

“Issues”

for the *Chuubo’s Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* RPG

Nobilis: Antithesis, Nobilis: the Essentials, and all included text, concepts, and game mechanics are copyright 2011–2015 by Jenna Katerin Moran.

Chuubo’s Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine and all included text, concepts, and game mechanics are copyright 2012–2015 by Jenna Katerin Moran.

All art and presentation elements are copyright 2012–2015 by Jenna Katerin Moran or by the original artist or artists.

Nobilis is the creation of Jenna Katerin Moran (formerly known as R. Sean Borgstrom).

Reproduction without the written permission of Jenna Katerin Moran or the appropriate artistic copyright holder is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews, blank character sheets, and copying reasonable selections for personal use and reference only.

The mention or reference to any company or product in these pages is not a challenge to the trademark or copyright concerned.

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, Cheryl & Joseph Couvillion, Anthony Damiani,
Chrysoula Tzavelas, Kevin Maginn, Raymond Wood, James Wallis,
Dara & Anna Korra’ti, Jesse Covner, Hsin Chen, Karen Hermann,
Sonja Britt Borgstrom, and Gayle Margolis.

Special Thanks

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

Credits

Written and Conceived by:

Jenna Katerin Moran

Edited by:

Stephen Lea Sheppard

Layout and Visual Design by:

Paolo Bosi and Claudia Cangini for Studio Shadow

Design and Development Contributors:

Amy Sutedja, Anthony Damiani, Christopher Humphrey, Erika Svensson, Jim Henley, Peter Svensson, and Rand Brittain...

not to mention my marvelous sponsors

and the many suggestions and error-catches they offered over the kickstarter's course!

Illustrations:

(Graphic Elements and Icons) Claudia Cangini;

(Logo) Brett Grimes

(pg. 19-23, 28-31, 53-56) Filippo onez Vanzo

(pg. 65-68): Antonio Minuto

(pg. 7, 14-18, 37-40, 49-52): Elizabeth Sherry

(pg. 4, 24-27, 45-48, 57-64): Kirsten Moody

(pg. 32-36, 41-44): Carlos Sneak

Playtesters:

Alexander Benekos as "Mrs. Senko" and "Hisui Watanabe;"

Jennifer Coy as "Soun Shoujo;"

C. Lindsay Cross as "Natalia Koutolika;"

Anthony Damiani as "Raven Irinka" and "Principal Entropy II;"

Beth Eves as "Lilimund Cartaign" and "Rinley Yatskaya;"

Lee-James Foelker as "Chuubo Nolastring" and "Leonardo de Montreal;"

Tristen Gardner as "the Magical Detective;"

Adam Gieseler as "Natalia Koutolika" and "Suzy Swan;"

Nicolas Hoover as "Soun Shounen;"

Channing Johnston as "Seizhi Schwan;"

Alex Kelly as "Leonardo de Montreal;"

Mike MacMartin as "the Magical Detective" and "Jasper Irinka;"

Travis McCord as "Leo the Rival" and "Dulci the Witch;"

Angelo Pampalone as "Soun Shounen;"

Jennifer Power as "Seizhi Schwan;"

Richard Preston as "Jasper Irinka;"

David Sepulveda as "Natalia Koutolika;"

John Sepulveda as "Chuubo;"

Justin Smith as "the Magical Detective;"

and Eric Eves, Peter S. Svensson, and Amy Sutedja as "the HG."



Contents

HOW AN ISSUE WORKS 5

WHICH ISSUE SHOULD I GIVE? 8

ISSUES IN PLAY 15+

Calling15

Complex19

Hero24

Hollow28

Illusion.....32

Isolation.....37

It Never Stops!.....41

Mystery.....45

(in) Over your Head49

Sickness.....53

Something to Deal With57

Trust.....61

Vice.....65



Issues

Over the course of play characters can accumulate points in various **Issues**—

Dramatic movements in their life, things building towards a resolution, each of them rated from 0 to 5. For instance, a cold or flu or werewolf virus is represented by the **Sickness** Issue; meddling with forces beyond your comprehension, by **(in) Over Your Head**.

How an Issue Works

general notes

Each Issue comes with an embedded narrative arc.

The first three levels of the Issue are mostly for expressing what's going on with you—they are for *establishing* the calling, the complex, the heroic journey, the vice, or whatever else is going on.

You are of course receiving the Issue and its increments over the course of play—

So it's not the text of the Issue that's doing the work of establishing this, but rather its interactions with the events in the game. By the time the Issue comes to a head at level 4, you should ideally know what it's "talking about" in the context of your game—not, "I have Hero 4," but "ah, the epic battle that I've been building towards since I first got Hero 1 is finally ready to be resolved."

At level 4, the Issue kicks into high gear. This is also when you'll have your first real chance to finish out the Issue's story, "closing" or "resolving" it and receiving 4 XP and an MP. If you do so, it isn't *necessarily* all that dramatic—

It's a *relatively* dramatic moment, of course, but if your group is really used to this game's systems, you could potentially have somebody closing an Issue every few hours of play.

At level 5, if the player didn't manage to close out the Issue, things get a little more hectic, dramatic, and scary—but even then it's not necessarily a big deal. If it makes sense for it to be an epic moment, then it's an epic moment; if it makes sense for it to be quiet and wrenching, then it's that.

Closing out an Issue at level 5 gives the same 4 XP + 1 MP reward.

Full Implementation

I'm going to start by giving you the full implementation of Issues. This is a mechanic with high handling time, so it's only suited for forum games, play-by-email, solo games, and games very low on immersion—

If you're playing tabletop or on IRC, and focused on in-character play, you'll want the simplified version in the next section.

In any case, for now:

If the handling time's acceptable, after an out-of-genre or particularly meaningful XP Action, the HG reacts. Their reaction takes the form of an Issue point given to a PC involved in the scene. There's one Issue for a kind of "*shrug*, I dunno either" reaction, for instance—that's



Mystery

There's another for a reaction like "that was peaceful, laid-back/bittersweet"—



Something to Deal With

And so forth.

The player in question increments the Issue, reads the associated instructions, and takes a card representing the new level of the Issue to keep in front of them in play.

Simplified Implementation

If that's too much bookkeeping or handling time for your game, I'm going to suggest that you instead assign Issues once per chapter or once per natural breakpoint in play.

The HG picks an Issue based on their strongest lingering impression from events, hands it out to all the players it fits (not just the one most responsible, but also not just "everybody") and players can handle the updating as the lead-in to the next chapter or section of play.

Issue Cards

The core of an Issue is built as *advice*—

As a set of "Issue cards," one of which is optionally kept in front of you during play to remind you of the Issue's influence on the way your character thinks. (If you can't do that, then the cards are something to glance through during stuff for which your character is quiet or not there, instead.)

For the most part, the Issues won't ask anything more of you than that; you just have to maintain a rough awareness of your Issues and how they affect you.

That said, at specific points in each Issue's progression (often, level 4 and 5), there'll be more that you need to do; for that, see the instructions below.

Genre-Based Issues

Characters may pick up the specific Issues



Hollow



Illusion and



Isolation

from the rules for their genre's XP Actions; I wouldn't give them out too casually for other reasons, but there are plenty of miscellaneous circumstances that they'd fit.

Characters may also pick up



Sickness

through unusual channels.

If you're playing with the simplified version of the Issues, you can wait to process that change until the next chapter or natural breakpoint in play.

Lowering an Issue

Issues mostly go up during play, but you can reduce them in three ways. The first two have to do with the reduced dramatic urgency of an Issue after a session or story break, which lowers an Issue:

- by one point at the end of each book; *and*
- by one point at the end of each session, or, for continuous games, each Sunday's dawn.

If you're playing by the full rules, you'll lose one point *per Issue* at the end of the session and book. If you're playing by the simplified rules, you'll lose one point from whichever *single* Issue the player judges to be least memorable in context—the one whose current dramatic urgency is least likely to carry over to the next session or story.²²

Resolving an Issue

The third way to lower an Issue is:

- by “resolving” the Issue when it reaches level 4+.

The actions you have to take to “resolve” an Issue are Issue-specific, and are going to be described on the Issue's card. Resolving an Issue earns 4 XP and 1 MP and drops the Issue to level 0, after which you can't pick it up again for a while—

What that specifically means is that if you're about to pick up the Issue again, and the HG thinks it's too soon after you resolved it, you... don't!

Gaming Terminology

Session—it's a “session” when the players get together for the game. I'm targeting 4-hour sessions. Online games might or might not have specific sessions.

Issues and MP

Issues have a power in them that derives from the wishing heart, the magic of various Regions, or the emptiness of the Outside and the Bleak Academy. I don't know if it's *precisely* the same as wish power from other sources, but...

In practice, Issues will give you MP.

In particular you'll receive 1 MP from each Issue when—

- it reaches 1, 3, or 5;
- it causes trouble for you (as with a level 1 Bond);
- you “resolve” it.

Issues can also save you MP. At level 4-5 they become ripe for resolution; there's something you can *do* to bring the story of the Issue to a convenient and appropriate end. **If you and the HG agree that a given miracle would resolve the Issue, then the dramatic weight of the Issue gives you an advantage—a 4 MP reduction in the miracle's cost.**

This is on top of the 1 MP that you gain for resolving the Issue.

If the miracle cost less than 4 MP to begin with, you may convert the rest of your discount to Strike.

A List of Issues

The standard Issues in a *Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* game are...



you're in **Over Your Head**



being a **Hero**



Sickness, including cinematic transformation and corruption



Vice



Mystery, where there's some mystery around you



a **Complex**, representing a neurosis or obsession.



It Never Stops!, where your life is just plain ridiculous and it's not your fault



a **Calling**, representing something—initially, an unknown something—you must do.



Something to Deal With, here meaning “baggage;”

and






Trust, in untrustworthy powers.

²² You can tweak the timing or the rate of Issue loss here if it doesn't wind up working out for you.



There's also three genre-specific Issues, which you'll usually only pick up based on the genre rules:

-  being **Hollow**, unable to truly appreciate the world
-  an **Illusion** hides the truth of your life even from the HG and players; *and*
-  **Isolation**.

This list is far from comprehensive, although I think it covers most of the important stuff; you can freely create new Issues for your game. For instance, *Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon* will track the progress of an expedition far away by introducing the Issue

 **To the Island of Death!**

Which Issue Should I Give?


These Issues are part of the game's conversation. Accordingly, as the HG, you can hand out any Issue you like, and here's what you're conveying by doing so:

	"That was pretty laid-back."	+1 to  Something to Deal With
	<i>Head-desk. Pause. Head-desk.</i>	+1 to  a Complex
	"This path that you are on... might be the wrong path."	+1 to  Vice
	"Doing ordinary stuff, huh?"	+1 to  a Calling
	"This is so mean to you guys."	+1 to  It Never Stops!
	"You guys are very active."	+1 to  Over Your Head
	"Suspense! Doom! Action!"	+1 to  being a Hero
	"I'm... intrigued."	+1 to  Mystery
	"This is a pretty big deal."	+1 to  Trust
	"...You're in trouble."	+1 to  Sickness



If you can't keep track of this many Issues, just look at the list occasionally and pick out one or two to have at the top of your mind.

