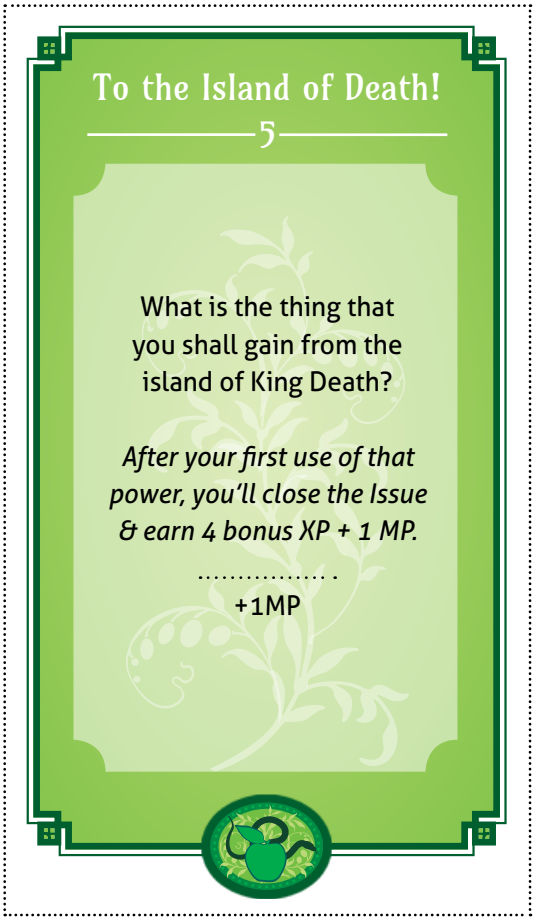
In **Beautiful and Far Away,** you'll wrestle with what it means that you're on that journey. (If you haven't "left" yet, for some reason, you can start out by dreaming it, foreshadowing it, thinking about what it will be like.)

In **This is So Surreal** and **This is *Such* A Bad Idea**, you'll face the miscellaneous fallout of people and trees and islands and death using their powers in goofy ways.

In **You've Lost Them,** the ship returns but you realize that someone didn't make it back; or, if the voyage is definitely still ongoing, maybe they fall overboard, or maybe time goes out of synch and they're fine on the ship but broken in Town because they're not *going* to make it back; or maybe there's no good reason for it, nothing to do with the ship at all, the part of them that's in Town just goes rotten or hollows out or vanishes or fades or something, all and entirely on its own.

It's usually **the Wishing Boy (or Girl)**, this victim, but it could be someone else.

In **Something Heals,** you might have a chance to make up for some of what was lost; or, at least, to say goodbye.



106 *OW OW OW HOT MY EYES ARE BURNING they probably do not say*

Chuubo and the Great Glass Dragon

The Fourth Dissolution Arc

In this final misadventure...

- ...the lost voyager returns to themselves (if they hadn't done).
- ...an ordinary kid finally plucks the shard of a great glass dragon from their dreams.

The Marvelous Misadventures of Chuubo & Company

Haunted is going to focus on those two bullet points above.

Wishing for Ease/Power follows the ordinary pattern.

Now, in re: **Wicked Creatures:**

If you've gotten this far and you don't know why anyone would try to corrupt you, or Chuubo/Shokyou, right now—

I'm going to guess that it's like this.

...this bit isn't necessarily canon, by the way. It doesn't become canon until you're starting to get close to these quests without a better idea coming to hand, you know? But if you get here, and you don't know what's going on, this is what it's like. This is how it starts:

With the claim that the shard of the glass dragon in that ordinary kid's dreams is also... a kind of notional key to the cosmos. A jade tablet of destiny. The power to shape fate.

We're going to say that a long time ago the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy took that key and put it into the hands of a prodigy of despair and hate—Melanie (or Reginald) Malakh. And Malakh took that key, and raised it high, and tried to crack the world with it; but the dragon of that crafting broke, instead.

And all the other shards of that dragon hold echoes of that power.

And it'd be great if Chuubo/Shokyou could keep it. But they can't. It's growing too heavy with power in them. It's gravid with a weight of dreams. It'd probably kill them to keep it forever.

There's darn few people in all the universe who *can* still bear its weight.

Maybe the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy can. Maybe Melanie Malakh. Maybe de Montreal, though I doubt it; or the Dream-Witch in her nascent state; or even the Guardian Bird.

The Child of the Sun—

I suspect. But I am not certain. I suspect she can.

I think even the Angel of Fortitude would crack under its weight.

And that's why the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy, or Malakh, is tempting you now, in **Wicked Creatures.** That's why they think they can get you, or Chuubo/Shokyou, to give it up.

And afterwards, you won't be much of yourself, will you?

Even if you're not that ordinary child, even if the shard that mattered most wasn't actually in *you*, the world will be different afterwards. So much will be changed; broken; lost. It will be rough, **Asserting Your Existence.**

You'll need at least one more quest, **Wishing for Healing,** before you can make things right.

The Bittersweet Saga of the End

As a bittersweet saga, this is a very straightforward Arc.

Your **Secret Place** is the Bleak Academy, I think, or a room somewhere in your head or soul where you are alone with Melanie (or Reginald) Malakh.

With that, and the notes above—

I'll leave the rest to you.

Destiny

the Seizhi/Suzy Arcs

The Best Friend's been looking for a destiny.

If someone has a destiny, after all, that makes them *real*.

How to Play These Arcs

For Seizhi/Suzy, the Destiny Arcs are **Secret Histories** (pg. 322), featuring the quests:

- **Encounters in the Night.** You start to hear the call of a higher destiny.
- **The Troubled Sky.** You try to claim it.
- **Behind the Mask.** You're corrupted or threatened by some evil that hides behind secrets, shadows, politics, or masks.
- **Atonement.** The world's gone wrong. Set it right.
- **The Struggle of the Knight.** You face the final trials to become what you wanted to be.

For anyone else, these Arcs are **Numinous Gardens** (pg. 378), featuring the quests:

- **The Story of Your Life.** You work on your established projects.
- **The Sidekick.** You become responsible for a new pet or sidekick, and usually a larger social responsibility as well. (That is, for some reason, taking charge of them is or leads to a political or theological or mercantile act.)
- **Sins of the Father.** You confront some legacy of the first Principal Entropy—e.g., one of the "Six Sins" of the Student Council or some out-of-control element of the evil world.
- **Surreal Environments.** You go out of your comfort zone—into a surreal or stylized environment.
- **Triumph.** You have fun doing amazing stuff and making the world better.

The Destiny of a Schwan

Prologue

I will tell you some secrets.

The real and the unreal are built upon a scaffolding of bones. The creatures that are the substrate of existence are alive but they are not aware. They *yearn* to be aware, they hunger for the fire that is self-awareness and is life, but they do not have that precious power.

Such is **Billy Sovereign,** the bully.

He bullies because he wants to see himself reflected in others' eyes. He thinks that when they knuckle under to him he will see himself above them; their submissive groveling and entreaties will reveal to him his own existence; instead, it only empties them, leaves them a helpless extension of him, a portion of his pack, as blind to their own existence as is he.

Such *was* the creature now called **the Best Friend,** once.

It was nothing more than a spine, a tendril, a physical and tangible extension of the Bleak Academy that is beyond the world. It was a construct, a concept: a façade. Then **the Wishing Boy** fired up the Wish-Granting Engine and wished for a best friend; and that energy seized up a chunk of the architecture of the unreal and molded it. Turned it into something else.

Some*one* else.

This, I think, was a new thing. An unprecedented thing.

...but what does it actually mean?

Schwans and Sovereigns

The First Destiny Arc

Billy Sovereign isn't quite so nice as a typical **Best Friend.**

...

It isn't any kind of friend at all.

It's stirred up, though. It's angry or intrigued or hungry, because **the Best Friend** finds a destiny. It might start out as just a terrifying, mindless force, and it'll probably revert to that by the end of this or the second Arc—

But right now, its interest has sharpened and it has grown cunning in its need.

As the Best Friend—"Encounters in the Night"

If you're **the Best Friend,** this Arc starts with your desperate search for meaning.

You're sure you must have one.

Well, not *sure* sure. Just, kind of sure. Sure enough that when you refuse to admit to yourself that you might not have one, you don't think you're *necessarily* fooling yourself. You don't think you're *necessarily* wrong.

So every time people say, "Hey, you, you should grab pizza for us," or "Hey, aren't you the lost prince of the lake people?" or "Can you organize this party?" you make a fist, and salute the world, and say, or think at least, but usually say:

"Yes! This is my destiny!"

You were always meant to be a... chef? Food provider? Pizza delivery person? Italian? Perhaps even a special Schwan-style pie?

The lost prince of the lake people? An Olympic swimmer? A party organizer, perhaps?

And lately you've been dreaming of Jade Irinka, who was the sun. Terrible, terrible nightmares. And you've been feeling called down to the waters of Big Lake.

How does this all fit together? What does she have to do with pizza? You don't even know.

But you're sure it's *somehow* going to work out.

This plays out as the quest **Encounters in the Night.**[107]

As the Best Friend—"the Troubled Sky"

Once you've got a new role and destiny, **the Troubled Sky** is going to showcase how ridiculous your life can get. It'll feature the full-on weirdness of the Schwan family and probably repeated unpleasant encounters with Billy Sovereign.

You'll also meet a "guardian bird."

I'm going to suggest going with a straight-up baby griffin here, because honestly, finding a soaked baby griffin during a stormy night and taking it home is a perfect combination of inherent awesomeness and slice of life.

An alternative is to skip ahead a little and make either **the Guardian Bird** or **the Cruel Prince** "Owler," whom you'll see featured in the second Arc. Another option is to make the Guardian Bird a Schwan, or a destiny duck that someone else used to help you find your destiny, or a guy named Griffin, or something else. You could even adopt a parrot!

(Though, I love parrots, so please be kind to them both narratively and IC if you do.)

Either way, I think it's the bird that's the heart of this quest, this time around, and everything else kind of spirals around that.

Stock Features

If you're **the Best Friend,** you'll need to know these features for your first Arc:

- **Vice:** Your standard vice is "I'm not real!" It doesn't matter whether you secretly are real. It doesn't matter whether being unreal is wrong. You think it's what's wrong with you, so unless you've shaken things up, this is your vice.
- **the Walker in Darkness:** This is usually the standard **Walker**—"the Sacrificial Bull." (pg. 323) It's also possible for it to be a family member, but that's pretty tragic; or, with some fiddling, Billy Sovereign (pg. 405).
- **the Cruel Prince:** The usual cruel prince for this Arc is Billy Sovereign. As noted below, Owler (pg. 422) is another option.
- **the Guardian Bird:** This is usually a generic guardian bird (pg. 326), but, as noted, it could be Owler, or a Schwan, or something else!
- **the Hero:** This is typically Laodemus Schwan (pg. 414).

107 *Or the slightly tweaked version in* ***the Best Friend's*** *playbook,* ***Why Are You Here?***

Alternate Antagonists

If you wind up deciding that **Billy Sovereign** should be redeemable, you'll want a secondary antagonist for this Arc—I'd recommend bringing in Owler, from the next Arc, early, but you could choose any member of the Student Council, an NPC Dream-Witch, or the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy.

Alternately, split off a variant of **the Best Friend**—part of them didn't get the destiny, and it's off being an evil twin.

5

As the Best Friend—"Behind the Mask/Atonement"

The quest **Behind the Mask** will focus on a larger plan by a Cruel Prince to corrupt you—typically the Arc's antagonist, which is to say, Billy Sovereign, or Owler, if you swapped it in. I'd suggest that simple plans are best here: either they're using a steady spiritual/metaphysical pressure against you, or they have control or leverage over some resource you desperately need, and plan to first hint at and then exploit it.

It's standard to mess up somewhere in here—to slip up. To make a *mistake*.

E.g., you tell your family that you're not real and they might not be real either, and it breaks them; or, you don't tell them, and they find out, and they don't trust you ever again. You get someone hurt. Whatever.

If there's something like that, then dealing with it is the heart of **Atonement.** If not, you're probably engaged in spiritual self-purification to be better fit for your destiny; or, you've just hit **the Guardian Bird's** betrayal point, it's carried off the physical representation of your destiny, or of *everybody's* destiny, and bam, you've got to make it right.

As the Best Friend—"the Struggle of the Knight"

If you find yourself moving on to **the Struggle of the Knight,** that's closure on the destiny you've found.

As the Best Friend – After "the Struggle of the Knight"

Once you get that closure, doing Knight Arcs will be a little more difficult.

One option is to ignore Knight Arcs and just focus on Bindings Arcs ("People come to me when they need help handling [Chuubo? Bleak Academy stuff? Semi-real things? The Guardian Bird?]"), Otherworldly Arcs ("My destiny is calling me away in dreams!"), and Storyteller Arcs ("Now that I have a destiny, my life is so grand!").

...but what if you really want to work more on **Become Somebody** or **Reality Syndrome** or a mundane Knight Arc like **Knight (of Pizza Delivery)?**

In that case, I'd suggest declaring that...

- ...that first destiny failed somehow.
- ...that first destiny was completely fulfilled, leaving you at loose ends again.
- ...your fulfilled destiny still leaves room for further details—a typical evolution path goes:
  - "What am I for?"
  - "...and what is *that* for?"
  - "...and why is that important?"
  - "What are *we* for?"
  - "...and why?"
  - "...and what does it all mean?"

Numinous Gardens

Other characters play out this Arc as a **Numinous Garden,** like so:

As Anyone Else—"the Story of Your Life"

Normally you'll actually start this quest just... living your normal life. **The Best Friend** will probably be around. The other Arc stuff we're going to talk about—

It might show up during the quest.

Billy Sovereign. The sidekick. All of that stuff? It might show up, in passing.

But mostly this is just the story of your life, as it always is.

Pay attention to the quest card, but ignore the bigger-picture story stuff for now.

The one exception is if you're on an **Aspect** Arc. If you are, you need to foreshadow a future connection to **the Best Friend** here—lay some groundwork for

Seizhi/Suzy *naturally* becoming important in your life in your next quest, **Triumph.**

Otherwise? Just play.

As Anyone Else—"the Sidekick"

In ancient Rome, when somebody was born without a destiny, the gods would send a wise or otherwise relevant member of their community a "destiny duck" to redress the situation. The duck would soak in ideas about the target's destiny and then would be ritually killed in order to convey those ideas to the proper target and patch the hole in the fabric of the world.

Maybe it's an unexpected life interruption—particularly if you're on a **Shepherd** Arc. Maybe it's foreshadowed and predicted.

But...

Such a duck arrives at your address in Fortitude.

Was it labeled for you? Did it go to a group location like a clubhouse and you're the one who stepped forward, took up the quest, and decided to adopt and otherwise impress your concepts of things on the duck? Or did it follow you home?

Did it come with instructions? Did you already know what it was for? Or are you going to have to look up what the duck is about, maybe after getting a hint or two from a mysterious masked and cloaked individual standing beside the road?

Maybe you'll even come into an understanding of this grave responsibility and duty by accident!

The destiny duck is normally an adorable duck, such as one might make into a pet or even a sidekick.

It's normal but not *necessary* for you to discover whose destiny we're talking about here. (It is, of course, the destiny of **the Best Friend**, who was summoned without complete reality.) It's normal but again not *necessary* for you to perform the proper sacrifice of the duck—alternately, you keep it alive, and take responsibility for Seizhi/Suzy's *non*-destiny, or the duck dies by accident.

Anyhow, this quest plays out as **the Sidekick,** and ends when you've become responsible directly or indirectly for the destiny of **the Best Friend.**

Note!

I'm explicitly assuming that you'll find a destiny that connects **the Best Friend** to the other PCs and major plot points—that is, "paladin in the service of PC X" is acceptable, while "destined to deliver delicious pizzas to others" is not. I really don't want to predispose you to any specifics, because that feels like it would or could cheapen your play, but I also want you to have some reason to *care* about it when evil threatens that destiny, later on.

As Anyone Else—"Sins of the Father"

This quest brings in one of the "Six Sins" (pg. 384) to work with Billy Sovereign, or melds him with some creature of the evil world, or has him try to *take over* the evil world.

As Anyone Else—"Surreal Environments"

In this quest you'll experience all too much of the surreal environment that is the Schwan family.

As Anyone Else—"Triumph"

In a Shepherd, Bindings, or Emptiness Arc, this would give you a chance to anchor the destiny that you created/chose/found in **the Sidekick**—you fix it in place somehow, you reduce it to a concrete form.

On an Aspect Arc, though, this is going to be a little different:

This quest is about how awesome you are, but as an Aspect 2 quest, it's also about how that awesomeness lets you appreciate and build a friendship, romance, alliance, lasting teacher-student relationship, or even grand rivalry with **the Best Friend.** It's about how Seizhi/Suzy becomes *important* to you.

It can work like that in any Arc, of course, but it's most structurally important in an Aspect Arc.

Owler and Impious

The Second Destiny Arc

The Best Friend's new destiny is under siege.

The student **Owler Lendsme** is a piece of the first Entropy. It thinks itself a God and laughs at the pride and achievement of other souls. It runs the Catering Committee at School, but more importantly, it has learned the trick of stepping from body to body, leaving its old host confused and dazed behind it.

It dreams of finding an amazing god-like host that can make a new world for it to rule.

The student **Impious** is another piece of the first Entropy. He runs the Athletics Committee. He's only actually named that when he wears his student council mask—he has some sort of ordinary name otherwise. He commands many strange weapons left over from the first Entropy. He likes to "toughen important people up," he thinks that's his job, so he'll make assassination attempts or kidnap and hurt anyone he thinks has a good chance of being important.

They've come to Fortitude with a target. They have *very high hopes* for...

- ...**the Best Friend,**
- ...someone entangled with **the Best Friend's** destiny, *or*
- ...you.

What are their weaknesses? What can be done to stop them?

Are you like them or unlike them?

Who has the right to chart the world's destiny for the forthcoming days?

Playing it Through

In practice the second Destiny Arc is a further exploration of the destiny established in the first; the big *thing* that **the Best Friend** is doing in this Arc is settling into and exploring the role. Other than that and a scaling up of the opposition you won't see much new—if you're **the Best Friend:**

- **Encounters in the Night** features more dreams, strange encounters with Impious or Owler or other legacies of the first Principal Entropy, and in general an opportunity to get more in touch with the spiritual side of whatever role you've found.
- **The Troubled Sky** builds up tension/weirdness.
- **Behind the Mask** pits you directly against Owler and Impious, often at a great cost or leading to a grave mistake.
- **Atonement** pays for that mistake, in part, and most likely finishes the main story of their interference in your life.
- **The Struggle of the Knight** resolves the underlying questions about your role that inexperience, Owler, and Impious hopefully raised, or if not, pushes you in general to the next level of your existence.

For anyone else, the Arc looks something like this:

- **The Story of your Life.** Your life's gone mostly back to normal. What are you working on when you're *not* dealing with destiny ducks, guardian birds, and cruel princes?
- **The Sidekick.** The "sidekick" could refer to Seizhi/Suzy, but it's more likely to be someone involved with Owler and Impious—maybe even they themselves, and you're stuck trying to ride herd on them, but it's also plausible for your new sidekick to be a random person in Fortitude that they're targeting.
- **Sins of the Father.** This is your chance to deal with Owler and Impious directly.
- **Surreal Environments.** This is often related to being possessed by Owler or drugged/sent to a training camp by Impious, but it may also be more encounters with the Schwans.
- **Triumph.** Again, this'll show off how awesome you are. On an Aspect Arc, it's also likely to focus on your friendship or other relationship to Seizhi Schwan, some other Schwan, Owler, or Impious.

Stock Features

If you're **the Best Friend,** you'll need to know these features for your second Arc:

- **Vice:** Your standard vice is probably still "I'm not real!" but it could have moved on to "I'm not good enough," "I'm not ruthless enough," "I'm not tough enough," or, for all I know, gambling.
- **the Walker in Darkness:** This is usually still "the Sacrificial Bull." (pg. 323)
- **the Cruel Prince:** The usual cruel princes for this Arc are Owler and Impious (pg. 422, pg. 413).
- **the Guardian Bird:** This is usually a generic guardian bird (pg. 326).
- **The Hero:** This is typically still Laodemus Schwan (pg. 414).

Schwan Song

The Third Destiny Arc

This Arc is the story of "S.E.E.D. Project Gamma"—an attempt by either the Student Council, **the Angel of Fortitude,** or Laodemus Schwan to establish a Utopian community in the near Outside.

The principle is simple:

The world is going to end. The plan originated by the first Principal Entropy, the plan that may have been too pure a thing for that evil creature and thereby killed him, was to train up students whose dreams or sense of reality or confidence in themselves—whatever!—was strong enough to recreate the world, starting from the sea of the Outside.

But it's no good to have a plan like that if you're not going to test the technology. And one day it's going to come up to the test, and someone's going to say, "We can't make the world too perfect. We can't make it too good. We can't make it too peaceful. A world like that—

"Why, it wouldn't even exist!"

So let's test those things now—that's the idea. Let's build a world in the near Outside; or maybe a little deeper out, if that doesn't work. Let's head out into the Outside, not to *find* some portion of the lost, drowned Earth, or some other world, but to *create* a perfect Eden—a new Paradise. And let's go ahead and make it good, and beautiful, and perfect, because if that's *really* not going to work, or if it *is*, then we ought to know *now.*

Maybe **the Best Friend** gets involved in it naturally. Maybe you're focused on it yourself, and you can leave Seizhi/Suzy out of the story. Or maybe someone concludes that they're going to need something *like* the Best Friend at some point—them, or Billy Sovereign, or something resembling one of them to be captured from the Bleak Academy at some point—and, well, inviting the Best Friend or a close associate thereof into the project is the simplest way to proceed.

This plays out as a typical Arc. For **the Best Friend,** that probably means:

- **Encounters in the Night** introduces the idea, and a suitable walker in darkness.
- **The Troubled Sky** explores the place and its guardian bird.
- **Behind the Mask** gets into the politics behind it.
- **Atonement** pays for a mistake they've made.

- **The Struggle of the Knight** either establishes the place as a permanent moon or suburb of Town, claims control over it, or abolishes it if it turned out to be an atrocity.

For anyone else, it probably means something like:

- **The Story of your Life.** You work on your established projects, including something that will get used for the S.E.E.D. project, or in consultation with them.
- **The Sidekick.** You become responsible for something involved with the project.
- **Sins of the Father.** One of the "Six Sins" tries to take over the project—most likely Impious, Glass Spider, or Mourning.
- **Surreal Environments.** You venture out into the Outside.
- **Triumph.** You play a key role in building the new world.

This Arc is intended as a very limited sort of tragedy—that is, while there could be a disaster, or the whole place could be taken over by Owler or turn evil on its own or something, or it could be rife with conflict and people turning on one another to seize paradise or a shard of the glass dragon or something, it's much more likely to be a gentle tragedy:

People just aren't made for perfection. But it's not like they're *anti-perfect* or anything. Perfection is just... hard to fit yourself to, and even harder to fit yourself to without losing some of the oomph, the fight, the *guts* people'll need to deal with the other threats in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon.**

So the place doesn't die, or explode. It just... doesn't wind up being a big deal, and maybe doesn't have the strength to sustain itself forever.

That's just me, though.

I mean, you're free to end this Arc by crafting Paradise Enfleshed and making it a superb and the best and only answer against chaos; or, conversely, have the whole place drown in blood. It's all up to you![108]

Stock Features

If you're **the Best Friend,** you'll need to know these features for your third Arc:

- **Vice:** You can have whatever vice you want, here, just as long as you think about how to make it circumstantially or philosophically relevant to the project. That might even work out to be optional.
- **the Walker in Darkness:** This should be someone in the S.E.E.D. program, I think, but this is another good opportunity to have it be Billy Sovereign. Or, if there's an old guardian bird floating around that never got a good chance to betray you, you might want to use them here.
- **the Cruel Prince:** The usual cruel prince for this Arc is one of the Six Sins—maybe Lee Scathing (pg. 414), maybe Owler or Impious again. You could also have a real jerk in charge of the project or have someone nasty sent by the Bleak Academy to intervene. An Owler-possessed Laodemus or corrupted version of **the Angel of Fortitude** would also be a pretty good choice.
- **the Guardian Bird:** You'll typically want a new guardian bird for project Gamma—a bird or bird-like entity created out of nothing as part of the project's birth. The nice version is that someone conceived of it or constructed it. The nasty version has it as a naturally-arising severe spirit, guardian, and angel of paradise—in which case it'll probably be morally painful when it suddenly and inevitably betrays you later on, declaring you unworthy of paradise.
- **the Hero:** This is typically **the Prodigy,** but if that happens to be you, it's either one of your NPCs, a partially redeemed member of the Student Council, a disguised Headmaster of the Bleak Academy, or we're back to Laodemus Schwan.

108 You! You know, your whole group of you. It's possible that it's more up to the HG and the person on these quests than anything else, but really, it's up to what happens, which neither of you can necessarily control unless it's a one-player game.

A Spine of the Bleak Academy

THE FOURTH DESTINY ARC

You've been asked to take over for Laodemus Schwan—or someone else who's been an Arc **Hero,** or larger-than-life hero in general. They have to disappear for a bit, or go undercover. Or they're dead, and their ghost is asking you.

That's how you wound up in the pro racing circuit.

Or wrestling.

Or flying your zeppelin around, wearing a mask, and righting wrongs and fighting evil.

But there's something wrong in the world, or with your temporary profession; and that's going to lead you, and your mysterious rival/antagonist/...ally?, "X," out to the Bleak Academy itself, where you either become involved with a group of Town expatriates trying to spread the infection of sentience and life to the substrate of the place; or a Magister trying to exploit the opposite and poison the basic reality of Town with a murderous will; or, if that doesn't fit, get captured and put on trial—

Use flashbacks or flashforwards if you don't have the time for a long trial because other stuff is going on far from the Bleak Academy in play—

For the activities of those expatriates or of that Magister.

Stock Features

If you're **the Best Friend,** you'll need to know these features for your third Arc:

- **Vice:** A typical vice is "I'm not Laodemus." But "I exist, and the world shouldn't" is also viable, later on. Or "it's my existence that has let people come up with this plan." Or "I was never worthy of existence in the first place!"
- **the Walker in Darkness:** This is probably a rival of Laodemus (or whomever) in the racing, wrestling, or whatever circuit. It could be Laodemus (who is probably aka "X") but I'm hesitant, because the Walker in Darkness often dies at the end, and there's two reasons why Laodemus shouldn't. First, next time you see a discussion of media and how sympathetic gay characters always die at the end, you don't want to feel uncomfortable about how that's *your* game too. Second, in later supplements he'll be a possible PC, and you don't want to close him out of your ongoing world!
- **the Cruel Prince:** This Arc potentially overflows with them. A cruel prince of the racing circuit (or professional baking competitions, or whatever). A Magister or Judge at the Bleak Academy. Maybe even the Headmaster himself!
- **the Guardian Bird:** There's a good chance that at this point, you've gotten past trusting new bird-like entities to guard things; in which case, it's probably best to bring a previous one back for redemption, have you subvert the one guarding something at the Bleak Academy, or have them play a more active role (e.g., rival in the wrestling circuit.) If all else fails, though, the AI or spirit guarding your mode of transportation—the car, carriage, horse, boat, zeppelin, or whatever you use to get around during this Arc—is a good choice.
- **the Hero:** Since you're stepping into this role yourself, you can try a switch by having this be a heroic sidekick instead of the actual hero. Or, of course, it could be "X."

