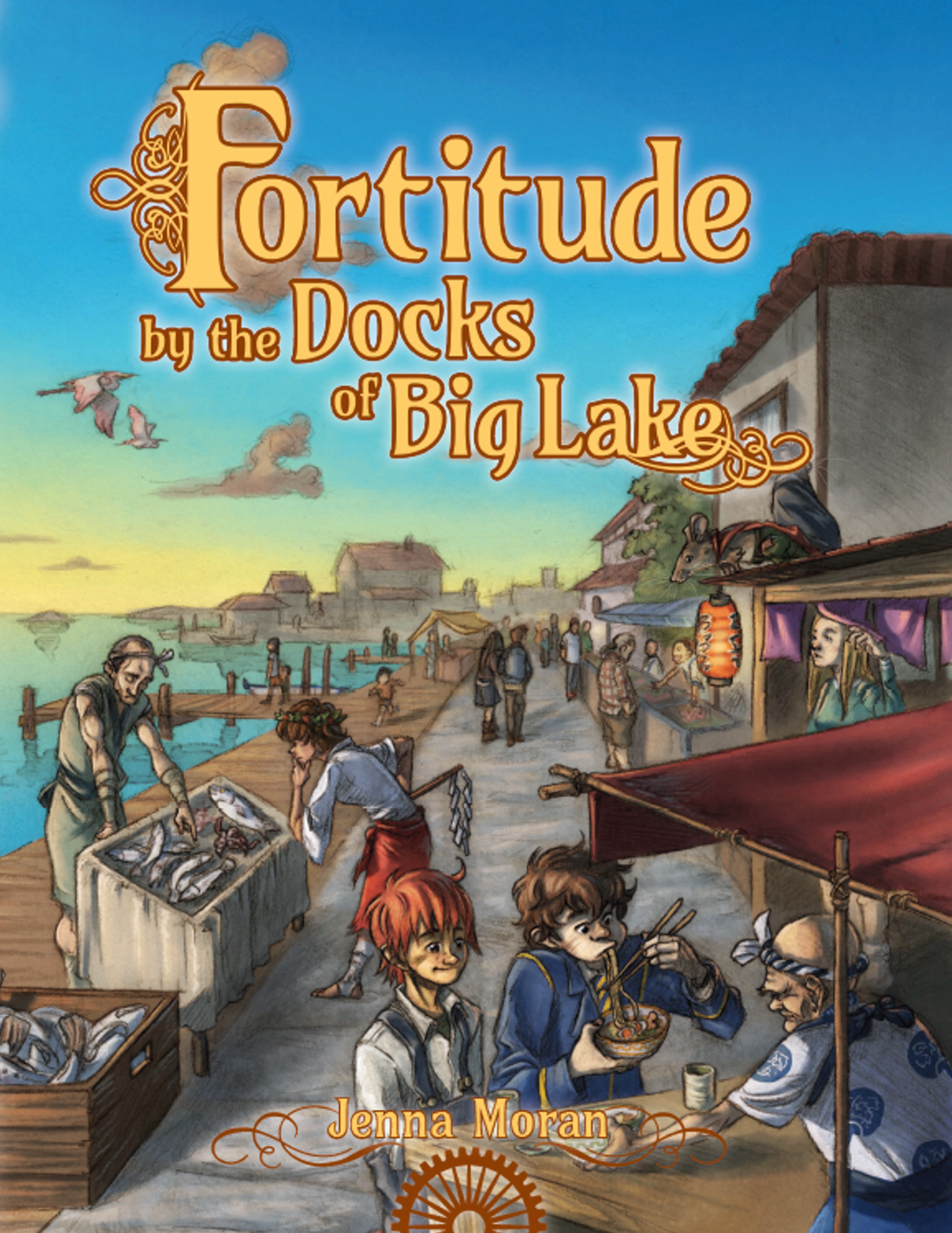

Fortitude
by the Docks
of Big Lake
Jenna Moran

Fortitude

by the Docks of Big Lake

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, Cheryl & Joseph Couvillion, Chrysoula Tzavelas, Kevin Maginn, Raymond Wood, James Wallis, Dara & Anna Korra'ti, Jesse Covner, Hsin Chen, and Gayle Margolis

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Introduction



1

Let me tell you a story of a peaceful place.
A beautiful place.

Its name is Fortitude.

I want you to come and game here. I want you to experience its joys. I don't want to tell you cold, dry facts. I want to tell you the experience of living here. I want to give you the story of *what it's like*.

Set aside your modern ideas.

It isn't glitzy here. Life moves slowly. It is (to be honest) rustic, rickety, and archaic here. It's behind the times.

I'll acknowledge that as a flaw.

But here's what you get in return.

This is a place that smells of fish, and wood, and cooking; aromatic grasses; the water of the lake.

Listen and you'll hear people walking and people talking; gulls crying; and in between them silence, wind chimes jingling, and the occasional ringing of a bicycle's bell. Insects'll hum. You'll hear that sometimes. If you're close enough, you'll hear the docks creaking and the sound of the endless waves.

It's *good.*

Walk around here. Feel your leg muscles stretching. Do you catch sight of a potato chunk on some shish-ke-bab that some guy is carrying just as it's slipping free of its stick? It's about to fall? But this is the kind of place where he's probably lucky. Maybe you had your mouth open to say something, maybe you made a noise, maybe you didn't, but he's already caught the thing in time.

Stop for a moment, maybe, and you can admire the cross-mast of a ship and the incredible thicket of its rigging as it rocks in its berth down at the shore.

Live here and you'll see the sun setting over the water, and the clouds will be pink and gold above it against the burgundy of the sky.

You'll duck under the long eaves of a row of shops when it's starting to rain, and there'll be fresh fish sizzling on a grill that a convenience store's set up along the way. It'll smell really, really good. You'll get a flying bug in your house, or where you're staying anyway, this lean little biting thing with gorgeous wings, and maybe you won't want to shoo it out.

This one time, a few months back, a fishing ship brought in an octopus that must also have been a god. It was vast and white and unreasonable, with gold rings and gold beaks that had their own tentacles coming from them scattered along its form. Its skin was tough like stone and there was a pearl in the center of its head. It fed Fortitude for days. I remember that a smiling sailor girl tried to sell me a cut of it when I was out shopping for something else; or is that actually your memory, instead?

I remember the first time I saw one of the rats along the road. It shocked me. So big! Such clever hands! And the movement and colors of the thing that was clinging to the rat confused me, for a little while, until I realized it was *clothes.*

I was staring, I think. Would you have stared? Is that what your first rat sighting would be like?

I was staring; and then it looked at me, it stood right up and it looked at me, and then it grinned and it *saluted* and it moved away.

And later on you might see a cat walking across the street.

And you'd be all "weird, rats in clothes—and cats."

Right?

But there *are* a few cats. They're allowed. Not many, but they're allowed. The treaty that the rats and the humans have will allow for a full one thousand; I guess, if you count the one at the cat-face shrine, which the treaty doesn't, it allows for one thousand and one.

This is a peaceful place. A beautiful place. A **Pastoral** place. So I'm going to tell you how to play in it in a game.

What is this?

Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake is a part of the **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** transmedia project and specifically its RPG line.

Here's a guide to the first few releases for that project:

- **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** is the core rules for the RPG. You'll need it to play.
- **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake** is this book. It's an in-depth exploration of the Fortitude Region, including information on its places, characters, customs, and circumstances.
- **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon** is an epic campaign set in Fortitude featuring eight Main Characters and numerous variations thereupon:
  - The Wishing Boy (or Girl)
  - The Best Friend
  - Nightmares' Angel
  - The Prodigy
  - The Angel of Fortitude
  - The Dream-Witch
  - The Troublemaker
  - The Child of the Sun
  - (and optionally using the character options from this book as well)
- and a planned forthcoming campaign currently titled, **Fortitude: the Far Roofs**.

You may also be interested in:

- **Fable of the Swan,** a novel set over the hills in Horizon and featuring one version of the Main Character "the Ideologue," as well as a cameo from the Fortitude character "the Prodigy."
- **The Legendary 139,** a mini-supplement containing a lifepath, quest sets, and adventures for Gothic, Fairy Tale, and Immersive Fantasy games.
- **Nobilis: the Essentials, volume 1: Field Guide to the Powers,** a kind of cosmic fantasy game and introduction to the supernatural entities of the Earth.
- **Nobilis: Antithesis, volume 1i: A Diary of Deceivers,** which is a supplement for Nobilis and not for this game but touches nevertheless on the mission of the Ideologue and the girl who might or might not be prisoner under the Titovs' shrine.

Basic Principles

Preamble

1

The Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG is a game of pretend.

It plays out in the course of a conversation. It can be an online conversation or a bunch of people sitting around a table. It can have props or it can do without. But fundamentally, the core of play is a bunch of people talking.

Most people are playing a single character—their PC or Avatar.

If you're doing that then your fundamental power is **the right to take actions.** You can use your game traits to do stuff. You can say, "I do this," or "I do that," meaning your character by 'I.'

This doesn't mean that your actions will do what you want them to.

It just means—

The game is built on the assumption that you can always *do* stuff.

This isn't philosophy or a manifesto. It's just how the rules are designed. You could have an ability that helps you wake up fast, so you're allowed to use your abilities even when you're asleep. You could have a character who's really good at reacting quickly—so nothing ever happens "too fast for you to react."

Sometimes your actions are pointless. Sometimes you're trying to do stuff that is just plain beyond what your character can do. If your character is a normal human, and you take an action like "I catch that falling star," then maybe all that happens is that you run down the beach and realize too late that it's actually extremely far away. If your character is on a fishing boat in a storm trying desperately to bring a forty-foot halibut in, and you take an action like "I play a quick game of tennis," then maybe all that happens is that people blink at you and then say, "OK, and, moving on."

(Or ask a question like, "Wait, what?")

But if you're playing then you have access to the game rules and your abilities. You'll be able to use Skills (pg. 180), emote (pg. 13), take quest-related actions (pg. 223), and earn XP (pg. 12)—if you're in the game, if you have a PC, then you have full access to the rules.