It's totally OK for your impressions to adjust based on the average game—

If you're playing a game that focuses on the PCs' ordinary lives, and this is the first time you've really done that in an RPG, then I'd expect you to respond to a lot of stuff in the first few stories with "ah, doing ordinary stuff, huh?"

And it's fine for that to mean you give your PCs  **Callings**.

But if after a while, the PCs are heavily involved in a prize pumpkin-growing contest, and it's still pretty ordinary, but it stands out from their ordinary lives for you as "Suspense! Doom! Action!" or "This (pumpkin) is a pretty big deal?"

It's fine to give out  being a **Hero** or  **Trust** then instead.

In short, go with your actual responses here—don't try to create some objective standard to how to and then burden yourself with the expectations that gives.

a Calling

There's something you're going to need to do.

There's a task or problem or destiny waiting for you that you won't be able to ignore. You won't know what it is at first. At least, you probably won't, at least not in detail. But you'll figure it out eventually. And in hindsight, when you look back on the story afterwards, you'll realize it was calling out to you all along.

Here's a simplified picture of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ Your world is in good order.
- 1▶ You feel like something's been left undone.
- 2▶ There's something important left undone, and the world's gone a bit awry.
- 3▶ Your heart is awake. The world is calling. You *almost* understand what you must do.
- 4▶ You can't ignore this. You know what you have to do.
- 5▶ This is really important. You have to do it, even if you're scared. Even if you die.

Mystery

Picking up the **Mystery** Issue means that there's something mysterious going on with you. People—you, the HG, the other players, or maybe just the other players—will be aware that there's some mystery. It'll become more important and more central to the scenes you're in over time. Then there'll be a big or at least a little reveal that brings some closure to that and adds a satisfying beat to the story.

Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ Mystery has not yet touched your life.
- 1▶ There's a hint of something weird and mysterious.
- 2▶ That mystery might *matter*.
- 3▶ Something inexplicable is revealed behind the surface of the mystery.
- 4▶ You stand at the doorway of revelation.
- 5▶ The mystery is spiritual, unnatural, or otherwise fraught with meaning.

becoming a Hero

Picking up the **Hero** Issue means that your life is on course for a climactic confrontation with a terrible adversary. You're going to face dangerous enemies, perilous journeys, and ultimately you're going to have to overcome some horrible foe, who at least *seems* scarier than yourself, and probably at a large personal cost, in order to seize, rescue, learn, or win something precious.

Maybe it's larger-than-life. Maybe it's just life-sized. But as far as the stories of your life go, it's going to be epic.

Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ everything is under control
- 1▶ you've shown some heroism
- 2▶ you've decided to step up to the challenge
- 3▶ you've met your enemy, and it terrifies you
- 4▶ all seems lost—but wait...

[somehow you survive, and maybe even *win*, except that now...]

- 5▶ you face a final, impossible challenge

Your Calling

You might have a **Calling** if there's...

- ⚙ someone you need to apologize to
- ⚙ a window you need to repair
- ⚙ a treaty that you need to broker *or*
- ⚙ a lost treasure that you need to find

Your Mystery

Mysteries have gathered around you, e.g....

- ⚙ where did you come from?
- ⚙ what is your real motivation and agenda?
- ⚙ what secret are you keeping?
- ⚙ are there really aliens living in the sun? *and*
- ⚙ why does Big Lake have access to the seas of other worlds?

Heroic Challenges

Pretty soon you might find yourself putting everything on the line to...

- ⚙ fight bullies
- ⚙ conquer the Bleak Academy
- ⚙ rescue somebody from Hell
- ⚙ find the holy grail
- ⚙ steal a dragon's treasure
- ⚙ or challenge a Mystery you haven't even yet seen....

Hollow

Picking up the **Hollow** Issue means that you're acting like your life has meaning when, for you at least, it doesn't.

You've lost some of the sense of wonder; some of your empathy; some of your terror.

You don't have it in you to really *explore*.

This ends when the world, abhorring a vacuum, sends something at you from an unexpected direction and you get hurt, transformed, or otherwise forced to care.

Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ Your world's pretty interesting to you.
- 1▶ You'd rather have magic and color in your life but you're basically OK without.
- 2▶ Your life is kind of muted. Things don't matter as much any more.
- 3▶ You're actively cynical about the idea of anything mattering.
- 4▶ You don't really care at all any more.
- 5▶ You're actively self-destructive.

Isolation

You'll pick up **Isolation** when you reach out to people only to realize that you're alone. At first you may accept it or even valorize it, but eventually you'll realize that you need to turn to somebody else for help.

Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ You're fine.
- 1▶ You're only really lonely when you're alone.
- 2▶ You're drifting a little bit apart from everyone.
- 3▶ You're becoming quieter, meeker, afraid to disturb the people around you.
- 4▶ Something's wrong. You need help. You need to reach out to somebody.
- 5▶ Some Bleak power has your soul, mind, or heart within its grip.

Illusion

If you're in the grip of an **Illusion** it means that there's something about your character that isn't being shown in-game.

There's something... *off*... about the events that we actually see.

It could just be that there's a piece missing. It could be that they're a doppelganger, a clone, or that you're reconstructing the story of what happened later on. There's a narrative or plotting trick here, in short, and this Issue builds up to its being revealed.

Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ Seeing is believing.
- 1▶ It's hard to believe, but this part of your life actually happened.
- 2▶ There's some illusion or trick here.
- 3▶ There's something that rings false about the threats you face here.
- 4▶ The trick is about to be revealed.
- 5▶ ...and it's going to change everything.

Being Hollow

You're on the road to trouble...

- ⦿ hanging out with the wrong crowd
- ⦿ being a bit too casual about making enemies
- ⦿ being dismissive of magic and miracles
- ⦿ thinking you know everything there is to know
- ⦿ choosing a bland life over a vibrant one
- ⦿ ignoring serious life issues and risks

Being Isolated

You're drifting away...

- ⦿ spending too much time in the places of the dead
- ⦿ thinking of bleak and far-off things
- ⦿ spending too much time alone
- ⦿ turning to your imagination for company
- ⦿ ignoring good chances to hang out with people
- ⦿ pulling away because you don't want to burden people
- ⦿ feeling bad about yourself; unloved

The Illusion

Are you...

- ⦿ hallucinating some of this?
- ⦿ secretly the cat's-paw of a villain?
- ⦿ a body double?
- ⦿ someone else's hallucination?
- ⦿ being inserted into the story retroactively by a wish?
- ⦿ yourself, time traveling from the future?
- ⦿ *fighting* future-you, traveled back from the future?

Something to Deal With

Picking up a **Something to Deal With** Issue means that there's something nagging at you. There's something that you need to process. It's not so much that there's an *action* that you have to take, although there's usually a symbolic action at the end. It's that there's some *emotion* you need to recognize or something in your life you're doing wrong, and you need to bring that to the surface and deal with it.

Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ You don't have an Issue like that.
- 1▶ There's something nagging at you.
- 2▶ You feel unsettled and off, and you don't like it.
- 3▶ Things are *almost* fitting together, but you can't... quite... see it, yet.
- 4▶ You've put the pieces together. You know what you have to do.
- 5▶ You know what you have to do, and you even know why you haven't done it!



The Thing That You Must Deal With



There's something lurking in the background of your life that you haven't really faced. Do you have...

- old baggage, memories, and wounds to sort through?
- fears to acknowledge and face?
- a situation you don't know how to navigate?
- bad/wrongful ideas you need to realize that you're having, *or*
- errors that you have to notice that you're making?

Sickness

Picking up a **Sickness** Issue means that there's something wrong with you. There's something that has gotten *into* you that's changing who you are. You're getting weaker and weaker and it's getting stronger and stronger; but in the end, you'll have to show your true strength of character, either casting it out of you or learning how to live with and integrate it into your identity.

Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ You're reasonably healthy and strong.
- 1▶ You've been through a lot lately.
- 2▶ You're having a hard time hanging on to who you are.
- 3▶ You're weak, battered, and nearly broken.
- 4▶ You have to defy what's happening to you for the sake of who you are.
- 5▶ You draw on your wounds and transformations for a new strength and self-definition.



Your Sickness



You might pick up a **Sickness** if there's...

- something transforming you
- something possessing you
- something traumatizing you
- something corrupting you
- something messing with your head
- something messing with your body
- something taking away your confidence in yourself
- something ruining your life *or*
- something making it harder to be yourself

a Complex

A **Complex** is basically a set of bad ideas that you can't let go of. They make you feel bad but having them feels good. They drive you into a series of escalating bad decisions until your life falls apart in complete disaster and disarray.

Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ you know what you're doing.
- 1▶ you're trying too hard.
- 2▶ you're driven to distraction.
- 3▶ your life is falling apart, *but you have a plan*.
- 4▶ *...that wasn't a very good plan, now was it.*
- 5▶ you face epic inevitable disaster, but may be saved by an equally epic grace.



Your Complex



You might wind up with a **Complex** if you're dealing with...

- a fight you can't win
- a problem you can't handle
- an obsession with schoolwork
- an obsession with shopping
- an obsession with some mystery *or*
- relationship troubles?

The It Never Stops! Issue is kind of like a Complex or obsession, except not all of the irrationality is in *you*—some of it is genuinely externalized into the world. Having this Issue means being caught in a fundamentally irrational situation...

Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ You know what you're doing.
- 1 ▶ Things are... a little rough
- 2 ▶ Things are getting kind of messed up here
- 3 ▶ This is ridiculous, but at least it'll be over soon, one way or another
- 4 ▶ *How can this still be happening?!*
- 5 ▶ ...?!?!?!?!?!?

Picking up the **Trust** Issue means that you've offered your trust to powers beyond your own. You've signed on with the Student Council or the Riders; bound yourself to a spirit, god, or totem; joined a club or a sports team with unnatural resources; sworn blood sisterhood or brotherhood with a powerful character; taken up with one of the shrine families of Fortitude; or started dating somebody scary and powerful enough to count. This Issue tracks the trust you give such things over the course of the current story.

Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ You've been pretty self-contained and self-assured thus far.
- 1 ▶ You've shown or acquired a connection to some power outside yourself.
- 2 ▶ You feel comfortable relying on such powers.
- 3 ▶ You're enjoying that connection, that relationship.
- 4 ▶ You relied on someone or something too much—it's going to betray or hurt you.
- 5 ▶ You've been betrayed and hurt but you're going to have to trust again anyway.

Are you dealing with...

- ⚙️ ridiculous, ever-escalating fights and battles?
- ⚙️ absurd, ever-escalating romantic hijinks?
- ⚙️ horrifying, ever-escalating trainwrecks of a situation?
- ⚙️ or with something even worse?

You'll pick up **Trust** by displaying the kind of excessively trusting and open nature that...

- ⚙ makes you vulnerable to spiritual powers
- ⚙ gives you an excess of faith in humanity
- ⚙ lets your family control your life and identity
- ⚙ lets your peers push you around
- ⚙ binds you too tightly to a figure of some power or importance, *or*
- ⚙ that makes you too certain in yourself and in what you believe.