Nightmares

the Leonardo/Dulcinea Arcs

5

Nightmares' Angel went out to the Bleak Academy. He sought to steal the secrets of the land of death.

Instead he fell victim to the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy.

His dreams turned to worms and rot inside his head. A blasphemy was sealed inside his hollow chest. He went away to become a god of dream and nightmare, and he came back a god of dream and nightmare, but he came back also *wrong*.

Lately the Outside has been roiling. Lately the Outside has been disturbed.

This is the story of the Headmaster's plan for **Nightmares' Angel.** This is the story of that blasphemy; and of dreams and nightmares; and of what the Headmaster hoped to gain.

Maybe there wasn't anything.

Maybe it was just a blasphemy he had laying around, and with no better use for it than to punish the errant **Nightmares' Angel.** Maybe he turned the man's dreams to rot and worms inside his head because that's just what he does.

I suspect, by the end of the quest, that you will discover otherwise.

Presented here, a set of heroic Arcs and the world of nightmares: you will challenge the wickedness and blasphemy beyond the world and you will come back strong.

How to Play These Arcs

For Leonardo/Dulcinea, the Nightmare Arcs are **Scientific Adventures** (pg. 334), featuring the quests:

- **Science!** You've been presented with a situation or possible tragedy. By gum, you will do science to it!
- **Someone's in Trouble!** Someone's in trouble! You help them out.
- **Engineering!** You've got a sense for the meat of this situation now. It's no longer an enigma—it's a technical problem. It's time to do engineering to it!
- **Above the Fray.** You rise above the situation and make moral or philosophical decisions—what *should* be done with this situation or technology?
- **Walking the Boundaries.** Having made that call, you explore its consequences.

Anyone else will play these out "the Rinley Yatskaya way" (pg. 344), that is, with the quests:

- **Adventure GET.** You've gotten involved in something exciting!
- **Let's Doing!** You drive forward through the situation.
- **Labyrinth Diving.** This is the part where you're a little bit confused. You know where to *look* for answers, sort of, but you don't have them yet.
- **Climbing the Sacred Mountain.** You're chasing answers, solutions, or victory.
- **Down.** You're chasing something subtler, scarier, or more painful than that.

The Outside Stirs

Prologue

Something's stirred up the Outside.

There've always been occasional riotously colorful storms coming in from Outside, flowing in over Big Lake, full of the particulate essence of the great beyond—but they're getting a bit more frequent of late. There's an overall increase in the Outside's ambient presence in people's nightmares, and in the groundwater, and people have been dreaming now and then of the mask of a dream-witch and the shine of some vast glass creature.

And **Nightmares' Angel** is investigating.

Haunting the shores and cliffs of Fortitude. Taking measurements. Trying to figure it all out. Trying to understand.

Nightmares Open

The First Nightmares Arc

A gate has opened, or will open, from the dreams of a Haunted Child.

Nightmares will spill out into a little Town—

Including a hooded monster named **Ill-Made** and her potentially vivisectionist gang.

As Nightmares' Angel—"Science!"

If you're **Nightmares' Angel,** then let's start by looking at your own troubles. I mean, maybe that won't be your first quest if you want to break from the norm of the game and do an Emptiness or Aspect Arc, but—

We're going to start by looking at things that aren't haunted kids.

You've been dreaming of Jade Irinka, who was the sun. You've been feeling called down to the waters of Big Lake.

Maybe it's just destiny. Maybe you're being called there to drown.

Or maybe something is coming.

Because you survived, something is coming. Because you came back from the Bleak Academy, something is coming. Or maybe it's nothing to do with you. Maybe it's because of that "angel of Fortitude" you've heard about. Or even—

OK, you know those old stories about the glass dragon? You know:

> *"Once upon a time, a witch and a glass-maker made a dragon out of glass and taught it to hate the world. It raged and it would have destroyed everything; only, it shattered, instead."*

... ?

You're pretty sure that those stories were actually about a particular manifestation of chaos, a particular *way* the Outside attacks Town. Before your time, but not all that many years ago, a glass dragon *did* show up in the skies above Fortitude, and seemed like it might destroy stuff, and then it shattered. Maybe it was just because it was fragile, but that doesn't seem right. No. It's much more likely that somebody *did* something. You just don't know what.

So you're investigating.

That's **Science!**

As Nightmares' Angel—"Someone's in Trouble!"

You've encountered a child plagued by nightmares—**the Haunted Child** (pg. 409). Their nightmares are touched by some hostile alien force. This kid's suffering from severe anxiety and a distorted sense of reality.

You're going to try to help that child.

Maybe you're just coming off of a personal victory. Maybe that's given you the strength to want to help others. Or maybe it's part of how you manage your own issues—that of *course* if there's a kid supernaturally plagued by nightmares you'll help them out.

Maybe they even remind you of yourself.

This probably plays out as a lot of conversation, because that's going to be any reasonable person's first tack here, and yours as well. It's not that you can't just fix the matter with science, but a person shouldn't *fear* their nightmares. They shouldn't *fight* their nightmares. The way to deal with nightmares is to embrace and come to an accord with them. Right?

I mean, that's what *you* did. You explored them. You turned them into power.

So you'll want to help the kid through their therapy. You'll want to help them find a way to reconcile themselves with their nightmares. You might not want to be their therapist yourself, although therapists *do* get to wear long white coats and be called doctor (don't they?) but the kid's psychological counseling is a big theme for this quest. And if you *don't* step in as their therapist maybe you'll see one yourself?

All of this gets complicated, though, because nightmares have opened; the kid's nightmare figures are slipping through, one by one, into reality. Later on, a gate will open straight between the nightmare world and Town, and this kid's dreams are a big part of why.

In particular, a hooded horror named **Ill-Made** haunts you and the child alike; she and her gang of nightmares may wind up... disassembling... somebody, if they are not first stopped.

As Nightmares' Angel—"Engineering!"

This is your chance to initiate a somewhat more complicated plan.

As Nightmares' Angel—"Above the Fray"

This is the story of how you face your death.

In a typical Arc, this comes near the end. It's you in your capacity as thinker, planner, and shaper of events.

Aside—Why Does the Gate Open?

Why does a gate open from the Haunted Child's dreams? I figure it's one of these reasons:

- Nightmare science, used to help, goes wrong.
- Some Main Character happens to open such a gate.
- It's the natural next stage in the alien force's move against **the Haunted Child.**
- **The Haunted Child** is special and something in their subconscious or nightmares always had the potential to break through into the world. The PCs' efforts or the alien force that has touched their dreams just enhances/amplifies this.

You have the opportunity to decide what should be done about the gate if it stayed open. You have the opportunity to decide what should be done about the talents of the Haunted Child. You're the one who'll decide the proper fate of any nightmare creatures stuck in Town or in the other world. Etcetera.

And your own fate—to drown or not to drown, as it were—is a part and parcel of that.

If you're an advanced user of these rules, and you switched to an Aspect Arc right out the gate, then this is more of a prelude—you haven't really gotten engaged with the story yet, you haven't met the Haunted Child or discovered that the Outside is stirring yet, it's just that you keep dreaming of Jade Irinka and death and feeling drawn to the water and it's drawing you out to Fortitude. On an Aspect Arc, this is almost nothing *but* the story of your personal fate:

Of knowing that you are wicked, and ought to die; of wrestling with the blasphemy inside of you; but you have so much to do! You are too valuable to the world! How can you let your magnificent light be drowned in the waters of Big Lake?

As Nightmares' Angel—"Walking the Boundaries"

This is your chance to explore the consequences of the choices previously made—

In particular, in regards to the Haunted Child.

The Rinley Yatskaya Way

Other characters—even if they're not actually Rinley—usually play these Arcs out **the Rinley Yatskaya way.** Like so!

As Anyone Else - "Adventure GET"

Nightmares' Angel thinks that something is stirring up the Outside. They've been out taking readings near and in Big Lake. They've been studying reports of recent storms, and the legend of the glass dragon, and the death of Jade Irinka (who was the sun.)

Their dreams have been calling them to Big Lake—

Possibly, since they are a wicked creature, to drown themselves therein.

You become concerned by some of this. Probably the most interesting part is that Town might be in danger—that something might *in fact* be coming: a massive Outside-fueled hurricane, a new glass dragon, a zombie revenant of Jade Irinka (who was the sun), or an army out of the Bleak Academy.

It's an adventure!

Whether you annoy Nightmares' Angel, compete with them, help them, or investigate them, that'll usually start with the quest **Adventure GET.**

As Anyone Else—"Let's Doing!"

In **Let's Doing!,** you'll play out your further plans for Nightmares' Angel or take the Haunted Child (pg. 409) underneath your wing.

As Anyone Else—"Labyrinth Diving"

In **Labyrinth Diving,** you'll explore a maze. I think there are three options here:

- the Haunted Child's psychological and dream issues
- some labyrinthine warren that Ill-Made's gang (pg. 429) sets up in Fortitude
- your first taste of the nightmare world (pg. 427) itself

If you need a longer Arc than that, you'll want to sow the seeds for it by the end of **Labyrinth Diving—**it's best if there are some floating risks and potential failures around that you can play out in the next few quests.

As Anyone Else—"Climbing the Sacred Mountain"

Here are some typical subjects for **Climbing the Sacred Mountain:**

- You'll have to fight to win the Haunted Child's soul back from Ill-Made's gang.
- Perhaps Nightmares' Angel gets stolen by or at least needs rescuing from some sort of horror.
- Maybe those dreams I mentioned that have been calling Nightmares' Angel to Big Lake intensify, and you have to stop them from going down to the water (voluntarily, involuntarily, or accidentally) to drown.

As Anyone Else—"Down"

So the premise here in a Knight or Storyteller Arc is that you've failed; at some point in all of this, or in something unconnected to all of this, you should probably have failed; there is something awful that happened, something painful, and you'll have to cope with it before moving on.

If this is the first quest in your Arc, though, then I think you must be having nightmares yourself. You must be dealing with something rough—I don't know what. Some personal tragedy or grief. Or the same mental invasion that the Haunted Child is dealing with. Or even just the fact that Nightmares' Angel is being called to the water to die.

As a Shepherd quest, that ends when you become responsible for what's going on in this Arc in some way—when you stumble on the Haunted Child and realize that your own nightmares will have to take a back seat, or (less usefully, but similarly) first face/discover the stirring up of the Outside.

As a Mystic Arc, it's more likely to end with the opening of the gate into the nightmare world and all manner of trouble soon thereafter ensuing.

How Should You Help the Haunted Child?

Late in the first Nightmares Arc it might become very obvious what you have to do—but early on, when there aren't nightmare horrors running around, figuring out how to help a child with nightmares can be pretty tough.

So here's my thoughts!

The "default" plan to help the Haunted Child should be reconciling them with their nightmare figures and carefully cleaning the metaphysical "space" of their nightmares—sometimes in real life, once that gate opens; sometimes using technology or magic to get into their dreams and do it there; sometimes with careful psychological work.

This doesn't *have* to be your plan—

If the child's problems all stem from a "dream eater" that's skulking over them spiritually, or if some nightmare science device accidentally tore a hole in their dreams and that's why they're having problems, or whatever, then you might want to do something else. That said, the quests for this Arc implicitly assume that a meticulous and harmonious approach probably would be best.

Nightmares' World

THE SECOND NIGHTMARES ARC

Below and beyond people's individual nightmares there's an entire world; and in that world, a blasphemy forced into **Nightmares' Angel** at the hands of the Bleak Academy: a horrid bog of muck and poisons and endless drowning. It is growing. It is spreading. It is crumbling the whole of nightmare down into itself.

A wolf-bog. A death-bog. A gap in the universal mind.

You've found a way in—

Past the mundane world, into the world of nightmares. Maybe the gate from **Nightmares Open** is still around. I'd assume that, in fact, but for all I know your particular version of that story had to see it closed. If so, then you've discovered another route. It's still accessible through the Outside; or through your dreams, because you knew the people of nightmares; or through some of the technology of Leonardo or Dulcinea de Montreal.

This Arc is the story of how you visit it; how you explore it; how you *deal* with it, and what it represents.

...how *are* you going to explore it, by the way?

Will you make a beachhead, or will each new venture be independent? Are you just poking around or are you going there as a savior? A conqueror? A destroyer?

Is there anything of goodness there?

Other Options

If you feel you're already done with the story of the nightmare world, you can skip this Arc. Conversely, if you don't feel done with the story of Ill-Made and the Haunted Child, then feel free to merge the remainder of that story into the story of this Arc.

As Nightmares' Angel—"Science!" / "Above the Fray"

I figure that if you're **Nightmares' Angel** you're drawn to the place. Drawn back to the nightmare world. It touches too much on stuff that's pretty personal.

The order of these quests is going to depend on the Arc, but—

In **Science!** your dreams call you back to a place of danger. You have to fix the problems there. Conversely, in **Above the Fray,** you're more of the immaculate and glorious destiny-deciding god of dream and nightmare, the incomparable de Montreal:

What are you going to *do* about the place?

What *should* you?

As Nightmares' Angel—"Someone's in Trouble!"

I don't know who's in trouble here, exactly. Someone in the nightmare world. If you aren't actually exploring that yet, if you're on an **Emptiness** Arc and this is your very first quest here, then you can go in and poke around for a bit before you meet them—

Or maybe you meet them in a dream. Or the Haunted Child tells you about them. Or dozens of people have a simultaneous nightmare about being them. I don't know.

The point is, it's a nightmare person, most likely, that's in trouble, a person residing in that world, because that world is the subject of this Arc.

I think that if you are in the nightmare world, and you're hoping as a player to stumble across someone in trouble to help, that you will find them by a riverbank. I mean, that's not an IC rule—

Although I'd guess being by a river and being in trouble probably correlate statistically—

But I think that a riverbank's a good place to set the scene for finding them. If there are innocent souls anywhere in nightmare, they're most likely by the river, running from hunters or living in little cottages heating kettles on their bone-fueled fires.

As Nightmares' Angel—"Engineering!" / "Walking the Boundaries"

I don't have anything to say here! In **Engineering!** you come up with and execute a complicated plan. In **Walking the Boundaries** you explore the effects of the choices that you've made thus far.

"The Rinley Yatskaya Way"

As Anyone Else—"Adventure GET"

If you're not actually **Nightmares' Angel** then I think a player-driven exploration of the nightmare world is probably less pressing. You can go and do another Arc, say, one of your own or one for some other NPC, and then come back and realize:

You know, I should do something about that nightmare world. Adventure GET!

This is the quest where you go in to deal with it all. To fix it all. To figure out what should be done. It's scary but it's also kind of exciting and cool.

As Anyone Else—"Let's Doing!" / "Labyrinth Diving" / "Climbing the Sacred Mountain"

These'll play out in the standard fashion for a Rinley-styled adventure:

- You drive forward through the situation...
- You tackle or map a complex labyrinth or puzzle; and...
- You ascend to a height, respectively.

As Anyone Else—"Down"

If you're not **Nightmares' Angel** then this'll play out as a Rinley-styled adventure.

On a Shepherd/Mystic Arc

And if you're on a Shepherd or a Mystic Arc, then I guess it's probably some awful things that draw you back into it—that Arc will start with **Down.**

You'll be *troubled* and that'll lead you back into the Nightmare World. It might not be *your* troubles. It might be something that happens to the Haunted Child or to the creatures of the nightmare world currently living in Town (if there are any.) It might be someone you care about having nightmares, or it might be having "nightmares" that someone you recently lost is still alive. Or nightmares that they're suffering.

What I'm saying is that on those Arcs it's not so much that you decide to go explore the nightmare world is that your life becomes a bit of a nightmare *itself;* and then—

Maybe it's not until the end of the quest that the exploration of the nightmare world kicks off. Maybe that's the miracle at the end of your Mystic 1 quest, that something you thought was hopeless isn't hopeless, that something you thought was destroyed isn't

destroyed, just lost in the nightmare world. Or maybe it's the responsibility at the end of a Shepherd 1 quest:

You were going along, just fine, or at least, not fine, but making do, pulling your life back together, and then your own problems were cast into shadow as you suddenly realized or discovered a responsibility to something in the nightmare world.

Don't let that *stop* you from exploring the place during **Down**. I'm just saying that it doesn't have to be about that—your first quest here can have a thematic tie to the nightmare world rather than a real one.

5

On a Knight/Storyteller Arc

If you're on a Knight or Storyteller Arc, instead, I hope you'll already know what to do with **Down** by the time you get there. It'll be the fourth or fifth quest, and it'll be the quest where you're dealing with hard truths and your own sins. If it's really not obvious what those hard truths might be or what your sins or errors are, though, you can start this quest out by having nightmares and night terrors and hope to figure out the rest along the way.

The House in the Dark

THE THIRD NIGHTMARES ARC

The blasphemy embedded in **Nightmares' Angel** is a thing of stagnant water, rot, and decay.

There is a house at the border of Town whose traditional practices help keep that at bay—a house that sinks its metaphorical fangs into the blasphemy and pours clear water out.

You've just discovered it—found hints at it in historical records, maybe, and traced it to the place, and it's still there; or maybe you've been given it, willed it by the former caretaker who's just died or an enemy trying to be clever; or, heck, maybe you've *remade* it when it had been lost, found old plans and rebuilt it or killed a crawling leviathan born from the chaos and found the house inside.

It's a cool, rambling old mansion, but is it an answer to the problems you've encountered in the two previous Arcs?

Typically the answer is either:

- "Yes, but it'll take more time than you have."
- "No, it's a horrible trap and a diversion."
- "No, but it's a pretty cool place."

The House in the Dark

Some of the things I know about this rambling, sprawling structure—

There's several creaky stairways of dark wood. One of them goes down into the basement. One has a place you can hide underneath it, or sit on a wooden platform halfway up and eat sandwiches and have tea.

There's a nice semicircular veranda looking out on the sky and on Big Lake.

There's caverns underneath it—the cellar opens into a natural water-hollowed cave system. It probably ultimately connects to the Lake.

It's multi-story, with a multi-level shingled roof.

Traditionally there's an ageless scullery boy, Mizu, and a young ragamuffin girl, Kona, who helps in the kitchen and plays occasional games of pretend out on the roof. There may also be a full staff, or there may be a peculiar emptiness in the household rolls between you (as lord or lady of the house) and the low-ranked/servants' servants such as the two I just brought up.

Some other creatures that could be around include:

- the former caretaker's child, Skot
- your neighbor, Lucy Godsfollow (pg. 415)
- a prisoner of some sort
- the spirit or AI of the house itself[109]
- a creature of the Outside, nightmares, or blasphemy that suffers because the house exists
- some random person who lives in the neighborhood and comes by with a lasagne when you move in (Let's call them "Mr. or Mrs. Brisby.")

109 In my head their name is "Absinthe Buttersby," but you probably want a more somber name like Morgan, Apsu, Liragon, or Dumuzi... or a slightly goofier name like "Buttersby Drowning" or "Dill Bayleaf Absinthe."

The Death of the Sun

The Fourth Nightmares Arc

Something—the nightmare realm, the blasphemy, the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy, the reawakened spirit of Melanie Malakh—is sending horror after horror into Town. (Possibly including a vampire or puppet version of the dead sun.) Blasphemy is seeping in, and the near Outside is drowning.

Can anyone stop it? What's *causing* it?

That's the subject for this Arc.

First, there are rumors of the great horned snake **Bašmu—**one hundred and eight miles long, with six mouths, who devours fish, birds, ships, rats, cats, and humans with equal alacrity.[110] It's not the first time it's been sighted by Fortitude's sailors, but they're saying that it's been coming awfully close to Town.

Legend? Rumor? Fact?

Then maybe there's a curse—someone's being possessed; or transformed into a horror; or, maybe, not quite *transformed*, exactly, but imprisoned in a golden birdcage inside the body of a giant beast. Often the result is a manifestation of **Ugallu,** a lion-headed storm-demon with the feet of a bird. But it could be that a Main Character loses their self-control under the impact of the curse, or something weird happens with **the Guardian Bird** (pg. 326).

Can you save them and Fortitude from themselves?

Or maybe there's no transformation or possession—it's just that there's someone whose fate is intimately connected with some horrifically dangerous creature: Ugallu; or the giant wolf-creature **Uridimmu**; or a killer whale or great shark able to swim through land; or a three-eyed dream demon with a peculiar **Reality Syndrome** who accidentally manifests anything wished for in its presence.

It's got to be a pain to have that kind of fated connection with something that is completely unacceptable in Fortitude society.

Maybe you can help?

And if it were just that, then maybe it wouldn't be a big deal. You solve them, and the two incidents are over; heck, maybe one or both are much less threatening than they seemed. But it doesn't stop.

Town is under attack.

You've got to figure out where these things are coming from and why. Maybe it's obvious; maybe it takes you a little while; maybe you're at the end of the third or fourth quest before it actually makes sense.

Then, when you know where they're coming from, you have to figure out what you'll do about it!

110 I keep saying that turning into a giant snake never helps, but neither my design aesthetic nor the Sumerians listen!

The Lost World

"The Death of the Sun" is the last Nightmares Arc that I'm going to go into, because I suspect it marks the end of **Nightmares' Angel's** story. That said, it's *possible* that there's one more—

Specifically, I think that it's possible that you're on the point of the classic hero's journey where you've won the day but still have to get home again, and that's even harder yet. If so, then I'd guess that somewhere around the end of this Arc, you'll wake up and realize that you weren't in Fortitude or Town after all—

You thought you were wandering around taking care of last details and enjoying the fruits of victory, but no!

You weren't! You're not!

That was wrong!

You are somewhere lost in the Outside, instead.

Rinley

the Rinley Arcs

5

These are the stories for **Rinley Yatskaya, the Troublemaker.**

Not the original. Not the *famous* one. Not the one who invented pepper and tied together an angel's shoes. Not the one who dredged up Greenland from the sea and tricked all the Martians back to Mars.

But *a* Rinley, anyhow.

These stories aren't deeply tied to the particulars of the character. If you're basically a troublemaker yourself, and Rinley's an NPC, then you can probably play through them *as* Rinley—someone out there looking for adventure.

I mean, I like the character, I'd prefer Rinley actually show up, but PCs are more important than NPCs! If you're into the idea of actively making adventures happen, and becoming a bit more of a storybook character over time, and being a little immature compared to the typical PC (but not by *much*) then you can play through these Arcs *as* the Troublemaker.

Or you can play through as someone else who gets tangled up in these stories—probably a long-suffering someone else.

How to Play These Arcs

For Rinley, or someone playing through these Arcs *as* Rinley, the proper path through these Arcs features the quests (pg. 344):

- **Adventure GET.** You've gotten involved in something exciting!
- **Let's Doing!** You drive forward through the situation.
- **Labyrinth Diving.** This is the part where you're a little bit confused. You know where to *look* for answers, sort of, but you don't have them yet.
- **Climbing the Sacred Mountain.** You're chasing answers, solutions, or victory.
- **Down.** You're chasing something subtler, scarier, or more painful than that.

For anyone else, these are going to be **a Scientific Adventure** (pg. 334), featuring the quests:

- **Science!** You've been presented with a situation or possible tragedy. By gum, you will do science to it!
- **Someone's in Trouble!** Someone (Rinley?)'s in trouble! You help them out.
- **Engineering!** You've got a sense for the meat of this situation now. It's no longer an enigma—it's a technical problem. It's time to do engineering to it!
- **Above the Fray.** You rise above the situation and make moral or philosophical decisions—what *should* be done with this situation or technology?
- **Walking the Boundaries.** Having made that call, you explore its consequences.

Rinley Yatskaya Looks for Trouble

The First Rinley Arc

This Arc begins with a player-driven exploration of one or two of the mysteries of Fortitude:

- the deal with the straw-haired spirit (see "the romantic interest," see below)
- the deal with the pirate ship (pg. 488)
- the deal with the death of Jade Irinka (pg. 487)
- the deal with any NPC Main Character:
  - ...particularly **the Angel of Fortitude**, but...
  - ...probably *not* **Nightmares' Angel** or **the Troublemaker**
- the deal with the glass dragon (pg. 488)

In fact, if you find yourself exploring a mystery, and **the Troublemaker** is an NPC, you might consider exploring it by way of this Arc!

Most of what I'm going to provide for you here are characters and settings—over the course of this Arc, if you're Rinley, you'll...

- ...overcome or win over the antagonist, **Simon (or Liza) Brambles** (pg. 427),
- ...have a developing friendship or romance with the romantic interest,
- ...encounter one or two scenic heights or mazes (pg. 488),
- ...slowly unravel the mystery or portions thereof with the help of the other PCs and the spirit named Palimpsest or Totem (pg. 445),
- ...and deal with the weighty presence of death (pg. 442).

If you're anyone else, it's basically the same, except that:

- **Simon (or Liza) Brambles** might or might not be *your* antagonist—they could be your romantic interest, or someone in trouble to help, instead. For instance, you might be called upon to help them if they're, e.g., torn between their affection for Rinley and whatever's blackmailing them or forcing them into opposition.
- **The Romantic Interest** for this Arc *could* become your romantic interest, of course, or they could stay Rinley's, leaving you stuck in the position of watching the inevitable emotional trainwreck and helping as much as you can.

As the Troublemaker—"Adventure GET"

So lately you've been coming out of your shell a bit. You've been starting to get behind the idea of having adventures—of trying to live up to the name you wear.

You're going to start by looking into one or two of the mysteries of Fortitude—see the list above!

... and, hey. You've been noticing the PCs around. You can *see* that you're going to get together with these people one day and have adventures.

(I'm not kidding. It's one of your powers.)

So you might as well drag them in!

This plays out as the quest **Adventure GET**.

As the Troublemaker—"Let's Doing!"

This quest is a good time to make sure you encounter all the characters and set pieces for this quest. See if you can get the HG to introduce Simon Brambles, Totem/Palimpsest, and the romantic interest, if they haven't. Visit one or two of the scenic heights and mazes that I'll talk about below. Have an encounter with the death wolf.

This is the long body of the Arc, the quest where a lot of the slow work of investigation happens.

As the Troublemaker—"Labyrinth Diving"

This quest is about exploring or mapping a big confusing situation. If you're investigating a mystery, like you are here, that's often a sign of progress:

A maze is scary and confusing but fundamentally *solvable*. So by the time you get around to **Labyrinth Diving** you're actually in a good position, because you know what you're doing. You know *where to look*.

This particular quest is in the shadow of one or more of the labyrinths discussed on pg. 489.

If you're on a **Mystic** Arc, then you'll want to talk to the HG or poke over the material before digging into this stuff—work with them to figure out *which* labyrinth will overshadow the quest, *which* labyrinth is the "where to look," and figure out who your "opposite number" is. I assume it's Simon Brambles, but maybe it's the romantic interest, a PC, or the death wolf.

You'll explore that labyrinth as part of figuring out the mystery that you're investigating, and you'll talk to your opposite number a fair amount.

If you're not on a Mystic Arc, then you've probably already had a chance and a good excuse to *encounter* labyrinths on this Arc, so you should be able to come up with a reason why searching through one is part of your plan.

As the Troublemaker—"Climbing the Sacred Mountain"

This is you reaching for a solution. This is you trying to make things better; or grasp the answer; or become better than you were.

It's often a little mystic. This is the quest of yours that is often a little mystic—

The entire quest is a metaphor for striving beyond your limits.