Conversely, if you lose control of your PC so thoroughly that you *can't* act—

If your PC dies, and the game doesn't just pick up with you playing their spirit out in the bleakest regions of the Outside where the dead things go; or if they're possessed by some evil witch or dream-poison and you're not in their driver's seat; or even if they're just so thoroughly beaten that they're part of someone else's story now—

Then you're no longer playing them. All conditions like that mean that you don't have a PC any longer, and you're just a spectator until you get them back or make a new one. You're never actually *playing* a character that you can't control.

One player—maybe one or more players in a big game—does things a little differently.

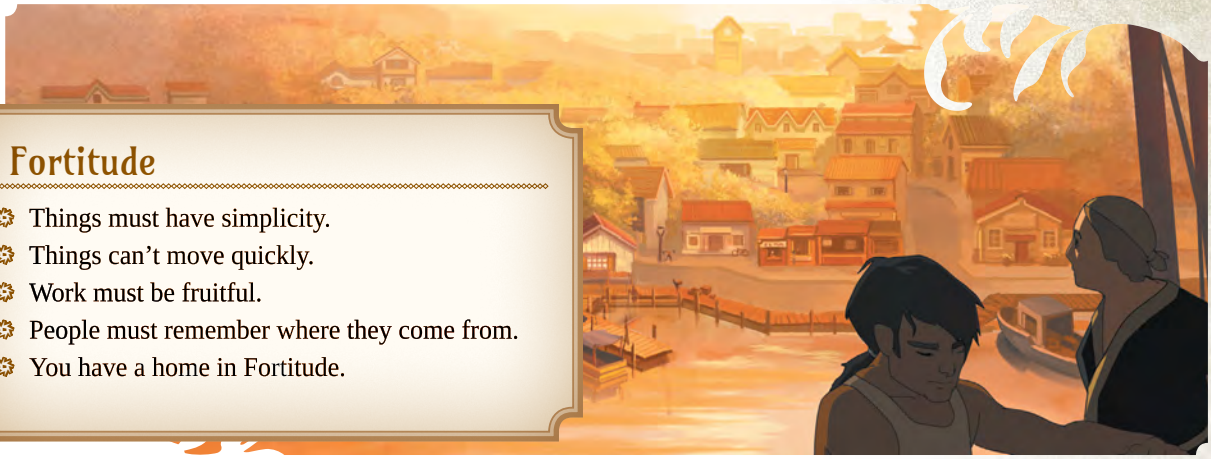
They're called the HG (or "an" HG). They're the final arbiter of rules stuff that affects or changes your abilities, but more importantly, they're not playing a character. They don't have a PC or an Avatar.

Instead, they play the world.

What this boils down to in the end is that the HG's role is to describe *what happens* as a result of how you act. Often the HG's descriptions will look a lot like the people in the world are taking actions, and that's fine—it's even *normal*. The HG can pretend that some kid you're playing hockey with has a Hockey Skill, like a PC would, and is using that to take actions, like a PC wound, with a certain numerical level.

But that's not what's really going on! That's just how it looks.

The *rule* is... **players take actions, the HG describes what happens.**



Fortitude

- Things must have simplicity.
- Things can't move quickly.
- Work must be fruitful.
- People must remember where they come from.
- You have a home in Fortitude.

The five core Properties of Fortitude—occasionally augmented by neighborhood or building Properties—are always with you when you're in the area. They exert a constant, subtle influence on everything you do.

In rules terms they function as a level 2 Bond—

You can invoke them to help you out when you're in trouble. If they somehow get you *into* trouble, it's a pretty good kind of trouble to be in, because clinging to the honest simplicity of them will strengthen your heart and will kind of balance the trouble out.

These are things that you can trust in.

Remember that.

If you're in trouble—if you're at the bottom of a cliff somewhere with a broken ankle and you don't know how to get to where anyone can help you out... remember it. If you're trying to find Christmas presents for all your children and you have no money... remember it. If you're a kid, just an ordinary kid, and you're fighting a gigantic snake-witch monster from the sea—

Work must be fruitful. Work hard. Have faith in that. Remember that. And your home, too.

Move slowly. Be patient. Keep it simple, even if you don't think that you can afford to. Even if this all seems like it's just mumbling nonsense.

Let these Properties be your lighthouses.

They will see you through.

Gaming Terminology

PC or Avatar—Player Character. Your Avatar in the world of the game.

NPC—Non-Player Character.

Main Character—this term isn't actually standard. A Main Character is someone at the heart of the story, including all PCs but some NPCs as well.

IC—"IC" actions are taken by your character, "in character."

OOC—"OOC" actions are things you do as a player, "out of character."

HG—this term isn't actually standard. The HG is the "Hollyhock God," this game's equivalent of the Game Master.

Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine—this term isn't actually standard. This is the general term for the game rules we're using, e.g. "In a ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** game, you'll have 8 points of Skills..."

Scale

Fortitude proper is a roughly 42 sq. mi. (108 km^2) settlement hosting ~30,000 human-shaped people—more than a fishing village, more than a resort town, but small enough to be a backwater and not a metropolis.

Counting the sparsely-populated hills, beaches, and wildlands, Fortitude stretches out to three times that size—120 sq. mi. (311 km^2), and about ~34,400 human-shaped people. You can think of it as comparable to a mid-sized Greek island or a little beach-side town in California, I think: big enough to lose yourself in, but small enough that you could eventually see it all.

The longest straight walk you can reasonably manage in Fortitude is about 35 kilometers and change—a good

Gaming Terminology

Bonds and Region Properties—you can use Bonds and Region Properties to help you with difficult actions or to punch through barriers against miracles. When they get you into trouble, instead, you gain extra Will or MP. They're introduced on pg. 116 and 119 of CMWGE.

seven hours in theory, and eight or nine in practice. That's going to start you from a dock or a warehouse, though, and take you to the middle of nowhere. More reasonably, you can probably get between any two points in the main settlement in a couple of hours, and the longest walk you're likely to take is maybe a five-hour journey from the far side of the settlement to the mangal in the north.

If you wanted to do a comprehensive survey of Fortitude—to go up and down every street, take conscious note of what's there, and move on—I figure it'd take about seven years. But it's *doable*. And half a year of dedicated poking around is enough to get *most* of it sorted out.

The Rhythm of the Game

The default genre for Fortitude is **Pastoral—**you're playing through the long, dream-like stretches of the characters' lives. Each "chapter" of a Pastoral game usually lasts an in-game week; each "book" of play covers a season. Thus the stories and epochs of the game aren't so much based on plot as on the cycles of the world, and

You'll play them out a week at a time.

Each player can earn the group bonus XP twice per chapter, plus once more on certain holidays, by taking Fortitude-themed actions—these are, specifically:

Shared Action: Find someone who's doing something simple and honest, like cooking, cleaning, or practicing their martial arts katas, and connect with them as they work.

Shared Reactions: Talk things through with someone—sort out your head on stuff, or help them do the same. And then reach out a little.

Slice of Life: travel, admire the scenery, have a meandering conversation about nothing in particular; in general *experience* stuff and emote your reactions to it….Find a moment or mood in there somewhere that somehow sticks with you for a while.

You can "happen" upon these actions during the course of play or you can specifically set out to do one of them, and you can pick any combination (including two of a single action type) in any given week.

After you take one of these actions, you usually *fade* for a bit—

It sets the tone for 2-5 days of your life, wherein you're not rushing forward to do more.

How Group XP Works

The XP from these actions is cooperative—the goal is to experience stuff and do stuff *with other people*. So this bonus XP doesn't go to you directly.

Instead it goes to the group.

All the bonus XP from these XP Actions goes into a shared pot that you can divide up among the players at any convenient breakpoint during play. If there's XP left over after a division, it stays in the pot; at the end of the session, the HG should add enough XP to the pot to make the final division even out.

You *can* earn personal XP in this game, selfish XP, private reward XP that only goes to you.

You can!

But not from this bonus XP.

Visual References

Looking for visual references beyond what I'll give you here?

You could look into pictures of Lemnos, or Lake Tahoe; or you could say, it's a less populated Onomichi, or a Rostov Veliky with just a bit less historical wealth.

Gaming Terminology

XP—stands for "Experience Points." It's stuff you use to improve your character. You want it.

Quest—In **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** you'll have a set of "quests" that your character is working on—e.g., caretaking a park or practicing your flute. You'll spend XP to advance or finish quests, earning you various rewards.

So you care about XP because whatever you're doing—trying to learn a skill, or get new powers, or have people acknowledge you as cool—it'll help you get it done.

Emoting

Fortitude games make heavy use of the concept of "emoting"—

Of consciously letting a certain emotion show. Maybe you get angry, so you'll say something like:

- " 'You bastard!' "
- "I'm kicking the wall" *or*
- "I emote anger."

...not so much to cause an *effect* as to let the emotion play out.

Or maybe your character's happy, so you'll smile. But the other players might not notice you smiling, or they might think it's just you as a player, or they might assume for no real reason that your character is putting up a front. So you say:

- "Smile" *or*
- "I emote 'happy.'"

I don't mean to imply this is a new concept in RPGs or anything. It's not!

I'm just calling it out and giving it a name.

Your character can take physical actions. They can say things. And also, you can *emote:*

Take an emotion. Let it radiate. Let your character be the vehicle through which that emotion expresses itself in the world.

Emoting vs. Taking Action

Unlike most actions, emoting isn't physical and tangible. Often you won't be able to describe all of the elements of your character's behavior that go into it. You'll know a lot of them, of course, but you should assume that there's probably even more to it than your character is consciously aware of—and even more than *you* are. Emoting will come out in your body language, your voice, your eyes, and the way you think and act.

There are two key rules for emoting:

- You have to let the other players (in the scene) know what you're emoting.
- Emoting has to be honest.
- If you don't keep those rules, you're not emoting. I don't know what you're doing but it isn't that!

Making It Clear

The first rule:

To emote, you have to let the other players know what you're emoting.