The name might undersell this Issue a little. I could have called it, maybe even should have called it, “playing with fire” or “spending a lot of time using rituals” or “the world is really weird around you” or “you’re OK with the company of angels, gods, horrors, and great and terrible things.”

Whatever.

It's just, it doesn't feel like that to you.

If it did, you wouldn't have this Issue. If you gave all this stuff its proper respect and fear, then this wouldn't be an Issue. If it *felt* like the kind of stuff that you should be getting Trust from, then... you wouldn't be getting Trust.

So for you, and this is the reason I'm giving it this name, it's just *Trust*.

Your faith that the world is good. That you know what you're doing. That things are going to be OK.

Vice

Picking up a **Vice** Issue means that you're embracing something that you probably shouldn't be doing. You're treating something that's actually kind of bad for you as if it were a Calling. This produces progressively more phantasmagoric, epic, and staged devotional scenes until eventually the world forces you to resist temptation and stand up for the things you *actually* believe in.

So if you're 100% genuinely convinced that your Vice is a good thing, that booze or slacking or working for the Bleak Academy or whatever is up there with friendship and honesty and hard work on the list of virtues, don't take a Vice! Explain to the HG how you feel and take it as a Calling instead.

Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ You haven't shown any stand-out vices for a while.
- 1 ▶ You're walking a troubled or risky course.
- 2 ▶ You're justifying it to yourself.
- 3 ▶ This is screwing up your life. Wait. No. Let's say, "spicing up" your life. Oh yeah.
- 4 ▶ You've got to shape up; somebody needs you.
- 5 ▶ You've got to shape up *anyway*, but your vice is what gives you the key to save the day.

Something You Shouldn't Be Doing

You may pick up the **Vice** Issue if you've gotten into a habit of...

- truly excessive slacking
- drinking, drugs, or smoking
- working too hard, or for the wrong people
- lying, cheating, or being cruel
- gambling or street racing
- collecting way too much yarn
- ...or even just staying up half the night playing games!

Over Your Head

You'll pick up (**in**) **Over Your Head** when you stumbled into a situation with more going on than you can easily understand and resolve:

You're trying to learn or understand something that confuses you. You've walked into a morass of secrets, lies, and hidden motivations. You've gotten involved, intentionally or accidentally, in a complex conflict with people of good faith on both sides. You've found yourself in unknown territory, dotted with riddles and confusion.

There isn't a single great mystery behind it all, most likely; or if there is, you don't know it yet. There's just a lot of little *stuff* that you need to figure out.

You get more and more confused, more and more lost, or deeper and deeper in over your head until finally everything *clicks* and you understand exactly what you have to do and why you're just who this situation needs.

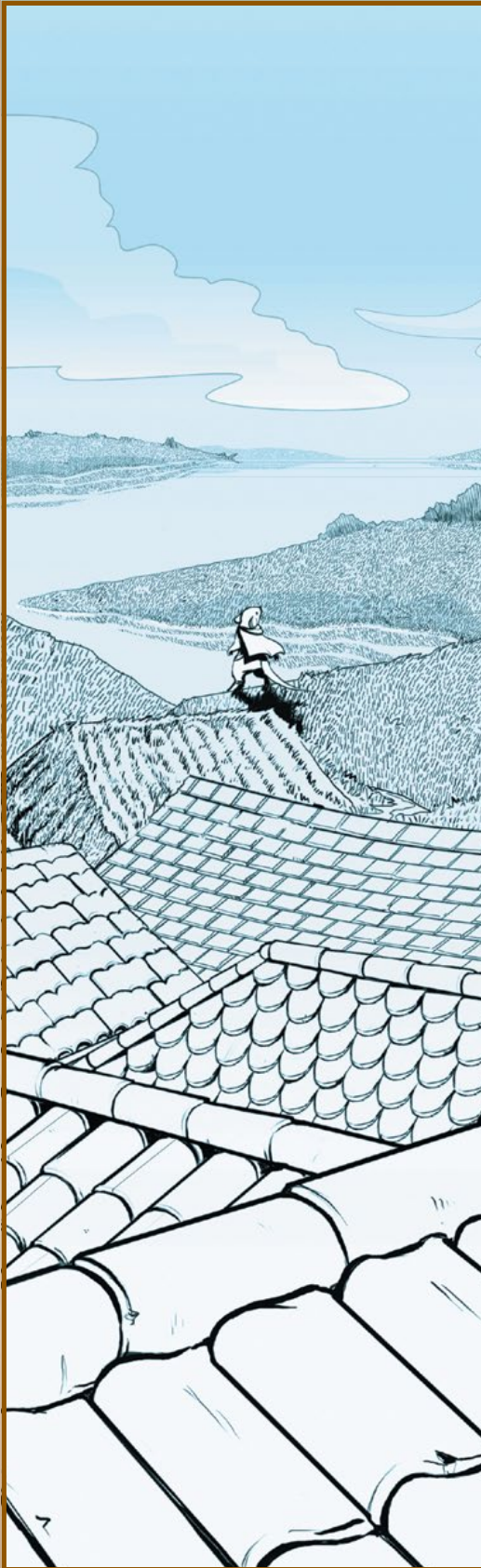
Here's a simplified form of the Issue and its progression:

- ▶ You're comfortable with the world and you understand how things are.
- 1 ▶ You're confused—something isn't as it should be.
- 2 ▶ You feel betrayed—something you *relied on* isn't what it should be.
- 3 ▶ You were *wrong*—and your misunderstandings have put something important in danger.
- 4 ▶ You have an *idea* about what to do and how things fit together.
- 5 ▶ You've just had the *best* idea. Seriously. *This rules.*

In Over Your Head

You've been stumbling across complicated and problematic things, e.g.,

- shadows of mysteries and old guilts hanging over peoples' head
- prophecies
- people you're starting to fall in love with
- things you're supposed to be studying that you just don't get
- mysterious organizations hanging out around their School
- complex political situations *and/or*
- guns inexplicably prominent on the mantel...



Malambruno

The roofs of Notting Rather roll together into grassy hills; the chimneys fade from brick to sod. The gutters have stopped up to form a lake: the Gutter-Lake of Forms.

There, past Nowhere Way in Notting Rather, Malambruno, which is named Hatred, sleeps.

There, in that fine and pretty place, it melds itself into the shingles and the trees; the river and the lake; the hills, the grass, and even the sky and stars. It is made indistinguishable from the world around it and the scent of its musk is sweet.

Sleep not on Malambruno; breathe not its musk. It will make you other than yourself.

It will fill you with the seeds of its wickedness; it will give you a monstrous form; and you will have no one to complain to but yourself, o human child, for you slept on Malambruno, in Notting Rather, past Nowhere Way, and by the Gutter-Lake of Forms.

—from *The Mysteries, for a Human Child*,
by Filimer Augustine



Issues in Play

This section's here to tell you what to do when you have an Issue at a certain level. The general instructions equivocate between being IC and OOC; the card, on the other hand, is always²³ meant to be an IC representation of the influence of the Issue on your character's thoughts.

You don't have to agree with it. It doesn't have to *be* your thoughts.

But it's what the Issue is presenting to you, in your character's head, roughly as often as you look at or remember the card.

At some points during the process the instructions might ask you to "tell yourself" things, or to tell things to the HG and the group. If there's going to be a long pause before you can put these ideas into action, make sure to write any key conclusions down!

²³ With one arguable exception.

Calling

Calling 1-2

You feel like something's left undone...

You feel like there's something you need to do, but you're not sure what. You've forgotten, or you haven't figured it out yet, or all the pieces haven't come together yet for you to act.



Calling 1

+1 MP



15

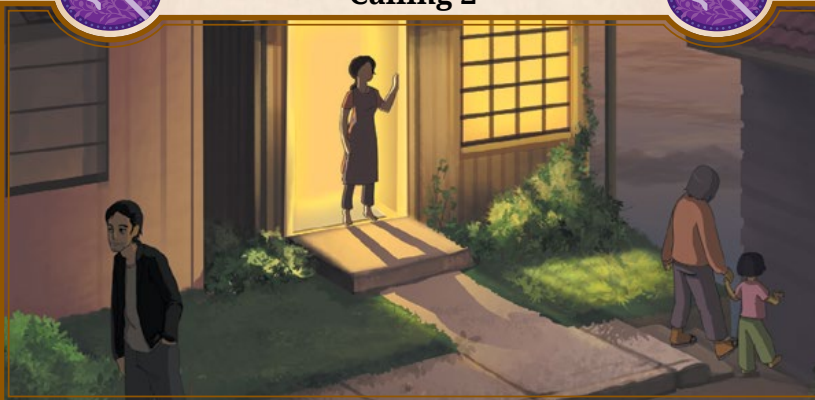
There's something wrong somewhere.
You feel like there's something you need to do,
something you've forgotten or haven't figured out.

Maybe if you talked about it to your friends?

Took a second look at your priorities
and your routine?



Calling 2



Calling 3

It's like you're finally starting to wake up. It's like you're rising above the straits of your ordinary life. Your heart is speaking to you. The world is speaking to you. You can't understand it quite yet—

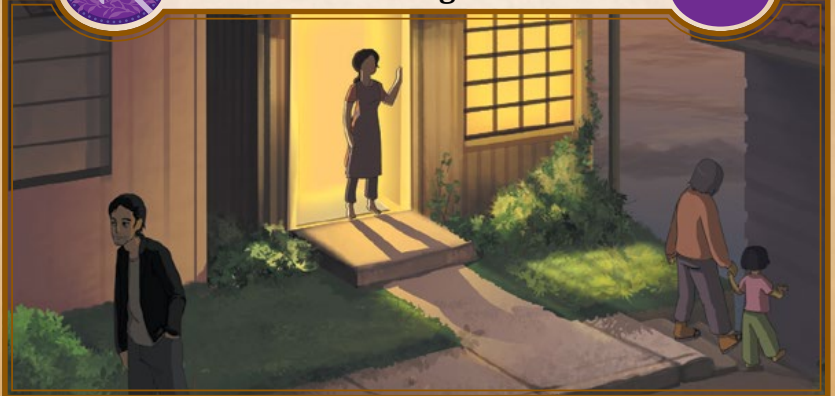
So while you have this card, don't close your eyes to things. Not to anything.

You have to be alert, open, and mindful until you understand what the world or your heart is telling you to do.

To hear your heart more clearly:
connect with others &
do the things you love.