What do you need? What are you reaching for? What's the magic something that you, by way of this quest, could reach for?

As the Troublemaker—"Down"

This is a rough one.

Maybe it's the end of the Arc, and you're having to face the fact that the romantic interest is short-lived. To really cope with that—it's rough work.

Or maybe you failed somewhere.

Having to accept that is *hard*.

If you're on a Shepherd or Mystic Arc, if you're just starting, then I think you're coming into this Arc out of a hard time in your life—sickness, trouble, grief, and guilt. If that fits your life, then work through it in this quest; if it doesn't, then maybe it has to happen now.

If you're on a Shepherd or Mystic Arc, this mystery, this investigation, isn't something that you leapt into because you were feeling great. It was a gift. All of it—the romantic interest, Totem/Palimpsest, maybe even Simon Brambles—

It was a *gift*, something precious, given to you in the world and by the world in your time of trouble to help you see past it to the end. It was or it will be a miracle.

A Scientific Adventure

Other characters—even if they're not actually Rinley—usually play these Arcs out as **a Scientific Adventure** (pg. 334):

As Anybody Else—"Science!"

It's not like Rinley has a lock on the market for making trouble and exploring mysteries—if you're playing through this story as someone else, it might take a *little* longer before you start shaking the trees and poking around the secret corners of Fortitude, but not necessarily that *much* longer.

So you'll find some mystery or situation you care about investigating and you'll do the quest **Science!** to it. At some point you'll bump into the Troublemaker, because Rinley's investigating whatever you're investigating too.

I recommend soft-selling this meeting—

It's going to be tempting to assume it's a weighty moment where at last you meet the driving force of the Arc, but it's probably not. Rinley can be played pushy and proactive or more towards a limpet/tagalong kid sister or brother, and in most games you'll want to reserve "pushy and proactive" for PCs.

Not all of them!

Sometimes a PC group really needs a proactive NPC around because they're all tentative and stuff, and then having Rinley show up here will be a big deal, but in *most* games you should expect an NPC version of **the Troublemaker** to be a sidekick or even a goofy background character even in the character's own Arcs.

It's just, it's important to have Rinley *around* so that in the future, if you bump into any of the stuff designed for Rinley and it doesn't fit your PC (e.g., the romantic interest, the ally spirit, the poisoning in a later story, etc.) you and the HG can fob that stuff off onto **the Troublemaker** and have it remain relevant to the Arc.

As Anybody Else—"Someone's in Trouble!"

This quest is the one that personalizes things. If **Science!** is more about the investigation itself, **Someone's in Trouble** is where you get involved with Rinley, the romantic interest, or someone else who's, well, in trouble. This is where what you're looking into becomes personally and not just intellectually important.

As Anybody Else—"Engineering!"/"Walking the Boundaries"

These quests are generic:

- **Engineering!** focuses on a plan that you come up with.
- **Walking the Boundaries** focuses on the consequences of your choices so far.

You may also find it helpful to tie the quest **Engineering!** to one of the labyrinths for this Arc—see the discussion of the labyrinths below, and consider keeping them in mind when trying to come up with the plan that this quest is about!

As Anybody Else—"Above the Fray"

On an Aspect Arc

If you're on an Aspect Arc, if you're investigating one of the secrets and mysteries of the game as a way of training yourself, then **Above the Fray** is first and foremost about why you'd do that.

It's going to be about your search for answers on some bigger deal in your life, and how that ties into the labyrinths, the high places, the spirits, and the secrets of Fortitude. It'll be a story about how you can't go forward on what you've been doing until you figure this stuff out, and the end of **Above the Fray** is also the moment when you kind of push past that barrier—

When you *see* it, for the first time, when you know that: yes. This is the right direction. This is the path that'll take you where you need to go. If your life progress was like a ship blocked by a field of icebergs, this is the summer:

The icebergs, beginning to crack.

Since your next quest will be **Someone's in Trouble!,** that means that there's probably a person who's going to help you either spiritually or technically—that Rinley or the romantic interest or Totem/Palimpsest or someone else who is involved with this story is *just what you needed* to push past the icelocked sea lanes of your life. If not then maybe they're more of a side deal, like, you've just pushed past your mental or circumstantial stumbling block, but you have to help them out and maybe celebrate with them a bit before you can go much further.

On a Bindings, Otherworldly, or Emptiness Arc

If you're coming in to **Above the Fray** on any other Arc it's going to be more focused on the stuff you've already experienced—on the encounters you've already had with the characters and settings of this Arc. It'll be about you saying, OK:

Here's what we have to do.

The Antagonist

The antagonist for this story is **Simon Brambles, Prince of Thorns,** as described on pg. 427. He'll emerge from the nightmare world and make an effort to confuse the mystery at hand.

Things to Investigate

This section covers a few suggested mysteries for you and/or **the Troublemaker** to explore.

The Death of Jade Irinka

Once upon a time, but not all that very long ago, the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy rode out onto the clouds above Fortitude, drew back his great black bow, and killed the sun:

Killed Jade Irinka, whom he had—purportedly—loved.

There's probably a secret here. It's probably one of these three things:

- that she wasn't killed by the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy—it was something else.
- that she wasn't killed at all—she's a prisoner at the Bleak Academy.
- that she *let* the Headmaster kill her, so that she could change the nature of death.

The truth is, if there's any secret here I want it to emerge over a long time—

I mean, try to get through at least a tenth of your game's planned lifespan before you nail it down, and ideally you won't be *sure* until the final third.

But you can poke into the matter now. You can get some hints that point in any of those three directions; in fact, ideally, you could get some early hints that point in *all* three of those directions, as well as some hints that there isn't actually any kind of mystery at all, that it's all exactly as it seemed.

Dig out some truths and hints, I mean, and see what actually sticks.

The Glass Dragon

People are pretty vague when they talk about the glass dragon, mostly. Everyone remembers that there was one, and the basic stuff that was covered in the campaign premise, but most people'll be like "oh, somebody must know" or they'll tell their own personal little side story and those side stories won't fit together into truth.

Maybe you could dig the real truth up?

5

The Pirate Ship

There's supposed to be a pirate ship, possibly crewed by ghosts, that hangs around the docks and hasn't actually troubled the ships there yet. Maybe it's having trouble working up the nerve to bother Fortitude. Maybe they're just too nice for piracy. Maybe their plans are complicated and haven't come to fruition yet.

You could investigate!

I actually have no idea where this one will go; I'd suggest that that gives you the opportunity to propose as outlandish and goofy a set of theories as you like.

High Places

Playing through Rinley's Arcs, and through **Storyteller** Arcs in general, favors the introduction of "high places" with special meaning to you—metaphorical mountains and world trees for use in a quest about an ascent.

I'm going to talk about three high places here:

- the "topless tower"
- the heights of the Yatskaya temple
- the mast of an abandoned ship

...but if none of those fit your interests, you might also look into:

- the limestone cliffs of the north beach
- the roofs of Fortitude
- the top floor of the Archive of Hideo Hayashi
- the stack of ignored paperwork in the office of Amelia Kozlov, jam guru and Regional Council member

The Topless Tower

There's supposed to be a tower down by Imported Cold that no rat has ever climbed.

It's under construction. They can't get in.

They've climbed up twenty, thirty floors of girders from the outside, but they haven't reached the top. They've gone so high that there's *no way* that you couldn't see the tower from everywhere in Fortitude; yet, you can't, because it isn't properly *in* Fortitude. It's in the Outside.

The Yatskaya Temple

I haven't defined how tall the Yatskaya temple is, really. The real thing isn't *that* tall, but it's kind of unworldly and daydreams and reality blur. So if you want it to be one of the "high places" for this quest, you can assume that either the real temple or its apparent extent when daydreams and spiritual stuff gets involved is lighthouse height—forty to eighty yards.

The temple will also come up as a possible labyrinth, below.

The Abandoned Ship

Thirty years ago there was a span of two and a half years where there was an abandoned three-master just kind of keeled over on the northern beach—the kids really liked playing on it and there was some holdup with processing the salvage. Maybe it was ghosts, maybe it was bureaucracy, maybe somebody actually owned it but was too sick to do anything about it and it wasn't doing any harm. I don't know!

If you wanted, you could move that ship and its secrets to the modern day.

Mazes and Labyrinths

You'll also want to run a labyrinth or two.

I'm going to talk a little bit more right now about three possibilities:

- the Bramble Rose Sideways, a tangled section of the Fortitude streets
- the Yatskaya temple, again
- the labyrinth near the top of Hideo Hayashi's Archive

I don't have any particular notes on them, but I'd also recommend considering:

- the banks of the Twisting River
- a maze-like junkyard

There may well be a labyrinth under the Titov family shrine, but don't force that if it doesn't wind up feeling right—it's more important to have an evocative, real-feeling Titov shrine that works for your player group than to get another labyrinth set up. There'll definitely be a few labyrinths introduced during **Nightmares' Angel's** Arcs (both "Nightmare's World" on pg. 480 and "The House in the Dark" on pg. 482 are probable warrens), but I don't know when those'll come into play in any given game.

If none of these ideas work for you, and you're feeling hard up for labyrinths, you might also look into:

- the labyrinth under Horizon's School
- the roofs of Fortitude
- the labyrinth in Soma

I don't want to separate you too much from Fortitude, and particularly lower Fortitude, and traveling to Soma Village on a regular basis might be a mess, but all three of those things have the labyrinth-nature, so if they seem to fit, I'll just have to deal!

The Bramble Rose Sideways

As noted elsewhere, "Sideway" is a Fortitude abbreviation for "Outside Alley," which in turn refers to a street whose destination you don't know. The Bramble Rose Sideways is a tangle of practically unnavigable streets. I've never been there, so it's possible that it's being exaggerated; on the other hand, it's possible that it's an extra labyrinth right there in Fortitude!

The Yatskaya Temple

The temple doesn't seem to be that big around from the outside, but it's really hard to be sure—

There's a lot of natural obstacles, from brambles to fences to a hillside to a drainage ditch, that make it difficult to walk around the temple, and in truth you just *can't* unless you're willing to break into people's houses and through their walls to make certain of it. That said, there's a lot of space inside. A *surprising* amount of space inside. You could get lost there, going up and down and around indefinitely, particularly given that there are some Hayashi-made mirrors that I'm pretty sure you could walk through if you tried.

The Archive of Professor Hideo Hayashi

I'm going to talk more about this place elsewhere, but it's worth note that, like the Yatskaya family temple, Professor Hideo Hayashi's archive is a place of indeterminate extent. In particular, near the top the maze of shelving starts to slip into the Outside and become a labyrinth. On the one hand, this is a crucial set piece for the entire **Glass-Maker's Dragon** campaign, so using it as a high pace and labyrinth to investigate during the first Arc of this quest only makes sense; on the other, it's a crucial set piece for the entire campaign, so if you're looking for something more **Troublemaker**-specific or if the nature of the Archive has already been determined or if **the Dream-Witch** wants to keep its purpose focused on her character stuff, it might not be the ideal choice.

Rinley and the Titovs

The Second Rinley Arc

The Titovs charge **the Troublemaker** with taking food to the creature imprisoned underneath their shrine.

So here's how this story usually goes—

Bearing in mind that you'll have to tweak things a bit, or possibly *start* with this Arc, if you're using the character variation **Rinley Titov.**

The story goes that there's some mystery that's gotten near and dear to the PCs' hearts that the Titovs can help you solve. Usually that's...

- ...something to do with the evil previous identity of **the Dream-Witch.**
- ...something to do with Professor Hideo Hayashi (or the "imaginary country" he once sketched out in glass).
- ...something to do with the death of the sun.

Maybe it's something else. Ideally it's not *just* Rinley's stuff—making this bargain with the Titovs could be a great way to tie **the Troublemaker** to the other stories in the game.

Anyway, the Titovs need Rinley to take over taking food to the thing under the shrine.

Maybe it's just woken up. Maybe it's been struggling. Maybe it's just manifest a new face. Maybe this has always been what Rinley's "for." And the Titovs offer a trade: information or help or something in exchange for Rinley agreeing to this.

Normally that thing under the shrine is **Iolithae Septimian** (pg. 438).

She's extremely dangerous, but she's also a cool storyteller—she'll tell you stories of emptiness and dream, stories of why the world isn't worthy, and all kinds of interesting stuff.

Typically she'll get out during the course of the Arc and be imprisoned again at its end.

As Rinley—"Adventure GET" / "Let's Doing!"

You've been dragged into this mess. You've been summoned by Titov magic and given a bargain that you can't refuse.

That said:

Adventure GET.

For the first quest, you're probably basically just going with it. The Titovs are an awful mess, and Iolithae's imprisonment is scary, and being compelled by magic—

Worse, being offered a bargain by magic that you could theoretically refuse or abandon, knowing that the magic carefully selected you and the bargain so that you *wouldn't*, so that you *would* accept, would be *guaranteed* to accept, and to keep its terms—

That's scary.

But whatever. You go with it.

Eventually it begins to wear on you, you begin to stress over the risks and the pain around you and stuff. It gets hard on you. You'll move on to **Let's Doing!** to try to fix some of this stuff.

I'd suggest that it's around the end of that that Iolithae escapes—unless you deliberately free her, before that. Don't *force* that if it doesn't make sense or isn't fun, but I think that it's a good moment. Regardless, at that point, you're oriented on the long-term elements of the situation.

As Rinley—"Labyrinth Diving"

You know sort of what you have to do. You have to unravel your obligations, catch Iolithae if necessary and put her to sleep again, or strengthen the general bindings on and the health of the Titov Shrine.

Just *how*—

That's going to be confusing, and may involve a lot of visits to dark corners of the catacombs under the Titov shrine, or Bluebell Park, or the Outside, or other scary places; or navigating the family politics of the Titovs—

That will play out with the quest **Labyrinth Diving.**

As Rinley—"Climbing the Sacred Mountain"

If there's a high and lofty goal remaining after that, then you'd pursue it with **Climbing the Sacred Mountain;** if there's a leftover terrible grief, or pain, or suffering, after that, you'd have to follow that climb up, no pun intended, with **Down.**

As Rinley—"Down"

There's another way to do these quests, of course, where **Down** begins it all. Where that quest, where the *harshness* of that quest, *is* the way in which you encounter the Titovs.

Things suck. Things are very bad. And part of that, or maybe exacerbating that, you're called to deal with the Titovs. You're dragged into their stuff. And that isn't "Adventure GET." That's... it's awful. It sucks.

If you're on a Shepherd/Mystic path, you won't get all happy and Adventure GET until much later; not until there's a spark of light, a bit of hope, a reason to think that maybe, after all, these people can be saved.

"A Scientific Adventure"

If you're *not* Rinley, then you have a choice about how to start this story:

- You can assume that you've been summoned instead of Rinley...
- ...or that both of you were called for the same task...
- ...or that you're investigating the Titovs or the thing under the shrine on your own recognizance, and that Rinley doesn't show up until you need **Someone in Trouble!** to help.

In general:

- **Science!** is about figuring out what's going on and formally getting involved.
- **Someone's in Trouble!** is your chance to help Iolithae, the Titovs, and/or Rinley.
- **Engineering!** is about immediate solutions.
- **Above the Fray** is about tackling the philosophical problems here and deciding what *ought* to be done about the Titovs and their prisoner—whether that's a compassionate balancing out of the harsh actions taken in earlier quests or an arrogant meddler's act of hubris.
- **Walking the Boundaries** explores the outcome.

Rinley is Poisoned

THE THIRD RINLEY ARC

The Troublemaker is poisoned in their dreams by the claw of a dead bird.

(That happens.)

It poisons them. It *sickens* them, and they must find an antidote before it is too late.

I'm not going to give you any more than that.

Not right now, anyway.

If Rinley's an NPC that nobody cares about, then this can happen to somebody else. Some other NPC, maybe. Or to you. But it's *meant* to be terrifyingly inexplicable. It's *meant* to be this elusive thing that happens that's almost impossible to grasp.

As the Troublemaker

You'll play this out with:

- **Adventure GET** while the poison isn't that bad and the sheer freakiness of it is kind of entertaining.
- **Let's Doing!** when sickness and uncertainty is starting to wear on you.
- **Labyrinth Diving** when you've found *somewhere* to look to try to find answers, antidotes, and meaning—probably "the near Outside," "the nightmare world," "the top floor of the Archive," "the depths of Yatskaya temple," or some other sort of maze.
- **Climbing the Sacred Mountain** to hunt down the actual cure; *and maybe*
- **Down** to deal with the nearness of death, the worst of the poison, the cost of that cure, or whatever else.

A Scientific Adventure

As Anybody Else—"Science!"

On a Bindings/Otherworldly Arc

It's harder for you to get involved in this particular Arc *before* the Troublemaker does, because, after all, it happens *to* Rinley—

But you could still be doing general **Science!** about some sort of impending threat, poison, dream thing, or dying birds. In fact, I'd recommend that last: there's some sort of mysterious epidemic among the birds of Fortitude, which possibly has some natural relationship to dreams or nightmares. Do science to it!

That leaves you free and clear to delay Rinley's entrance until **Someone's in Trouble!**, which has some value because the only person explicitly stated by this Arc to be in trouble *is* the Troublemaker.

On an Aspect/Emptiness Arc

You've already been helping Rinley, most likely—but now there's a bigger problem! Maybe the dream-poisoning is somehow infectious? Maybe it's happening to other people?

Something's going on! Do science to it.

As Anybody Else—"Someone's in Trouble!"/"Engineering!"

Someone's in Trouble! usually focuses on helping Rinley. This is usually about finding a short-term solution to keep her from dying.

Engineering! is your search for an antidote.

As Anybody Else—"Above the Fray"

On a Binding/Otherworldly/Emptiness Arc

Sometimes, you've fixed some stuff—made an antidote to the poison, saved Rinley's life, whatever—but that's just treating the symptoms. It doesn't address the fact that dead birds are appearing in people's dreams and poisoning them now or whatever.

Addressing that kind of thing—leaving the mundane, tangible, earthly, mucky, *biological* part of the science of this behind and floating in aetherial realms of science, philosophy, dream, or whatever to make a bigger-picture solution—is handled in **Above the Fray.**

On an Aspect Arc

If you're on an Aspect Arc, **Above the Fray** can't shift gears to a philosophical approach—

It'll be the starting quest and won't be able to inherit details from the rest of the Arc. Instead, it should foreshadow them: over the course of your normal work, studies, and training, try to work in (or to casually touch on) dead birds, poisonings, dreams, the Outside, labyrinths, and Rinley:

Stuff that'll become resonant and relevant, later on.

As Anybody Else—"Walking the Boundaries"

You may be able to get through all of this with relatively pure science—or whatever you use. Wishing. *Feng shui*. The power of friendship. You may be able to get through all of this just by addressing the symptoms and contagion at that level; but I suspect that, like Rinley, you'll be better off hunting through some sort of labyrinthine place for answers, at some point, instead.

Walking the Boundaries likely covers that sort of thing.

Rinley and the Glass Dragon

The Fourth Rinley Arc

The last Rinley Arc focuses on the mystery of the glass dragon.

Nominally in this Arc, **the Troublemaker** finds, gets access to, or otherwise focuses on a trove of the memories of the former identity of **the Dream-Witch: Melanie (or possibly Reginald) Malakh.**

In this Arc, Rinley investigates why the glass dragon hated the world and why it died.

As the Troublemaker

- **Adventure GET** gets you up to speed and launches the investigation. (Or, on a Shepherd or Mystic Arc, marks the point where it becomes an *adventure.)* Often this ends up with a piece of those memories getting stuck in your own head, arguing for the death and the destruction of the world.
- **Let's Doing!** is your attempt to fix things and find answers by just pushing forward. Incidentally, you *are* allowed to actually fix a lot of things and find a lot of answers here; it's just, there's usually at least one big part of any problem that needs a more diligent, detail-conscious approach.
- **Labyrinth Diving** is generally that approach.
- **Climbing the Sacred Mountain** is about purifying things, about cleaning those memories out of your head, finding good things about Malakh (e.g., perhaps the glass dragon was sabotaged by Malakh's love for Professor Hideo Hayashi), and more generally healing some of the legacy of the glass dragon.
- **Down** gives you an opportunity to gamble yourself to recover something that's been lost—e.g., to venture to the Bleak Academy to convince it that the world is worth saving.

As Anybody Else

For anyone else, this Arc plays out as:

- **Science!** covers your investigating or being dragged into Rinley's discovery of the cache, figuring out what's going on, and working out your strategy.
- In **Someone's in Trouble!,** you'll help someone in trouble—either **the Troublemaker, the Dream-Witch,** or somebody who's suffering on account of the glass dragon shard inside them;
- In **Engineering!** you'll pursue a complex plan;
- In **Above the Fray,** you'll make a big decision—resolving something major about the story of the glass dragon or Melanie/Reginald Malakh;
- And finally, in **Walking the Boundaries,** you'll explore the world that your choices have made.

Winter

the Natalia/Antony Arcs

5

The Prodigy comes to Town from Earth. A once-in-a-generation prodigy, with limitless mental and physical potential, this Main Character should have been a hero—but some sort of tragedy pushed her to retreat emotionally from the world. Now her heart is frozen in ice and she refuses to accept hope, her own worth, and that anything can be done about the brokenness of the world.

This is the story of how that winter breaks.

How to Play These Arcs

For Natalia/Antony, the Winter Arcs are **Coming-of-Age Stories** (pg. 354), featuring the quests:

- **A Troubled Protagonist.** You struggle to recover from or push past some deal.
- **An Unlikely Friendship.** You meet someone who broadens your perspective.
- **Your Social Burdens.** People have weird expectations of you.
- **Action!** An epic fight with a giant monster or conspiracy or something.
- **Coming to Grips with Death.** You spend a while facing death, grief, or some kind of troublesome situation that's a metaphor for one of those things.

For anyone else, these Arcs are **Heroic Journeys** (pg. 368), featuring the quests:

- **Changes.** Something is changing in your life, but you're not sure exactly what.
- **The Refusal of the Call.** You try to take a way out, but it blows up on you.
- **The Belly of the Whale.** You're separated from your normal life, threatened, and at risk of being transformed.
- **The Trials of the Sun.** The cosmos has fallen out of order; you struggle to fix it.
- **Apotheosis.** You become something more than you had been.

The Frozen Heart

Prologue

Because she is a hero she will show up now and then. She will go through the motions of it, at least. She cannot help investigating the odd, helping the helpless, standing between bullies and their prey.

It is in her nature.

She is very cold. She is very distant. I don't think it's clinical depression. It could be. I don't think it's the influence of the Outside. It could be. I think it is unreconciled grief: that at some point something happened, and she just stopped, and because she is not dealing with that yet, she does not grow.

But it could also be depression. Or the work of some evil force upon her. Or a personality trait—that she is not a good person being held back from the warmth of the world, but an amoral sociopath held back by some logic or incident that makes her wear morality as a chain.

These things are not like one another, but they all produce such cold.

Perhaps you will never care about her.

In that case you may wind up skipping this story. You can scavenge these quests for parts to use in dealing with your own traumas, and maybe skip ahead to have her play a role in some sort of Bleak Academy plan.

If you begin to care about her—

If you start trying to talk her from her cynicism, or get her to seek help, or if you are playing her, of course—

Then you will begin this Arc.

Flowers in the Ice

The First Arc of Winter

A boy named **Hayden Sorrows** comes to Town. He's a student at the Bleak Academy, and he's hunting **the Anomaly—**a creature of raw, crystalline chaos. He claims that it's been stirred into existence or stirred up, at least, by the reborn sun and that its whispering, from Town, is disturbing the void beyond the world.

By default Hayden is comparatively trustworthy—as with any NPC, the HG may decide that he's a jerk and a liar, but he's *normally* either naturally sincere or under instructions to be so.

He'll offer competition for the idea of light—

That is, he'll argue that it's not warmth and hope that **the Prodigy** needs, but peace: the pure dark beyond the world, vistas of endless quiet. And whether she accepts his ideas or not, she'll probably help him track down the Anomaly, uproot it, and cast it out of Town:

Its whispering has been pervading Town of late, too subtle for most people to hear, but it'll be starting to get on *her* nerves.

As the Prodigy—"A Troubled Protagonist"

The truth is that since you have come to Town you have begun to care about things again. You want to believe in the world. You want hope. You want friends. You want light. You want life.

But it's hard!

Every time something touches your heart, you kind of freak out. You go into denial. You shut it down.

Eventually the light and warmth of Town will wear through that ice, and you'll start being able to care about things again.

This'll play out in the quest **A Troubled Protagonist.**

As the Prodigy—"An Unlikely Friendship"

An Unlikely Friendship typically both introduces Hayden Sorrows and focuses on your relationship with him. It's possible that he's not the right unlikely friend, of course, and you can try out a few other options—it's why I made doing so a weekly option on the card, and give 5 XP for finalizing your choice—but in principle, he's the Arc's Unlikely Friend. (If not, it's probably either a Main Character you've been talking to or **the Anomaly** itself.)

This quest also probably has a sidelight—linking **An Unlikely Friendship** and the later quest **Coming to Grips with Death,** if you wind up doing it—wherein you talk with him about your past and some guilt or painful legacy of your life before Town.

As the Prodigy—"Your Social Burdens"

In **Your Social Burdens,** your family starts pushing you to socialize more.

If you have a lot of free time, they might set you up with a job with a friend of the family—if you've been really intent about cracking the mystery that is Town, it might be with the Fortitude Regional Council or some sort of investigative agency; otherwise, it could be something like assisting the Widow Morozova with personal stuff (and thus the occasional high-class occasion, since she's rich), apprenticing at the House of Crystal or the Watanabe candy shop, helping at a hospice, or joining a social project or initiative. If you're thoroughly engrossed in school-type stuff and can't be pushed into a job, they or your teachers or peers might push you towards more club and extracurricular activities or out-of-school socializing.

On some level it's OK if it feels completely ridiculous—I mean, it's *best* if it all makes sense to adult players OOC and just feels silly IC, but honestly, there's something to be said for the social stuff being incomprehensible or at least archaic on the player level as well. This is a quest about parents and fellow kids wanting things that seem, to you, to completely miss the point, so having it be really weird OOC is also OK!

There is just enough of a debutante tradition in Fortitude, even among the less important families, that it's *possible* that you'll be pushed to formally debut. If you're on a Shepherd Arc, this is probably when you meet Hayden Sorrows.

As the Prodigy—"Action!" / "Coming to Grips with Death"

If you need more to finish things up, **Action!** is about how you track **the Anomaly** down.

And, most likely, get rid of it!

The Arc may resolve with an epilogue where you think and talk a lot about your guilt, your past, and some legacy of your life before Town. With Hayden? Or with someone else?

As Anyone Else—"A Heroic Journey"

5

Something has infected you.

When the Prodigy hints at or talks about their past, you taste crystal. You remember shattered bits and pieces of winter nights.

Something is poking about in your head or soul—

Something deeply *connected* to her past. I'm guessing it's one of these four things:

- someone tied to her backstory, like, the ghost of a dead sibling, mentor, or friend;
- **the Anomaly** (pg. 435);
- something related to **Hayden Sorrows** (pg. 410) or the Bleak Academy; *or*
- **Melanie Malakh** (pg. 419), somehow connecting to the Prodigy's despair

The first two are the simplest answers in a standard game where she's an NPC, and you can usually make them work out if she's a PC, but you might have to go on to the next two or invent something else if the game has a lot of established canon around this stuff.