That means that if your feelings are too wordless, quiet, or subtle to express at a noisy gaming table, you'll have to make them explicit. You'll have to actually *say* something like "I emote [the relevant feeling]." If you're trying to stay in character, and you're wondering what it means to say that, it just means that you're leaking enough emotion through your expressions and body language for other people to read.

You don't have to be that explicit if you can make your feelings obvious through play. You can just react to something, for instance, and let the other players see your reaction, and that's often completely adequate as an emote.

Often—but not always.

Remember that if you are not going to make something an explicit statement, and you want it to be an emote, *you* are responsible for making sure that the idea gets across.

You can express sympathy and shock with a muttered, "wow." Some people may even express their sympathy and shock by totally ignoring someone's pain and rambling on about furniture. That's fine, when it comes to expressing your character, but it's not emoting.

"Oh, my God, that's awful, that's so awful, is there anything I can do?"—that's the kind of thing you need to be saying for an IC statement to qualify as emoting sympathy and shock.

And bear in mind that it also works to say "Oh, my God, that's awful, is there anything I can do?" and then wait a beat and then, when your character would be doing something difficult to convey like squeezing a shoulder or feeling a silent burst of empathy, "— I'm emoting sympathy and shock."

Keeping It Honest

The second rule:

Emoting has to be honest.

This is not the game for sending off false emotional cues. You can totally house-rule this at your table, if you and the other players want to play through convoluted mind games, but at its core, emoting is about sharing your character's true feelings. Don't worry about being too obvious and open. The other players and the HG will find ways to be confused about what's going on with your character's head even if you give

Success and Failure

Your emote does not succeed until somebody acknowledges it.

Now, it's possible that you don't *need* an emote to "succeed." This game doesn't currently include any sort of mini-game where you have to emote successfully four times within a minute or whatever to earn a Watanabe candy. The rules that demand that you emote, herein—they don't require your success.

I'm just saying!

Physical actions tend to "succeed" by achieving a desired physical result. Mental actions tend to "succeed" by giving you correct, actionable information. Emoting "succeeds" when the HG or another character acknowledges the emoted feeling by responding. Maybe a PC comments on it. Maybe they emote back. Maybe they just look over at you, sigh, and nod. Maybe an NPC does one of these things. Maybe the world itself responds—like, you shout that you're not afraid of Heaven, and then, a few seconds later, thunder rolls in.

But if nobody at all notices, that emote is a kind of IC failure on your part.

I like there to be a *beat*—a pause of a second or two—between an emoting action and the response. If the response is too quick, or too immediate, with a couple of exceptions maybe like sweeping sad people up into hugs, the exchange starts to feel like overlapping actions instead of like action and response. Accordingly, a too-quick acknowledgement might or might not count.

them a play-by-play of your character's internal monologue. Don't worry about losing the potential for problematic interactions, either. People can hurt each other, and misunderstand each other, and have trainwrecks of conversations even *when* they're being honest, and in fact, it may even make it easier.

So you're allowed to fake emotions in character—

—but any time you actually *say* that you're emoting something, you need to be giving your character's real emotional state. And any time your character is giving a false impression, and someone asks if you're emoting, or fits things into some kind of rules framework where emoting matters, or whatever, you need to clarify that you're not emoting, you're just talking and doing things.

Emoting is for showing your character's heart.

Why do you need this?

Here's the three reasons I'm including the emoting rules:

- to give you a better handle on the Slice of Life, Obsessive, Discovery, and Adversity actions, below;
- to legitimize a focus on the things your characters are feeling; and
- because people often find it a useful concept to keep in their mental foreground in a ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** game.

The last is also why I've gone into such depth!

Isolation

Here's the last piece of this Fortitude game's heart.

Connecting to other people isn't automatic. It isn't easy and it isn't free.

It's just that...

The alternative is isolation.

Isolation isn't part of the Fortitude theme. In fact, it's anything but! But it has to exist, it has to be a presence in your life, or there won't be any real reason to connect.

So here's the rule.

In this game, characters who take the big in-genre XP actions but don't manage to connect to anyone? Characters who're alone, or talking to themselves, or rebuffed by the people they reach out to, or indulging in a lonely, isolating mood?

Putting it explicitly:

Characters who take a **Shared Action, [Share] Reactions,** or take a **Slice of Life Action,** but without making any sort of connection as they do so?

They pick up a point of the Issue "Isolation," a Trait ranging from 0 to 5.

It's not that bad to have Isolation.

I wanted to make it something bad, something to make you want to stick to the core theme instead of veering pretty much directly away from it—but in the end I couldn't do that. In the end, I had to pick a kind of Isolation to give out that's just a little awkward, a little embarrassing, a little, well, humanizing, really, instead.

So it's not that bad.

Because...

Because even in a little town of people who are mostly pretty loving and pretty good, it's not as simple as just saying "so don't be isolated." It's not as simple as shaking a finger at you and telling you to stay on theme.

If there's something that pulls you away from other people, then that has to be observed. That has to be experienced, too, in all its lonely hours. It has to be allowed its reality, accepted as taking place, surfaced in the course of play, and then resolved, or a game where connecting to other people matters doesn't work.

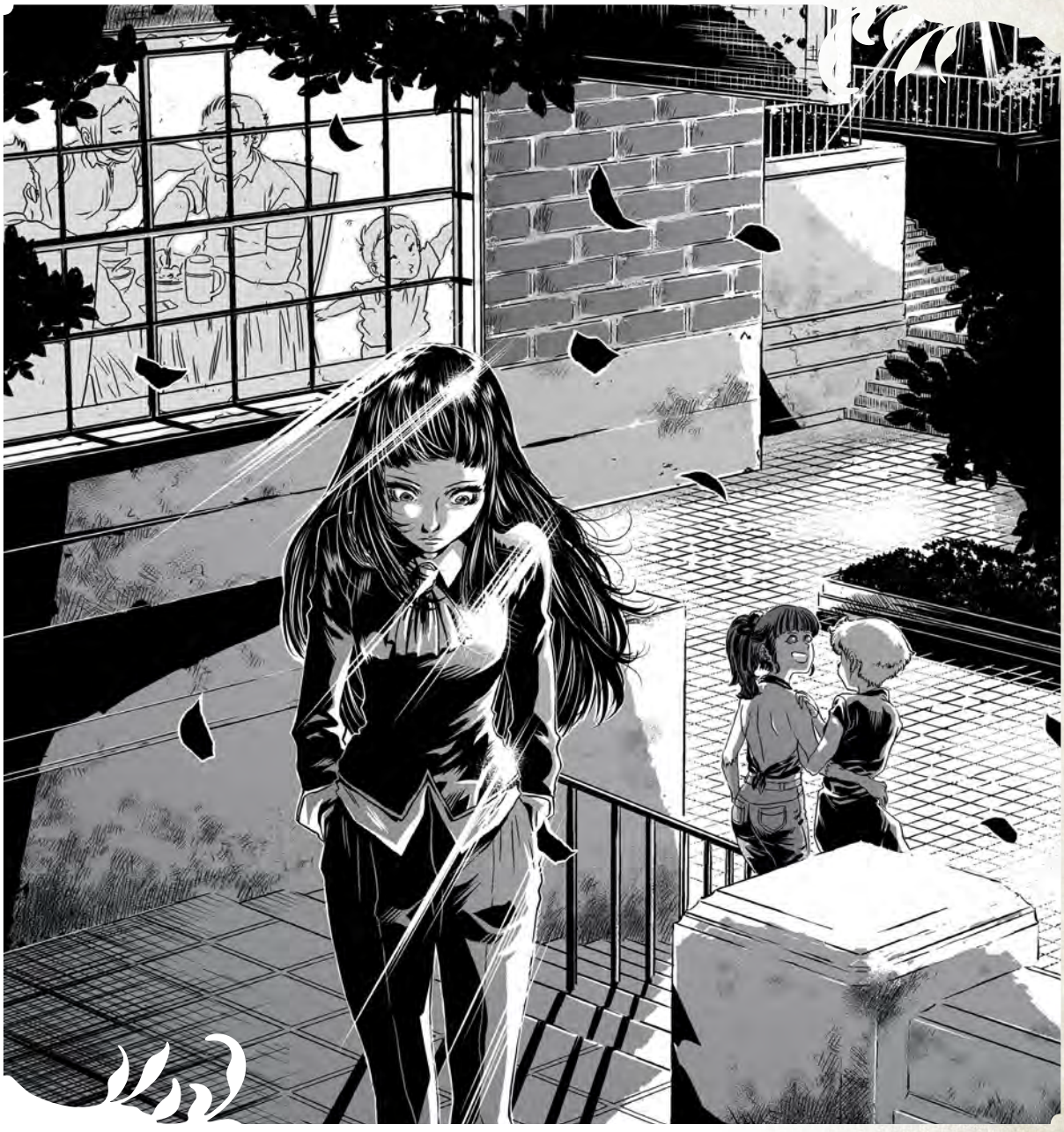
So, in practice, I'm mostly representing your Isolation as *advice*—as a card, that you optionally keep in front of you during play, that reminds you how your Isolation influences your character's thinking. And you'll even get some in-game benefits from it, like "MP" (a power source for miracles) and a discount on miracle abilities when they help to bring that Issue to a close.

But it's still a price. You should still think of Isolation as a price. It should still be a reason that, when you're out there taking XP Actions, you want to find people to connect to. You don't just want to live your life alone.

Gaming Terminology

Issue—a game trait that tracks part of your character's life situation.

"Resolving" an Issue—taking an action at Issue level 4-5 that brings an Issue to its close.



Characters

Come with me to the edge of the world, to the creaking docks by the waters of Big Lake and the piquant settlement beyond.

2

Come *home*, you who were homeless; be *found*, you who were lost; come and find shelter here from the endless surging strife and torments of the Outside and the surfaced Earth; settle here, or at least pretend, and be...