Calling 3

+1 MP



Calling 4

Just hit level 4? OK. *Your path is clear.*

You know what's wrong with the world. You know what hasn't been done. You know what task has been left unattended, or what wound has been left to rot. You know

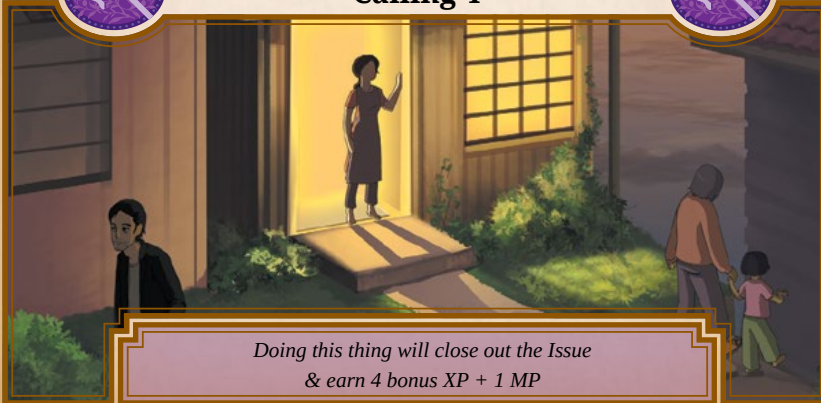
- ⚙ what you needed to do, and didn't;
- ⚙ what somebody else needed to do, and didn't;
- ⚙ what you did, that you oughtn't've;
- ⚙ what was done, that shouldn't have been;
- ⚙ what needed to be honored and trusted, that wasn't;
- ⚙ what needed to be fought, that wasn't; *or*
- ⚙ what needed to happen, somehow, only, it never did.

Take a moment and tell yourself what that was.

Then tell yourself what you have to do, now that things have gone this far, to try to make it right.

You know what went wrong with the world
&
You know what it is you have to do.

Calling 4



*Doing this thing will close out the Issue
& earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP*

Calling 5

Just hit level 5? **This Calling is harder, and scarier, and more important than you thought.**

It's not going to be easy. Maybe it wasn't going to be anyway, but now it's definitely not.

Now it's going to be scary, and it's going to be hard, and you're going to have to do it anyway, because it's the thing that's needing done.

Remind yourself about what's wrong with the world, and why.

(Or has it changed?... but you'll have to go forward, with the new path, even if it has.)

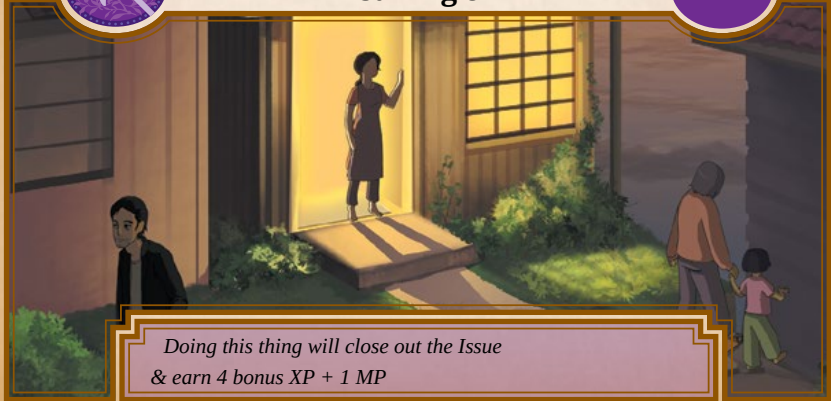
Tell yourself again what went wrong with the world. Tell yourself what you've got to do to fix it. Tell yourself why you're scared.

Then face forward, find your opportunity for action, and do what must be done.

You know what went wrong
&
You know what it is you have to do.

Calling 5

+1 MP



*Doing this thing will close out the Issue
& earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP*



Complex

Complex 1

You're trying a little too hard...

Sometimes you get a little bit too excited,
distracted, or weird.



Complex 1

+1 MP



Sometimes, *even when not indulging your other
Complexes*, you get a little bit too excited,
distracted, or weird.

Is there something else going on?



Complex 1'

+1 MP



For your second, third, etc. Complex

Complex 2

Just hit level 2? Time to decide what your Complex is about.

Like, for instance:

- ⊗ what if you fail at life?
- ⊗ what if you don't get all As at School?
- ⊗ what if people find out what you've done?
- ⊗ what if somebody is eating your soul?
- ⊗ what if you're accidentally eating someone *else's* soul?
- ⊗ you don't look good enough
- ⊗ you're not popular enough
- ⊗ you want so much stuff and can't afford it all
- ⊗ why can't everyone understand how important this mystery is?
- ⊗ why can't everyone understand the importance of eating vegan?
- ⊗ why can't everyone understand your deep connection to Mr. Spock?
- ⊗ why can't everyone understand how important it is to *love*?

Pick something. One of these or something else. Or make the HG pick something.

At the next chance, tell everyone—the HG, yourself, and by OOC communication or IC emote, the players—what it is. Even if you don't want to! You're too stressed and obsessed to keep this an actual secret.

There's something you are
not doing enough about.

You have to try harder. Don't give up!

Say something like that to yourself, or even out loud, right now. "I have to try harder on *[[this thing, whatever it is.]]* It'll be OK if I work harder."

Complex 2



Complex 3

What's your plan?

It wasn't as easy as you thought. You've been trying really hard but you feel even further from success than you did when you started. Maybe your standards got higher. Maybe your need got dire. Maybe you're just falling behind. But you can't stop here.

It's time to start pushing harder.

Figure out a plan. Figure out a magnificent, glorious, crazed plan. Then do it. And then the next plan. And then the next plan, until you get to Complex 4, when everything...

...will probably work out OK.

Here's your Issue

...but you have a plan. Did it fail? Come up with a new plan. Keep going. You just have to make it to Complex 4 and everything will definitely,

definitely

work out OK.



Complex 3

+1 MP



Complex 4

Your Complex hit level 4? OK, *Complex 3 kind of lied to you.*

A little.

Things have not worked out OK. Not yet.

So...

Think about what you've been doing wrong. Think about where you could go from there. Figure out what, in that vein, you absolutely *can't* afford to do. It made sense so far, but you have to stop before you do *that*. It will lead to total disaster. Figure out what that thing that will lead to total disaster is.

Tell yourself what that is. Heck, tell the HG and the other players.

Then realize, as you say it, that *wait*. That isn't necessarily a total disaster. That is... if you do it right, if you're lucky, if the world will smile on you just this once

...why, that could actually *work*.

Here's your Issue

...but you have a plan.

...come on, world, just this once, just let it *work*!

Complex 4



Enacting your plan, and bringing disaster down on your head, will close out the Issue & earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP

Complex 5

Your Complex hit level 5? OK, *you can see your doom a'comin' like the headlights of a train.*

What happened with that last plan? Did you not get the chance to pull it off before the stakes got higher? Or did it actually *work*, was it actually *a good idea like you thought*, only the world is so unfair that you have to top it now with something else?

Anyway.

You know what you have to do. You are committed. There is no turning back now. You have to kick it up a notch.

Tell the HG and the players what you absolutely, positively can't let happen. Tell them what you're doing all of this to try to prevent. Then explain your *new, improved* plan to make that happen. Er, well, not happen. You know.

Yeah.

That plan sounds good. It is *just crazy enough to work*.

You know what you absolutely, positively can't let happen.

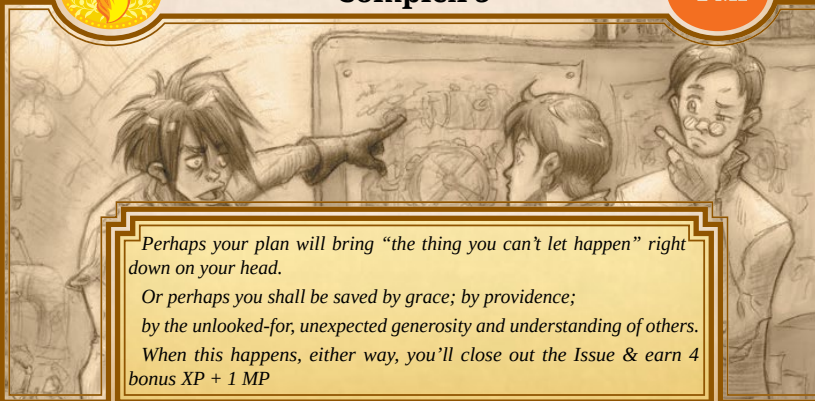
You have a new, improved plan.

It'll work. It will work. It's your last shot. *It has to.*



Complex 5

+1 MP



Perhaps your plan will bring "the thing you can't let happen" right down on your head.

Or perhaps you shall be saved by grace; by providence; by the unlooked-for, unexpected generosity and understanding of others.

When this happens, either way, you'll close out the Issue & earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP



Hero

Hero 1-2

You've shown some heroism...

There's more to you than this. You haven't shown your full strength and power yet.

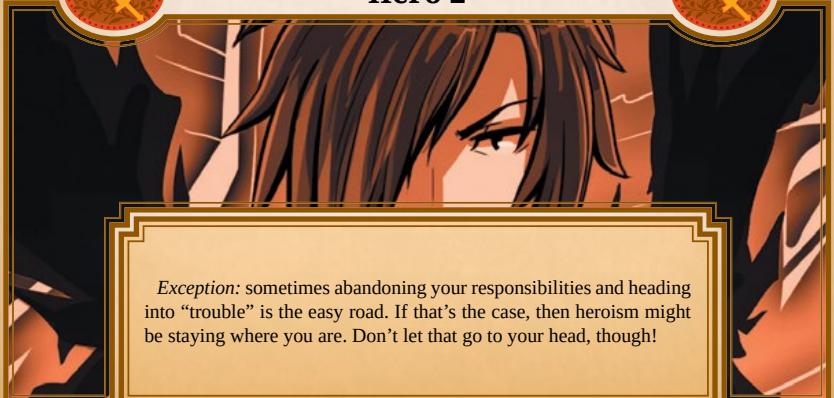
Hero 1

+1 MP



You're a hero. When there's trouble, head in that direction.

Hero 2



Exception: sometimes abandoning your responsibilities and heading into "trouble" is the easy road. If that's the case, then heroism might be staying where you are. Don't let that go to your head, though!

Hero 3

Level 3, huh? *Time to name your fear.*

You are facing something that terrifies you. Identify it. Name it.

Is it

- ⚙ an enemy or hazard already encountered in the game?
- ⚙ something that your enemies might do to hurt you?
- ⚙ some principle or possibility that the threats you've seen represent?
- ⚙ some weakness in your heart?

Don't think too hard about this if it's obvious. Like, for instance, if you've been fighting Typhon (pg. 225), just say "Typhon." Don't try to pretend you're not scared. Face your fear. Don't look for a deeper meaning. Typhon is scary!

But if there's no really dangerous enemy that's shown their face, maybe the thing that terrifies you is "my best friend getting hurt" or "some shadowy force I suspect behind all these disasters" or even just "pain" or "disappointing everyone."

Whatever it is that you fear, you can't beat it.

Not now.

Name something you can do to hold it at bay for a little while. Explain how you can get a temporary, tactical victory.

Tell the HG, at least, what the enemy is and what you can do about it.

You have named your enemy—

—and you are afraid.

Hero 3

+1 MP



Hero 4

All is lost. Tell the HG that.

All is lost, or all is about to be. You're about to have something horrible and unfair happen.