As Anyone Else—"Changes"

Over the course of **Changes** you'll figure out just what that infection is and what it's doing to you.

In some sense you're lucky, I think.

I mean—reaching somebody. That's really hard. People aren't things you can *fix*. People aren't things you can connect to when they're trying to keep you away. Not just by trying. In a sense, the fact that you're being twisted up by the Prodigy's deal is a miracle. It means there's a *link*.

In another sense—

Well, this could be pretty scary and pretty bad.

If you're on a Mystic Arc, and this is in fact your *first* Mystic Arc, remember that you'll want to choose an Element and a Form at some point during the quest.

As Anyone Else—"the Refusal of the Call"

In general **the Refusal of the Call** will focus on your own relationship with **Hayden Sorrows**—a potential friend, ally, and opposite number for you, though probably not a romantic interest as he is for **the Prodigy**.

He'll give you a chance to escape what's happening to you—

Something which you'll probably want to keep active as an opportunity even if you're certain of your course, because you're probably not 100% sure at this point in the story what *is* happening to you and whether it's entirely good or bad. There's even a chance that you're infected by something Bleak (or, if you're a natural ally to the Bleak Academy, by something bright and wishful) and that you'll need all the help you can get!

If it seems to fit you better, **the Anomaly** could be your ally and opposite number here instead, and Hayden the real danger in the following Arc.

As Anyone Else—"the Belly of the Whale" / "the Trials of the Sun" / "Apotheosis"

The Belly of the Whale is a series of scary conflicts with the Anomaly, but also a chance to bond with the Prodigy—often, the tangle between the two of you established in **Changes**, combined with your individual connections to Hayden Sorrows, results in you feeling responsible for one anothers' fates.

If you end things there, then there's a kind of sweet resolution for what you've been becoming—the negative elements prove to be exaggerated by fear; the building narrative of scary stuff ends in delight, in "eucatastrophe."

If you plan to move on to **The Trials of the Sun,** though, then it's the other way around.

There's something in you that's messed up, something possessing or warping you—a parasite attached to the positive change that a Mystic Arc might bring, a consequence of your mistakes for a Knight Arc, and its own little bit of nastiness connected to the Prodigy's backstory or your own on an Otherworldly or Emptiness Arc—and it's breaking free.

Apotheosis then represents your chance to find meaning in that and to sort everything out again, thereafter.

Permafrost

The Second Arc of Winter

The problem with opening your heart to people is that they die. The problem with learning to love the world is that it ends.

Just because you trust people a little doesn't mean that anything can ever become *better*.

This isn't a story of grand adventure.

It's a story of how one day Yuri, **the Prodigy's** father, dies.

Portions of this Arc often break from the normal Pastoral genre of the game and become, temporarily, a road of trials, epic fantasy, or Techno game.

As the Prodigy—"A Troubled Protagonist"

This probably starts with **A Troubled Protagonist.**

You don't know yet that this is the story of your father dying. It's the story of how you're getting closer to people, but you're a little scared by that. It brings up old, bad memories of bodies in the snow.

You might not even know what those memories are of.

They might not even *be* memories of anything in particular. I'm just saying. People die.

As the Prodigy—"An Unlikely Friendship"

An Unlikely Friendship is normally going to focus on the sacred child **Stefan**—

He acts as a kind of mentor in Fortitude spirituality, and has a personality almost as reserved as yours normally starts at, but with a lot more mischievous humor hiding underneath. You'll share a lot of tea and talk about the social obligation of the individual to the community vs. the obligation of the individual to actualize the self, and stuff.

Probably.

And if you're on anything but a Shepherd Arc, you'll have gone two quests, and your father will still be alive.

As the Prodigy—"Your Social Burdens"

Your Social Burdens is the chance to hang out with your father's fisherman friends and his Russian expatriate socials where people sit around and discuss exquisitely boring and alienating stuff and in general really get kind of irritated at him—but also make some last good memories, if you're good.

And then one day his ship goes out, and it doesn't come back.

And later you—well, you, or someone, but probably you—find him. Well, what's left of him. The corpse.

That's not hopeless, I mean, there's a whole other set of stories about dead people coming back, but that's not your Arc. That's not *part* of your Arc. It's not hopeless, but, on the other side of that, don't get your hopes too high up.

(If he dies before you get to this quest, by the way, or in the middle of it, the social burdens of arranging for a funeral are a little off-center for this quest but probably still an acceptable fit.)

As the Prodigy—"Action!" / "Coming to Grips with Death"

Action! is going to assume that when the funeral actually happens, maybe even while you're escorting the body to the grave or maybe a little after, some spiritual force or wickedness (**the Graveyard Spirit**) messes with you—you fall into a spiritual realm of some sort, a *nasty* spiritual realm, the belly of a death spirit of some sort.

Then either you can petition for the HG to shift the game to a short-chapter epic fantasy, Techno game, or road of trials for a bit, or you can quickly escape that spiritual world but keep stumbling back in at night, or in dreams, or every time your grief gets strong. You're being devoured by something that has gotten a good taste of your grief and wants to eat it all.

It's not really a physical antagonist—it's just a descriptive thing, a world, a part of this quest. It might not even be real. It could be something you put together in your head to try to hang on, somehow, or something. That's really unlikely, because you're actually awfully sane considering, but it *could* be what happens, particularly if you're messing yourself up with guilt.

Beating it up, anyway, won't be satisfying on its own, though it might very well be cathartic; **Coming to Grips with Death** is the quest you need to really solidly process the event.

"A Heroic Journey"

As Anybody Else—"Changes" / "the Refusal of the Call" / "the Belly of the Whale"

This is going to be a little cruel.

I think if you're playing as anybody *but* the Prodigy, then **the Graveyard Spirit** touches your life long before Yuri actually dies. Maybe it's an event outside the causal order. Maybe it doesn't want Yuri and the Prodigy specifically—

Maybe it only finds them because of you.

But **Changes** is a touch of death, or at least a foreshadowing of that death, working its way through you.

That probably gives you a strong reason for **the Refusal of the Call.** I don't know whom you actually *turn to*, though. Is Hayden Sorrows or the Anomaly still around? Or does the HG have to come up with a new opposite number for you, a new tempting spirit, to help you try to hide Yuri from death or yourself from the knowledge of its coming?

The Belly of the Whale is where you fall into the **Graveyard Spirit's** world or sway.

Even if you come back, it's entangled with you.

Even if the Prodigy *kills* it, it's entangled with you. It's stained you, tainted you, become a part of who you are.

And during this quest, or the one before it, Yuri dies.

As Anybody Else— "the Trials of the Sun" / "Apotheosis"

The Trials of the Sun—this quest is usually about how you try to revive him. You can figure out your own path here, if you like, or skip the quest entirely. But usually that's the consequence of your getting entangled with the **Graveyard Spirit.** You feel responsible for that death, and possibly entangled with a bit of Yuri's soul—

Some hope, or whatever is appropriate, that he shared with you before he died?

It's not about reviving the dead. I mean, there may be other dead people whom you'd normally prioritize, or you may have strong feelings against resurrecting people. But you're all tied up in this. Yuri and the guilt and the graveyard spirit are like a knot in long-unbrushed hair.

Apotheosis is, as is going to be a regular pattern for this quest, just an extra chance to sort things out and find closure for it all.

Thin Ice

THE THIRD ARC OF WINTER

A death god will rise—a great, mute mushroom-beast to fill the sky with woolen, staticky nothingness.

Before it becomes that, though; before it turns *into* that, it will have been a friend.

As the Prodigy—"A Troubled Protagonist"

Once you might have thought you were strong enough to handle anything.

But these days—you can't be so sure.

So, much of this Arc is a training Arc for you. There are limits to your strength. There are things you haven't been able to manage. In **A Troubled Protagonist,** you try to push past that.

You try to break through to the next level.

You turn to your favorite of...

- ...**the Wishing Boy (or Girl)** and their Wish-Granting Engine...
- ...the Science of **Nightmares' Angel**...
- ...faith in and connection to **the Child of the Sun**...
- ...the teachings of the Bleak Academy...
- ...the creatures or teachings of **the Angel of Fortitude**...

...to start developing your strength.

As the Prodigy—"An Unlikely Friendship"

An Unlikely Friendship will usually connect you to one of two individuals:

- **Hayden Sorrows,** if that turned out to be a decent person; they've come back to Town on orders and need someone to show them around, help them set up, or whatever.
- **A Bleak Innocent** (pg. 442)—basically, if Hayden was not your friend, or you decided they weren't your friend, then the Bleak Academy sends a weapon to destroy Town, but it's both intelligent and non-malicious; a distant-seeming child, more or less, who probably reminds you of yourself at a younger age.

It can be someone else—but a link to an innocent creature of the Bleak Academy is important at this point.

As the Prodigy—"Your Social Obligations"

In the quest **Your Social Obligations,** you're distracted from your training by the Model Bleak Academy Club. This is a club in Fortitude that's trying to recreate and explore the culture of the Bleak Academy, either as a cultural outreach, as a way to help connect young Riders to their parent culture, or as preparation for potential future attack/infiltration/diplomacy.

Basically, you're asked to participate and learn some of the ways of the Bleak Academy, either by a Rider whom you like, or, if you don't trust any Riders, by someone who wants you to prepare for a potential visit or infiltration attempt. It's probably the case that the Model Bleak Academy customs are put together from myths and with more scrupulous attendance to odd details of etiquette and dress than the actual residents maintain, so feel free to let the obligations here be as wild as you like.

There are other ways to do this—you could revisit some of the social obligations encountered in previous Arcs, or you could skip back a bit and focus on your escorting Hayden Sorrows or raising a Bleak innocent—but the Model Bleak Academy Club is my suggestion for your onerous obligation here, anyhow.

As the Prodigy—"Action!" / "Coming to Grips with Death"

In **Action!,** your friendship with Hayden or the Bleak Innocent ends badly. The Bleak power within them blossoms; they become, as mentioned, a god of death. They are an embodiment of the way the world fades when you're anesthetized—a pale emptiness that rises to drown every other thing out. A slow, slippery explosion of nothingness to make existence fall asleep, forget itself, and unweave into the Outside.

Coming to Grips with Death is how you face having to kill them. As the fourth quest in the sequence, it's about how you're losing them; how they're transforming, and nothing you can do will stop it. At most you can delay it for a while.

As the fifth quest in the sequence, it's instead about your grief and loss; and possibly, a funeral.

As Anyone Else—General Notes

This Arc isn't going to focus *heavily* on **the Prodigy,** and in theory they could sit it out; on the other hand, the HG can reasonably assume that the Prodigy is going to *be* involved, in the manner described above.

Even more than in **the Prodigy's** version of this Arc, the "death god" is most likely a plot device: while the rules for fighting Bleak effects may be a little bit helpful, it's likely that the only way to ultimately stop the world from ending is through the structure of these quests. (Or some other player-level effect—I mean, if you abandon the quests because the game goes in a different direction, that's fine; and, in fact, if you decide that something *should* work, that's fine too; I just mean that you should probably assume that most of the things you try to stop the Bleak Academy's superweapon with are going to fail, because it's more a framing device for a personal struggle than it is a manipulable event.)

As Anyone Else—"Changes" / "The Refusal of the Call" / "the Belly of the Whale"

Changes will focus on Hayden Sorrows or the Bleak Innocent (pg. 442). An innocent creature from the Bleak Academy has come to Town, sent as a weapon to destroy it.

You can feel the change stirring inside it. You can feel it becoming something *wrong*.

You may have a chance to help resist some of this change by merging or melding with the creature somehow—it depends on your Arc and character concept, really—but that won't help much, or for long. In fact, most of what that'll do is infect you and put you at risk of becoming a world-drowning abomination yourself.

The Refusal of the Call is generally about the temptation to break from your principles in a case like this. I don't know what those principles are as I write this, so I don't know which *way* that goes. I assume you're either tempted to kill them now so they don't become a death god, or you're tempted *not* to kill them even when it seems like it might save the world, because it's not their fault.

I think you'll normally wind up heavily involved in the medical/spiritual treatment that holds this stuff at bay, either way.

The Belly of the Whale will have a focus on that treatment. The power in the creature is beginning to awaken; the world is beginning to end, if slowly; and you'll try to survive it, and to comfort **the Prodigy** and the creature itself, because it's likely that even if you can save the world, Hayden or the innocent (as applicable) will die.

As Anyone Else—"the Trials of the Sun" / "Apotheosis"

The Trials of the Sun involve trying to master or twist that Bleak power with your own.

Apotheosis is a final chance to sort things out and find some closure for it all.

Yet We Go On

THE FOURTH ARC OF WINTER

5

It's enough. That was enough. This doesn't need to go on any longer.

The Prodigy goes to the Bleak Academy to try to *fix* it.

This Arc generally involves enrolling there (specifically at the Colloquium of Magi) and trying to understand the place, while still holding on to sanity. Typically the story is goofy and baroque for the first third of it, turns dark when whatever resource **the Prodigy** brings with them to escape-or-triumph-if-necessary turns out to be useless, and is finally resolved when someone there—a student, a teacher, the hypothetically captive sun, or the Headmaster himself—either reveals themselves to be salvageable, or, well, does not.

This is a story about trust. It's a story about cleaning the last of the ice from a frozen heart.

So I think, as a philosophical point, if things go as badly as they can possibly go—

If it turns out that there's no fixing it; if the place is simply unsalvageable, evil to its core, or too set in its wickedness for a few PCs to fix in even the longest lifetime—

I think that you still leave it standing afterwards. It's a threat, sure, it's a problem, sure, and maybe there's even a chance to destroy it, but you don't. You don't, and the Prodigy doesn't. You just go home, in that worst case, a little older, a little wiser, and glad that at least you tried.

Sometimes you fail, you know?

Sometimes people betray you.

Yet we go on.

P.S. Happy endings full of victories:
Also OK!

Traveling to the Bleak Academy

Usually by this point there's either a quick way there and back or a few other people with Arcs that might take them to the Bleak Academy. If not—if you're the only person with a reason to go there, and it's distant and isolated from the game—

Then I recommend handling your journey there as a dream/spiritual experience rather than as a normal matter of physical travel. You master astral projection, and anchor your spirit there, while a soulless shell trudges through your life in Town; or, you close your eyes at night and dream of being at the Bleak Academy; or, the ship you sail on hits a strange patch of the Outside and you return even while you go: something like that, something that allows you to keep some portion of yourself in Town even as you play out your time at the Bleak Academy. Let your journey be a metaphor for a mood rather than a place. And feel free to come up with equivalents to the other PCs there, warped versions of them, people "like" them but motivated by bleakness rather than wishing power, for the other players to play when interacting with you there.

Another option, if none of that seems like it'll work, is to travel there for the story but remain in contact with the other PCs by letters for Shared Action and Shared Reactions scenes. If you do that it's also OK to take over some NPC—some lesser prodigy, family member, or temporary Natalia replacement—for when you want to physically interact with scenes in Town.

As the Prodigy

In **A Troubled Protagonist,** the focus of the story is on the fact that you are *nowhere near* as confident in this as you pretend. Whether it's selling your friends on this plan or convincing the other students at the Bleak Academy that you fit in, you are in *way* over your head.

An Unlikely Friendship is typically the story of an inspirational teacher or friend that you've found in this most unlikely of places. The teacher is the most amusing option, of course, but an enthusiastic or diligent study partner or a mini-dragon of some sort that you find on the grounds could also be good.

Your Social Burdens reprises the issues faced with the Model Bleak Academy Club in the previous Arc, only—naturally—with the actual culture of the Bleak Academy. This is vastly stylized, a little different and much stranger, and there's a lot more extrasocial weirdness going on.

Action! pits you against some defense of the Bleak Academy—probably after you snooped or poked around too much.

Coming to Grips with Death gives you a chance to change the world, or to sign on with the Bleak Academy in truth. It's difficult here, but so exciting!

As Anyone Else

This Arc assumes that you accompany the Prodigy to the Bleak Academy. As with the last Arc, this doesn't actually *need* the Prodigy, per se, and it's OK if they kind of get shuffled to the side in actual play once you get there, but I think it's best if you don't do that—

I think the "feel" of the Arc will be better for you if you're there as an anchor to someone else, and as support for someone else, then if you're there on your own and adrift. In particular this Arc is going to focus a lot on a fear of assimilating to the Bleak Academy, and that works better if there's someone else to set your pace—if you don't have complete control over the situation!

That said...

Changes probably focuses on your concern that the place is changing you and **the Prodigy**; or possibly that you were already changing even before you arrived. It might be good if you both have a birthday sometime shortly before heading out, making it feel more like a legitimate life transition and not like an infiltration mission.

The Refusal of the Call probably focuses on your choice of "major" at the Bleak Academy—

You realize the level of the intramural conflicts offers a scope for finding a legitimate alliance here and turning or using part of the Academy against the rest, but unless you stumble on some department that's actively pro-Town and pro-existence, you're liable to find this even more corrosive to your sense of self.

The Belly of the Whale is when you realize that you *fit in*. I don't know how or why, or whether it's a real phenomenon or a deception, but you fit in. You *belong* in the Bleak Academy, and no longer can imagine how you might fit in in Town.

The Trials of the Sun often involves your struggle to pass classes, exams, or sometimes literal trials at the Bleak Academy.

Apotheosis finishes everything off; you are either instigator or key in the redemption of the Bleak Academy, or you're the key player in actually getting everyone to go home in time to *make* it home if the plan is failing and your whole team is in danger of assimilating to the place instead.

Spring

the Jasper/Raven Arcs

5

"Once upon a time, but not all that long ago, the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy rode up into the sky of Fortitude and he drew back his great black bow and he fired an arrow and he killed the sun."

— FROM **THE BEST FRIEND'S** QUEST, "WHY ARE YOU HERE?"

The sun died, and a new sun shone, and **the Child of the Sun** tumbled from the sky to land in Town.

They start out just a waif, a vagrant—

The new solar deity, sure, but they don't even *know* that, much less things like how to get back to the sky or why their mother died. A weird and freaky semi-alien kid whose memories seem pretty dream-like and who doesn't know what they are or what to do *at all.*

It's not like there's a rule book for solar deities!

Plus, while Town was very clear that Jade Irinka was "the angel of the houses of the sun" before the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy shot her, it's not like Town's super-spiritual or like their religion would be more than plurality Shinto-esque if it were—the connection between Jade Irinka and the physical sun, or any supernatural force, was already as vague as a fairy tale in a typical resident's mind.

They're no help!

These Arcs wind up being a kind of after-the-fact cosmogony—

I mean, the hard work of the reinvention of the cosmos and the rebirth of the sun was done long ago, the same day (at the latest) that Jade Irinka died. But the measures of that story are still playing out in the cosmos and **the Child of the Sun;** the story is yet to be acted out properly and to completion in their life and in their heart.

So this is the story of how we go from "a stray on the streets of Fortitude" to "the logos; the sun; that which sets the houses of the cosmos in order."

And maybe, if we're lucky, a way to get some answers about the Headmaster and about Jade Irinka's death.

How to Play These Arcs

For Jasper/Raven, the Spring Arcs are **Heroic Journeys** (pg. 368), featuring the quests:

- **Changes.** Something is changing in your life, but you're not sure exactly what.
- **The Refusal of the Call.** You try to take a way out, but it blows up on you.
- **The Belly of the Whale.** You're separated from your normal life, threatened, and at risk of being transformed.
- **The Trials of the Sun.** The cosmos has fallen out of order; you struggle to fix it.
- **Apotheosis.** You become something more than you had been.

For anyone else, these Arcs are **Coming-of-Age Stories** (pg. 354), featuring the quests:

- **A Troubled Protagonist.** You struggle to recover from or push past some deal.
- **An Unlikely Friendship.** You meet someone who broadens your perspective.
- **Your Social Burdens.** People have weird expectations of you.
- **Action!** An epic fight with a giant monster or conspiracy or something.
- **Coming to Grips with Death.** You spend a while facing death, grief, or some kind of troublesome situation that's a metaphor for one of those things.

The Miracle

Prologue

The Child of the Sun is set apart. They have spiritual significance—

But it isn't clear, at first, just what that is.

It's just that there's something inside this kid, this Irinka, that's practically tearing them apart. Something struggling in them. Something trying to be reborn.

There's no rule that says that if you're the child of a dead sun goddess and the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy that you'll be anything special. Implications, sure, but no *rule*. Nothing that says that one day you'll be standing on the cliffs above Big Lake and one of the drownéd horses of the sun will reawaken into life; gallop into the sky; and be yours to ride. Nothing that says that a bird of fire will descend like a spark of light from the sky and perch upon your shoulder, or a temple of Jade Irinka will restore itself, unwind itself from moldering ruin with your touch. Nothing that says that an old woman who died of grief when Jade Irinka was killed will come back for a day to see her grandchildren or a star that lies dead and iron in the local museum will rekindle and swirl back up into the sky.

But in an early quest here something like that will happen.

A miracle will come.

The Pleasure Ship

The First Arc of Spring

This Arc's pretty goofy. One thing that will help you keep things moving on an even keel is to make sure that all the NPCs involved are extremely cooperative in any plan that doesn't involve them actually going away.

At its core this story is about **the Child of the Sun's** opposite number—a Rider named **the Prince of Cats** or **the Moon Prince** (pg. 427), representing more than anything else the lure of *things just being OK*. The chance of all the troubles and weirdness stopping.

He may offer a pitch like: "come away with me and..."

- ...spend eternity on a fabulous, fascinating pleasure voyage through strange realms, never having to turn into anything weird or lose yourself in the power of the sun.
- ...learn the secrets of the world—why "it seemed like" the Headmaster killed Jade Irinka, why it had to happen.
- "...the Headmaster will grant you an exalted place among the powers of the Bleak Academy."
- ...you can forget your sorrows and end your broken life "before you burn this world to ash."

Or maybe he offers something else; but the point is, in your game, it's at least a little bit tempting.

He shows up on a cloaked pleasure skyship carrying hundreds of cats.

He invites **the Child of the Sun** to a "masked ball of the cats" on that ship. But it's likely that there's something very wrong with this scenario—almost certainly the problem is *him*, just because romantic guys with cloaked pleasure skyships tend to be a little rotten, but the problem *could* be somewhere else!

The cat Old Tom (pg. 432) will warn you against him.

The rat investigators, Alexandra Prokofieva and Melanie Glenn (pg. 433) will worry that bringing this many cats into Fortitude will draw the attention of the Mystery "Hedge the Fang." Correctly, as it happens—

Perhaps because he's using a quest miracle to approach Town, or perhaps because the world is kind and his future coming is foreshadowed by echoes in the now, **Hedge the Fang** (pg. 434) shows up dimly in the world early in the Arc:

Yellow eyes gleaming, taking on the appearance of a cat—or of Rinley, Kuroma, Caroline, Goro, or Shiori

Yatskaya; or the Prince of Cats—as he hunts the local rats and Jasper Irinka, whispers his dreams of flaying them, and vanishes into mist and dream if ever seen unobscured and in good light.

Later, his herald Nikolai Zakharov (pg. 420) will wake to his task, and seek to sell the PCs that are not Jasper Irinka on the idea that losing your self-awareness to Hedge the Fang is actually a pretty good deal.

And at some dramatic point—most likely, at the ball; most likely, immediately after the Prince of Cats is either dealt with or after the Child of the Sun agrees to go with him—**Hedge the Fang** will possess the cats attending and try, even before he goes for that whole rat-killing thing, to eat the sun.

(Either Jasper Irinka, or, with freaky magic, the sun that burns in the sky.)

She's not very rat-like but I guess the sun is even more appetizing to him than a rat.

As the Child of the Sun—"Changes"

You're changing. You're becoming something more than you were. It's pretty annoying and brutal.

Spiritual experience often is.

You're bigger on the inside than on the outside, you know? There is a fire in you bigger than the world. You are being called to be more than an ordinary kid can possibly be. You've already been a bit of an alien, a bit of a space cadet, but the kind of alien you've been is "naïve sky person unused to the details of the lower world;" what you're *becoming* is something *alien*. *Really* alien. Like, in the sense of "the incarnate, primordial divine."

It hurts. It's confusing. It's *dizzying*.

It plays out as **Changes.**

By the way—

This Arc relies on the fact that you're more than a little uncomfortable with what's going on. So if you realize midway through the quest that you're actually pretty confident and secure about it because anything that happens is just tying you closer to your mother?

Add a Bleak element, something that you're picking up from your father, or even from some third and awful source, so that there's a *reason* to be concerned about these changes later on.

Mind, learning to accept the changes life throws at you is a pretty good thing; it's just, acceptance is the kind of thing you usually pick up at the end of an Arc and not in the first or second quest!

On a Mystic, Emptiness, or Otherworldly Arc, **Changes** will often play itself out—beginning to end—before the skyship arrives and before Hedge the Fang manifests. At most you're likely to get a few bits of foreshadowing—a strange momentary glimpse of something in the sky; an ominous encounter with an echo of the forthcoming Hedge the Fang; the stifled voice from the bushes of Old Tom, before something distracts him and he runs away.

As the Child of the Sun—"the Refusal of the Call"

You're afraid. Strange things are happening to you. Life is weird. And your mother, well, she's not *dead*, but she is gone.

So the Prince's offer is going to be tempting.

When the Prince of Cats shows up and says, "Come away with me and be fine forever," or whatever else he says—it's *tempting.*

The Refusal of the Call is going to be about that temptation—about the impulse to find some way, any way, even if it's the help of the Prince of Cats, to avert what's going on.

As the Child of the Sun—"the Belly of the Whale"

In **the Belly of the Whale,** the skyship becomes a symbol of the way you're trapped.

You probably won't spend the full quest literally trapped there; for one thing, the Prince might not even be evil, and for another, that's potentially one or two seasons without touching the ground. (Not that that's a unique feat for the sun or anything, but still.) But circumstances will make it really hard to maintain even the ghost of a sense of a daily life—

You'll be dreamy, drifted, rootless, trapped, and there's a pervasive feeling of helplessness.

It's like you're being eaten. Like you're being dissolved into something else.

You'll wander the depths of the skyship and they will seem organic to you.

As the Child of the Sun—"the Trials of the Sun" / "Apotheosis"

The Trials of the Sun is a good quest to have a major confrontation with an enemy in—whether that's the Prince of Cats, or some other power, or Hedge the Fang. You'll get to crush them, probably, and you'll probably get to reclaim some treasure of Jade Irinka's (or maybe of the Headmaster's, but probably of Jade's) when you do...

But some Bleak power will express itself through you as well, either the thing you've been fearing all this time or something that Hedge or the Prince of Cats or Old Tom or something *put* in you.

Apotheosis completes your transformation.

If you manage to crash the skyship, much of **Apotheosis** tends to take place in its ruins.

A Coming-of-Age Story

Other characters play out this Arc as a **Coming-of-Age Story,** like so:

As Anyone Else—"A Troubled Protagonist"

You're a mess. You've always been a mess. You've closed off part of your heart.

You don't believe in miracles:

They're *powers*. They're just like the ability to punch people or make a delicious cake, only more abstract. At *most* they're like magic, you know, breaking the rules of the world to enact your will.

That's what you think.

But that belief is starting to change.

This kid you've met, this "Irinka" kid, is... something that changes that, somehow. I mean, *obviously* they're just a messed-up vagrant with a weird story, but... sometimes it slips in. Sometimes it gets to you. The sense that there's something there.