- **A "Citizen of Fortitude,"** e.g. Evsevka Niijima or Yoshio Duskin,
  - to pick your own career, schtick, and lifestyle
  - to be a normal person, or to invent your own abnormality
  - if you're playing in a Pastoral or Adventure Fantasy game.
- **A "Shrine Maiden/Priest,"** e.g. Yasha Fyodor Titov or Sachiko Vasili,
  - to have a spiritual, magical birthright
  - to grow up in the context of a shrine
  - to have a detailed, well-established, and important family
  - if you're playing in a Pastoral game, or one of the genres that fits an individual family well
- **A "Fortitude Rat,"** e.g. Gregori Augustine or Morwyth, if you want
  - to be a two-pound swashbuckling hero
  - to run around on the roofs of Fortitude facing terrifying Mysteries and gods
  - if you're playing in an Epic Fantasy, Adventure Fantasy, or a Fairy Tale.

Or you can 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, *and*
  - 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 think about stuff!

Otherwise, you can move on to character building in **A Citizen of Fortitude, Shrine Families,** or the **Fortitude Rat** section, below!



Shake it up!

Here are a few slightly more unusual options—I don't have any problem with your taking any of them as a PC or Main Character, but I wanted to separate them out so you didn't think they were common!

You could be...

- **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
  - if you're playing in a Gothic or Immersive Fantasy game
- **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
  - if you're playing in a Pastoral, Gothic, or Epic Fantasy game
- **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 *or*
  - to play yourself, or someone like yourself.
  - (this can work in any genre, depending on your character concept.)

Skills

Skills are this game's description of "The things your character knows how to do." For instance, you might have a Skill like "Navigation," "Handle Yourself in a Crisis," or "Sneeze Dramatically."

Each Skill is rated from 0 to 5, or sometimes a little lower—for instance, a pretty ordinary Fortitude resident might have something like:

- **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.
- **Some Sort of Hobby 1**—You're familiar with something else.
- **(Woeful Flaw) -1**—You want to be good at this thing, but you're not.

You can choose 8 total points of Skills (not counting any negative Skills). If you're particularly cool, some of them might be "magical Skills" that can do the impossible, "Superior Skills" that make you inhumanly competent, the special Skill "Cool" that helps you come out on top in a conflict with others, or the special Skill "Shine" that makes you more motivational and inspirational.

Bonds and Afflictions

The characters in this book are mortal characters—they may gain access to miracles from their very first quest or they may never, but they don't start with them.

However even a mortal, if they're a Main Character, starts with two special powers:

A "Bond" and an "Affliction."

Each is written as a law or a rule.

A Bond gives you extra strength ("Will" or "MP") when that rule gets you into trouble; when that rule would help you do something, the Bond can help you overcome Obstacles and add power ("Strike") to your miracles, instead. While the HG decides when you get the benefits, the Bond itself—the law or rule—is under your complete control; it applies when you want it to and when you think it should.

An Affliction is more absolute—it's a cosmic, world-shaping power. It also gives you Will or MP when it gets you into trouble, and when it's on your side it's even more effective: the stuff specified in the Affliction basically just *happens*. On the other hand, the HG controls the rule and all its effects, not you, so its down side is potentially much more troublesome.

Connections

Related to Skills are "Connections," which represent your character's baseline sense of familiarity, comfort, and ease in and with various people, places, and situations. Your Connections mostly come from in-game experiences, but based upon your character type you'll get a small number of them to start.

NPCs

A typical Fortitude NPC is designed with:

- 8 points of mortal Skills—
  - normal Skills, usually between 0-3
  - possibly a magical or Superior Skill
- 8 points of Connections, mostly rated 0-3—
  - mostly left open for the HG to fill in on the fly
  - but some may be filled in early
  - and there's usually a level 1-2 connection to Fortitude in there to start
- 0-3 points of Bonds—
  - usually, none
  - sometimes, a 1-2 point Bond
  - sometimes two such Bonds
- 0 MP
- 2 Normal Health Levels

An NPC Main Character who's also a normal resident of Fortitude (e.g. a romantic interest or mentor) will still have 8 points of Skills and up to 8 points of Connections, but for the rest, instead, they'll have:

- a single level 2 Bond
- potentially a level 0-2 Affliction
- potentially a few miscellaneous "Perks"
- 1 MP
- 2 Normal Health Levels *and*
- 1 Tough Health Level

They're a lot stronger, at least potentially, though much depends on what their concept is!



A Citizen of Fortitude

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.
Typical *Blood Type:* A
Animal: Horse or Sheep
Genres: Pastoral, Adventure Fantasy
(Before playing a Citizen of Fortitude in any other genre, please make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept.)

Step 1: Figure Out Your Concept

Hey, neighbor. ^_^

As **a citizen of Fortitude,** you are... just somebody who lives in Fortitude, I guess.

You could be *anybody.* An errand runner, a ship's hand, an apprentice plumber, a kid who spends the weekdays over the hills at Horizon's School, or even somebody who just hangs out and helps out at your family restaurant or store. If the game's going to be about adults, or if you're willing to let your role in the game devolve into some combination of mentor and teenager wrangler, you could even be an adult with a career!

That's all. You're just somebody ordinary. Or at least you *were*—

Until you got involved with these people. The tumult of these events. Until you got roped into the story of whatever's going on.

Who are you? What are you? What'll your basic story be before miracles and chaos come into play?

Age

The standard age for a **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** campaign is 15ish. This is a little ambiguous in Town because Town doesn't really have dates like "April 3, 1997" or whatever *as such* and people's birthdays tend to drift around. Still, for a PC, 15 is the target—young enough to plausibly be in school, old enough to plausibly go to work or date somebody.

That doesn't mean that you can't do it differently.

Maybe the HG wants to run a game of young adults, experienced troubleshooters, or even cute kids or octogenarians taking on magic, wickedness, and miracles. Maybe if they don't, you can talk them into it!

Conversely, maybe the HG wants to run an accelerated prelude covering the early years—maybe even starting as young as 5.

15 is the target, but talk to your HG before making too many assumptions about how old your character should be.

Points of Connections

I want to start out the PCs with a few central points of connection.

If you're a PC, then you should probably know the Yatskaya family, the cat-affiliated magicians who live in their incense-shrouded temple in the Maple Hill neighborhood. Like, you live in the area, under their jurisdiction; or you have a veterinarian in your family who's helped treat some of the Yatskaya cats; or the Yatskayas helped you once when you got possessed by a cat-spirit and so you bring them a pie every year; or your family makes clothing, and you used to hang out with their youngest (Rinley, aka **the Troublemaker**) while her older brother and sister Kuroma and Caroline were being fitted. Something!

I think it would also be good if you also had social ties to Professor Hideo Hayashi's archive—it keeps Town's records and it serves as something of a halfway house. Maybe you're one of the random people who live there or spent a short time there. Maybe Professor Hayashi was your tutor when you were a kid, before he started spending all his time in the archive. Maybe you're going to help renovate the manor down the road from the archive, that **the Dream-Witch** and a few other people associated with the archive are going to turn into a garden, art shop, and café.

How do you know the Yatskaya?

What, if anything, is your connection to the archive of Professor Hideo Hayashi?

Names and Fortitude

Fortitude naming is pretty eclectic but Russian and Japanese names are the most common. Town doesn't fall under the curse of Babel, so some naming practices are ambiguous—for instance, I'm pretty sure that an ethnic Russian would hear names like "Kiri Sosunov" as "Kiri Sosunova," and *possibly* even "Kiri Konstantinovna Sosunova." Similarly, ethnic Japanese might hear it as "Sosunov Kiri."

I can't even guess as to what's *really* going on there—I'd guess there might be a subtlety in intention that could distinguish one from the other, but ultimately I think the deal is: if you *want* to adjust a name to follow the Russian or Japanese or, for that matter, ancient Babylonian practice, feel free. I'm going to do this American-style because that's what I'm comfortable with!

Step 2: Choose Your Name

Let's pick a name for you! I've numbered the options so you can roll dice if you want. I expect that you'll actually want to choose your own name, so these are mostly to get your mind into the right general territory and for the HG to use for quick NPC names.

Here's some names you might like...

For a Boy

1. Trent Shikakura
2. Hamada Oleg
3. Turlough Slutski
4. Kosho Genrich
5. Hero Murata
6. Iustin Van Haust
7. Ivan Kuvnetskov
8. Ilya Nemomoto
9. Kenjiro Narahashi
10. Toshimo Galkin
11. Andrey Vorobyrov
12. Alex Kojima
13. Haruhiro Jokun
14. Bernard Busto
15. Mishal Mitsubishi
16. Jeremias Smirnov
17. Iō Duskin
18. Iemitsu Iriye
19. Kafi Ivanov
20. Radimir Zetsev
21. Dima K. Morioka
22. Ruslan Nebekov
23. Sergey Morozov
24. Mosumasu Kristoff
25. Hiroaki Niijima
26. Yoringa Kojima
27. Yoriyuki Inoue
28. Ruarc Attenberg
29. Nissho Kitagawa
30. Anatoly Golyubov
31. Aleksey Sokolov
32. George Ostrov
33. Tetsuo Sanjo
34. Yegor Kozlov—*any relation to Amelia Kozlov, jam guru?*
35. Simon Solveynov
36. Kono MacNeill
37. Cassius Kobi
38. Hokichi Popovich
39. Ivan Petrov
40. Ananta Mandel
41. Phrixos Toyotomi
42. Tokozaku Medved
43. Masatake Koryo
44. Reinhart Oliversen
45. Vasya Smirnov
46. Hirotsugu Shimon
47. Boris Jumonji
48. Yosaku Surovy
49. Dayu Novikov
50. Gil Silverstein
51. Koichi Kokkyo
52. Michihiro Fukichi
53. Shuji Simonich
54. Zeshin Ostrovsky
55. Daniil Novokov
56. Renjiro Sakaki
57. Yasotaro Mochi
58. Xenocrates Koval
59. Omezo Otake
60. Lycaeus Antonoff
61. Peter Bauers
62. Aryom Semyonov
63. Parfit Takei
64. Pavel Kimiko
65. Tetsuki Shagairo
66. Vladimir Nakasawa
67. Ivan Ivanov
68. Sasha Pradelemov
69. Arthur Shirokawa
70. Igor Bogdanov
71. Dmitriev Komiya
72. Casper Ivanov
73. Nikita Fujimaki
74. Llew Watson
75. Matvey Dalekov
76. Shunko Tsuruga
77. Nikolai Popov
78. Hachigoro Hirasuki
79. Kiminobu Kawagichi
80. Takao Nanakishi
81. Ringo Yosano
82. Nobuhiko Sarai
83. Horiuchi Kunda
84. Tomoyuki Fuze
85. Kyriakos Belski
86. Takejiro Smirnov
87. Pyotr Kuma Nebokov
88. Kiyomori Glinko
89. Dima Surovy
90. Yuri Volkov
91. Shirai Gurin
92. Vladimir Vinogradov
93. Andrew Ishikawa
94. Mikhail Kuznetov
95. Maxim Vasilyev
96. Theodoric Thompson
97. Sacha Moriguchi
98. Fayvel Vance
99. Kiyo Shiratori
100. Vladimir Lebedev