Either you're about to

- ⚙ *lose, and lose hard;*
- ⚙ *face the need to sacrifice yourself to get what you want; or*
- ⚙ *confront your enemy in a pyrrhic battle, where you win but you go down fighting or some circumstantially plausible variant thereof.*

The HG can pick which of these happens based on the situation at hand. You should probably cooperate in the latter two cases with helping that story come about.

Your enemy is

and
all is lost.

Hero 4

*Once your doom manifests,
the HG can close out the Issue & you earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP
...or they can choose to wait*

26

Hero 4: A Dirty Secret

Here's a dirty little secret.

"All is lost," right? That's what the card says.

But... there's still hope. Sometimes, sometimes, when it seems like everything is lost, when it seems like you're doomed, or even already dead? Sometimes it's not that way.

There is still hope.

Hero 5

The hardest part is yet to come.

Tell the HG that.

Tell them—look. You need to claw your way to victory here. You need to climb back out of the darkness.

You need to win what you were fighting for. Because this part? This part where you thought that all was lost?
(Were they?)

This isn't the hard part.

The hard part is what happens next.

If you haven't won big yet, the HG needs to help make sure that you do, that you win something big in the vein of what you thought you were after; they need to *give* you that...

And then they need to throw at you the biggest threat so far.

*When you realize just how royally screwed you really are,
close out the Hero Issue & get 4 XP + 1 MP.*



All is lost.
OMG WTF BBQ

Hero 5

+1 MP



Also,
you're out of bubblegum



Hollow

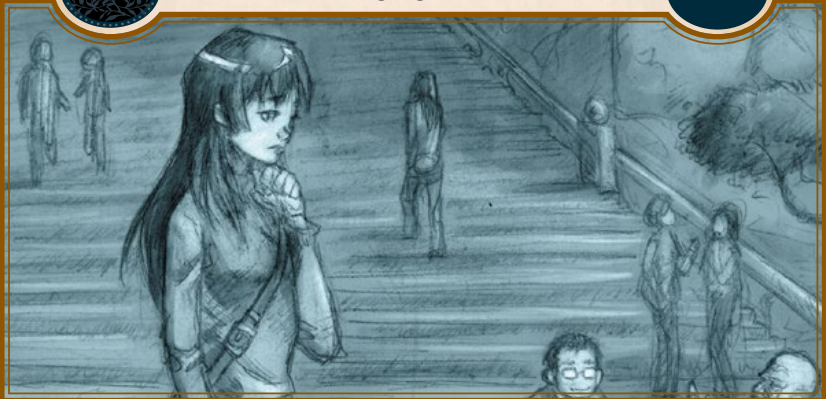
Hollow 1-3

Things don't matter as much to you any more....

Who are you, really?

Hollow 1

+1 MP



Would anyone even notice if you were gone?

Hollow 2



*It's OK if all there are is shadows. You can decide to
care about shadows.*

*It's OK if you're not real, if this isn't real,
if this is all you get.*

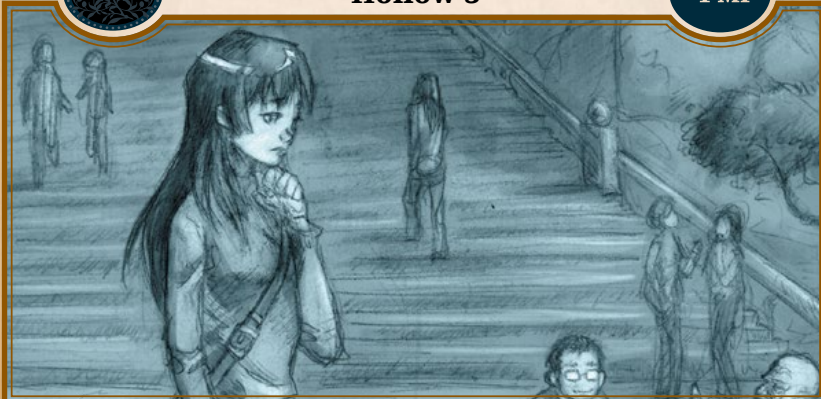
If, I mean, if...

I mean, that's allowed to be OK.



Hollow 3

+1 MP



Hollow 4

Just hit level 4? OK. *Nothing bad can possibly happen any more.*

Tell the HG that.

Like, "No, seriously, the card says that I no longer have to worry about the minor threats in this setting, or, like, seatbelts or responsible drinking or who I hang out with and stuff. Because you? You are not my Mom."

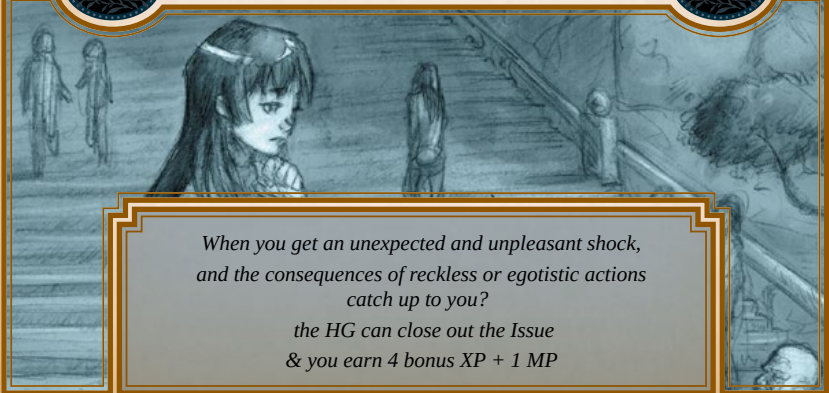
Or... well, something to that effect.

You're safe now! All those little things, whatever. Worrying about that stuff is just the kind of precaution taken by wimpy players who don't have the courage of their convictions. It's just an imaginary world anyway. They're not your Mom!

...unless they are, in which case you should probably clarify that they're just not your *game* Mom. Otherwise they might become upset.

Nothing in this meaningless world can really hurt
you, anyway.

Hollow 4



*When you get an unexpected and unpleasant shock,
and the consequences of reckless or egotistic actions
catch up to you?*

*the HG can close out the Issue
& you earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP*

Hollow 5

Just hit level 5? You can take that as proof that Hollow 4 was right.

You're still here, aren't you? Nothing bad happened, did it?

I don't know if it's because you're secretly God Almighty incarnate in the form of whatever, or if you're a robot with no real emotions that nobody can therefore really hurt, or if it's that all the magic and wonder in the game is just paper tigers and illusions.

I don't know, in short, if it's because you *don't* care, or because you *shouldn't* care, or because you just *don't* have to.

But frankly, at this point, you'd kind of *like* something to hurt you. You kind of want that. It would... I mean, it would *mean* something.

You know?

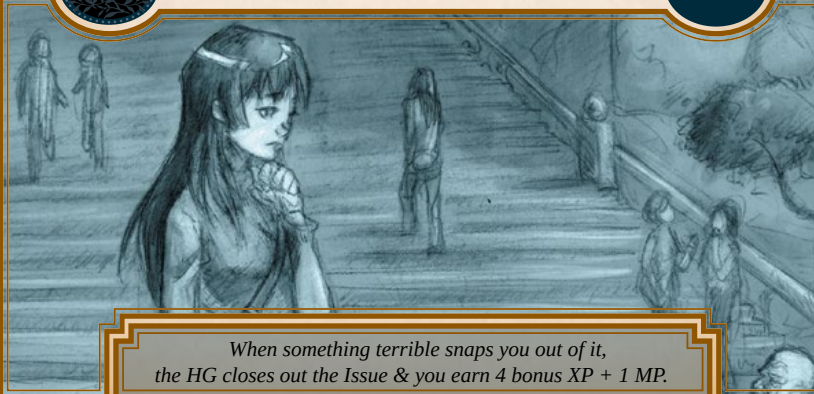
Maybe it would let you feel.

Haha. *Licks lips, nervously.* Haha. Yeah.

It doesn't even matter anyway.

Hollow 5

+1 MP



*When something terrible snaps you out of it,
the HG closes out the Issue & you earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP.*

31

Illusion

Illusion 1

The ironic thing is that at this point, the “illusion,” if there is one, is the unbelievability itself. The stuff that earned you this Issue?

It really happened.

It just *seems* like the kind of thing that never could.

How does this stuff *even happen?*

Illusion 1

+1 MP



Illusion 2

There's some kind of trick here...

There's something wrong here.

Don't try to name it yet. Just... watch for it. Catalogue the little details that don't match up, the things that don't seem to make sense.

Listen to people's narratives for things.

Where are they lying to you?

Don't trust the HG's descriptions. I mean, mostly trust them. They're mostly good. But somewhere there is a single deceit.

Illusion 2



Illusion 3

Just hit level 3?

You receive an immediate Serious wound: *something is not right*.

See the wound system on pg. 126-128—

But in practice, that means you're going to want to choose one of the following:

- ⚙️ a +1 Tool on actions when you're playing up the wound;
- ⚙️ a level 1 Bond related to the wound;
- ⚙️ a level 1 Affliction related to the wound; *or*,
- ⚙️ if you and the HG can quickly agree on how it works, a related level 2-3 Magical or Superior Skill.

If you know what's going on, if you know what's wrong, then base the wound on that.

Otherwise...

There is a story of a woman whose face was cut with swords, over and over, and she took no scarring; a torch was thrust burning into her stomach, but it just went out; she ate nothing, nor drank she anything, and yet she did not starve;

For she was simply the reflection of a woman standing over the water, and not even a true woman, but a shape of straw.

If you don't know what's going on yet, then the wound boils down to: "I am merely an image on the water."

The Serious wound remains as long as you have Issue 3, and not a moment more or less.

34

This is not real.

Illusion 3

+1 MP

+1
temporary
Serious
Wound



Illusion 4

Just hit level 4?

Heal the wound from Illusion 3, then re-inflict it; it's scaled up now. It is *Deadly*.

If you must, rewrite it, and change the power that you receive.

The Deadly wound remains as long as you have Issue 4, and not a moment more or less.

The *skandhas* arise from our sense-perceptions. The...
heaps and piles of our ideas.

We know things and, knowing them, deceive ourselves:
And become ignorant.

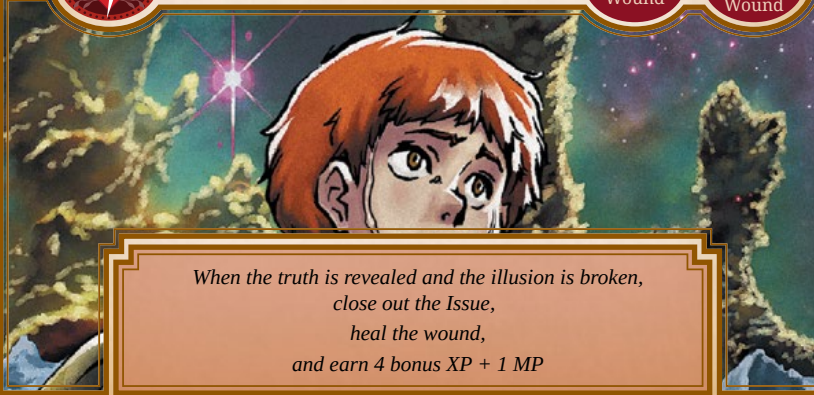
If you wish to lie to someone, show them a truth. Then
they will draw their own conclusions, and be deceived.