There's something real.

There's something in **the Child of the Sun** that's bigger than you are, a light that can change the world.

...I know that's a little specific. If you want, you can just fall into a temporary doldrum based on the events of some recent quest and this quest helps with that. Or you can say, "Oh, I don't have *major* doubts, but there's a tiny part of my heart somewhere that didn't trust that the universe was good."

Or you can start stuff out by having flashbacks to and lingering trauma from the long-ago death of the sun.

Or something else!

All that's really important is...

- ...that there's *something* wrong with you, and...
- ...that the presence of a miracle—of a disordered cosmos, in the process of becoming orderly again; of a new sun being born in a sunless night—helps.

That plays out as the quest **A Troubled Protagonist**, typically in the Lurid form.

As Anyone Else—"An Unlikely Friendship"

Your best options for **An Unlikely Friendship** here are probably:

- the Prince of Cats (pg. 431);
- a relative or lieutenant thereof;
- **the Child of the Sun;**
- Old Tom (pg. 432); or
- Alexandra Prokofieva and Melanie Glenn (pg. 433)…

But you could also think about a member of the Yatskaya family, or someone connected to the Archive, or a Main Character that is floating about at loose ends.

As Anyone Else—"Your Social Burdens"

The heart of this Arc is still that you're drawn to **the Child of the Sun**—that they're awakening a spiritual part of you, a *hope*, that had been sleeping. A sense that there's more to the world than just the ordinary existence.

Or, if you knew that already, well—more than you thought.

And that means that you can't just let some dashing Rider come into Town and swoop them up onto a skyship and carry them away to be eaten by cats or whatever else. Not even if you wound up being that Rider's friend!

I mean, it's not your call. It's the Child of the Sun's call. You don't get to decide whether they get swooped away. But at the least you need to see them through this and keep them safe as long as you reasonably can.

Your Social Burdens is going to be a little fairy-tale romantic for you. It'll focus a lot on the upcoming "masked ball of the cats." Whether you find such things delightful or an annoying inconvenience, you're going to have to find suitable attire, practice the relevant dances and social niceties, and help with any number of arrangements. You'll likely meet *someone* dashing or beautiful—it's probably the most amusing if you've decided to hate the Prince of Cats and then he turns out to be totally swoonable when he focuses his attention on you, or, if you're more interested in women, if it turns out his sister, lieutenant, or mom is. (Or that he's a stunning woman in disguise.)

As Anyone Else—"Action!"

Action! is typically a long-term struggle to suppress Hedge the Fang.

It's also possible that part of your soul gets stuck on the skyship being hunted by some creature that lives on or embodies the lower levels thereof.

As Anyone Else—"Coming to Grips with Death"

Coming to Grips with Death normally flows from the events of the previous quests, but if you're coming close to doing that quest and there's no way to bring things around to a natural struggle with grief, you can either assume that an important NPC to you suddenly dies *or* that all of this has awakened a need in you to mourn and remember Jade Irinka, who was the sun.

Sorrows' Week

The Second Arc of Spring

The Child of the Sun is having flashbacks to the events leading up to their mother's death—

Not just from the Child's own perspective, but from Jade's.

Flashbacks of a tempestuous romance with the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy; of their arguments and reconciliations; of the sky fracturing above her in the moment of her death.

And sometimes not just from *their* perspective—

But from *his*.

It's during this process that Arikel, the older brother of **the Child of the Sun**, shows up in Fortitude driving his magical Mercedes Alsvidur. He's pretty awesome, a lot like Laodemus really; only, and this is really regrettable, it's probably not actually him.

Either his, ah, superpowered evil side has completely taken him over, or, much more likely, "he's" nothing more than a shadow Arikel had cast—a shadow burned into the world by the death of Jade Irinka, whose name will later be **Eclipse** (pg. 405).

And all of this is building up to his attempt to re-enact the sun's death—on a special day, possibly the Saturnalia or Walpurgisnacht or possibly just a random conjunction of celestial bodies or events—in a way that will ensure that this time, the sun *stays* dead.

Or maybe, if he's a little nicer, that *this* time the new sun is *him*.

A Summary of The Past

And there are those who say that the first meeting between the two of them was in a dream: a nightmare, even; that Jade Irinka slept with a wicked god, and in his eyes she saw her death; *knew* her death, for the first time, and screamed; that that vision, that nightmare from which she later bore the child Arikel, was her first sight of the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy.

He was tainted by it from his birth—

The son of a nightmare, and not of his father; the son of the lord of Death's dominion, and not of the man who with his mother lay—

And he became a demon of sorts.

When he was good, and just, and a son of light, then he was welcome in his mother's home; but too often he showed in his face the mark of the nightmare that was his father, and eventually he was cast from the sky, banned and exiled, though the doors remained open to him once a season and he'd swing by now and then for holidays in Alsvidur his magical silver car.

At another point Jade Irinka traveled to the Bleak Academy; this was for one of four reasons:

- to attend a funeral for her sister's husband, a bull-headed Magister who'd died in Town
- her dreams were shadowed by the presence of death, and she sought to challenge it at its source
- to rescue the toddler Caroline Yatskaya, who'd been stolen by the Bleak Academy
- because she'd met the Headmaster and he'd invited her, and she'd finally opted to come

The first version very likely reprises the *Descent of Inanna*, complete with her garbing herself thoroughly in power before leaving but having to abandon it piece by piece at the door; with her showing up to speak pleasantly, but being betrayed and nearly slain; in that only by some subterfuge of Town's gods of dream and nightmare is she freed to leave that place again.

In the second and third version, she is more likely to attend in force, to stride thunderously through in triumph and leave the place in ruins behind her; the Headmaster may be lovestruck then, or just dismayed.

The fourth version takes the form of a dangerous heroic journey and there might be suggestions that while she is welcomed by some of the Academy's Magisters, others mean her and even the Headmaster ill.

At another time, on a third occasion, the Headmaster came to Town. He was dazed; he'd all but forgotten himself, and there was the dust of a far and a sunless land upon his feet.

I suspect Jade was roused to deal with him by alarms; by the baying of hounds and the thudding of the spears of a thousand guards against the marble floor. I suspect it was very much, "Night, death, and despair—they walk in Town!"

But he had fallen *hard* for Jade Irinka when he met her; and on that third meeting, she for him.

It was a troubled love; for ultimately, she believed in making an end to death, to seizing up all the endless dark Beyond by its tail, smashing it, and sculpting from it crystal mountains, seas of delicate color and floating

flowers, dazzling thousand-mile bridges of woven gold and silver, and in general a majestic, light-filled land.

He the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy was not sanguine to this aim.

He found it a blasphemy, I think; she thought it a blasphemy that they should do anything else.

They fought fiercely; and at other times loved fiercely, eloping from their duties to wrestle beneath the sea, run through jungles in the night, argue moral philosophy and with the bleed-off from their passionate debate create the aurora borealis and the comets, and in general have all kinds of enormous, lawless fun.

And they had a child: their first, or second, depending how you count:

The Child of the Sun.

Their arguments intensified until they reached a desperate crux; words were said that could not be unsaid, words like spears, words unmeasurable in the language that can be spoken or remembered; the humming of cicadas and the white-out of the world drowned them all out.

It struck her like lightning strikes a tree; and her words back burned him like fire.

And one day, not very long after, he rode up silently onto the clouds over Fortitude, and drew his great black bow, and he shot her down.

As the Child of the Sun—"Changes"

Changes is going to focus on your flashbacks to these events. In these early stages of the story it's likely that they're proper flashbacks and not full-on memories—emotes but not words, splinters of events rather than things. The parts that are the most like full-sensory experience are going to be the parts you know best and least want to relive, whether from your perspective or from Jade's.

As the Child of the Sun—"the Refusal of the Call"

The Refusal of the Call can play out two different ways (or, most likely, in a combination of them both); the first is to seek help in the modern world in escaping these experiences. The second option is told in the memories themselves—

Jade travels to the Bleak Academy; the Headmaster, to Town; they refuse the call of their natures and become "helpless" in the face of their love.[111]

Meanwhile, in the modern world, your brother Arikel shows up; and I'd guess that Arikel's presence is really exciting and *cool*, and he's probably a good person to turn to to try to fight the flashbacks, although he may also urge you to try to remember, because, well, you never know what you might learn.

As the Child of the Sun—"the Belly of the Whale"

The Belly of the Whale is functionally a struggle not to drown in Jade Irinka—in her identity and memories.

You're at risk of losing yourself.

Often this ends with "death"—you re-live it with her, up to but not including the miracle of not actually dying all the way.

As the Child of the Sun—"the Trials of the Sun" / "Apotheosis"

The Trials of the Sun is your struggle against **Eclipse,** and may include further flashbacks, here focusing upon your father's role. There's a power here pushing for you to go to your death willingly, to experience it as a bleak sacrament, an exultant return to the moment when by your (father's) hands all the light in the world went out.

Apotheosis is a chance to linger on the memories you've already recovered and attempt to either return Eclipse to being Arikel, or, in the more likely event that he's just a shadow of your brother and not your brother at all, extract or awaken some portion of the real thing from him before he dies.

111 *Scare quotes because I'm pretty sure they both knew what they were doing. The only question is whether her death was a metaphysical gambit that one of them won, a magician's trick they pulled off together, or an abominable act of selfish pride—everything up to that point was pretty conscious and chosen on both their parts!*

A Coming-of-Age Story

As Anybody Else—"A Troubled Protagonist"

It is normally stipulated when you begin this Arc—not required, but typical—that you have become uncertain and afraid.

You have withdrawn into yourself for reasons of your own.

Maybe this is a new thing. Maybe it's an old thing.

Maybe it's a highly specific fear, like, "if I trust anything, it'll just die." Maybe it's a more general thing, like, you're starring as the easily-frightened kid in a Saturday morning special about facing fear.

But the normal premise of this Arc is that it is the faith that **the Child of the Sun** puts in you that strengthens you and frees you from that. That you can go beyond that, not because of yourself, but because **"the Child of the Sun believes in me."**

The second option is that you're increasingly distressed by your own memories of the death of the sun; by the sorrow of that, by the impact of that, by what it *means* that such a thing once happened in the world.

(Then the last option is that you figure out your own reason why you care.)

Also, I'm going to assume that you have at least a *tiny* crush on either **the Child of the Sun** or **Arikel** at one or two points during this story.

If that's impossible—e.g., you're a straight guy or lesbian and Jasper is either spoken for or has been replaced by a boy variant—you can replace Arikel with "Ariel." If you're asexual and aromantic, I suppose you can go for starry-eyed admiration instead.

In **A Troubled Protagonist,** that may be all that's really going on here. You're not strong, but you're becoming strong because the new sun believes in you. You may not be dead center in this Arc, but you're still disturbed and troubled by the memory of the death of the sun.

As Anybody Else—"An Unlikely Friendship" / "Your Social Burdens"

An Unlikely Friendship is almost certainly with Arikel/Eclipse; however, if that doesn't fit, then I recommend that sometime during this quest you start to share in the flashbacks yourself. That gives you a chance to have a kind of unlikely friendship with the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy.

In **Your Social Burdens,** you want to help out with this flashbacks thing, or hang out around Jasper or Arikel, but Arikel has a *lot* of expectations for how the people around a solar deity should behave. Like, there's this whole etiquette. If you're going to be on her staff—this is probably the role he assumes or declares for you, high-handedly—then you'll need a *lot* of training, not to mention a completely new wardrobe.

You maybe wouldn't do it, you totally wouldn't even *do* it, except that there's this moment when the appropriate one of them is *so. Wicked. Hot.*

As Anybody Else—"Action!"

By the time you do **Action!** you should definitely be a full participant in the flashbacks.

I'm not going to theorize just yet on why. Maybe Arikel did something—gave you a drink in a poisoned McGuffin cup that tied you into it?

Maybe it just happened.

But the point is, while fighting Eclipse may play into that, the core of the quest **Action!** is going to be your struggle, as Jade Irinka, against death; or to escape the Bleak Academy; or, possibly, if you're participating in the flashbacks as the Headmaster, to stop the dead sun from relighting in the heart of the Bleak Academy and setting the entire Outside on fire.

(That's not necessarily that far from what happened—

But it's not *quite* what happened, so there's a cause for struggle.)

As Anybody Else—"Coming to Grips with Death"

Coming to Grips with Death may be the stage of this Arc at which the struggle with Arikel/Eclipse actually takes place. I don't know for sure what happens; either defeating him *is* coming to grips with death, or he dies early on and that's part of the melancholy of this quest.

The Hole in the World

The Third Arc of Spring

The Child of the Sun has a good handle on where their life is going now. They've accepted some portion of who they are.

Maybe it's stuff that happened during the last few Arcs.

Maybe it's just... their resistance to it has run its course.

But the problem is, the cosmos is in disorder. The houses of the angel of the sun were cast into disarray; the sky kingdom is unreachable; there is a hole in the world and maybe even inside the heart of **the Child of the Sun** where Jade Irinka died.

And so they come up with a plan.

It's a boggling plan. It's a massive leap of faith. It's the kind of plan you come up with when you're sitting around one day, not sure where to go, and you think, "Well, at least I'm not doing X." Or "The worst thing I could possibly do here is X, haha."

And then, after a pause:

"...hey."

That... just... might... work.

As the Child of the Sun—"Changes"

Changes is the next step in your evolution into (or more precisely, your recognition and realization of) your nature as the sun.

It's still a little traumatic, but it's mostly a good thing.

As the Child of the Sun—"the Refusal of the Call" / "the Belly of the Whale"

So it turns out that **the Refusal of the Call** is actually about your plan. It's not about the current changes. It's about this idea that's visiting you. This notion, this completely absurdly dangerous notion, that you've just started to feel, more and more deeply, is *right*.

You don't want to do it.

You're looking for a way not to do it. A way to convince yourself not to do it. But the problem is, the more irrational a plan is, the harder it is to rationally convince yourself that it's wrong. It's like reason's treading water or slipping into quicksand.

How can it fight this wild hope in your heart?

So you fight it, but you give in to it. And, if you like—because the best and the worst plans always include some self-defeating element—the plan can feature an element of refusing the change, fighting the change, in you as well.

This is the story of how you try to give yourself to the Bleak Academy, or to stop being the sun and become the earth or moon or stars instead, or infect yourself with Rider poison, or appoint the Dream-Witch or Nightmares' Angel as the new sun. Something completely dumb, but which has a "feeling" like it might just... somehow... solve things, because metaphor! Because metaphysics! Because nobody will ever expect it!

And it just might work, except...

In **the Belly of the Whale,** it doesn't. It really doesn't. In the name of your plan or as a consequence of your changes you'll lose your safety, your solid footing, but it won't be clear how to gain or whether you've gained anything in return. You're a figure people can have faith in, but this will be a stern test of whether you can have faith in yourself.

As the Child of the Sun—"the Trials of the Sun" / "Apotheosis"

The Trials of the Sun moves this plan forward, anyway. You drive towards the tiny chance of success and the greater chance of these events devouring you.

The outcome, as of **Apotheosis,** is unknown.

(On an Otherworldly or Mystic Arc, anyway. On a Knight or Emptiness Arc, you almost certainly win!)

As Anyone Else—General Notes

There's a hole in the world. There's a hole in the foundations of things, in your ability to *trust* the foundations of things, left by... well, life, but also, in part, by the death of Jade Irinka, long ago.

I don't know if you know that. I don't even know if you'd agree with me. If you disagree as both player and character then maybe it doesn't matter that I think that, right or not.

But... I think it's there.

And then, for one of two reasons:

- because the **Child of the Sun** goes looking for Arikel, but falls into the hands of something else instead, or...
- because it was always latent in the sun, ever since the arrow of the Headmaster pierced it, a poison stuck into the nature of the sky...

...this person, this solar brightness, whom you've put a lot of trust in—

They're going to betray you. First willingly, and then later on unwillingly, they're going to betray you; and, in the second instance, become a more terrible threat than anything you've faced so far.

It all starts when they ask you to fill in for them at some ceremonial function.

Then—

I don't know why. Maybe it's social-fu. Maybe it's Imperial magic. But when it's over, the sunniness sticks to *you*. You're still you in the mirror; people still know your name; you still have your own character sheet, but on top of everything else, you're "the child of the sun."

That's the willing betrayal.

The unwilling betrayal is when they come back *wrong*.

As Anyone Else—"A Troubled Protagonist"

So, normally, in **A Troubled Protagonist** you'll be facing a test of faith.

See, that willing betrayal? It's already happened, or, it happens at the start of this quest. And afterwards, you're feeling a little abandoned.

A little, well. Betrayed.

Maybe you'll be struggling to hang on to your faith in the Child of the Sun despite this test.

Or maybe you didn't have any faith in them anyway. Maybe you're more worried about something like, what if you can't manage this? No, you know you *can't* manage this. You can't hold the hope and light of the world in your hands. ...you think. And now that you're "the child of the sun," the Bleak Academy is trying to kill you...

...you think.

You can feel it sometimes. You can feel its hunger. You can feel the despair inside you grow. It's horrible, but also kind of horrifyingly attractive. It's *pulling* you to that terrible place.

As Anyone Else—"An Unlikely Friendship"

This Arc is one without an obvious **Unlikely Friendship;** you'll have to try a few options. I'm guessing it's probably a Main Character, a rival or enemy who you get an unexpected chance to spend time with peacefully and positively (perhaps **the Sacrificial Bull,** pg. 323?), or an unlikely friend from one of the previous Arcs. It's OK to have a full social calendar for a few chapters while you try to figure out whom it could be.

As Anyone Else—"Your Social Burdens"

Your Social Burdens explores the onerous social burdens associated with this situation. If there aren't any yet, weren't any yet, then *this* is when Fortitude finally wakes up and starts enshrining you as a holy figure; *this* is when the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy decides to start negotiating and sends someone to deal with "you" and feel out how much you know about the death of "your mother" Jade; *this* is when the bird-headed minister Jokkun, *extremely* disappointed that you don't remember them, descends from Celestia to begin instructing you on the thousand books of etiquette and practice that "you" will need to learn before being crowned, anointed, and escorted back into the sky.

IT NEVER STOPS.

As Anyone Else—"Action!" / "Coming to Grips with Death"

In **Action!, the Child of the Sun** comes back as a roiling thermonuclear... thing. A congeries of dream and fire. Spheres and tendrils. Heat and death to roll across the sky. You can reverse some of the heat/cold and light/shadow stuff in your quest card if you like.

Coming to Grips with Death is a chance to think about how you handled all of this and build something amazing from the pieces.

Alternate Plans

If being turned into the Child of the Sun doesn't seem right, maybe the ritual is to make a "paired" form—not **the Child of the Sun,** but **the Avatar of the World**, or **the Temporary Sun Substitute, Double Morning Star!** or something like that. Something that you don't really want to be *stuck* with, and which can malfunction and trigger the sun-splosion, but which is more about an unexpected duty than stepping into someone else's shoes.

For a completely different version of this Arc, instead of selling you out by sticking you with their job, **the Child of the Sun** might, well, literally sell you out.

Maybe the Witch of the Far Roofs has either taken over Caroline Yatskaya's body for good or just shown up and Caroline is missing, and she's set up a vacation home (a chicken-legged villa) for herself in Town. In order to find information on Caroline or something to do with Jade Irinka's death, **the Child of the Sun** sells you to her as a servant. This isn't a legal transaction in Town or anything but the Witch is adamant and Jasper begs you not to make waves—are you really being placed there to spy on the Witch?

...or maybe it's the Headmaster that's come to Town, and you've been sold to his retinue?

These are more sketches than ideas so make sure your group is up for it before you go this route. I do want to note that if you do this you'd almost certainly have the Witch/the Headmaster as your **Unlikely Friend.** They might also be your enemy in **Action!**

The Hollow Sky

The Fourth Arc of Spring

In this Arc, hope is lost.

Everything's gone wrong. Maybe at the end of last Arc. Maybe it's just that the worst thing that could happen is about to.

The Child of the Sun is fading into ashes; becoming an empty avatar of despair.

Maybe it's a parallel to before.

You know, before. When Jade Irinka was lost, only it wasn't as bad as it could have been. Maybe it's like that.

Maybe.

That would be nice. A happy ending would be good; though of course, as it was then, well, no, more than it was then, a happy ending is impossible. It'd be nice but it can't happen.

Hope, after all, is lost.

As the Child of the Sun— "Changes" / "the Refusal of the Call"

Changes focuses on this slow inversion. You're hollowing out. It's even possible that during this Arc your powers will reverse—your core Principle will shift from Hope into Despair.

In **the Refusal of the Call**, you'll try to save yourself.

If there's no one more obvious to turn to, I suggest traveling to the Bleak Academy. I suggest enrolling there, and trying to learn enough about what you might be becoming, there, or enough about your mother and why she died, there, to gain control over yourself.

If that won't work—maybe you just finished the fourth Winter Arc?—

Consider seeking help from Iolithae Septimian (pg. 438), Ill-Made (pg. 429), or from **the Dream-Witch's** hidden room.

As the Child of the Sun—"the Belly of the Whale" / "the Trials of the Sun"

In **the Belly of the Whale,** you're no longer yourself any more. You start to withdraw from the world for fear that you'll destroy it—but it can't live without you, either, so that's not really any good.

In **the Trials of the Sun,** you give in and start experimenting with your new powers. Even if you swore you'd never do that—it becomes obvious that perhaps you'd best. That you don't have a realistic *choice*.

As the Child of the Sun—"Apotheosis"

Apotheosis is the endgame.

I like to think that this is the story, after Arc after Arc of things going wrong for you, that things go wrong for *despair.* I like to think that this is the story that recapitulates the miracle of Jade Irinka not dying exactly—

Of her "death" instead lighting the Nothing and making it the Outside.

But maybe that's not what happens.

Maybe you become a murderous god of despair, and take your place at the side of the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy, and the sun goes pale as a dead white worm, and the world below grows cold.

It's your last Arc! Probably anything can happen!

"A Coming-of-Age Story"

As Anyone Else—"A Troubled Protagonist"

A Troubled Protagonist gives you the chance to move forward from being shaped and affected by the sun to... being a light in the world.

Maybe it's the last Arc that taught you. Maybe it's just time.

But I think it's core to the series of Arcs that, even if you don't have to focus on it for this Arc, as the sun is fading into emptiness, *you're* learning to make light.

What if you'd reached that point already? What if you already do that?

I guess in that case you should try for, maybe, a small but meaningful shift in your spiritual stance.

As Anyone Else—"An Unlikely Friendship"

This Arc is another without a built-in **Unlikely Friendship**; though, I think, given the changes that they're going through, your Unlikely Friend here will *actually* turn out to be **the Child of the Sun.** It may also be a good time for Arikel to come back or for the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy to show his better side; or, if not his better side, then a side that implies this is a test for you and the Child of the Sun rather than an outright attack against the world.

As Anyone Else—"Your Social Burdens"

Often **Your Social Burdens** here involve a visit to the Bleak Academy—

As noted above, **the Child of the Sun** is likely to go there to seek help and understanding, and the manners and customs of the Bleak Academy can qualify for this quest. In fact, if you do go to the Bleak Academy, you can use the notes above for **Your Social Burdens, An Unlikely Friendship,** and **Action!**

If you *don't* go to the Bleak Academy, though, I think you'll be sent off to talk to a bunch of different people who might be able to help, ranging from established characters (e.g. **Iolithae Septimian,** pg. 438) to random fairy-tale spirits that the HG makes up like "the Deep Arctic God" or "the Seashell Princess" or characters that I haven't detailed herein like Lady Mugain (pg. 332, *Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake*). And, as you might expect for this quest, it's not like they just talk normally. No, it's all events and hints and etiquette.

Geez!

The world's at stake!

As Anyone Else—"Action!" / "Coming to Grips with Death"

For a second time, **Action!** is going to pit you against an out-of-control sun—but this time, a sun powered by despair.

Coming to Grips with Death either *is* or *sets up* the endgame.

Much as above, I'd like to think that the endgame here is a saved world. I'd like to think that the last step of this quest, after hope is lost, is a miracle. Best of all if it's a miracle made by your own hands—

If you create light where there was only darkness. If you *make* hope burn again, and the world lights up, and it's even *better* than before.

It doesn't have to be that way, but wouldn't it be great?

Entropy

the Entropy/Attaris Arcs

Evil died, and **the Angel of Fortitude** fell out of its broken shell.

He wasn't the only one. There were others, too—

Six sins of the father, inherited by the son. Six members of the Student Council at Horizon's School, each with horrible powers.

And his evil island, it flew on, on the back of a soul-devouring beast; and the Angel's hands dripped with endless blood; and there were enemies all around.

That was the kind of legacy he got.

Is it any wonder that now and again he is driven to put all of it aside, leave it all behind, and come out to Fortitude to cleanse his heart?

How to Play These Arcs

For Entropy/Attaris, the Entropy Arcs are **Numinous Gardens** (pg. 378), featuring the quests:

- **The Story of Your Life.** You work on your established projects.
- **The Sidekick.** You become responsible for a new pet or sidekick, and usually a larger social responsibility as well. (That is, for some reason, taking charge of them is or leads to a political or theological or mercantile act.)
- **Sins of the Father.** You confront some legacy of the first Principal Entropy—e.g., one of the "Six Sins" of the Student Council or some out-of-control element of the evil world.
- **Surreal Environments.** You go out of your comfort zone—into a surreal or stylized environment.
- **Triumph.** You have fun doing amazing stuff and making the world better.

For anyone else, these Arcs are **Secret Histories** (pg. 322), featuring the quests:

- **Encounters in the Night.** You start to hear the call of a higher destiny.
- **The Troubled Sky.** You try to claim it.
- **Behind the Mask.** You're corrupted or threatened by some evil that hides behind secrets, shadows, politics, or masks.
- **Atonement.** The world's gone wrong. Set it right.
- **The Struggle of the Knight.** You face the final trials to become what you wanted to be.

Principal Entropy Builds a Fountain

The First Entropy Arc

There is a ghostly, creepy figure known to the people of Fortitude. A figure of urban myth and legend. A biker who drives around at night, with an occasional entourage of monsters, changing the shape of the streets and the *feng shui* of the gardens.

And why? And to what end?

In this particular case, because if the proper structure is built—if Fortitude's energies can be made to flow in certain ways, to carry corruption and negative spiritual energies out into Big Lake—then **the Angel of Fortitude** may wash his hands at a certain fountain, and for a day or so they shall be clean.

As the Angel of Fortitude—"The Story of Your Life"

You have a purpose in Fortitude. There's a reason you ride those streets, study the *feng shui* of the place, and sometimes make adjustments.

You think you can turn a good part of the Mayweather Street area into a spiritual drainage system.

You want to get the little dried-up fountain in the plaza there working again. And get the energy flowing in all the streets around it to take all taints and poisons and wickedness down to the water and out past the lake into the Outside.

And then you're going to wash your hands.

It might be enough for a whole day—you think.

You think if you work hard enough, you can make that fountain pure enough, clean enough, and perfect enough that you'll be able to have a whole *day* to eat sandwiches that don't have blood on them; and to write letters that don't have blood on them; when you won't have to clean the blood off the handles of your bike and you can touch someone's hand without getting blood on it and you can rub your cheeks without getting blood on them; a whole sweet glorious day where you can just *relax* and *be*.

It probably won't make the Outside *too* angry, washing all that impurity out there. You think.

It'll be OK.