For a Girl

1. Alina Ippitusai
2. Kaylee Wolf
3. Sachi Kojima
4. Lilya Saromi
5. Marina Vasilyev
6. Manami Dmietriev
7. Sadako Wescott
8. Darya Voryobrov
9. Nanako Okumura
10. Sayuko Shaw
11. Rosanna Benedict
12. Julia Smirnov
13. Shika Pozniak
14. Aeslinna Markov
15. Ayaka Dresden
16. Namiko Kuro
17. Shina Miyazawa
18. Kita Shagairo
19. Daria Kozlov—*any relationship to Amelia Kozlov, jam guru?*
20. Alyona Surovy
21. Beatrice Olmos
22. Nanami Q. Stark
23. Maxima Watson
24. Natsumi Apeldoorn
25. Kaoru Solveynov
26. Akane Oyama
27. Toshi Novikov
28. Mayako Borin
29. Chie Matsubara
30. Chiyeko Takamura
31. Mayu Ochida
32. Kataya Wilson
33. Kiniya Jokun
34. Dasha Lazaroff
35. Lesya Yamanouchi
36. Ladislava Tormen
37. Doroteja Nemetov
38. Polina Semyonov
39. Kristina Rodin
40. Minami Tsuji
41. Helena Chernokov
42. Irene Tsumasa
43. Dasha Noguchi
44. Viktoria Zetsev
45. Izumi Inoue
46. Olga Krasinski
47. Agnija Davidsen
48. Haruhi Mitsubishi Volkov
49. Anna Novikov
50. Celestina Noel
51. Raku Kawaguchi
52. Kana Wakatsuki
53. Anna Hanari
54. Chisaki Dubsky
55. Olga Nebekov
56. Kseniya Ivanov
57. Yuki Calhoun
58. Katsumi Vasilyev
59. Valerie Saigo
60. Tanya Gillikin
61. Namiyo Ivanov
62. Jane Ostrov
63. Elizaveta Kokkyo
64. Matsuko Glinka
65. Tatiana Pavlov
66. Daemarnia Hannigan
67. Svetlana Kelsey
68. Yana Abraham
69. Delphine Kajiyama
70. Miki Allen
71. Shiho Delacroix
72. Risa Solberg
73. Kura Inoue
74. Yukako Smirnov
75. Hitomi Kitagawa
76. Maeko Koryo
77. Namie Konagezawa
78. Echiko Chernov
79. Katia Ohka
80. Yasuko Sakasawa
81. Irina Sokolov
82. Katarina Turnbull
83. Ludmilla Bogdanov
84. Maria Litvin
85. Zinoviya Okarin
86. Kagami Shimazu
87. Eva Okazaki
88. Vika Dalekov
89. Kate Medved
90. Yukari Chekov
91. Disney Maximov
92. Haruna Devin
93. Kikuko Federov
94. Ingrid Mihoshi Nakazawa
95. Maria Itagawa
96. Alanna Shapiro
97. Ayano Ishimura
98. Nina Pradelemov
99. Noë Hasekura
100. Evgeniya Miki

2



"The Other One"

So, in the big picture of Town, there's a lot more going on than the life of one Fortitude citizen can encompass.

Over in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon**, you're going to find the story of a boy with a wishing machine and the daughter of the sun; a god of nightmares and a witch of dreams; a girl straight out of fable and a boy created out of nothing; the King of Evil and the best mortal in the world—

And that's still just relatively small potatoes: that's still just a *Fortitude* story.

There's ever so much more to Town.

In Horizon there're ogres teaching classes and elf detectives on the case. The kingdom of the sky is under siege by darkness; the far roofs, so say the rats, are stalked by Mysteries; somewhere beyond the world is the Bleak Academy, run by its mysterious Headmaster, and his other name is Death.

If you're in a campaign that's about that kind of thing, then your archetype title probably isn't **A Citizen of Fortitude**. It's **the Other One**. You know, as in, "so, this story is about a god of nightmares, a witch of dreams out of fable—oh, and, the other one!"

There's nothing *wrong* with that! It doesn't mean you can't be cool. It doesn't even mean you won't wind up the center of events. I just wanted to make sure, before you started playing a random person from Fortitude in a game like that, that you *knew* that you were choosing a kind of inherently ordinary role.

As noted, for a more Russian flavor you may want to feminize some of the girls' last names—

-ov to -ova, -ev to -eva, -in to -ina, and -ski/-sky would become -skaya. Thus, option 37 would become **Doroteja Nemetova.**

Step 3: Choose Your Skills

The next step is figuring out what you're good at—what you know how to do.

If you're familiar with the game and have some time and energy to think through your options, designing your own Skill list top to bottom is probably the best thing to do. And, familiar with the rules or not, you're probably going to want some sort of special talent. But let's leave both of those considerations aside for a moment and start with some basics, some stuff that it makes sense for just about anyone to have:

- **(Your Best Skill) 2**—This is what you're good at.
- **(Your Catch Phrase) 2**—This is a saying you live by.
- **(Additional Skill) 1-2**—There's something else you know how to do.
- **(Woeful Flaw) -1**—You want to be good at this thing, but you're not.

I've listed some suggestions for all of these below. They're a bit biased towards teenagers, since that's the default age for PCs, but feel free to add an air of competence or adulthood to any of them (e.g., Chess => Chess Master, Roughhousing => Mahjongg) if you're looking to make someone a bit more distinguished than that norm.

Step 3a: Your Best Skill

Some options for your best skill include:

- **Academics 2**
- **Archery 2**
- **Baseball 2**
- **Bicycling and Bicycle Repair 2**
- **Card Shark 2**
- **Carpentry 2**
- **Chess 2**
- **Domestic Skills 2**
- **Electronics 2**
- **Errand Runner 2**
- **Exploring 2**
- *Feng Shui* **2**
- **Fishing 2**
- **Fly a Kite 2**
- **Get Along with Animals 2**
- **Good Smile 2**
- **Gossip 2**
- **Grace 2**
- **Haggling 2**
- **Hiking and Climbing 2**
- **Home and Roof Repairs 2**
- **Interrupt 2**
- **Knitting 2**
- **Mediation 2**
- **Navigation 2**
- **Plumbing 2**
- **Roughhousing 2**
- **Running 2**
- **Sailing 2**
- **Season to Perfection 2**
- **Stealth 2**
- **Storytelling 2**
- **T'ai Chi 2**
- **Taunt 2**
- **Trivia 2**
- **Video Games 2**
- **Weather-Sense 2**
- **Woodcarving 2**

You can also look at some of my suggestions for "additional Skills," below, if you want to have a goofy, specialized, or peculiar primary Skill.

Anyway!

What's yours?

Step 3b: Your Catchphrase

Your catch phrase is something you believe in. You can generally use it for any circumstances that reinforce what you believe in, but mostly you use the Skill in situations and for actions where you'd have a good reason to say it out loud or to yourself.

Some options include:

- **Generic "I'm doing something now" Catchphrases—**
  - **"Seize the day!"**
  - **"It's nothing to a person with naturally curly hair, such as myself."**
  - **"In the name of righteousness and justice!"**
  - **"I did that three minutes ago."**
  - **"Listen to the world. It'll tell you what to do."**

—These are pretty much useful for anything you want to do, and in some cases to declare that you've already done something you want to do, with only two limitations. First, you'll have to establish what the catchphrase is good for over time—new applications of a Skill have to be explained/justified, or, if you can't do that in advance (as you often can't here) those applications'll be a little less reliable. Second, you're limited by your willingness to say a kind of goofy phrase—all of them sound best when used in moderation.

- **Catchphrases to use Before a Burst of Effort—**
  - **"Close your eyes. Take a deep breath. OK, go!"**
  - **"Let's all do our best!"**
  - **"Let's get serious."**

—these are things you say before starting something new and/or re-trying something you've just failed at. These work best when it's something you can do pretty fast, or something that's easy once you've gotten it started.

  - **"As you sow, so shall you reap."**

—this is also something you say just before a burst of effort, like casting a fishing line, putting laundry dramatically into the laundry machine, or punching a whale, but it's *extra* good for revenge and serving cold food (such as a cold fish and jellied fruit salad.)

Miscellaneous Catchphrases—

- **"You can't just leave a mystery behind you!"**

—this is useful for exploring, poking mysterious things, and solving puzzles

- **"I like to keep everything neat."**

—this is useful for being organized, finding things quickly, and getting chores done

- **"I wouldn't forget something like that!"**

—this is useful for having remembered, for explaining away having forgotten things, etc.

- **"You've got to have ice cream."** *or*
- **"You've got to have teriyaki."**

—this is useful for persuading people to share or stock or try the relevant food or for doing things necessary to obtaining it

- **"I want to stand on a high place and seize the stars in my hand."**

—this is useful for literal climbing, astronomy, and navigation, but also for working towards your big life ambitions in general.