Illusion 4

-1
Serious
Wound

+1
temporary
Deadly
Wound



When the truth is revealed and the illusion is broken,
close out the Issue,
heal the wound,
and earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP

35

Illusion 5

Just hit level 5?

You are no longer playing your character. Instead, there is only an illusion.

Choose:

- if you and the HG can quickly agree, you are now playing something that is not your character, but with an established or easily-created build;
- you are now hanging out and kibitzing for a few scenes. You may earn emotion XP or claim quest bonus XP but other than that you are not in play.

You are no longer playing your character, so this card is OOC.

Talk to the HG about a time frame—something that works in the game, something that puts pressure on them but doesn't screw them over. Single-player game? 10 minutes. Crowd of 8 players with a lot of stuff going on? 60-90 minutes. Forum game? Maybe a week and a half. Forum game where you're having fun playing your alternate character? It could be as much as two months.

But there *is* a time frame, and since you're OOC it's even a RL one.

A clock is ticking.

Something shattering is going to happen to the illusion of your character, and your own character is going to return, when that clock's metaphorical alarm goes off. At that point, you'll also get 4 XP and an MP and the Issue'll resolve.



Illusion 5

-1
Deadly
Wound

+1
Defeated

+1 MP



Isolation

Isolation 1-3

You're drifting a little bit apart from everyone....

*You are not alone. You're not lost. You're not messed up.
Are you?*

Isolation 1

+1 MP



*Sometimes you think people don't really get you.
Like, you're not there; like, you don't matter;
like, you're a ghost.*

Isolation 2



*You're surrounded by beautiful people. Beautiful things.
And then there's you.
It's stupid, isn't it? To feel so insecure. But you're just
not cool. Not like them.*



Isolation 3

+1 MP



Isolation 4

Just hit level 4? OK.

Something bad is about to happen.

You've been pulling away. You realize that. You've let yourself get more and more separated from the world.

Tell the HG who you most want to protect—which of the PCs and important NPCs you've been trying hardest not to burden. Tell the HG who you most don't want to hurt or burden; and that that's *why*, that not burdening them is *why*, you sometimes choose to bear things alone.

Then admit to the HG, "But I'm going to have to bother someone. I can't do this on my own."

The HG will arrange a scene, soon, where you're stuck—where there's such a good excuse to ask one of them, to reach out to them, to talk to them, that if you don't, you'll have to admit you're too screwed up for words. If it's not obvious, the HG'll even tell you when it's that scene.

Tell the HG that.

"You're going to have to set something up where it's pretty much obvious that I should talk to them, ask them, burden one of them, or whatever. And make sure that I know."

It's so embarrassing!

You can't handle everything alone. You're going to have to be a burden to someone. Dang it.

The HG will give you an opportunity to reach out...

Isolation 4

Once you do this,
the HG can close out the Issue & you earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP
...or they can tell you that it's not that easy. That something
much bigger than you thought was wrong.

Isolation 5

It wasn't like you thought.

This situation—it wasn't like you thought. It was a lot worse, maybe, and maybe in some ways better. If you've hit Isolation 5, that means that you *weren't* just being neurotic when you isolated yourself. Either you've been deceived, betrayed, and the people around you weren't who you thought they were—or you're under some kind of magical effect or curse, something that's dragging you away from everybody.

You reach out to someone, and they don't answer you, and there's this terrifying emptiness in their expression or in the way you feel.

To fix it would take a miracle; it lasts *until* there's a miracle, until someone or something reaches down into your life, all unexpectedly, and saves you—or until the breaks between sessions whittle down your Isolation Issue to something reasonable, I suppose.

You are lost, until a miracle comes.

Isolation 5

+1 MP

*When a miracle breaks through your emptiness,
the HG closes out the Issue & you earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP.*

40

It Never Stops!

It Never Stops! 1-2

Things are... a little rough right now.

There's some over-the-top stuff going on.
It makes it harder to just relax and be yourself.
But you can handle it. You can stay cool.
You can just, you know, help a little, or be a little
rebellious or snarky, or explain carefully why
you don't want to be involved,
and then you're done, bam, in, out, simple,
and you can go back to being you.

It Never Stops! 1

+1 MP



OK, maybe you've made some commitments.
Maybe they're getting a little tough to keep.
But if you just stay focused, you know, stick to
what really matters, and keep moving forward,
you'll totally resolve the whole thing soon.
Everything is going to be fine.

It Never Stops! 2



It Never Stops! 3

Just made it to level 3? *Phew! It's almost over.*

OK, so maybe the earlier levels of **It Never Stops!** said things would be fine. And maybe things are not, in fact, fine. But there are some decision points coming up soon. This all *has* to end there. You're going to win soon, and if you don't win, you're going to lose.

Soon as you can, figure them out. Tell them to yourself and probably the HG.

Like:

- ⚙️ "After I fight this guy, it's over, right? I mean, either I win, or I'm dead/beaten."
- ⚙️ "After this test, it's over, right?"
- ⚙️ "I'm going to risk it all on this one last chance to reach the Headmaster's heart." Or
- ⚙️ "At least once I finish this Malamb Bruno-repelling ritual, it's done."

Yeah.

Pick some stuff like that.

I mean, it sucks that things were this hard, and it sucks that you *could* still lose, but at least, you know, if you lose you lose, and if you win you win, and then you're free.

Just hang on a little longer.
A little longer, and it'll all be over.

It Never Stops! 3

+1 MP



It Never Stops! 4

Just made it to level 4? I guess that settled it...

But wait.

Maybe you know this already. Maybe you're just finding it out as you read. But the HG's not going to let you off so easily.

Did you fail? You're going to get another chance.

Did you succeed? That was just the *second*-to-last boss. Maybe even third-to-last.

Or did you not even make it to the end before things unexpectedly got worse?

I'm going to be straight with you here. Your job isn't to win or lose. Not any more. Your job right now is to accept that all this has changed you. It's changed what you want, it's changed who you are, it's changed what you're fighting for.

Figure out how you're different. Tell yourself how you're different. It doesn't have to be a big deal. It's usually not a big deal. It can be like a quarter or a fifth of a big deal, you know? It can take a fair few runs at this Issue before you're all that different as a person. But it matters.

It's a deal.

Figure out how to recognize, validate, formalize, or even celebrate your change. Tell yourself and the HG what kind of scene you'll need.

You've changed.

You need to mark and express that change somehow so you can get your head around it.

It Never Stops! 4

When you've done this, you'll close the Issue and receive 4 XP + 1 MP...
or it'll blow up in your face, and you'll move on to level 5.

43

It Never Stops! 4: A Note of Explanation

Here's how trying to mark and express that change might blow up in your face.

You go and tell a friend, "you know, all this time, I've been fighting for you and telling myself I didn't want to; but, you know, I shouldn't think that way. Because you? You're worth fighting for."

And then your friend says, "Surprise! I'm the final boss!"

It Never Stops! 5

Just made it to level 5? *It never stops!*

You were wrong. Whatever you thought about how you've changed? That was wrong. It's not that easy, that comprehensible. There's something much darker or much brighter going on. It's probably even outright supernatural.

Used to the supernatural?

Then it's practically *eschatological!*

Talk to the HG.

Throw them some ideas. Get some back.

Figure out what kind of scene will show how you've *really* changed, and then go play it.

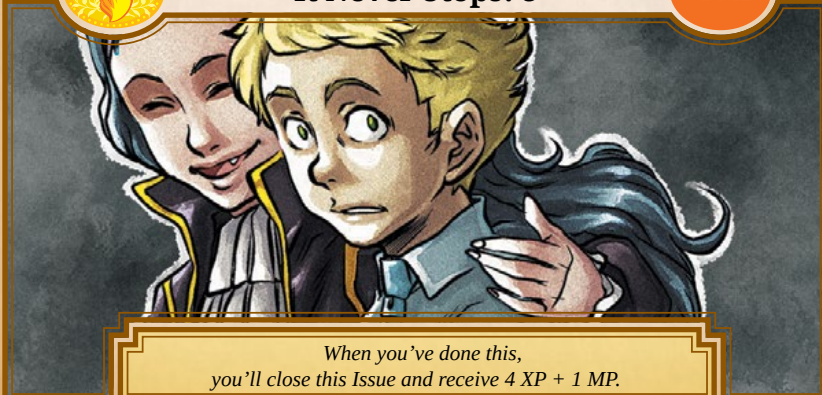
You've changed. *Really* changed.

You are not who you've been.

You need to do something to mark and express that change so you can get your head around it.

It Never Stops! 5

+1 MP



*When you've done this,
you'll close this Issue and receive 4 XP + 1 MP.*

Mystery

Mystery 1-2

A hint of something weird and mysterious....

There's some mystery about you, or some mystery that you'll have to face. What is it?



Mystery 1

+1 MP



45

A lot of what's going on with you and around you—it's all connected. It's all connected back to this one mystery.
Is there something that you're keeping secret?
Or is it something that's being kept from you?



Mystery 2



Mystery 3

You want to rip the truth out from where it lies—whether that's the world, or your own heart—and show it to people. But can they understand? Is it even *possible*?

To move forward
look for omens and signs;
listen to stories &
trust your own reactions to events



Mystery 3

+1 MP



Mystery 4

Just hit level 4? OK. *You stand at the doorway of revelation.*

You don't necessarily know the answer to the mystery. But you know what answering it would *mean*. You know what part of your life will never be the same—in a small way, or a big one—once the mystery is revealed.

Tell yourself what that is. Or, if you don't have time right now, tell yourself as soon as you get a chance and you're looking at this Issue.

It's that. Right?

Now tell yourself what you have to do to reveal the mystery. What's the step you can take that will bring it to light. Do you have to share a secret with your friends?

Do you have to open a doorway you've been dreaming about?

Do you have to break into Lee Scathing's lab at night?

You know what you have to do, don't you? Right?

And you know what it will mean?

Mystery 4



Doing this thing will close out the Issue & earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP

Mystery 5

Did you hit level 5 before you could close this Issue? OK. *This is a deeper mystery than you thought.*

It's not just a mundane thing. Maybe you already knew that. But, either way, you now understand that it most definitely is not.

This is a spiritual thing. This is a numinous thing. This is, at the least, something that's a little bit beyond words and understanding. It's like love, maybe, if we're talking about things that aren't necessarily supernatural—you can say the word love, you can explain things by talking about love, but in the end the only way to understand something like love is to take in the whole story of it and let it osmose slowly into your mind and heart.

Tell yourself again what answering the mystery will mean. Has it changed?

Tell yourself again what you have to do. Has that?

And whether that's changed or not, tell yourself something about why you think you cannot understand—a few private words to yourself on what you think it means that here is something that defies simple understanding. Tell yourself what it means that this is a deep mystery, and think about how to *share* that wonder with the other players in play.