The Story of your Life looks in on you as you're working on this task.

As the Angel of Fortitude—"The Sidekick"

The Sidekick is often a kid that starts following you around. They're not quite a runaway, but they have some problem at home—something they have trouble dealing with, like the recent loss of a loved one, or a family that's kind of given up on them, or a family they're ashamed of, or a mental illness that there isn't good treatment for in Fortitude. They could also be a potential "sacred child"—someone who'll be entrusted with the health of Fortitude as a whole, someone with the strength of spirit to hold off the Outside, but who's having trouble dealing with the responsibility and the necessary partial severance of their family ties.

I want to underplay the larger social obligation here—instead of an instant *wham*, it's more that the story will wind around, eventually, to...

- ...the idea that you have to start a training camp for S.E.E.D.s here in Fortitude;
- ...you running a gang of roustabouts who help you with "cases" (think "Baker Street Irregulars");
- ...placing the sidekick at Hideo Hayashi's archive and taking up a side role as tutor to the children there; *or*
- ...you thinking bigger than just "clean my hands" and developing or managing a recycling or cleanup program for Fortitude as a whole.

An alternative is that your "sidekick" is something from the evil world—something cute but nasty, normally, like a wild dog that exhales snowstorms or something—that proves extra-difficult to fold into Fortitude as a whole. That would build in play towards a fuller acceptance of your duty to mediate between the creatures of the evil world and Town.

It would make sense if an NPC Main Character became interested in your story and started following you around as the Sidekick for this quest, but I'm hesitant to go that route because they have story Arcs of their own—I mean, if you really wanted to interact with **the Troublemaker,** wouldn't you play *her* stories? That said, it's an option. An even better option might be hooking in one of the NPCs that one of the other *PCs* have around for their current Arcs.

As the Angel of Fortitude—"Sins of the Father"

Sins of the Father brings in one of the Six Sins to make trouble for you and the sidekick that you've found; or, your responsibility for the evil world puts you in an awkward moral place. Your life is often made more difficult by the blood that drips from your hands.

As the Angel of Fortitude—"Surreal Environments"

Surreal Environments can be played out a couple of different ways. One option—particularly if this is the final quest in the Arc—is that you succeed *better* than you'd hoped. Your hands stay clean for chapters on end... but while they're clean, you're functionally human. You might or might not still have your powers, but you've lost your native immunity to being traumatized by them. Being a Magister and King of the Evil World is really *weird* to you now.

Another option is that you've stirred up the Outside with your work, and you have to deal with that. A third option is that as you get closer to success your sleep fills up with nightmarish visions or you start running a high fever. The fourth option is that the streets you change themselves become a surreal environment. This last option is probably the most generic and blandest, but it's also a good default if you're not sure how any of the options will play out.

As the Angel of Fortitude—"Triumph"

Triumph is, of course, the completion of the project. If it's the end of the Arc, it could give you your day without blood dripping from your hands. Otherwise, it could complete a test run—something that cleans your hands for a few seconds as a proof of concept.

Secret Histories

Other characters play out this Arc as a **Secret History,** like so:

As Anybody Else—"Encounters in the Night/ the Troubled Sky"

You're strangely drawn to the stories of **the Angel of Fortitude.** Or, you come across that Angel at work one night and you're transfixed. They're... a marvel.

They feel to you like...

Like something that's been missing, in your life. Like the antidote to the vice that's dragging you down or holding you back.

But there's someone else who meets them with you, or soon after, who disagrees.

Someone like you—**the Walker in Darkness—**who, out of avarice for the Angel of Fortitude's power, or fear of the wicked special effects of that Angel—doesn't think you should get involved with them at all. Someone who shares your vice, and, accordingly, by rejecting the Angel, is going to fall to that vice.

This plays out like so:

Encounters in the Night explores your sense of connection to the Angel of Fortitude. You have... well, numinous, mysterious sightings of them. You watch them from afar and see them do strange and wonderous things.

This quest usually introduces **the Walker in Darkness** and your vice.

The Troubled Sky is about how you try to use **the Angel of Fortitude** as a catalyst to becoming a better person—usually. It also shows that your life has become very weird right now, which you can think of as a helpful tool the universe is providing you against relapse: I mean, if your life was *normal*, then the change this Arc pushes you towards would probably be very easy or almost impossible instead of just challengingly hard.

As Anybody Else—"Behind the Mask/ Atonement/the Struggle of the Knight"

Behind the Mask is going to focus on a shadowy figure who wants to use you.

The most common version here is a "personal demon"—some part of you, some element of your vice, has been washed away by the *feng shui* and taken form and seeks to break the power of the Angel and reintegrate with you. Or, alternatively, the Angel of Fortitude melds a creature of the evil world to you to help you with some problem, and it has an agenda of its own.

A more sympathetic enemy is a cop or parent who thinks that **the Angel of Fortitude** is inherently wicked and wrong and wants to get them out of Fortitude or out of your life; or, arguably, someone hurt by a creature of the evil world who's looking for revenge.

A less sympathetic version brings in one of the Six Sins at this point with a plan to use you against the Angel. The most likely Sin for this is Mourning (pg. 420), who, as noted in the box, could have spent years planning for this by disguising itself as your friend. If nobody's doing **the Best Friend's** quests, that also frees up Owler (pg. 422).

And maybe it's your vice, or maybe it's that enemy, but it's almost certain that as a part of this and an outcome of this—

You screw up.

Atonement deals with how you try to make that right.

The Struggle of the Knight is almost certainly a chance to wash your own hands, literally or metaphorically; it's a chance to share in the respite that **the Angel of Fortitude** means to claim.

Stock Features

If you're anyone but **the Angel of Fortitude,** you'll need to know these features for this Arc:

Vice: Your vice can be anything here, but you should take a moment to identify it. A good standard is just a sense of something spiritually missing in your life—a hollow inside.

The Walker in Darkness: This is someone whom you meet the Angel with. If **the Best Friend** is an NPC, you can raid their locker of stock characters and go with the Sacrificial Bull (pg. 323) or Owler in the body of one of your friends (pg. 422); otherwise, I suggest a follower of yours, a friend of yours, an enabler, or maybe Mourning (pg. 420) who has spent a long time, maybe even years of your life, pretending to be your friend.

Cruel Prince: The standard Cruel Prince for this Arc is the Exultant (pg. 406), but Mourning also works.

The Guardian Bird: You should be able to go with the generic option on pg. 326—the only reason you might not be able to is if **the Best Friend** is a PC, *and* if they're so out of synch with your Arc that you can't interact with their version of the guardian bird. In a case like that, I'd recommend going with either Sa'a Lingurth (pg. 441) or just a random evil bird from the evil world that **the Angel of Fortitude** is trying to fit into the world.

The Hero: This is typically Laodemus Schwan (pg. 414) or **the Prodigy**, but it could also be a member of the Fortitude Regional Council—someone cool, like Dominic Waystreet*, whom you can look up to.

* *He has a pickup truck.*

Principal Entropy Runs for Office

The Second Entropy Arc

5

In the second Entropy Arc, you're finding a new life after the events of the last chapter. Often that means that you've been tapped or targeted to replace someone on the Fortitude Regional Council.

Meanwhile, **the Angel of Fortitude**—whether that's you or not—discovers that their Fortitude existence is illegitimate. They can't *properly* do whatever they've been doing or need to do, or what this Arc will ask of them. They're not a real person, not in that sense. Not legally, or metaphysically, or whatever.

So to gain legitimate existence, they'll wind up running for the ancient and honorable office of Fortitude Dogcatcher, which, among other things, grants a legitimate Fortitude existence to an unworldly resident.

Now, Fortitude doesn't really hunt down its dogs very much—I mean, barring kid-mauling or something, they're free-roaming. So the post is mostly honorary. One could maybe give it some use by arguing that the creatures of the evil world come under animal control ordinances, and that's possibly what one of the villains of the Arc is planning on by running for the post themselves...

But it's mostly honorary.

So that's what's going on here. There's the Angel of Fortitude running for dogcatcher; and as for you, whether you're them or not, you're trying to get your foot in the door for a higher post—but first, as a requirement, you've got to deal with the dogcatcher election.

Of course, some people would say that it doesn't really matter what the popular vote says, even if that's how the regional law would have it; after all, you can't very well have a dogcatcher unless they're approved by the legendary "First Free Dog." (pg. 407)

As the Angel of Fortitude

If you're actually **the Angel of Fortitude** here, you have some choices.

First, you don't *have* to go for dogcatcher. Sure, your existence is possibly illegitimate, but you can go for a different post—sherriff, maybe, or angle for taking over local garbage collection. One of those *other* posts with an ancient proviso allowing for anthropomorphization of a legally inanimate holder of the post and/or redemption of the unforgivable monster who holds it.

Second, you have a couple of different things you could be going for as the post you're actually *aiming* for—normally, this is about paving your way to the Fortitude Regional Council, but you could also legitimately want to be something important like sherriff, census officer, or, say, *cat*catcher.

Dogcatcher is just the paving stone on your route!

Or you could be getting all official about one of the things you set up last quest (like a S.E.E.D. program in Fortitude, or managing a skate park, or teaching the kids at Professor Hayashi's archive), and electoral or bureaucratic politics might just be necessary along the way.

Unfortunately when you do start your run, one of the Six Sins runs against you—typically but not always **the Exultant.**

All this plays out like so:

The Story of your Life isn't generally on point for the Arc. You're doing stuff. You might have picked up a new grand project, or you might be at loose ends and kind of ghosting through Fortitude with no clear goal, but this quest doesn't have that much to do with what's to come. At most it's a good place to introduce or hint at the Exultant or reinforce a project that you've got going on.

The Sidekick is probably what actually gets your skin in the game.

The standard option here is that you rescue a kid from a house fire or drowning or something. I'm voting for "genre hero in the wrong genre" here—the mostly-silent Daiichi Murata, say, who has traditional clothing, dark hair, maybe even glasses gleam, a supreme talent at something that's never relevant in play (like incredible tennis skills or being undefeated at rock-paper-scissors), but doesn't like to admit that he isn't very good at anything in particular else.

And this kid not only kind of limpets to you but also winds up pushing you forward for the "office" in question. They're probably a relative or friend of Kimiko Dinsbury, of the Fortitude Regional Council.

Meanwhile, either an established Councilmember is retiring or they get killed by a creature of the evil world, and you're tapped by Kimiko Dinsbury to replace them. Or they're just wounded and you're tapped to fill in for them?

Or Kimiko takes interest because her son or nephew is now your sidekick and decides to push for you to make something official that hadn't been before.

Another option is that you wind up hanging out with the First Free Dog, and that's actually a big deal—oh, sure, it's a zombie dog, which is kind of ucky, or maybe a vampire dog if the HG doesn't want to deal with the sudden existence of zombies, but it's also the dog that has to approve a Dogcatcher. It's the dog that according to legend brought about the current days of dogs mostly free-roaming Fortitude, and maybe even the first dog that came to the place at all. It was roused from its grave by the love of the community but then rejected by them because it's an undead, bad-luck uck-dog. But it's still kind of cute in its way.

Sins of the Father brings in an enemy. You're running for Fortitude Dogcatcher, or whatever, and the Exultant or maybe Impious runs against you. They're out for your blood, and not even in the flattering way Lee Scathing is... and they've got a plan.

Surreal Environments here tends to be a study of bureaucracy, politics, and the home life of your sidekick.

Triumph reaches, and shows off, your victory.

As Anybody Else

Here's the story as it plays out for you.

There's something you're trying to do in Fortitude—something you want to achieve that needs public support. Or, if there's nothing like that, then out of nowhere an established member of the Fortitude Regional Council decides to retire, or gets killed or wounded by a creature of the evil world, and Kimiko Dinsbury has her eye on you to replace them.

(Or fill in for them while they're wounded.)

And one of the tasks you have to take care of to demonstrate your worth here is helping to run the election for Dogcatcher that's just come up and prove your discretion and effectiveness thereby.

Encounters in the Night might precede a lot of this—it's where your encounters with the Angel of Fortitude, and possibly with the First Free Dog and the Arc's Hero, help shape you to be the kind of person who seeks out or accepts recruitment for a place on the Council.

The Troubled Sky is where things get weird. Often the election for Fortitude Dogcatcher doesn't *really* get going yet, but it may get started. This focuses on bureaucracy, early politics, and, if it winds up needing more meat than that, encounters with the Hangman (pg. 409) or another Cruel Prince.

Behind the Mask is where you find out that there are such things as shadowy conspiracies to steal or pervert small-community dogcatcher elections... as the engine to stop the Angel of Fortitude from claiming the post really gets started and one of the Six Sins tries to sway you (directly or subtly) to their side.[112]

At least you've got a reliable guardian bird to guard the ballot boxes!

...somehow, you usually wind up losing. The Angel of Fortitude winds up losing. Bad things are happening. Or maybe it's your own post, your own target, that gets stolen somehow. Like, maybe it turns out that "the Dogcatcher" (né "the Exultant," pg. 406) also has the right to dictate replacement members of the Fortitude Regional Council. Or something!

Atonement is where you have to pay for your mistakes. Often you'll fail right up to the end of the quest, any maybe even after.

The Struggle of the Knight is a followup which lets you genuinely put things right, and by doing so prove your own worth.

112 It's going to be kind of OOC obvious that they're the bad guys, but please feel free to treat it as inobvious IC!

Stock Features (Second Arc)

If you're anyone but **the Angel of Fortitude,** you'll need to know these features for "Principal Entropy Runs for Office:"

- **Vice:** Your vice can be anything here, but you should take a moment to identify it. Try to pick something that could reasonably stand in the way of your progress here!
- **the Walker in Darkness:** While this could be a generic Sacrificial Bull (pg. 323), this is often a tragic twist on **the First Free Dog** (pg. 407).
- **the Cruel Prince:** The standard Cruel Prince for this Arc is the Exultant (pg. 406), but Mourning (pg. 420) also works. Or possibly someone who feels entitled to a post on the Regional Council because a parent is on it, but they're not worthy of it and will eventually go on to develop evil mind-altering or mind-control abilities. Another possible Cruel Prince is "the Hangman," a wicked ghost that's been stirred up to murder the descendants of a criminal they hung generations before.
- **the Guardian Bird:** This is normally the generic option (pg. 326) or another evil bird from the evil world, but a black ops soldier/accountant who's just come in from America on a mission ("for democracy!") and wields two desert eagles is also viable. The treasure you ask them to guard is very likely to be the ballot boxes.
- **the Hero:** Again, this is typically Laodemus Schwan (pg. 414) or **the Prodigy**, but it could also be a member of the Fortitude Regional Council—someone cool, like Kimiko Dinsbury, whom you can look up to.

Principal Entropy Takes a Holiday

The Third Entropy Arc

In the third Entropy Arc, you're asked to help Fortitude prepare for a big festival.

Either it's at an unknown time—like, it's when dignitaries from Outside visit, or when there's some cosmic conjunction, or when the archivists finish research on how it used to be done—or it's 2-3 seasons away. The HG can fudge time and weeks if necessary to keep you from finishing the Arc long before or long after the festival.

You can run this Arc two ways.

The first is comedic with a touch of heart-warming: you focus in on the "spirit of the holiday."

But that's not the only way to play it.

See, there's a hole in the world, I think. It's from when the sun died, and evil broke, and from when **Nightmares' Angel** lost something at the Bleak Academy. Maybe it's even something to do with the other characters, too—like, it's balancing out the Wish-Granting Engine.

And this Arc can be about that, too, if you let it—about holidays as celebrations of survival, as things people do in the face of great tragedies to remind themselves that there is good in the world, that things have survived, that light and life endure.

I'm mostly targeting the comedy here...

...but if you find it growing old, and want to tie things back to a real and meaningful core?

That's what you need to remember. That's what you need to have your character face. That hole in the world.

A Quick Guide to Fortitude Holidays

For those of you without **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake,** the most likely holidays to explore here are—

- 4th week, Spring: Sorrows' Week, a mourning rite for Jade Irinka.
- 5th week, Spring: the Flower-Viewing Festival.
- 7th week, Spring: Easter.
- 10th week, Spring: Celdinar Day, remembering the heyday of vampires and deviant science.
- 5th week, Summer: the Star Festival / festival of wishes.
- 6th week, Summer: Landing Day, celebrating the human arrival in Town.
- 9th week, Summer: the Spirit-Honoring Day, wherein ghosts visit Fortitude.
- 10-11th week, Summer: the Harvest and Apple Festivals.
- 8th week, Autumn: Halloween.
- 4th week, Winter: Christmas.
- 12th week, Winter: Valentine's Day.
- 13th week, Winter: Pancake Week.

As the Angel of Fortitude

You usually wind up getting involved in this because you adopt the festival pig. As you know, of course, a festival pig is a pig, a special free-range festival-*related* pig, maybe even a white pig with a star on its forehead, and it's very important to all Fortitude that the pig be healthy and happy until it gets eaten later on.

(This is obviously more suited to some festivals than others, but feel free to have fun explaining why spirit-honoring day, the flower festival, or Christmas needs a festival pig.)

As an alternative you could wind up quasi-adopting the spirit of the festival, who is amnesiac owing to a particularly hot summer or cold winter and needs help understanding the... spirit... of the holiday, in the *other* sense of the word.

The Sin you're most likely to deal with here is Lee Scathing (pg. 414), who is running a terrifying experiment somehow related to the holiday, the spirit, or the pig. (It could also be the Exultant again.)

The festival itself is your typical **Surreal Environment.** Since it's rare for a festival to last more than a week, I'm assuming that something happens to kind of *stick* it—you keep encountering lingering elements, spirits, decorations, or whatever, long after the festival ends. I don't know why! If there's a real reason, you'll probably figure it out, but it's also possible that it's just a running joke or a metaphysical detritus.

As Anybody Else

You've been called on to help organize the festival. It's just too bad that the Six Sins have "holiday spirit" too!

Lee Scathing has a serious scheme here—he's going to use the holiday to create an innocent, or possibly reduce many of the people of Fortitude into an innocent or even bodiless state.[113] The others are probably less into it: they have holiday plans, sure, but they don't rise to the level of "schemes."

113 This is normally a bit too nasty for him, but nasty interpretations of this character exist!

Stock Features of a Comedic Arc

If you're anyone but **the Angel of Fortitude,** you'll need to know these features for this Arc:

- **Vice:** Your vice here is something that runs counter to your holiday spirit.
- **the Walker in Darkness:** This is generally a generic Sacrificial Bull (pg. 323), but more importantly, it's someone who rejects the holiday. This isn't necessarily a bad thing—I mean, sure, it's mean-spirited to hate Christmas or Sorrows' Week, but there are some serious issues with Landing Day and a bunch of holidays are in between.
- **the Cruel Prince:** The standard Cruel Prince for this Arc is Lee Scathing (pg. 414), who thinks he can use the holiday as a "crucible of innocence." This is also a good Arc for an appearance of Billy Sovereign (pg. 405) or a snotty anti-holiday kid who becomes empowered by an evil holiday-hating ghost.
- **the Guardian Bird:** A few holidays may offer their own choices here, including tongue-in-cheek choices like the Easter Bunny or a Landing Day turkey. Celdinar Day suggests a great brass-bound, smoke-spewing zeppelin war machine. Normally you'd just use the generic option (pg. 326) or, if you didn't get the chance to use them last time, a black ops soldier/accountant who's just come in from America on a mission ("for the holidays!") and wields two desert eagles again.
- **the Hero:** The specific holiday may offer you a few options here. Otherwise, we're probably talking about Dominic Waystreet or Laodemus Schwan.

Stock Features of a More Serious Arc

You'll want to run this a little differently for a more serious Arc:

- **Vice:** Your vice is, basically, that hole in the world that I mentioned. The fact that there's something wrong in the world and in your life. Something broken. It's hard to touch on it directly. Just, something's missing. Something's wrong.
- **the Walker in Darkness:** This is generally a generic Sacrificial Bull (pg. 323), but more importantly, it's someone who'll get corrupted by that broken part of the world. Someone who'll deny it at first but eventually despair because of it and decide the whole place ought to go, that there's no worth left to it, not after Jade Irinka died.
- **Cruel Princes, Guardian Birds, and Heroes:** As for the comedic version of the Arc.

Principal Entropy and the Lost Adventure

The Fourth Entropy Arc

In the fourth Entropy Arc, a handful of dream-beetles fall off the edge of the evil island, sprinkling into the dreams and stories of Fortitude Below.

They're big. They're sea-turtle big.

And it looks like they brought a queen. That, or a compatible queen had always been sealed behind crystal in a secret cave in the hill on Fortitude below.

Because they're spreading.

More and more people dream about them now. Or find their dreams being sealed over in amber, walled away by the bugs, repeating over and over again, there for the egg-cluster of the dream-bugs to grow.

It's a good thing, sort of.

I mean, the nectar they leave in the repeating dream refreshes the mind, maybe?

But mostly it is bad.

And they've been appearing in the illustrations of old books, because they've slipped into the stories. And they show up in flashbacks and flashforwards too, and sometimes memories. They're arguably more "drama-beetles" than "dream-beetles," and they're

hard at work gnawing away at the spaces between people's dreams.

They've slipped through into the physical world, too—

Into that cave in the western hills.

They're not evil. They're not even really *bad*. And **the Angel of Fortitude** doesn't want them killed. There has to be some way, the Angel reasons, for them to fit into Fortitude life in a stable, harmonious way.

There has to be a way to *not* kill them.

This is the story of how that happens; or how it doesn't happen, how the whispers of Mourning turn the people of Fortitude against the idea, because who knows what'll happen to people when the dream-eggs hatch?

Or maybe it's a different story.

Maybe it's the story of how, while everyone was distracted, while all of that was going on, Glass Spider came to Fortitude and tried to both save and take over the world.

As the Angel of Fortitude

You'll usually get drawn into all of this by an impulse to protect the dream-bugs from getting wiped out. You want to find a *proper* place for them in the life of Fortitude.

Your **Surreal Environment** is often either the dream-world or story-world access that the dream-bugs open up or the play that Glass Spider (pg. 408) hopes to perform.

As Anybody Else

For you this Arc is probably built around **Glass Spider** or possibly **Mourning—**

One of them is looking for your help to save the Region.

And the problem is, they're monsters, but it's possible that they're on the right side here, or at least, that turning them down isn't as simple as it looks. Glass Spider's got a play to put on or a mural to design, and it'll genuinely strengthen the world; and if Mourning is pushing against what **the Angel of Fortitude** is doing this Arc, well—

The Angel of Fortitude is spending this Arc trying to find a way to fit the dream-bugs into Fortitude, and that might not be the best thing to do with a hive of giant insects with no local natural predators who are spreading through the world of people's dreams.

So this is basically a moral test for you:

Who are you going to be? And can you stick by your guns and be that when it could wind up, quite possibly, wrong?

Stock Features

If you're anyone but **the Angel of Fortitude,** you'll need to know these features for this Arc:

- **Vice:** You probably know your vice by now, but if you've resolved your former vices over the last few Arcs, then we're talking about something that makes you vulnerable to Mourning or Glass Spider's pitch. Basically, probably: something that tells you that you are not strong enough to save the world from drowning in chaos; or, that makes you distrust the Angel of Fortitude's ability to reconcile the drama-bugs with Fortitude without killing them all.
- **the Walker in Darkness:** This is generally someone who willingly sells themselves to **Glass Spider** for luxury, for knowledge, or in the belief that Glass Spider is better able than the Angel of Fortitude to help save the world. It could be almost any major established NPC with a solid reason for doing so.
- **the Cruel Prince:** The standard Cruel Prince for this Arc is Glass Spider (pg. 408), but it's possible for Mourning (pg. 420) and maybe even the Exultant (pg. 406) to be involved as well.
- **the Guardian Bird:** There could be a large flying glamour beetle with otherworldly beauty, associated with the dream-bugs. Someone could bring in an ornithopter from Old Molder named "the Guardian Bird." Or, of course, you can use the generic option (pg. 326)
- **the Hero:** This is often **the Angel of Fortitude** themselves—they're likely to be at their best here. It *could* also be the nominal villain Glass Spider (pg. 408), if the HG redeems them or just has them put on a really good front, or a heroic exterminator, or a knight out of legend or somebody's dreams—Sir Lancelot? Or one of the rat paragons? Whomever it is probably winds up hanging out with Laodemus a lot.

Glass

the Miramie/Reynard Arcs

5

In the days of your mother, in the days of your father, the Bleak Academy sent a Magister to make an end to Town.

It was a terrifying creature, that Magister: a prodigy of hatred and despair.

It was a witch.

It put a shard of its witch's dreams into the brain of young Hayashi Hideo. He had been a glass-maker. He became its servant as well.

Together they built a glass dragon and they taught it to hate the world.

Then they turned it loose.

They sent it out to make an end to everything. But it didn't do that. It broke, instead. And the Magister broke too. And the sun shone across a sleepy little Town in the middle of nowhere, and it was still safe, still living on.

A long time later—

Some people have shards of that glass dragon in them. In their dreams, in their souls, in their hearts, in their brains, in their arms or kidneys or lungs or whatever too, I do not know. Those shards are giving them strange urges, strange impulses, strange powers.

And what's left of the Magister has coalesced in the Archive of Professor Hayashi Hideo.

It has formed itself into a teenager who finds life pretty hard and thinks the world kind of sucks but doesn't think it's all that *impossibly* bad. Someone who *could* live in the world, live in Town, and find a kind of peace there. Someone who is many things—**the Dream-Witch** first and foremost among them—but *isn't* a "prodigy of hatred and despair."

Herein are a set of stories about...

What's inside a person. How a person gets put together, out of all life's shards of memory and power.

About souls and lives and joys and burdens, as delicate as glass.

More helpfully, this is:

- a story of low-powered superheroics (the people infected by the shards)
- a magical-realism-styled allegory for the construction of the self

Note that while this story does allow for some direct brain-bending and self-re-engineering through allegory, it *is* an allegory and not some postmodernist total-boundary-breakdown; taken too far or too swiftly, efforts like that will fail.

How to Play These Arcs

Particularly for Miramie/Reynard, the Glass Arcs are usually **Bittersweet Sagas** (pg. 390), featuring the quests:

- **Beautiful and Far Away.** There's a place you can go to escape this troubled world.
- **Fascination.** You're fascinated by someone/thing dangerous and irresponsible.
- **This is...**
  - **...So Surreal:** People are doing just plain goofy stuff with their powers.
  - **...*Such* a Bad Idea:** Someone gets or seizes new powers.
- **You've Lost Them.** You interact with somebody damaged.
- **Something Heals.** You interact with someone who is trying to make things better and make up for their old mistakes.

You can also play these Arcs out as **Misadventures** (pg. 308), featuring the quests:

- **Haunted.** Someone haunts your dreams.
- **Wishing for...**
  - ...**Ease:** You try to cheat and make your life a little easier.
  - ...**Power:** You pick up a new power.
- **Wicked Creatures.** Some wicked creature tries to change your nature.
- **Asserting Your Existence.** You try to reclaim something you've lost.
- **Wishing for Healing.** You try to fix something you've broken.

The Hidden Room

PROLOGUE

Near the top of the Archive, the books and boxes of papers start to fade into a labyrinth, and the labyrinth fades into the Outside—but if you go left instead of right, just when things start getting trippy, you might not wind up in the Outside. You might wind up in the place of **the Dream-Witch,** instead—

Where all the pieces of the shattered Magister are.