- **"Anything for love!"**

—this is useful for doing things in the name of romance

- **"Slow and steady wins the day."**

—this is useful for anything you tackle with persistence and steady effort.

- **"Honesty is the best policy."**

—this is useful for social interactions where you're honest.

- **"I know *just* who can help!"**

—this is what you say shortly before going to someone who can help.

- **"As long as you've got your health."**

—this is a good catch phrase for cheering people up, figuring out what someone needs for their health, and staying alive and in possession of your health when things get bad.

- **"Always have a bit of string."**

—you'll always have a bit of string, and the more you use this Skill to do cool things with your bits of string, the more cool things your bits of string can probably do.

- **"Idle hands..."**

—this is a great catchphrase for both doing things you probably shouldn't be doing, and for waving off the social consequences afterwards.

- **"There's nothing a nip of vodka and a bit of air can't cure."**

—this is mostly useful for overcoming your own personal troubles, but if you want to use it as a revolutionary first aid method I can't stop you. (Honestly, that's even got the potential to be cool, as long as you use it on yourself often enough first to make using it for someone else a dramatic payoff.)

- **"A dog's a kid's best friend."**

—useful for getting along with dogs and for having your dog do things for you.

- **"Brilliant!"**

—this reinforces the quality of the idea you've just had and/or lets you power through on your part of something through sheer enthusiasm.

- **"You've got to smile."**

—this helps you do almost anything when you're fending off grief or sadness or painful circumstances with a smile.

- **"Like a little fish, flopping in my net."**

—this is useful for opposing someone else's actions, implying as it does that you have the situation completely under control and they are merely your prey.

- **"I'm learning!"**

—this is useful for doing anything that you've been practicing.

What's yours?

Step 3c: Your Additional Skill

When picking your additional Skill, you *could* just pick another Skill from the list I gave above, but you might also want to try something comparatively goofy or highly specialized, like:

- **Appear to Have "Got" Somebody's Nose, Even Though In Fact You Do Not**
- **Art Appreciation**[1]
- **Catch a Break**
- **Cliff-Diving**
- **Cut Vegetables without Looking**
- **Daydream**
- **Declare (and then Favorably Resolve) a Thumb War**
- **Discover a Convenient Shortcut**
- **Flourish a Cape**
- **Frisbee**
- **Gimlet Glare**
- **Get it Done before Sundown**
- **Hopscotch**
- **Innocence**
- **Knock-Knock Jokes**
- **(Your Name)-Style Fish Stew**
- **Pack**
- **Paper Airplanes**
- **Rock-Paper-Scissors**
- **Run With Scissors**
- **Shed Manly Tears**
- **Sneeze Resonantly**
- **Sparkle**
- **Stare Down Cats**
- **Ventriloquism**

Or, conversely, you might pick something more adult and serious—that you've mastered, if an adult, or that you're in the process of learning, as a teen:

- **Accounting**
- **Aquaculture**
- **Botany**
- **Classic Literature**
- **Ecological Impact Assessment**
- **Emergency Medicine**
- **Epidemiology**
- **Forensic Science**
- **Formal Mediation**
- **Heliciculture**[2]
- **Herpetology**
- **Homebrewing**
- **Midwiving**
- **Ornithology**
- **Public Speaking**
- **Regional Politics**
- **Saltern Operation**
- **Technical Writing**
- **Traditional Chinese Medicine**
- **Veterinary Medicine**
- **Weaving**

You could also take something that *should* be a flaw, but which actually winds up doing good things for you overall. This is usually the right way to handle a flaw that has something to do with how you process situations and goals, e.g.:

- **Always Reading Instead of Paying Attention**
- **Distractable**
- **Easily Overwhelmed by Cuteness**
- **Impulsive**
- **Overly Literal**

You can also split your 2 points of "Additional Skill" between a couple of these ideas and take a point of each.

What's your extra Skill?

If you have two "additional" Skills, what's the other one?

Step 3d: Your Flaw

Often when choosing your woeful flaw you'll just want to pick from one of the lists above—**Chess -1, Grace -1, Stealth -1, Run with Scissors -1** and **Stare Down Cats -1** are all perfectly fine as tragic weaknesses go.

You may also want to pick a unique weakness that's phrased negatively from the start, e.g.

- **Always Losing Stuff -1**
- **Bad at Stealth -1**
- **Easily Lost -1**
- **Have Yet** *More* **Sand in My Shoes, Pockets, and Elsewhere -1**
- **My House Smells Like Stinky Tofu -1**
- **Remember Important Things Just a Moment Too Late -1**
- **Snot-Nosed Brat -1** *or*
- **Too Smart for Your Own Good -1**

1 *I am not knocking this general field of inquiry so much as its utility to a random resident of Town.*

2 *Raising snails.*

Or a catchphrase that's something you say when things are about to go wrong or more wrong, e.g.

- **"...He's Standing Right Behind Me, Isn't He?" -1**
- **"I Don't Believe in Catchphrase-Induced Misfortune." -1**
- **"It's Fine, It's Fine." -1**
- **"Imagine the Possibilities!" -1**
- **"This is a New Low." -1** *or*
- **"What Could Possibly Go Wrong?" -1**

What's *your* tragic flaw?

2

Step 3e: Your Special Talent

You're in a unique position to spend your Skill points as you like, so if you're a PC, I figure you should give serious thought to buying something *special* with them.

I'd specifically recommend:

- a once-in-a-generation talent
- unique magic
- an inhuman/pulp hero ability
- incredible cool
- incredible people skills *or*
- being consciously and intentionally low-powered

I've left you some wiggle room by saying that you have 1-2 points in your "additional Skill;" when you've chosen your special talent and your additional Skill, make sure you end up at a total of 8 points of Skills.

Once-in-a-Generation Talent

The first build looks like this:

- **[Your Best Skill] 4**—This is what you're *astonishing* at.
- ~~**[Your Best Skill] 2—This is what you're good at**~~

While the scale for Skills goes to 5, a level 4 Skill is better than a typical PC starts with and it takes a pretty epic quest to reach. Don't expect it to be a substantial edge in a conflict, but it's *huge* in terms of your daily life.

If you're an NPC, you'll probably take the last option—if you're a random NPC who runs a bakery, you're probably not going to need a once-in-a-generation talent at softball or a forehead laser—but you can certainly glance over the other options along the way!

What did *you* choose?

Unique Magic

The second build looks like this:

- **[Magical Skill] 2-3**—You're good at some unique kind of magic

Magic is basically a Skill for turning "the impossible" into "the rather difficult."

You could choose one of the magical Skills from **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine,** e.g.

- **Ghost Magic**
- **Necromancy**
- **Science!**
- **A Variant Form of Some Shrine Family's Magic**

or create a magical Skill yourself, like:

- **Beach Magic**
- **Fishing Magic**
- **Swanmay**
- **Summoning Magic**
- **Smoking Magic**
- **Kite Magic**
- **Healing Magic**
- **Kitchen Wizardry**
- **Knit-Witch**
- **D&D Magic,** based on imported RPG supplements, *or*
- **Drunken Martial Arts**

Either way, magic tends to be more trouble than it's worth[3]... but it's a lot of fun!

3 *I don't want the HG to think this is a rule. It's not. It's an observation! Magic will tend to be more trouble than it's worth if you play the rules straight.*

Inhuman/Pulp Ability

The third build looks like this:

- **Superior [Skill/Quality] 2-3**—You have an inhuman or pulp hero-type ability.

Why do you have this?

It's a good question!

I'd *guess* that you've been altered by magic or by deviant science or you're part of a family that isn't human. Not quite. Possibly you have a shard of magical glass stuck in you, as in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** or your soul's been touched and your body changed by one of the great Mysteries of the rats.

Whatever it is, though, it's changed you, it's made you different. And, in consequence, there's something that you can just *do*, like:

- **Glue Things to the Air**
- **Read Books by Touching Them**
- **See Into the Ghost World**
- **Show Up Where I'm Needed**
- **Shrug Off Damage**
- **Slow Time for 3 Seconds**
- **Stand on Anything, From Water to a Branch**
- **Take Anything Apart**
- **Whistle to Call Inanimate Objects Over,** *or*
- **(Grow) Wings**

Or something you just *have*, like:

- **Dirt and Grime Don't Stick to Me**
- **Incredible Marksmanship**
- **Music That Can Make Anyone Cry**
- **Perfect Memory**
- **Perfect Night Vision** *or*
- **Tree-Speech**, to ask trees questions about recent experiences (and life) with

A Superior Skill is a really good choice for a special talent as long as you're willing to accept not being completely human—and there isn't even any actual *down* side to not being human, except in its connotations.

Incredible Cool

The fourth build looks like this:

- **Cool 2-3**—You're always on top of things.

This is basically the Skill for being the kind of person who walks unflinchingly away from explosions and turns on jukeboxes by thumping them. If you have 2-3 points of Cool, the world is fundamentally there to help you and to highlight your awesomeness; it wouldn't want to get into your way.

Incredible People Skills

The fifth build looks like this:

- **Shine 2-3**—You're really sweet/popular and people like you.

Basically, if you have Shine, you inspire people.

Consciously Low-Powered Option

The sixth build looks like this:

- **[Your Best Skill] 3**—This is what you're best at.
- ~~**[Your Best Skill] 2**—This is what you're good at~~
- **[A Third Skill] 1-2**—You're good at something else.
- **[A Fourth Skill] 0-1**—You're familiar with something else.

For instance, in this build, you could have

- **Errand Runner 3**—This is what you're best at.
- **"You've Got to Have Teriyaki" 2**—You really, really like teriyaki.
- **Get it Done Before Sundown 2**—You like to end your day on time.
- **Flourish Cape 1**—It's an important talent for any boy or girl.
- **Run with Scissors -1**—This should not be such a problem.