The mystery is deep but...

You still know what you have to do, right?

And what doing that will mean?

48

Mystery 5

+1 MP

Doing "what you have to do" will close out the Issue & earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP



(in) Over Your Head

Over Your Head 1-2

Something isn't right....

You're starting to get a sense of what's going on here. You're building a picture in your head, even if it's hard to put it into words. But there's a problem. Something isn't right. There's something here that just... doesn't... fit.

Over Your Head 1

+1 MP



No. No, no, *no*.

There's something you've forgotten. Something you've overlooked. Something that isn't right. This isn't what's supposed to be happening.

Look around you.

This isn't right. This isn't what's supposed to be happening. It's a betrayal. Even if things *look* like they're going well, *this isn't right*. You're going to have to figure out what to do, what to change, who to trust—

And fast, because your instincts are warning you that this could all go *wrong*.

Over Your Head 2



Over Your Head 3

Horror. Shock.

You've made a terrible mistake. You've trusted the wrong person or the wrong theory. You've made the wrong decision.

You've *misunderstood*, and there's going to be a terrible price. If you don't do something, if you don't think this through, if you don't come up with something, there's going to be a terrible price, and it's going to be your fault.

Look around you. Look at the terrible prices that are in the cards.

Which one of them is your fault? Why? Are you sure?

What have you forgotten? What's slipped past you? What aren't you doing, what aren't you getting, where are you failing *still*?

To fix this, you're going to need your power.
You're going to need your genius.
But most of all, you're going to need to trust.

People are good. The world is good.
It will be OK.

Over Your Head 3

+1 MP



Over Your Head 4

Just hit level 4? OK. *You have an idea.*

You know how everything ties together. You know how you can *make* everything tie together. You know what you have to do. Does it

- ⚙️ bring in something that was foreshadowed but forgotten?
- ⚙️ bring in several such things?
- ⚙️ test your courage and faith by trusting something—
 - ★ yourself?
 - ★ someone else?
 - ★ a theory?
 - that you didn't dare to trust before?
- ⚙️ give someone else a chance to shine or prove themselves?
- ⚙️ show something that everybody already knew about the game in a new, interesting light?

It doesn't have to, but those are the key signs of a brilliant idea!

Maybe you can see the whole picture now. Maybe it's at the tip of your mind's tongue. Tell the HG what you *do* see. Tell the HG what bits of old foreshadowing you think you can bring in, who or what you'd like to trust, what about the game or your old ideas you'd like now to rethink.

Then either tell the HG what your actual idea is, or work with them and maybe the other players to figure the idea out.

Finally, figure out how to test your theory or to put it into action!

You've had a brilliant idea
&
You know how to test or implement it.

Over Your Head 4

*When you've done this, you'll close out the Issue
and receive 4 XP + 1 MP...
or it'll blow up in your face, and you'll move on to level 5.*

Over Your Head 5

Did you hit level 5 before you could close out this Issue? Or did your idea blow up in your face?... OK. That's all right. You've thought of something *even better*.

This is marvelous.

This is transcendent. It makes you want to dance with glee.

You know how to fix what just went wrong, or maybe, even better, you know how to *use* what just went wrong to make things right.

Tell the HG what this new idea is like. Tell the HG that "it will actually work, at least in part"—it says so right here on the page!

Then tell them what the idea is, or work with them and maybe the other players to define it.

You've had an even better idea.

This—

This is going to be *beautiful*.

Over Your Head 5

+1 MP

Implementing your new plan will close out the Issue & earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP.

Expect the HG to let your idea work, at least in part.

Sickness

Sickness 1-2

Some kind of unpleasant stuff's happened...

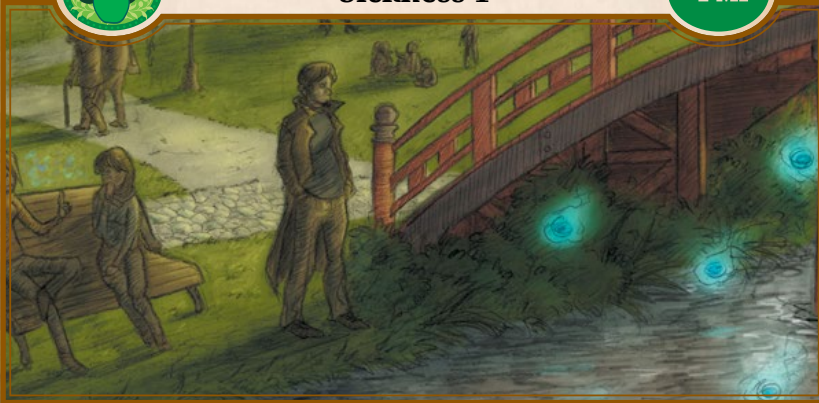
You feel kind of messed up. It's harder than usual to just be happy and have fun. It's harder than usual to cope with the little stuff.

Life's wearing you out.



Sickness 1

+1 MP

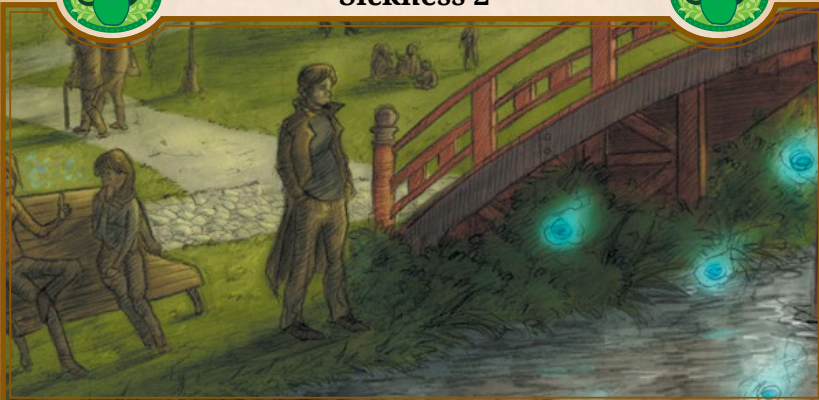


53

It's like the world has it in for you. It's like it won't *let* you climb out of this pit you're in. You are losing the sense you used to have of who you are and what you want to be.



Sickness 2



Sickness 3

You're dissolving. You're breaking. You can't hold on to yourself any longer in the face of what's happening to you. Except—

There's something you don't want to give up. There's something you are having trouble giving up, even though it doesn't seem you'll get to have it. There's something keeping you from despair, or maybe something that keeps pulling you *out of* despair every time you throw yourself back in.

Name it. Identify it.

Is it

- ⚙ a promise you want to keep?
- ⚙ a truth or principle you won't let yourself forget?
- ⚙ something you refuse to do, or have to do?
- ⚙ a person you want to stay yourself for?
- ⚙ something you love about yourself that you won't let go of?
- ⚙ something you hate about the change that you won't give in to?

You can't just let the world destroy you. At least, not this part of you. It's not that you're too strong to break here. It's just, you *can't*. You don't know how to let go of this even when you break. It's like an anti-break got to you first, something good or maybe even something awful that keeps you, somehow, *stuck*.

There's something that you can't give up. Remember?

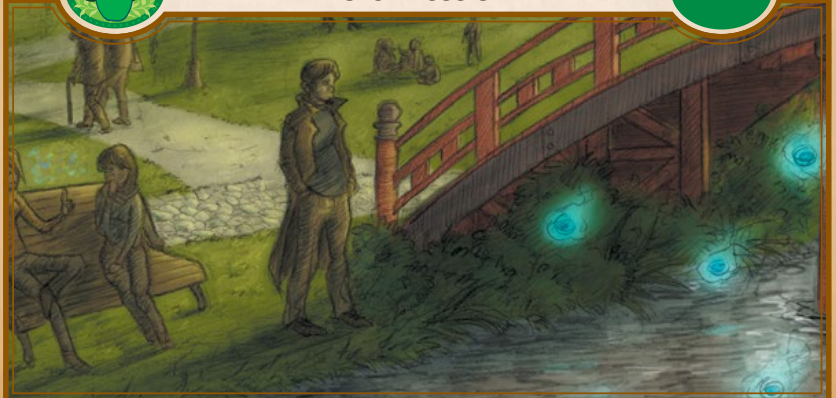
But it's not like that'll save you.

You have so many other things to lose....

54

Sickness 3

+1 MP



Sickness 4

Just hit level 4? *You're finding new strength.*

Tell the HG that.

You've lost the stupid little things you were clinging to. Probably. You've been broken down pretty far. You probably thought that all was lost, only, it wasn't.

You didn't know, or maybe you'd just forgotten that it was there, but somewhere inside you you've found a core of strength. You've found a steel core, a raging fire, or a perfected theorem somewhere deep within your self.

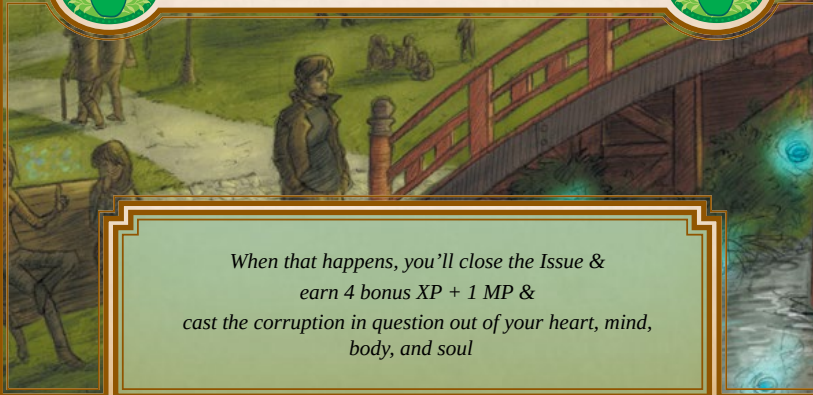
The next round of this battle, you're going to show that inner strength.

This is done now. You are your own person
now. You are going to fight.

It doesn't matter what it is. Mind control?
Possession? Vampirism? Peer pressure?
A really bad flu?

The next time it shows its ugly head,
you're going to take it down.

Sickness 4



*When that happens, you'll close the Issue &
earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP &
cast the corruption in question out of your heart, mind,
body, and soul*

Sickness 5

Just hit level 5? *You're going to have to live with this.*

Maybe you tried to fight off whatever sickness you've got going on, and you lost. Maybe you didn't get the chance to fight. But you can't win now. You might be able to suppress it, or deal with it some other story, but you're stuck with whatever's wrong with you until the current story ends.

But in that Sickness there is a chance at strength.

Tell the HG that.

Tell them—"look, you gave me Sickness 5, so this sickness isn't just a weakness any longer. It's not in charge any longer. Whatever caused it isn't in charge any more. It's part of me now, and that means I control it, and here is how it's going to give me strength: ..."

Or however you want to say it.

And then tell them. Tell them how it's going to make you better. Tell them how it's going to be a *power* for you, at least until the story ends, and maybe again in the future if the sickness doesn't go away. Tell them what it's going to *do* for you, for now.