Most of them are kind of scary. I mean, there's a lot of nastiness there, that **the Dream-Witch** has left behind but hasn't destroyed. The prodigy of despair and hate, the Magister of Emptiness and Dream, that person still *exists*, in pieces, scattered through all those shelves and halls.

And past all of that there is a private little library—a hidden room—with all the pieces of the person that took the Magister's place. All the things that make **the Dream-Witch,** well, *themselves*.

It's a pretty little room: delicate, beautiful, organized, and bathed in sunlight through a beautiful window of Hayashi glass.

Shards of Glass

THE FIRST GLASS ARC

Sometimes a shard of the glass dragon or a memento of Melanie Malakh turns up. They tend to do weird things to people. They encourage strange behaviors, grant strange powers, and rouse strange memories—

Not just in **the Dream-Witch!**

Dealing with them tends to be pretty flashback-heavy for *anyone*.

This Arc is a set of stories of those shards—of things that happen because of them. Not even necessarily troublesome things! Just, you're looking into the matter, and you meet some interesting people.

This usually includes...

- ...someone who's going a little bit out of control, e.g. Ardennes or Mazarin (pg. 404, pg. 417);
- ...someone who's likely to get damaged by this power, e.g. Renjiro or Sakura (pg. 423, pg. 424);
- ...a few other people using other options from the mentioned characters' possible powersets; *or*
- ...one or two people whose shards are just *there*, like Yulia Rozhkova (pg. 426).

And usually—

Not always. But *usually*!—

At some point early on, you and **the Dream-Witch** do something you regret. Maybe it's something bad. Maybe it's just embarrassing and goofy, like getting drunk for the first time, and way too thoroughly.

Maybe it's just carelessness that leads to something traumatic.

You don't want to think about it. But something happens.

And as a consequence, later, someone who shouldn't've finds out about the path to the hidden room; or one of the nastier shards of Malakh gets *into* the hidden room; or the shards are disturbed; or you cut yourself on a shard without realizing, and it tastes blood—something. Something happens to disrupt things. Or maybe it's not anything as obvious as that, maybe it's just a leftover affinity between Malakh or the dragon and the modern Dream-Witch that gets the shards acting up against her or in her defense.

More and more people with shard powers are turning up, and those shard powers are unstable. People are

burning out. The shards are burning out. Strangeness lights up the nights of Fortitude.

For the Dream-Witch— "Beautiful and Far Away"

It is a place of safety. It is a place of security. It is where you formed yourself; where you can safely *be* yourself, and not be at risk of becoming a prodigy of hatred and despair:

Your hidden room, in a corner of the Archive's upper floors.

You have a tendency to retreat there when you're stressed. It's good for you. It's a place where you can grow stronger in yourself. But it's also a little scary, because it's so beautiful and peaceful there. You can imagine getting lost there, losing track of time there—

Coming out again to discover that ten or fifteen years have passed you by.

It's an exaggerated risk but a real one.

It probably wouldn't happen. But it could. If you let it—it could. You could probably live in that room timelessly for centuries, moving little bits of self about, and if nobody else came in and found you, your existence would just drift forever-ly on.

On the other hand you can't just *give up* your place of safety.

That's like dieting by giving up on food!

It's all well and good as an idea but you can't actually *do* it, and even if you could, in practice it would be bad. So, figuring out what to do here is going to play out as the quest **Beautiful and Far Away.**

For Anybody Else— "Beautiful and Far Away"

If you play this out as a bittersweet saga then the truth is—

It's your hidden room too. It's your sanctum. I don't know why or how, but when you find it you will understand that it is precious to you; that it is a place you may retreat to, and find sanctuary there.

Somewhere **Beautiful and Far Away.**

General Notes

As a bittersweet saga, the quests are pretty independent—just play whatever quest comes next until it feels like a good endpoint. I should warn you that there are actually six quests here for a five-step Arc, so if you have specific plans for playing through **You've Lost Them** make sure you don't miss its place in the Arc.

"Fascination"

The main story of the Arc picks up with the quest **Fascination,** wherein you're drawn to and fascinated by one of these four targets:

- the shards of the glass dragon in general
- one of the build-your-own Fortitude PCs, who'll have a glass dragon shard in them
- **the Wishing Boy (or Girl),** who does too
- the prodigy Malakh and/or their history with Hideo Hayashi

I'm going to assume that it's the first one—the default here is that you're made interested by this whole shards-of-the-glass-dragon thing.

During this quest is a good point in the story to make that mistake I mentioned earlier.

If you're at a loss for what to do at any point during this quest, consider chasing a rumor to the doorstep of Sakura, Renjiro, Mazarin, or Ardennes.

"This is So Surreal" / "This is Such a Bad Idea"

This is the story of people doing strange things with their shard-born powers. They're usually weird enough that they can qualify as "wishes" by the quest card's definition.

This is usually where Mazarin or Ardennes goes out of control.

Which quest do you want?

Do you want to contend with people trying to make their lives easy? Or people reaching for power? You might not have the choice, if the characters making trouble or the trouble itself gets too firmly established before you get to this quest, but if it's all kind of vague, it'll follow the quest that you choose:

This is So Surreal if they're being weird;

This is Such a Bad Idea if they're displaying hubris.

"You've Lost Them"

This is the quest where the powers of one of the shards, or the consequences of that mistake that I recommended, mess somebody up.

Sakura? Renjiro?

Another PC?

You?

"Something Heals"

Something gets a little better for you, ideally because of the shards of the glass dragon or a friend you make after emerging from your hidden room.

Misadventures

Normally you won't, but you'll have the option of playing this Arc out as a "misadventure"—

Something styled after the Arcs of **the Wishing Boy (or Girl).**

This is an option for anyone, including **the Dream-Witch** herself.

The Misadventures of the Dream-Witch—"Wicked Creatures"

And if you're **the Dream-Witch,** and you take this option, it's quite possible that the hidden room isn't "really" yours at all—it's more of a remnant of and a Chapel *to* the Magister Malakh. You're still drawn there, but it isn't good for you, it's just a chance for your former self to corrupt you—

And that plays out as the quest **Wicked Creatures.**

The Misadventures of Somebody Else—"Wicked Creatures"

Or is this a misadventure for somebody else?

Then this is the story of how you come to know **the Dream-Witch**—how you wind up seeing the treasures and the keepsakes of the hidden room and learning the stories that connect to them.

Is the Witch your friend? Have they trusted you with this place?

Did you stumble on the hidden room?

Are you trying to investigate **the Dream-Witch,** to understand what makes them tick, whether there is something there that can be saved? Or just to learn the weaknesses of an enemy?

When the world is too much, the Dream-Witch retreats there.

They hide among the books and knick-knacks and reaffirm themselves in who they want to be.

For you, this quest is all about Slice of Life and Discovery—it's about getting to know someone and having the chance to admire their beautiful things. If that's not enough—if you want a little sharper an edge to this—you can deal with **the Dream-Witch's** hostility to those who would intrude here, and with the cost to the sanctity of the room of that intrusion.

This all plays out as the quest **Wicked Creatures**.

The Misadventures of the Dream-Witch—"Haunted"

The other possible starting place for a misadventure is the quest "Haunted."

In this quest, there's something that you're **Haunted** by:

- **the Wishing Boy (or Girl),** and the way they have some of *your* memories locked up in their head;
- concern about the whole situation with the shards; *or*
- someone with one of the shards, maybe even Sakura or Renjiro from pg. 525, gains access to your hidden room and/or some sort of power over you.

If you're planning on doing the Arcs for **the Wishing Boy (or Girl)**, then I'd recommend leaving that character alone for now and focusing on the shards. If someone else is doing those Arcs, or if you're planning to stay focused on your own stuff for a long time—

Then go with that first option. They're what's haunting you.

This story would start out as a story of how they're entangled in your dreams, you know? How the shard of the glass dragon *in* their dreams is a key part of who you were, and you don't necessarily want it back, but you're haunted by it, you need to understand it.

And maybe you're having Outside dust problems, or Horizon-related problems, or little weird wish effects in your life, because of that connection the two of you now share.

As a Misadventure of Anybody Else—"Haunted"

If you're not **the Dream-Witch**, this plays out pretty similarly, with one major exception:

Instead of having a hidden room and part of your memories in the head of **the Wishing Boy (or Girl)—**

You don't.

The Misadventures of the Dream-Witch—"Wishing for Ease/Power"

As the Dream-Witch, you don't have many wish-like powers, which makes **Wishing for Ease/Power** a little harder, but that's not actually a big obstacle—what you *do* have is the potential ability to...

- ...talk an NPC or even PC **Wishing Boy (or Girl)** into making wishes on your behalf;
- ...develop unusual and practically wish-level applications of **Changeling** or some other magical skill;
- ...rewire your own mind by playing around with the layout of the hidden room; *or*
- ...do magic/science in the hidden room to try to shape the powers of the shards of the glass dragon, with consequences even more unpredictable than a wish.

So it's only if *none* of those work in your game that you'll have to stress out about this point.

The Misadventures of the Dream-Witch—"Asserting your Existence"

If you find yourself needing the quest **Asserting Your Existence,** it means that stuff has gone wrong with your hidden room, and therefore with *yourself*; you're getting taken over to some degree by either somebody with a shard or by the remnants of Malakh.

The Misadventures of Anybody Else—"Wishing for Ease/Power, Asserting your Existence"

You may very well have your own wish-level powers—in fact, you may very well be **the Wishing Boy (or Girl),** in which case these quests are practically old hat for you!

But if not, or even if, I think your core schtick in **Wishing for Ease/Power** is that:

- There is a shard of the glass dragon in you (even if your character background doesn't explicitly demand one—you have it, and it's maybe partially responsible for the powers you already had, or maybe it sticks into you during the quest).
- The shard is connecting you to Malakh and **the Dream-Witch** somehow.
- If you don't have any wish-like powers you'll be able to use **Science, Faith, and Sorcery** Actions to jigger this shard into giving you one or two heavily HG-controlled "wishes" per season during the course of this Arc; *but...*
- ...eventually it may very well damage you.

That damage in the last bullet point will leave you lost until you play through **Asserting Your Existence.**

"Wishing for Healing"

If you find yourself needing **Wishing for Healing,** that's your chance to make some of the errors that have accumulated over the course of this Arc good.

The Passage to the Left

THE SECOND GLASS ARC

Between the Archive and the hidden there is a passageway lined with shelves and offshoot chambers.

Here there is a richness of lost, abandoned memories.

Here, stacked on shelves and tucked away in dusty corners, are pieces of **Melanie Malakh,** strategist of the Bleak Academy, prodigy of despair and hate—all the pieces, or most of the pieces anyway, that the modern **Dream-Witch** abandoned.

There's something there—

Something demanding attention. Something that was lost, but which is needed. It's just regrettable that the pieces of her are dangerous things that bring up dark memories and urges in you, in *anybody*, when you handle them too much.

As a Bittersweet Saga

This begins as a story of someplace **Beautiful and Far Away.**

For **the Dream-Witch,** that's still the hidden room.

For anyone else, perhaps it is the passageway, which, as I have noted, calls.

Then comes **Fascination** with...

- **...the Dream-Witch?**
- **...the Wishing Boy (or Girl)?**
- ...some other Main Character with a connection to the shards of the glass dragon? *Or*
- ...Melanie Malakh?

Now, explaining **This is So Surreal / This is *Such* a Bad Idea** should only be necessary in single-player games with a relatively hands-off HG—

I mean, to be honest, if there are other Main Characters swirling around doing stuff, things will very likely get surreal/inappropriate on their own. But if you're at a loss here, the surreality or bad ideas could come from people with shards of the glass dragon in them or people who fall under the influence of Melanie Malakh.

When you find what you're looking for in the passage to the left, it's a memory or truth that either breaks someone or leads you to someone that Malakh broke a long time ago. This plays out as **You've Lost Them.**

Your interactions in **Something Heals** are likely to focus on a piece or echo or shadow of Melanie Malakh that's remorseful enough to try to make up for

past mistakes, even if it's not "good" enough for the Dream-Witch to have included it in herself; or possibly a similar piece/echo/shadow of the glass dragon; or, if all that fails, it's Hideo Hayashi, coming clean about some unexpected level of culpability in events.

As a Misadventure

The eponymous **Passage to the Left** becomes the Chapel of your corruptor, Melanie Malakh, in **Wicked Creatures.**

You're **Haunted** by a nameless, voiceless calling that draws you there—

At least, at first.

You may decide later on that what is really haunting you is someone who needs closure, or Malakh, or the glass dragon, or a Main Character.

Your **Wishing for Ease/Power** is probably influenced by what you find in the Passage to the Left. You may find yourself using your powers autonomically, reflexively—I don't mean that the HG takes them over, although you can *tell* the HG to invoke them; I just mean, you invoke them in response to the feelings roused in you by the pieces of Melanie Malakh, and not to your conscious will. You enter a dream-like and suggestible state, perhaps, or you react to some vision that you see by losing your normal self-discipline.

Eventually you lose some part of yourself here, and must fight back by **Asserting Your Existence.**

As usual, **Wishing for Healing** is just you making as much right as you can of the errors along the way.

The Maze in the Library

the Third Glass Arc

If you turn right, instead of left, the passage leads to the Outside.

It's started calling.

You've started feeling like there's something *beautiful* waiting for you out there. It's terrifying, it's always stressful, but there's something—

It's like you're hunting a grail, or a questing beast. It's like there was someone you knew, long ago, someone you loved, and you can find them again. There's the most precious thing in the world to you, somewhere in the winding maze of the Outside.

Of course, it's a crazy place, and it's in the shadow of the Bleak Academy, and if you go too far it'll bleed into the low Outside which is worse; but there's nothing for it but to wander the stacks and have encounters with the strangeness and stumble into the hidden and faraway places beyond them until you understand what you're looking for.

So this is the story of your recurring visits to that maze; your explorations of that labyrinth.

Sometimes you'll meet other people who are searching for things there; or find bits and pieces of other places, usually as small and isolated set pieces that don't let you travel to the rest of the place—but maybe it'll lead you to somewhere interesting, like the actual St. Petersburg or an air-bubbled Martian city or a lost civilization in a library, and you'll be able to explore.

Or you'll stumble out, after a few days' walk, in the book-mines under Soma Village.

One of the greatest dangers of the place—the default Arc threat—is **Unicorn, which is named Numinous.** This creature dwells atop the labyrinth walls, and on its tumbled piles of rubble, and on the roofs of the places that you find there; or sometimes, though it seems to pain it, it walks delicately and with clicking feet through the passages below.

It is deadly because it may burn you down to nothing simply with its *presence*; or sear an obsession with itself into even the strongest mind.

What you find there will depend on your Arc, I suppose.

Perhaps you'll barely survive the journey, and count that a victory. Perhaps you'll find the key to all things in the world.

As a Bittersweet Saga

The setting and Secret Place for **Beautiful and Far Away** are both typically that maze. That may also be your **Fascination,** but it's more likely that you're fascinated either by Unicorn or by the thing that you sense calling to you from the maze.

This story is going to need a grail hunter—

Someone else exploring the maze, trying to find Unicorn or "the True Thing" or something else like that. This is often either Sakura or Ardennes, from pg. 424 or pg. 404, unless it's a leftover Main Character or floating NPC that you can revive for the purpose.

Once again I don't feel like surreal situations and bad ideas should be hard to come by;

That said, if you have trouble, Unicorn itself can make things surreal, or the grail hunter can have *such* a bad idea.

You'll probably meet other characters along the way, and there are thus multiple options—but the grail hunter is there as a candidate for the person who gets damaged, burned out by Unicorn or the True Thing that they find: **You've Lost Them.**

And if you find something amazing therein—

And there are, of course, many amazing things to find—perhaps it will be the case that **Something Heals.**

As a Misadventure

It is almost certain that it is **Unicorn** that haunts you, in **Haunted.**

It will double as your corruptor, with the maze its Chapel, in **Wicked Creatures.**

Perhaps one of these things is some other Main Character, instead.

It is in the context of the maze and its navigation that you're likely to invoke **Wishing for Ease**; it is in the faraway places that you find there that you are most likely to fall back upon **Wishing for Power.**

I don't know why it wouldn't just be another Unicorn effect; maybe it is, and maybe you'll be smarter than I am here and notice it. But I think that it is likely that **Asserting your Existence** is more about something else—

That there's something else, somewhere else, in the maze, where you take a wasting illness; where you get called away from yourself, to wander in a daze among the books beneath Soma or in some Martian ruin. You find something there that calls to you in a fashion much more specific than Unicorn, and it is eating you alive.

And what you do with that, with the True Thing or whatever—

That's **Wishing for Healing.**

The Archive of Hayashi Hideo

The Fourth Glass Arc

"Once upon a time, a witch and a glass-maker made a dragon out of glass and taught it to hate the world. It raged and it would have destroyed everything; only, it shattered, instead."

— Campaign Premise

5

A long time ago, Professor Hideo Hayashi stopped making glass. He started spending all his time in the Archive instead, looking for something.

Who knows what?

The archives are where he found **the Dream-Witch**, who is what is left of Melanie Malakh. So maybe it's that. Maybe he hated her. Maybe he loved her. Maybe he feels responsible to her. But his story might not be finished. The truth of his heart might not yet be shown.

In this Arc, you'll find...

- ...what he is looking for in the Archive, if he's looking for it still;
- ...what he *was* looking for, if he's stopped; *and*
- ...the last bit of glasswork he completed, a very long time ago.

And you'll find out why he hasn't explained much about his feelings or what went on to you. And then—

Well, there's nothing actually wrong with being an archivist instead of a glass-blower, but I think this still ends with the story freeing him to make something out of glass again. Maybe a goodbye gift for **the Dream-Witch** before he leaves the archive or she does. Maybe a new glass dragon. Maybe something else.

Depending on how this goes, it is distantly possible that this ends with him sailing away, e.g., the archive flying off or him sailing off on a ship through the Outside (via the archives) to a mythical country that once he saw in dreams.

As a Bittersweet Saga

There's a tabletop in the House of Crystal—if it's still there—that Hideo had made as a boy, before he left his family and his glassmaking behind. The tabletop has got a map of an imaginary country in it. Hideo had "seen" the country in the glass as a boy, and molded the glass to enhance that and bring it out, complete with a bit of topographic variance smoothed out with clear glass poured over it.

The setting for **Beautiful and Far Away** is often the entire Archive; or Hideo's office, if you like to sneak in and try to figure things out about his papers; or that country, in that glass.

He himself is usually your **Fascination**—or, if he's too responsible, then one of the miscellaneous archive NPCs, or **the Dream-Witch**, or **the Wishing Boy (or Girl).** Possibly the country in the glass, if it's dangerous somehow.

And the truth is—

It's not something that happens during this Arc. It's something that happened long before; you just figure out *now* how broken he is, or how broken Malakh was, or how cool the glass dragon could have been. You know **You've Lost Them** now, but the actual loss was a very long time ago.

Maybe **Something Heals.**

As a Misadventure

As a misadventure, you're going to need an active corrupting force, and something bad that can happen to you along the way.

So I think that the glass dragon must be reassembling itself;

Or someone is building a new one;

Or maybe you're getting dream-lost in the imaginary country in Hideo's glass.

Drowning

the Arcs of the Miracle Dead

So, the game isn't just the 8 main characters.

Maybe you're playing someone else. A Titov shrine maiden. A vampire. A shop fox. Or, you know, that other one.

Or maybe you're not *playing* someone else, but...

You want to know what other big stories might be happening around Fortitude.

Herein, one of those stories.

This is the story of the miracle dead—they who drowned in the Outside, were lost to the world of the living, and by the light of Jade Irinka came back home.

Is it just the handful of people who have the shards of the glass dragon in them? Just PCs and Main Characters and a few story-relevant folks?

Is *everyone* who dies going to start coming back soon?

Or will this story play out in some other way?

Herein, four stories of isolation, and how people may find one another and find comfort in one another in even the bleakest Hells.

A Far and a Sunless Land

PROLOGUE

I'm sorry.

You're going to have to die.

How, Exactly?

Death by Misadventure—

This is going to be your own fault, really. You've found a place at the edge of Town where you can listen to the voice of the Outside. It's important to you. It's helping you somehow—teaching you a magical song, protecting you from a bully, inspiring you, or helping you train an awesome pet (a pipe fox, fairy dragon, or nixie dog, say) conjured from your dreams.

And this plays out as **Wicked Creatures** (pg. 316).

You'll die when the Outside turns on you.

A Secret History—

I don't know why you're going to die, exactly, but I do know that you've started to dream of Jade Irinka—lost, murdered angel of the houses of the sun.

Figure out your vice—something that you want to overcome in a heroic or saccharine way.

Find a **Walker in Darkness** to be a friend or enemy, someone who supports or enables you in that vice and sneers at the dreams you have of light and life and sunlight burning in the void.

Then play things out as **Encounters in the Night** (pg. 323).

A Scientific Adventure—

You know that you're dying. It's obvious. Maybe you're sick with something particularly metaphysically tenacious. Maybe there's a family curse. Maybe you've just been having dreams that foreshadow it: you don't know the details but you can *feel* it, the moment something heavy is going to hit you and *bam*.

You want to save yourself. You'll try it! You'll use **Science!** (pg. 335)

A Bittersweet Saga—

You're fascinated with the idea of death. It's compelling to you. You're drawn to it, called to it like a rat to a Mystery.

You may not want to admit it to people, but you are. Called to Death. To King Death.

To the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy.

You don't want to die in the physical sense, exactly. You don't even want your life to end. You're just caught up in the *romance* of death, of "the sweet-smelling roses of the night" and the like.

This plays out as **Fascination** (pg. 392).

Hint: You'll want to establish a relationship or friendship with someone very alive and very much in love with life, for a possible angst twist later on when they die.

A Fading Flower (Soon to be Reborn)—

You've reached the end of your life. You've done all you can—you're too weak, now. Too old, too far behind the times, too tired, too sick—

And that's OK.

You've lived a good life. You're *ready*. You can leave the world to all the rest. So there you are, living out your final days happily, maybe putting together a last few things on, or puttering around with, a final work:

The Story of Your Life (pg. 380)

A Desperate Struggle (Soon to Become an Adventure)—

You're a desperate, messed-up kid trying to cling to things you're losing. A friend or pet that's dying. A broken family. I don't know. Things you've lost.

You aren't expecting that *you'll* die.

That's probably *why* it happens. You're surrounded by so much at risk, and *you're* all healthy and stuff. So you push too hard, and you risk your life, and you lose it.

This quest line starts with **Down** (pg. 352).

An Unplanned Heroic Journey—

You can feel it coming. It's like it's eating you from the inside.

You know it's going to happen.

You're going to die.

Your oncoming death is at the core of **Changes** (pg. 369).

A Coming-of-Age Story—

I don't know if you know that your death is coming, but you're living as if you're already dead. Distant. Withdrawn. Like there's no light in your life.

Or at least like there's something *wrong*.

This plays out as **A Troubled Protagonist** (pg. 355).

Afterwards

And anyway, you die.

But...

"You" are still something special, in a way. I'm not talking about the shard of the glass dragon in you, because, who cares? I mean, really. That's just a thing. The important thing is that you've got something important about *you*. You've got something in you that'll keep you going.

Something solid. Some virtue that you can cling to.

Something that'll keep you going even after death. Even after you should be dissolving into nothing, or into the Outside, or... whatever happens to the dead... it'll be there. It'll be something to hold on to. It will keep you going for a moment, or a forever, or for some time in between.

And once upon a time death was a far and a sunless land, or so some say;

Death was a bleak academy;

But now there is the light of a sun that shines Outside the world—the light of the former sun goddess Jade Irinka, who is dead—and it will fall on you. It will be a miracle. You will find yourself there, in the grainy Outside, with the light falling on you as through a window, and the dust drifting in that light; and the sun will reveal to you a path that will lead you back to Town.

Back to Life

If you were an ordinary person before, you're not any longer.

Specifically, the **Fortitude PC** archetype gains:

- **1 Divine Health Level** + **2 MP** upon returning from death; *and will later earn*
- **1 Divine Health Level** + **2 MP** upon finishing the Arc.

Plus, no matter *who* you were, you'll come back with a sense of something that's *important.*

You'll figure out something important about what you think holds the world together, what you think is important and central to there being existence and life instead of nothingness and death.

You'll have found something that *mattered,* out there in the boundless Beyond.

The Drowned World

The First Arc of the Outside

So... is it OK?

Is it *all right,* to be dead and then come back? Is it even real?

This is the story of people having trouble coping with the miracle dead—with the people who find their way back. Are they real or are they delusions spawned by the Outside? Are they ghosts with flesh or new lives or the old lives reborn? What's in their coffins? If there are still bodies there... why?

Does the **Child of the Sun** freak out at the implications of their Mom steering the dead back to life?

Does **the Prodigy** have trouble accepting it's even possible (or OK)?

Does **Nightmares' Angel** raise very reasonable questions about population growth and stability and **the Angel of Fortitude** wake up in night-sweats dreaming of his father being once again alive?

Someone's come back from the dead. Heck, eventually, probably, you're going to get *many* people back from the dead.

This is the story of how everyone who's ever lost someone is going to be wrestling with the unfairness of it, or, possibly, if it seems like it might not *be* unfair, in the long-term... with hope.

And of course it's about welcoming parties for the miracle dead, like wakes with the guest of honor there; and about the miracle dead trying to cope with all the self-doubts and terror and fears of not being legitimate that this will raise.

And if it was you—if you died and came back—

How can you go back to your life when death is no longer sacred?

What happens the next time you die?

Was it You?

Death by Misadventure—

So, you're haunted from afar by images of the sun and the Outside and the Bleak Academy. The forbidden or dangerous powers you learn to command along the course of this Arc are typically related to death, the Outside, or the dead sun.

And, all that taken together, you're not necessarily sure you *want* to be alive, or that it's necessarily a *good* thing that you came back.

But in **Haunted** you're going to decide or discover that there's someone you were sent back to help. It's generally a kid or old person who has given up on their life and is drawn to the Outside like you were; or someone your actions hurt in the past; or a PC; or an NPC entangled in some ongoing plot.

Sometimes it's the Titov family.

And in **Wishing for Healing** you'll get to actually make things a little better.

This is usually enough for the Arc, but if you need more, you can play around with whatever powers you've been picking up or can borrow access to in **Wishing for Ease/Power**, and then realize that you're not completely alive again (and struggle to fix that) in **Asserting Your Existence.**

A Secret History—

You're traumatized! Dying was very traumatic! In **the Troubled Sky** we'll see a lot of flashbacks to your time in the Outside—you'll play them live or just narrate them into being.

In the Outside, you met:

- ...**the Exultant**, **a Cruel Prince** who pinioned you with limbs born from nothingness and poisoned you with horrid toxins or wicked ideas.
- Possibly other **Cruel Princes:**
  - ...the owl-headed Rider Orderic Neustry, who'd take away the lingering remnants of sense from the Outside and strand you on landscapes more abstract than surreal.
  - ...Ill-Made (pg. 429), or a similarly-designed "Lamia," who'd torment you with the knowledge of your own faults.
  - ...or a more generalized representation of your faults.
- Probably **the Hero:**
  - ...potentially **Mourning,** in the near Outside, though you wouldn't recognize them as Mourning of the Student Council if they're going around acting like a hero.
  - ...often the mysterious masked "X" (who may or may not be Laodemus Schwan; see pg. 414).
  - ...and sometimes just a generic iconic hero or heroine.
- And a **Guardian Bird:**
  - ...some sort of vast snake-tailed eagle creature which stood guard over a representation of your soul (pg. 443).
  - ...the bitter motorcyclist Mavis Wheeler (pg. 416), who shared her campfire but stole a secret from your head.
  - ...or an albatross or other guiding creature born from your thoughts or from your heart.