2

Step 4: Choose a Bond

Bonds are actually pretty special—most ordinary people don't have one. But as one of the Main Characters in this game, you start with a level 2 Bond by default, and even ordinary people in Fortitude *could* have one or two Bonds.[4]

If you have a magical Skill, then your Bond is probably related to your magic somehow, some taboo you have to follow or some kind of magic that you're good at. If you have a Superior Skill, then it could work that way too. Otherwise, your Bond is usually something that makes you feel *alive*—something that you're deeply connected to. So we're talking about things like:

- **Bond:** I really love yakitori!
- **Bond:** I have a deep connection to my family.
- **Bond:** I love being out on the water.
- **Bond:** My hair must be perfect.
- **Bond:** I have a hedgehog that lives in my hair.
- **Bond:** I talk too much about ninjas.
- **Bond:** My magic forbids kissing and stuff.
- **Bond:** As a fire magician, I have to be smoking most of the time.
- **Bond:** As someone who talks to restless spirits, I have to help them out if I can.
- **Bond:** As a kite mage, I must fly my kite on a windy day.
- **Bond:** As a knit-witch, I can't just *ignore* a chance to buy yarn.
- **Bond:** I really want...
  - coffee in the mornings;
  - love;
  - money;
  - to have adventures;
  - to investigate mysteries;
  - to be important.
- **Bond:** As someone who learned real spells from my spirit-guide "Game Master" when my RPG character reached 9th level, I have to learn them from imported RPG supplements, re-memorize them once cast, and roll dice for their effects. I may lose my magical abilities temporarily if convinced they are not legal in these circumstances or while updating to a new edition.

Or do you have a unique Bond of your own?

Step 5: For Main Characters—Choose Your Affliction

Afflictions are a *big deal.* As an ordinary person, there'd normally be no reason for you to have one—but, as a Main Character, you do.

So there's something going on here. There's a weight of *destiny* on you.

There's something that you're meant to be or do.

Normally, this would imply a talent that's a bit fairy-tale: you'd be empowered to do marvelous things in the name of protecting or guarding or fighting some element of the world or Fortitude. But I think that might be excessive, considering the game setting; perhaps you might want to stick to Fortitude-style abilities like:

4 *In fact, they could even have more Bonds and more points of Bonds than a Main Character! This isn't so much a statement on power levels as a way to make life easier on the HG—if you're building a Main Character, it's worth taking the time to pick a single Bond to define them, but if the HG is putting together a random magical NPC in a hurry, they should just write down whatever Bonds come to mind at whatever levels seem right and and simplify them later if it turns out to really matter.*

- **Affliction:** My third cast of the day always catches the fish I want.
- **Affliction:** I can season any meal perfectly with just a pinch of salt or even sand.
- **Affliction:** When my friends are all right, I can hear their names in the sound of the waves against Big Lake's shore.
- **Affliction:** If I'm doing a dumb thing, nearby crows will always complain, "Aho, aho!"
- **Affliction:** It's always sunny where I'm drying my laundry.
- **Affliction:** My spit heals minor wounds.
- **Affliction:** There's always a trash can when I need one.
- **Affliction:** If I'm caught in the rain I will find an umbrella nearby.
- **Affliction:** There's always ripe fruit or berries around when I'm hungry.
- **Affliction:** My drinks are always ice-cold.
- **Affliction:** Everyone thinks of me as family.
- **Affliction:** My compass always points towards home.
- **Affliction:** If I'm lost in the dark, a star will come down to light my path.
- **Affliction:** My stew's the best!

Still, you're more than welcome to choose a more extreme power, if you want, such as:

- **Affliction:** I have ninja powers whenever necessary to protect threatened dreamers.
- **Affliction:** If the owner of the café I work at is in despair, she need merely ask my help and leave me alone in the shop one night, and all shall be made well.
- **Affliction:** I saved the eel prince, so I can always catch as many eels as I want.
- **Affliction:** If I make a request in rhyme at my mother's grave, the little birds that live in the nearby tree can bring me great treasures.
- **Affliction:** Traditional Fortitude cooking will never be outmatched by strange foreign food while I am there to stand as its representative!
- **Affliction:** I can stitch photorealistic patterns into fabric overnight.

Step 6: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

NPCs have whatever Connections the HG wants to hand out.

If you're a PC, you'll start the game with one free Connection 2 Perk, connecting you to your home, family, or something else central to your life. In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

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

Step 7: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

Congratulations! You've now created yourself as a person in Fortitude.

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in.

YOUR NAME

CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION

SKILLS

PERKS

ARC TRAITS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

QUEST INFORMATION

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

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

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The Shrine Maiden/Priest

The shrine families of Fortitude are old and well-established. They keep sacred places, process low-grade Outside dust, attune themselves to the spirit or dream worlds, and have minor magical powers—or at least most of the above.

Some of them started as temple families, shepherding the spiritual life of Fortitude. Some of them started out as workers exploring different ways to dispose of the dust of the Outside—the particulate chaos that blows in off Big Lake.

It turned out in the end, what with the way that the dust can destabilize the spirit and the way that holiness can tame the dust of the Outside, that the two tasks were, fundamentally, the same; and all of them kind of met in the middle, doing both.

Disclaimer

Part of the allure of playing someone from a shrine family is that you have an established place in Fortitude. I wanted to outfit you with a little bit of information about the people in your family and give everyone else a handful of interesting NPCs to interact with—but this was a little tricky, since they're, well, real people. Some of whom I kind of know!

So I'm going to warn you in advance.

The specific people that I'm including here—I haven't just cut and pasted them from my list of acquaintances and the family books of the modern families. In order to give you a good set of brothers, sisters, cousins, parents, and, if you're not at your own shrine, romantic interests, rivals, and allies—I've scoured Fortitude history for the *best*.

That means that you won't just get to play in a game with the Titovs—you'll get to play with the real, full-on *operatic* Titovs from the classic play. You won't just get to rub shoulders with Kuroma Yatskaya but with Caroline and *Rinley* (more or less) as well. I'm not going to actually tell you how much of this is from the modern age but basically you should be aware that some of these names are not *properly* from the now.

As a consequence of this, you should feel free—as the HG, or as a PC playing members of these families—to pare down the family trees, gender-swap the characters, or do whatever you have to do to make these families work for you in your game. They're already non-canonical, they're already the product of *fiddling for the sake of better gameplay*, so you don't have to feel at all strange about fiddling with them a little more.

I know you already probably wouldn't've! But well.

I wanted to say.



Choosing Your Family

Let's pick your family! There are seven shrine families with an important role in the game setting and probably one or two more around if you wanted to make something up.

If you're playing in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** or if the HG is using characters from that campaign as NPCs, then there are two Main Characters who might be connected to the shrine families:

- **the Troublemaker,** who is typically from one of the shrine families; *and*
- **the Dream-Witch,** who typically isn't but who has a number of suggested character variations that are.

So if you want to share a family with them, or for that matter want to *avoid* sharing a family with them, make sure to talk to the HG or the relevant PC!

Otherwise, you'll want to be...

- **From the Kichi Family**, e.g. Rae or Matthew Kichi
  - to live a peaceful, pure, and structured life
  - to be goofily adorable
  - to have connections to birds or a sacred bird-spirit
  - to have divination magic
  - to be *like* an ordinary person, but with magic
  - ...if you're in a Pastoral game.

- **From the Sosunov Family,** e.g. Jamie Sosunov
  - to be cute in a lost, wet kitten kind of way
  - to be sheltered, frail, and unworldly
  - to live in a kind of palatial situation as a member of the main family
  - to be insecure and loyal as a member of a branch family
  - to have ties to sailors and merchants
  - to be close to "enlightenment"
  - to have a powerful ghost/goddess/bodhisattva watching out for you
  - to have a great and burdensome duty as a guardian of dreams that's relevant to some core plot stuff for **Fortitude: The Glass-Maker's Dragon.**
  - ...if you're in a Pastoral or Fairy-Tale game

- **From the Titov Family,** e.g. Tethys Milena Titov or Yasha Fyodor Titov,
  - if you're in a 1-2-player game and need a complicated home life
  - if you like melancholy environments
  - to seek redemption for or escape from the family
  - to make magically great art

- to be hard-bitten but desperate
- to be someone created from nothing by magic
- ...if you're in a Pastoral, Gothic, or Epic Fantasy game

From the Vasili Family, e.g. Rikuto or Sachiko Vasili
- to be a happy, energetic person
- to work hard and play hard
- to know exactly who you are
- to have a deep connection with part of the natural world
- to make the world around you better
- ...if you're in a Pastoral, Immersive Fantasy, or Techno game

From the Yatskaya Family, e.g. Ptolemy or Nikki Yatskaya,
- to lounge on a divan amidst drugged incense
- to be intermittently possessed by spirits, e.g.
  - a cat-spirit *or*
  - an enemy-god of the rats (e.g. Hedge the Fang, Typhon, or Hydra)
- to be cat-like
- to be dream-like
- to be highly athletic
- to be part of the same family as the default **Troublemaker.**
- ...if you're in a Pastoral or Immersive Fantasy game

From the Hayashi Family, e.g. Jiro or Tomoko Hayashi
- to be a sharp customer
- to be related to some of the key symbolic ideas and figures in the **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon** campaign—
  - to glass-making, even if yours is mostly non-magical;
  - and to Professor Hideo Hayashi, who is a central figure in the campaign (albeit a passive one) unless the player of the **Dream-Witch** decides to refocus attention away from him.
- to be well-established and connected but kind of normal
- to have some of the social place of a shrine family member, but not actual *magic*. Or, well, very subtle, long-term magic, anyway.
- ...if you're in a Pastoral, Epic Fantasy, or Adventure Fantasy game

From the Watanabe Family, e.g. Theodore or Josanna Scylla Watanabe
- if you want to have a distinctive personal style
- if you want to have a contagious sense of humor
- if you want to be unflappable
- if you want to know a lot about making candy, and have a cheap source
- if you want to spend your life *around* magic but not have a life *of* magic—to be better at surviving weird stuff and keeping it tame than at doing it yourself
- ...if you're in a Pastoral, Immersive Fantasy, or Techno game

From a Shrine Family of your Own Creation, e.g. Octavian Kurosawa or Gabriela Romanov,
- if you want to make up your own magical style
- if you want to come up with a new way of processing Outside dust (see pg. 84) *or*
- if you like the general concept of the shrine families but don't like any of the specific options!