The HG can set some boundaries, but in the end, they're obligated to let you take power over the Sickness and make it something substantively useful to you in play.

Are you cursed to turn into a toad? No—a *were-toad*, with toad powers. Is somebody enslaving your mind? No—you've learned how to trick yourself into thinking whatever you want to do is what they really want from you, and suddenly you have the best self-discipline and mental/physical control ever. Peer pressure? No, *leadership*. Best of all, you don't have to make any concessions to this as a player: you're still entitled to use your powers to overcome your sickness, as often as ever otherwise you could.

Why, if you accept this, it isn't really
all that bad....

Sickness 5

+1 MP

*After the first use of your new abilities, you close out the Issue & earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP.
You'll keep the relevant power and problem until the current story ends.
[A level 4 Auctoritas blocks any attempt to take either the power or sickness away.]*



Something to Deal With

Something to Deal With 1-2

There's something nagging at you....

You keep thinking about things you don't want to think about. It's uncomfortable.
You want to distract yourself from it.



Something to Deal With 1

+1 MP



You keep thinking about things you don't want to think about. Your feelings are pushing their way out of you.

It's like a gigantic gum bubble blowing in your mind and heart.

Everything around you seems a little bit unreal and far away.



Something to Deal With 2



Something to Deal With 3

What happened? What's coming to the surface? A memory, bubbling up? A principle, you're not living up to? A promise that you'd forgotten that you'd made?

And why do you actually—

Why have you started actually feeling a little *freer*, like you're starting to see how to find peace?

You can *almost see* how all the pieces fit together, you just need a little help from someone around you or the world, you just need to see the right thing or hear someone to say the right thing that makes it all fall magically into place—don't you?

*To understand what's going on
get out and be in the world
explore
react to what you find
and watch how others are reacting.*



Something to Deal With 3

+1 MP



Something to Deal With 4

Just hit level 4? OK. *You think you know what's going on.*

You've figured out how it all ties together.

Tell yourself now what you think that is. Or, if you don't have time right now, tell yourself as soon as you get a chance and you're looking at this Issue.

Yeah. That feels right.

Now tell yourself what you have to do about that thing. Talk about it? Take action? Call a family member or a friend? Go out in the sunshine?

You know what you have to do.

You know how it all ties together.
...You know what you have to do.

Something to Deal With 4



*Doing this thing will close out the Issue &
earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP*

Something to Deal With 5

Just hit level 5? OK. *You can face this now.*

You've figured out how it all ties together. You know what you have to do.

And you also know why you were still a little reluctant to do it.

Tell yourself now why you weren't ready to resolve this Issue before. Do that even if it's "not your fault," like, other important stuff was happening or the HG didn't give you a chance.

You weren't quite ready before. Tell yourself why.

You still know what you have to do, right?

Find time.

Do it.



Something to Deal With 5

+1 MP



*Doing this thing will close out the Issue &
earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP*



Trust

Trust 1-3

You sometimes seem awfully comfortable palling around with vast and spiritual things, gods and fallen angels, magic, rituals, strangers, horrors, spirits, aliens, rats and foxes, the vampires, and the Outside...

You are not alone.

Trust 1

+1 MP


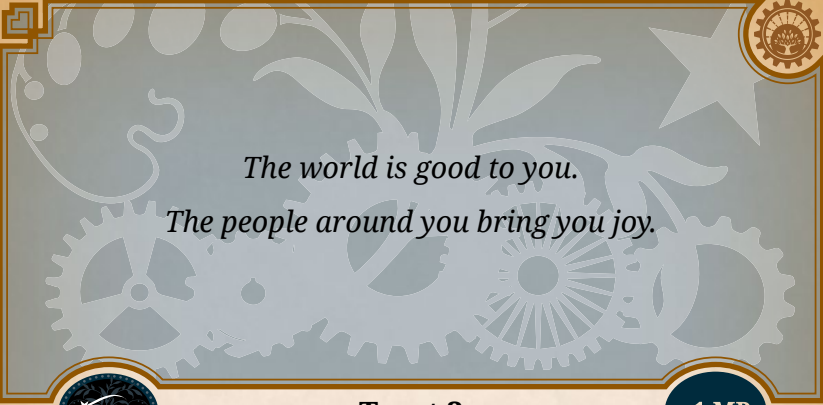



You can rely on others.


Trust 2







*The world is good to you.
The people around you bring you joy.*



Trust 3







Trust 4

Just hit level 4? OK. *Something bad is about to happen.*

Tell the HG which powerful NPCs you trust most—which you’ve given too much of your heart to.

Tell the HG how far you’re willing to go in trusting them.

Then tell the HG, “I’ve presumed too much, somewhere. One of them is going to betray me.”

The HG will arrange a scene, soon, where you can trust them in that fashion—possibly in a Science, Faith, and Sorcery Action. You’ll trust them; you’ll *gamble* on that trust.

But it won’t work out.

That’s a truth for now—that is, the HG will come up with how it will go wrong, and why, and so if events go awry and betray expectations, there’s a chance it will be OK. There’s still something you can hope for; I want there to be, so that it can be folly and recklessness, rather than simply obstinacy, to trust.

But unless things go really weird, and you should tell the HG as much, that trust will end in tears.

There’s someone or something you’ve already
promised yourself you’ll trust.

The HG will ask you to demonstrate that trust,
soon.

Trust 4



*Once you do this,
the HG can close out the Issue & you earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP
...or they can choose to wait*

Trust 5

You've been betrayed.

If you don't already know how you've been betrayed, if you weren't there for it, if there wasn't a scene, then you'll find out soon.

You've been betrayed, and yet you're going to have to trust again, because... because. Because that's who you are, maybe. Because there's no choice, maybe. I don't know.

Tell the HG that.

Ask them to set up the scene where you are or find out you're betrayed. (Perhaps a good chance for Foreshadowing or Sympathetic Action?)

Ask them to set up the scene where you are or discover that you've been betrayed; and then work with them, before or after that, to figure out why and how you decide (or are forced) to trust again.

64

How can you trust again?

Trust 5

+1 MP

*When you do,
whether your second chance at trust is rewarded or punished,
the HG closes out the Issue & you earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP*



Vice

Vice 1-2

You're walking a troubled or risky course....

There's something you like to do, that you want to do, that you've decided to do, and maybe other people don't think it's such a good idea, but so what? They just don't get you.



Vice 1

+1 MP



65

You've got this kind of magical dream of what your life would be like if you had a totally free hand to indulge your "vice," free of all the other obligations and issues that get in your way. Sure, people might tell you it'd lead to disaster, but no, it'd be this awesome, glorious vision. You get dreamy-eyed just thinking about it.



Vice 2



Vice 3

Your dream-world is calling you, your vice-dreams are calling, but—

There's something that's tugging on you, telling you that something in the rest of your life still matters. Name it. Identify it.

Is it

- ⚙️ a friend or place or activity that needs you?
- ⚙️ something cool coming up soon you want to be clear-headed for?
- ⚙️ a matter of principle?
- ⚙️ or maybe you're just too strong to get lost in vice, whether you want to be or not?

You can't just drift off into dreams, or gamble your life away, or burn yourself out working too hard on stuff that doesn't matter. This... thing, this something *needs* you.

66

There's something that needs you. Remember?

But it's not like it's a crisis. Not yet.

There's got to be time for one more bit of fun...



Vice 3

+1 MP



Vice 4

Just hit level 4? *Damn. You can't keep this up.*

Tell the HG that.

There's someone who needs you to shape up. Or something. There's a reason. You're about to get dragged out of your comfort zone. You can set some parameters in advance, but once you've done that, the HG is going to call on you to

- ⚙ be a hero instead of a slacker/druggie/drunkard
- ⚙ be a good person instead of a liar/cheat/bully
- ⚙ set aside a life-eating thing like
 - ★ gambling
 - ★ super-stressful work
 - ★ aiming for valedictorian
 - ★ nightmare science, *or*
 - ★ being a superstar
- so that you can be there for your friends
- ⚙ drop a bad relationship/alliance because it's gone too far, *or*
- ⚙ ...whatever.

And you're going to have to take that call, because it's going to be the right thing to do.

You can't keep this up.

You know that.

When the time comes, you'll have to set aside your Vice. It's going to be the only right thing to do.

Vice 4



When that happens, you'll close the Issue & earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP

Vice 5

Just hit level 5? *You're going to have to make your own call.*

It's time to go past the bottom of the bottle and out the other side of the glass. It's the time to slack so hard you spin the wheels of the world backwards. It's time to dance with the devil until the devil can't dance no more. Listen. Just now, you were thinking that maybe you'd have to give up on your vice in order to attend to things that matter more?

And, heck, maybe you still will.

But first?

In your Vice there is the answer to your problems.

Tell the HG that.

Tell them—"look, you gave me Vice 5, so I'm going to be called on to set all this Vice stuff aside pretty soon and tend to what needs tending. But I tell you, first, I'm gonna call on my Vice for power. I'm going to *use* my Vice to do something amazing, maybe on point, maybe a little off of it, before I give things up. Here is how it's going to go down."

Or however you want to say it.

And then tell them. Tell them how your Vice will *save* the day. If you don't know yet, make it up while you're talking. The HG can set some boundaries, but in the end, they're obligated to let your Vice help you, just this once, and throw the scene at you where it happens.

Where it proves *awesome*.

68

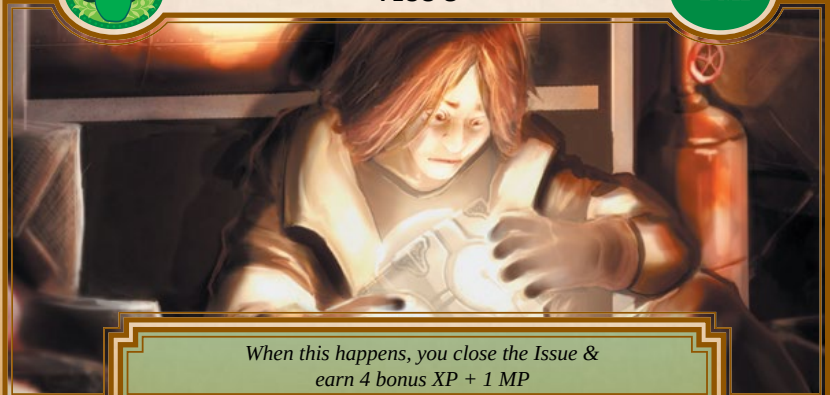
Get ready, world.

Your "Vice" is going to save the day.



Vice 5

+1 MP




When this happens, you close the Issue & earn 4 bonus XP + 1 MP







A decorative border runs along the top, bottom, and right edges of the page. It features a repeating pattern of golden gears of various sizes, some with intricate internal designs, interspersed with stylized green leaves and small yellow stars. The background is a light beige color with a subtle, mottled texture.

Looking for More?

The full PDF for the *Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* RPG is on sale now at [DriveThruRPG](http://DriveThruRPG.com)!