Plus probably all the ally spirits, strange animals, mostly-silent mentors, and weirdness that you'd expect from a surreal journey. Bear in mind that the Outside isn't *that* far from the borders of reality, though: these things aren't so weird that they can't show up later again in play.

In **Behind the Mask,** you'll work more on sorting this all out in your head. Sadly, one of the people you turn to for help sorting all of this out—normally a therapist, but possibly a family member, friend, or imaginary companion—is or is working for **the Exultant** (pg. 406), who had plans for you in your death; had *expected* you, dead, to carry on the toxins it injected into you to the Bleak Academy; it is disappointed in you that you did not fulfill its wishes. You appear to have been a tasty soul and so you may also see some of the other figures of this Arc (such as Orderic) follow you into the world.

Atonement and **the Struggle of the Knight** give you a chance to make sense out of your renewed life.

A Scientific Adventure—

So, being one of the "miracle dead" is... weird. It is not what you wanted. You're not even sure that you're *you*.

But there's someone else who is dying of whatever you were dying of, before.

So it's time to figure out what's going on and whether you can save them or at least guarantee that they'll come back too. You commit to this in **Someone's in Trouble!** In a short Arc, you'll probably fail, and they'll die in this or the next quest. In a longer Arc, there's hope. Either way, you'll try to understand what's going on with the miracle dead in **Walking the Boundaries** and **Above the Fray,** but actual solutions will have to wait for **Engineering!**

A Bittersweet Saga—

Often, even after coming back, you'll spend a lot of time roaming the near Outside. You might even have a favorite place there—an overgrown garden or tire park or something, full of shards of your experience of death.

It's **Beautiful and Far Away.**

And why wouldn't you?

I don't know if you took your own life or just didn't take care of yourself, but coming back was kind of... weird. And when you do look up and pay attention to what's going on around you, it's...

I mean, there are people with wish-granting engines and glass dragon shards in peoples' heads and lord only knows what. **This is So Surreal**. Getting involved with the world again:

This is *Such* a Bad Idea.

But you do.

If you go on to **Something Heals,** you get used to living in the world again. If you go on past that to **You've Lost Them,** there's a bitter twist, because someone who *wanted* to live, someone in love with life—they die.

And they don't come back.

Do they?

A Fading Flower (Soon to be Reborn)—

It's great to be alive again! You're full of new energy. You have great plans and things to do with your new lease.

In **Triumph** you're young; strong; fresh; renewed.

Unfortunately, someone like you—someone who can return from the dead, apparently—is of interest to **Owler** (pg. 422) and possibly **Impious** (pg. 413). This plays out as **Sins of the Father.** You as one of the miracle dead have caught their attention.

Nor are you alone.

You find yourself responsible for someone—

I'd suggest an orphan who refuses to go live with their grandparents because they're sure their parents will come back (just like you did). You take in this scrappy kid—Lisa or Dominic is their name, I'd guess—just to get them to accept shelter instead of standing staring at the shores of Big Lake and to get them to eat something instead of just *waiting*. You tell them stories of the Outside, and you eventually become a bigger part of the "miracle dead" community, helping to arrange a holiday in celebration of your return and the like.

But the kid's caught Owler or Impious' attention too. There's a daring experiment attempted, something like "what if I can kill them, send them out after their parents, and then reel them back in?"

All that stuff is **the Sidekick;** if you have to chase after them out into the lands of death, that's **Surreal Environments**.

A Desperate Struggle (Soon to Become an Adventure)—

Once you get back it's important to push forward on your life again. You analyze what's going on with this whole "miracle dead" thing. You try to figure out how to exploit it to recover things you've lost, make people immortal, and whatever.

You don't really have the faintest idea *how*, for clarity.

You just... you're *into* it, you know?

This plays out as **Let's Doing!**

And then you overhear it, or find it, or think it up—something. A really difficult task, a climb up a metaphysical or literal summit, but something that you think you can use to *make* someone you'd lost previously come back *too*.

That's **Climbing the Sacred Mountain.**

If you don't know what to do here, I suggest that you're building an elixir of life or philosopher's stone of some sort, and part of this involves tasting poisons and bargaining with a spirit griffin (or, well, a strange lizard-tailed lion-clawed bird, anyhow) that you sometimes see in your dreams.

The best part, though, is: you win.

Maybe you win right there. Or maybe you're dying of poison now, or had to promise the spirit griffin *both* your lives a year from now to get a key part of the answer, and either way to survive you'll have to find a grail or griffin chick hidden somewhere in Fortitude and pay it off.

But that's OK! You can figure this stuff out! That's **Adventure GET** and finally **Labyrinth Diving.**

An Unplanned Heroic Journey—

The subject of these quests is generally flashbacks and psychological work—you try to come to terms with what happened to you during your trip into the Outside. Most of the quest events come into play as things you tell people about or are psychological aftereffects.

You're *stuck*, in short; you'll have trouble moving on until you finish **the Belly of the Whale, the Refusal of the Call,** and possibly even **the Trials of the Sun.**

The events of **Apotheosis** might involve your moving *past* that stuckness, or they might be the final bits of memory and flashback.

A Coming-of-Age Story—

This Arc is about your connection with grief; your wrestling with grief from... kind of the other side. As someone who *wants* to be able to grieve, but can't, because it was you who died, and you're not even dead.

Kind of?

This Arc is probably going to connect you to someone who really *should* be an enemy—

Generally **Mourning** (pg. 420) or **Uridimmu** (pg. 441)—

Except that, for some reason, they're not. For some reason, they're drawn to you. They're friendly. They find comfort in you, because of what lingers on you of death. They are your "**An Unlikely Friendship**" for this Arc.

Your Social Burdens probably comes from the fact that your whole family and everyone expects you to be celebrating coming back to life, being a miracle, maybe even being this angelic figure, certainly someone worth showing off to everyone, but seriously, it's not like that. (I don't know why it's not like that. You tell me! Or is it one of those nameless teenage angers, where you can't put words to what's wrong?)

Coming to Grips with Death is your trying to understand it all.

If you move on to **Action!—**

That might be flashbacks to your escape from death. It might have been more heroic than you let on!

Death and Life, from the Other Side

So, I guess, one of the random people from Town—they're going to die.

They're probably not anybody important. They're not gods or whatever. They're just a person, and they are going to die. And when they die they will dissolve into the Outside—their *self* will, anyway; I don't know what will happen to their body here. And they will go to the Bleak Academy, perhaps, or simply go away;

Or that's how it was supposed to go.

This is the story of how you meet them and how you lose them. How you search for them, maybe, because you miss them. How you grieve for them.

And then they come stumbling back.

They held to something in themselves while they were out there, and then the light of the sun—not Jasper, the light of the *dead* sun. The light of *Jade Irinka*—

Showed them the way back.

This plays out as an ordinary Arc—one of the Arcs for a Main Character.

I'm giving you a lot to work with, but there'll still need to be some prep here—think of this as a toolkit to design your own Arc with, rather than a finished, polished Arc.

There's just too many different ways that this can go!

For starters, which Arc you play out isn't going to depend on you; it's going to depend on who you lose.

Is it...

Some Kid You Couldn't Help?

This is going to play out as a "scientific adventure." (pg. 334).

They're going to die in **Above the Fray**, and come back at the end of either that quest or **Walking the Boundaries.**

A Mentor or Teacher?

This is going to play out as a "secret history." (pg. 322).

You're going to lose them in **Encounters in the Night.** They'll come back at the end of **Atonement.**

A Mysterious Fascination?

This is going to play out as a "misadventure." (pg. 308)

You're going to lose them in **Haunted.** They'll come back in/after **Wishing for Healing.**

An Apparently-Doomed Friend or Client?

This plays out as an adventure, Rinley Yatskaya style! (pg. 344)

Despite your best efforts, you'll lose them in **Down,** but they'll come back either when it ends or at the end of **Climbing the Sacred Mountain.**

Someone who Inspires You?

This plays out as a coming-of-age story (pg. 354)

You'll usually meet this person in **An Unlikely Friendship.** You'll lose them at the end of **Your Social Burdens** or **Action!** You'll tend to get them back at the end of **Coming to Grips with Death.**

A Student or Sidekick?

This plays out as a "numinous garden" (that is, a magical realist adventure/allegory, pg. 378)

The Sidekick probably focuses on this person. You'll lose them at some point during **Sins of the Father,** and they'll tend to come back during **Triumph.** (Though, if you're on an Aspect Arc, they probably come back at the end of **Sins of the Father** instead.)

Someone Tied to Your Soul?

This plays out as a bittersweet saga (pg. 390)

They're someone you meet outside of reality, or grow close to there—somewhere **Beautiful and Far Away.** Later, you realize **You've Lost Them**...

But they probably make it back at the end of that quest.

Or Was it Somebody You Wanted to Protect?

This plays out as a heroic journey (pg. 368).

You'll meet them in the first quest. You'll typically lose them at the end of **the Refusal of the Call.** You'll recover them at the end of **the Trials of the Sun.**

The Lightless Gates

The Second Arc of the Outside

This is a story of seven wonders.

There is a child of the swan people—Setsuna Kaneko, a moon child, given prophecy at her birth, paled to the color of coffee and cream—and she is given to understand that she will die, but first she will see seven great wonders.

Over the course of this Arc six amazing things will happen.

The seventh comes on a day of festival, in honor to the spirits of the dead, when the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy comes to Town on the back of a dead, grey leviathan; and it sings, and all those touched by death and all the miracle dead hear the argument of death:

That they have lived, and that may
be good and that may be bad;
The flashiness and fire of them, moving figures
in the dark, may be good or it may be garish;
But it is done.
It is done. ***Let go.***

The Course of this Arc

Typically there's an underlying Arc that you'll come up with a concept for and run through using a quest set of your choice.

(Well, I mean, among the quest sets that fit the Arc color you want and that make sense with the concept.)

For instance, you might have an Arc wherein you...

- ...are drafted to run logistics or accounts or something for a small community or company fitting your character type.
- ...face something genuinely inexplicable: you start intermittently turning into a car or you're randomly appointed King of the World or whatever.
- ...find yourself summoned by some great and blasphemous creature that claims to have "spawned" your character type or family; this summons likely plays out as **Sickness** or **Vice.**
- ...get dragged into managing a character-type-relevant holiday.
- ...find yourself suddenly in control of a haunted house, shop, or project fitting your character type.
- ...find yourself haunted by a beautiful vision.
- ...come up with a world-changing plan that might be a little goofy.
- ...deal with a friend, family member, or SO getting basically appointed as your new opposite number: the big new evil that you'll have to defeat/oppose.

  Alternatively: since/if you made friends with Mourning earlier, maybe you have to stop his plans to steal Christmas and introduce him to the holiday?

Over the course of this Arc you'll pay attention to the presence of wonders—Particularly towards the end of an appropriate quest.

When the Issue **Kaneko's Tide** peaks, the leviathan arrives.

Kaneko's Tide

1-2: The leviathan approaches...

3: What is this? What is this feeling?

This... it's like something is moving beneath the waters of your life. It's like something is *coming*. Something blunt, something awful. Something shining. Something shark.

Sharp. I mean sharp.

It feels good. It feels good that it's coming. The world is full of wonders. Just... just don't get eaten. Don't get pulled under into these feelings and eaten, dissolved, gone.

You just need to see something more. Another beauty. Another wonder. Just a few more. …Surely?

4: Just hit level 4? OK. *You think this is it.*

You think you've seen the sixth wonder. You think the world is shifting. A new era is coming.

In the distance you can hear a song.

Tell yourself what you need to do. Tell yourself what has to happen now. Give yourself space to say what's in your heart, but don't worry about getting it "right." It's a deep mystery, it's a rough weird strangeness, but the truth is, you already know.

You just have to say it. Just give yourself the space and let it out.

5: Just hit level 5? OK. *You can face this now.*

Haha. You must have been wrong, before. Or just... too scared?

Why was that?

Say it. To yourself, at least. Maybe to the group. Say why you didn't close it out. Say what was wrong, that it didn't happen, and what you'll have to do.

Kaneko's Tide
1

You've met Setsuna Kaneko. You've seen her recently, too. She will see seven great wonders, and she will die. It won't be a pretty death. You can feel it. It won't be the kind of end you just come back from.

You don't want to think about it. Stop.

.....

+1MP

Kaneko's Tide
2

You've seen a wonder. Maybe it doesn't count, but you've seen a wonder. A great and marvelous thing. Did it glimmer in moonlight, slick with surf? Did it burn like the rising sun? Whatever. It's like this gigantic bubble in your mind and heart. It makes everything else seem unreal. Thinking about it— It makes you feel unreal.

Kaneko's Tide
3

You can feel the tide coming. You can feel— something moving under the waters of your life.

Watch for wonders. Watch for great and numinous things and you may yet survive.

.....

+1MP

Kaneko's Tide
4

You know what has to happen.
You know what you have to do.
And then the seventh wonder comes.

Doing so will close out the Issue & bring the leviathan to Town & earn you 4 bonus XP + 1 MP.

Kaneko's Tide

5

You still know what you have to do, right? Do it now. The tide must come or the world will drown in life.

Doing this thing will close out the Issue & bring the leviathan to Town & earn you 4 bonus XP + 1 MP. Not doing it—well, there is a cost.

+1MP

5

The Lifeless World

The Third Arc of the Outside

Since the song of the dead leviathan you have begun to fade in and out of the ghost world. You have begun to fall, sometimes, from reality into somewhere that may be the ghost world or the Far Outside.

It is mostly strange and lonely. But there are a few creatures there that are hungry and jealous.

It is intensely shameful and frightening. It is hard to tell anyone. It makes you ashamed to be alive. It makes you ashamed to be dead. It is like a knife in your head, twisting, telling you you're worthless, to even think of these episodes.

Even when others start to slip into there too—

Others affected by the song; others close to you—

You do not talk about it outside of it. The alienation closes in.

It's not until after you find the ghost-kid who is eaten by other ghosts every night; until after you're hunted by the jealous ghosts of Jotun slain by Ivan in the early days of Town; until after you meet the ghost of someone important to you; until *after* you meet Arthur (probably not the actual King Arthur, but still, a ghost who stands between you and some hunting evil)—

It isn't until it all finally all *piles up* that you realize you have to break the silence and find help.

That's how it goes—or is it?

What is the Song/Calling into the Ghost World Like for You?

I didn't hear it myself—but...

You bind yourself to someone or something who is falling into the ghost world and learn to follow them there, so that you may help them through it.

This is a gentle story with magical realism overtones (pg. 378), beginning with **The Sidekick.**

Something I fear—

This is a heroic journey (pg. 368) into the afterlife, to seize its treasures for reality—

Beginning with your attempted **Refusal of the Call**.

An annoyance. I don't have time to keep falling into the ghost world!—

This is the beginning of a goofy misadventure (pg. 308).

Starting with the quest **Haunted,** can you find a way to fix this without having to change your way of life?

Something magical, sacred—

From here we shall discover the secret history (pg. 322) of the ghost world;

Beginning with **Encounters in the Night.**

Something I have to be strong enough to face—

This is a scientific adventure (pg. 334).

It begins with **Above the Fray** as you struggle to find objectivity in the face of the crippling shame these experiences provoke.

... (something you don't want to talk about)

This is a heartwinning, heartrending coming-of-age story (pg. 354).

It begins with **A Troubled Protagonist**.

Something achingly beautiful

This is a bittersweet saga (pg. 390).

Let it begin with the quest **"Beautiful and Far Away."**

Death. It's me fucking dying, OK?

This is an adventure. (pg. 344).

The greatest adventure! ...except, it doesn't feel that way, because it's starting right in at the bumpiest possible bit:

With the quest, **Down.**

The Science of Dissolution

THE FOURTH ARC OF THE OUTSIDE

There are continents of them—I think. Whole civilizations, buried in the Outside.

In the default game where you don't contend with this issue I'm going to assume there aren't that many of them. But this, here, if you're on this Arc? If you're playing through **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** and you're strong-souled enough to get this far?

Continents of them. Whole civilizations.

In this game I will drop my fervent hope and assertion that this isn't true and just accept it:

The sun died, and the King of Evil died, and a tide rose and swept over all of them, and filled the endless bleak eternity but it also drowned—

I can't count them.

Too many.

Peoples with a longer history than ours. Children. Trees. Life forms you've never heard of. Distant worlds. People with forks on their heads. Tooth-stomach people. People snazzier and more fashionable than you could ever dream to be. People living their ordinary lives.

They didn't even drown in water. They drowned in... the loss of detail.

The attenuation of experience.

They're out there living lives like Mondrian paintings. Like the people of a simulated world on a computer that's begun to rot.

Maybe they notice. Some of them certainly notice.

Maybe, more likely, they can't.

What are you going to do about it?

...heck, you don't even have to go that far afield. Think of the ghosts.

They're not lost in quite the same way, I mean, the ghost world is colder but far more pleasant than the deep Outside—but dying and becoming a ghost still seems to involve a slow fading of experience into nothingness, and if you don't become a ghost it's probably even worse.

Scientific American tells me[114] that about 95% of humanity is already dead.

114 (in "Fact or Fiction?: Living People Outnumber the Dead," by Ciara Curtin, an article, writer, and magazine that ironically probably won't be dug out of the Outside until a few years after this point in the campaign)

I don't know how to calculate whether that'd be accurate for Town.

...still, I think we can safely say, there are a lot of ghosts.

So...

What are you going to do?

This isn't OK. *Fix this.*

How?

Science!—

...why even bother to ask "how?"

This is a *scientific adventure* to *do science*, starting with the quest: **Science!** (pg. 334) As long as you have a properly "mad scientist" attitude towards it, the judges will also accept the answer, "with *magic!*"

If I say I'm going to do it, I'm gonna do it!

You don't want to think about it. You want to *do* it! This is an adventure, and it starts with **Adventure GET.** (pg. 344)

I don't know, but I better figure it out!

Because you—and you're *pretty* sure this isn't just you being neurotic—think you *left* some of yourself out there. Or down there. You know. Wherever.

You're getting concerned about this stuff because you can feel a part of you, far away,

Dissolving into noise.

This is a misadventure (pg. 308). A rather bleak one. It starts with you desperately **Asserting Your Existence.**

...ummm...

You don't know how. You don't have a clue. You just... you just feel like you *must*.

You've been seeing their faces at night. Their... unfaces.

Their facelessness.

It's really creeping you out.

This is a secret history (pg. 322), and it'll start with these **Encounters in the Night.** I suggest the Cruel Princes from pg. 536, e.g., Orderic Neustry and the like, as suitable enemies for this Arc, and possibly Glass Spider (pg. 408) as well.

... (you wish you knew)

This is a heartwinning, heartrending coming-of-age story (pg. 354) about countless trillions of suffering people and a protagonist who's completely stuck on how to even start helping them.

A Troubled Protagonist.

Work. Slow, careful work. Bit by bit until the world's made new.

This is a story of "numinous gardens" (pg. 378), beginning with **The Story of Your Life.**

...I'll go out there or down there and study it until I know.

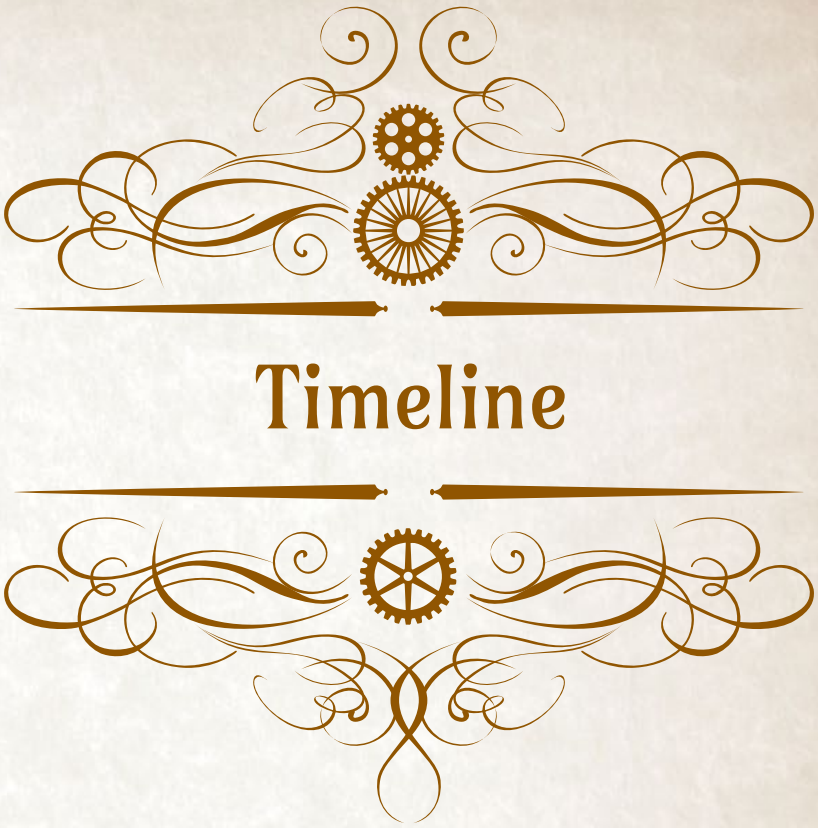
This is a bittersweet saga (pg. 390), and begins with the quest **Beautiful and Far Away.**

I don't think the ghost world or the deep Outside are beautiful that way, though. Maybe the ghost world, sometimes.

I think you might be *pushing* yourself to believe it must be.

I don't know. I only know I will. I can feel it coming.

This is a heroic journey (pg. 368), and begins with presentiment of **Changes.**



Timeline

This game is usually set around seven years after the death of Jade Irinka. By Town timekeeping it's set in the middle of what Town calls history's "Tenth Hour:"

The days of legend

Fortitude is founded; the human-*youkai* war; the Lake is sealed.

Humans dwindle but do not die out; Elizaveta reopens the Lake.

This and that happens; the Celdinar Mayoralty starts and ends; the sun rises.

The Fifth Hour of Town: a golden age.

For the purposes of this campaign, nothing happened here—the Sixth Hour was just a bunch of dull names and faces.

Again, nothing much happened—until the Hour ended, and the Headmaster killed the sun (March 9, 1997).

The Eighth and Ninth Hours ended abruptly with the "Kuji Calendrical Reform," apparently correcting for accumulated discrepancies.

The Tenth Hour of Town: modern day:

- The first week of spring, 2004 *or*
- The first week of spring, 2009.

(See below.)

There are three ways we can start the game.

The first option is to start in the modern day. In this case, I'd like to put the death of the sun seven years behind us and compress most of the major events of your backstories into the past couple of years.

The second option is a prologue that plays through the characters' childhoods at a fairly fast clip (50x acceleration, say), starting around age 5. The simplest way to do this is to move the timeline around—

Say, "Oh, the sun died when Chuubo was 3, and the 'present' is 2009."

That way you don't have to worry about the way the setting changes when suddenly Jade Irinka and the first Principal Entropy and such are around in-game.

The third option is to start play three years before the death of the sun and tough all the issues this raises out. I've given suggestions in the playbooks for all the characters this impacts. A master timeline would look something like this:

Timeline 1: Playing through your Childhoods, with the Sun Dying Early

1997

- The default character age is **3.**
- The sun dies, and is reborn.
- Leonardo de Montreal is in an evil orphanage.
- Jasper Irinka is falling.
- Rinley's mother Shiori is snatched by a giant bird.
- Entropy I dies; Principal Entropy II becomes the new King of Evil.

1999

- The default character age is **5.**
- Chuubo builds the Wish-Granting Engine Mk. I.
- Seizhi doesn't exist yet, but will be retconned as having existed.
- Natalia isn't in Town yet; her player has various options.
- Miramie is an amnesiac ghost girl.

The game begins.

1999-2002

- The default character age is **5-8.**
- Miramie recovers.
- Jasper Irinka lands.

2003-2004

- The default character age is **9-10.**
- Leonardo escapes the evil orphanage for good.
- Rinley meets Prince Eduard Fujimoto and begins coming out of her shell.
- Natalia's heart freezes.

???-???

- Leonardo travels to the Bleak Academy.

2004

- The default character age is **10.**
- Natalia comes to Town, in direct or indirect consequence of a wish.

2004-2005

- The default character age is **10-11.**
- The Dream-Witch begins haunting Chuubo.

2006

- The default character age is **12.**
- Chuubo completes the Wish-Granting Engine Mk. II.
- He shows it to Seizhi, who discovers his own unreality.

2009

- The "present."

Timeline 2: Playing through your Childhoods, with the Sun Dying in Play

1992

- The default character age is **3.**
- Rinley's mother Shiori is snatched away by a giant bird.

1994

- The default character age is **5.**
- Chuubo builds the Wish-Granting Engine Mk. I.
- Seizhi doesn't exist yet, but will be retconned as having existed.
- Leonardo de Montreal is in an evil orphanage.
- Natalia isn't in Town yet; her player has various options.
- Jasper Irinka occasionally visits Town.
- Entropy II is attending School, but he's pretty different.
- Miramie is an amnesiac ghost girl.

The game begins.

????-????

- Miramie recovers.

1996

- The default character age is **7.**
- Leonardo de Montreal meets Jade Irinka. Sensing her fate, he begins a futile quest to save her.

1997

- The default character age is **8.**
- The sun dies, and is reborn.
- Entropy I dies; Principal Entropy II becomes the new King of Evil.
- Jasper Irinka falls out of the sky.

1998-1999

- The default character age is **9-10.**
- Leonardo escapes the evil orphanage for good.
- Rinley meets Prince Eduard Fujimoto and begins coming out of her shell.
- Natalia's heart, conversely, freezes.

???-???

- Leonardo travels to the Bleak Academy.

1999

- The default character age is **10.**
- Natalia comes to Town, in direct or indirect consequence of a wish.

1999-2000

- The default character age is **10-11.**
- The Dream-Witch begins haunting Chuubo.

2001

- The default character age is **12.**
- Chuubo completes the Wish-Granting Engine Mk. II.
- He shows it to Seizhi, who discovers his own unreality.

2004

- The "present."

Timeline 3:
Starting in the Modern Day

12 years ago

- Rinley's mother Shiori is snatched away by a giant bird.

7 years ago[115]

- the sun dies and is reborn.
- Entropy I dies; Entropy II becomes the new King of Evil.

3 years ago

- Leonardo travels to the Bleak Academy.

12-18 months ago[116]

- Chuubo completes the Wish-Granting Engine Mk. II.
- He shows it to Seizhi, who discovers his own unreality.

6-12 months ago

- Miramie emerges from the Archive.

3-6 months ago

- Miramie begins haunting Chuubo.
- Seizhi begins dreaming of the death of the sun.
- Jasper Irinka lands.

1-6 months ago

- Natalia arrives in Town.

1-3 months ago

- Leonardo is drawn to Fortitude to investigate.
- Rinley saves Prince Eduard Fujimoto and begins to come out of her shell.

115 *The player of **the Child of the Sun** can move this around if desired.*

116 *The player of **the Wishing Boy (or Girl)** can move this around if desired.*

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