Age

The standard age for a **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** campaign is 15ish. This is a little ambiguous in Town because Town doesn't really have dates like "April 3, 1997" or whatever *as such* and people's birthdays tend to drift around. Still, for a PC, 15 is the target—young enough to plausibly be in school, old enough to plausibly go to work or date somebody.

That doesn't mean that you can't do it differently.

Maybe the HG wants to run a game of young adults, experienced troubleshooters, or even cute kids or octogenarians taking on magic, wickedness, and miracles. Maybe if they don't, you can talk them into it!

Conversely, maybe the HG wants to run an accelerated prelude covering the early years—maybe even starting as young as 5.

15 is the target, but talk to your HG before making too many assumptions about how old your character should be.

Shrine Family Cheat Sheet

Kichi



Academics Skill: OK
Sports Skill: Healthy
Favorite Foods: Rice, Fish, Frogs, Fruit
Blood Type: A
Animal: Egret
Genre: Pastoral

Sosunov



Academics Skill: Better than Average
Sports Skill: Frail
Favorite Foods: Rice, Stir-Fried Veg, Cocoa
Blood Type: A
Animal: Rabbit
Genres: Pastoral, Fairy Tales

Titov



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
Genres: Pastoral, Gothic, Epic Fantasy

Vasili



Academics Skill: Good
Sports Skill: Good to Very Good
Favorite Foods: French Cuisine, Wine, Crispbread and Chowder, Fried Mackerel Skin, Sea Monster
Blood Type: O
Animal: Tern
Genres: Pastoral, Immersive Fantasy, Techno

Yatskaya



Academics Skill: Average to Good
Sports Skill: Good to Excellent
Favorite Foods: Fish, Shellfish, Roe, Fowl,Thousand-Year Eggs, Dumplings, Mochi, Squash,String Beans.
Blood Type: B
Animal: Cat or Seal
Genres: Pastoral, Immersive Fantasy

Hayashi



Academics Skill: Good
Sports Skill: Average
Favorite Foods: Casserole, Fondue, Crunchy Breads, Pizza, Mozzarella Sticks, Apples, Ham Steaks
Blood Type: O
Animal: Monkey
Genres: Pastoral, Epic or Adventure Fantasy

Watanabe



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
Genres: Pastoral, Immersive Fantasy, Techno

Original

Academics Skill: ??
Sports Skill: ??
Favorite Foods: Pick your own
Blood Type: O
Animal: ??
Genres: ??



The Kichi

Academics Skill: OK
Sports Skill: Healthy
Favorite Foods: Rice, Fish, Frogs, Fruit
Blood Type: A
Animal: Egret
Genre: Pastoral
(Before playing a Kichi Shrine Maiden/Priest in any other genre, please make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept.)



Step 1: "Growing Up Kichi"

Near the top of the western hill there are the sacred Kichi pools. A family of sacred diviners tends them—befriending the birds that live there, helping people make offerings at those pools for the safety of loved ones far away, and catching glimpses of the future and the far-away upon the surface of those pools.

It's a good life, being a Kichi. They're healthy. They're happy. They know secrets. They live well.

It's also a hell of a lot of work.

Listen.

The defining feature of your childhood was probably the trek from the family home to the sacred pools.

For a Kichi that trek defines and divides the day.

Any true Kichi, dedicated to purity and the magic, must bathe in the sacred pools in the morning and the evening every day—and the pools are an hour's walk from home, up away from the settled city through the wildlands of green and birds. Even a child or resolutely secular Kichi makes that visit a few times a month.

It's hard work being a Kichi.

It's *really* hard.

Maintaining the powers of the pools is an endless labor in itself: you start with high-grade Outside dust, which you usually have to work to find money for in a strained temple budget; and then you refine it, washing it in a sandalwood basin, straining it, mixing it with various herbs to set, and pounding the dried blocks back to dust again; it takes seven repetitions of this before the diluted dust can be added to the pools to preserve their potency, or nine or thirteen, maybe, if you couldn't afford decent dust. It's slow and arduous; and that's *before* we get into the personal efforts of purity you have to make to stay attuned to the sacred pools.

It's hard work; but it's rewarding, too.

If you're playing a Kichi then you probably learned the Kichi magic. You learned to see the images of other places and other times—particularly images of people you care about, or love—in those sacred pools. You learned to float under the surface of the water, meditating, for hours without air. You learned to walk right up to the herons that live there and rest your hands upon the feathers of their wings.

Maybe you even made a connection with one of the bird-spirits rumored to live at or visit the Kichi pools.

And your family loves you well; and you live amongst natural beauty; and you know your place in life:

And into this family you are born and raised, and you are named...

Shrine Maiden Names

Rae Kichi	Elsabeth Kichi
Annabelle Kichi	Annika Kichi
Gladys Amanda Kichi	Susan Kichi
Doris Kichi	Sakura Kichi
Judy Lynn Kichi	Zoë Penners *(a cousin)*

Priest Names

Matthew Kichi	Cohen Kichi
Travis Kichi	Gerhard Kichi
Martin Kichi	Solomon Kichi
Douglas Kichi	Neil Armstrong Kichi
Emanuel Kichi	Tsubasa Kichi

Step 2: For Main Characters Only—"A Person of Destiny"

Just being a Kichi is pretty cool in and of itself, but you're actually something more than that. *You've* been touched by destiny and miracle. There's something going on with you that's beyond what ordinary shrine magic could explain.

What is it?

What's your distinguishing quality or specialness *about?*

Are you...

- ...destined to marry a sacred bird-spirit?
- ...or just blessed by one?
- ...an extremely pure and spiritual soul?
- ...the reincarnation of someone important?
- ...the product of a marriage with the Vasili?
- ...with the Yatskaya?
- ...with some supernatural force?
- ...just generally extra-awesome?
- ...a prodigy with the Kichi magic?
- ...someone who spends a *lot* of time looking at the future in the pools?
- ...something else?

Step 3: Family Status

The Kichi family is pretty casual about status distinctions within the extended family—blood is blood, at least out to your fourth or fifth cousins. There's an undercurrent of boisterous family love that's stronger than most petty conflict. Plus, the Kichi magic takes *work*, as I might have noted, and there's always room for another willing pair of hands.

All that said, there's still a definite main line of descent; if push came to shove, everyone but the main family is only participating in the Kichi legacy and living on Kichi lands by courtesy.

Where do *you* stand?

- ...I'm first or second in line to succeed the Kichi temple one day.
- ...I'm third or fourth in line—no big deal, but I have to take it seriously just in case.
- ...I'm like eighth in line to *run* things, but my role and future is pretty secure.
- ...I'm kind of at the edge of things—nobody'll mind if I drift away into a secular life, and if I have a spouse and kids one day, they won't count as Kichi unless I do some serious favor-trading
- ...I'm not actually a Kichi, I'm just staying with them.

Step 4: Choosing Your Skills

The next step is figuring out your Skills—what you know how to do.

For a young Kichi, I'd recommend—

- **Traditional Ways 2**—You're good at formal and archaic stuff.
- **(Life Skill) 2**—You're good at... management? Design? Athletics?
- **(Hobby) 1**—You're familiar with something else.

And

- **Kichi Family Magic 3**—You're excellent with traditional Kichi magic.

Some suggested Life Skills include—

- **Athletics 2**
- **Charm 2**
- **Domestic Skills 2**
- **MacGyvering 2**
- **Meticulous 2**
- **Money Management 2**
- **Nature Drawing 2**
- **Pleasant 2**
- **Studious 2**
- **Wild Child 2**

Some suggested Hobbies include—

- **Fabulous Fingernails 1**
- **First Aid 1**
- **Freestyle Arts 1**
- **Ham Radio 1**
- **Poetry 1**
- **Precision Spitting 1**
- **Karaoke Sensation 1**
- **Sharp Dresser 1**
- **Sneaking Around 1**
- **Well-Read 1**

If you're not happy with these options—I've tried to come up with things that make sense for the Kichi, but I could have missed something obvious, or you could want to be a little unusual—then feel free to make your own life skills and hobbies, or even assign your 8 Skill points in some completely different way!

(Optional) Step 5: Choosing a Motto

There's kind of a *thing* in the Kichi family for mottos. It's a family in-joke or tradition, particularly among the younger generation, for everyone to have one.

Like, "Seize tomorrow," "Just roll with it," "First, take care of your health," or "Life is short!"

Do you have one?

What's yours?

Some Kichi

Unless a PC shows up for that spot, **Catherine (Katy or CK) Kichi** is the Kichi heir. She's a serious, diligent girl with a rock collecting hobby who is likely to become increasingly concerned about the future of any Main Character whose fate she snoops in the Kichi Sacred Pools. Her motto is "Seize tomorrow!" which is a lot less about optimism and more about action when you remember that she is unusually likely to already know what tomorrow's challenges will be.

Thomas Kichi is the oldest child of the main Kichi line. He'd probably have been the temple's heir, except that he's not the least bit interested and hoping to leave the work of the family to his siblings and cousins. He's hoping to move deeper into Town, somewhere in the more industrial portions, and get a job as an engineer. He doesn't have a motto, so his sisters regularly propose new mottos for him. Their current favorite is "Oh God it's early!"

Lillika Kichi is the goofy, cheerful sister of the Kichi heir. She's wiry, tough, a magnet for any dirt or grime in the area, and her parents and siblings tease her with despairing declarations that a long-nosed imp somehow wound up born into the Kichi line. Her motto is "add oil!" which is both her literal suggestion for any engineering problems Thomas might have and a metaphor for stoking the fire of your ambition and your heart.

Step 6: Choose Your Kichi Family Bond

The Kichi family may develop Bonds relating to their magic. Kichi are *allowed* to have up to 8 points of Bonds, although it's normal to have just 1-3, or even, for characters like Thomas, none at all.

If you're a Main Character, you'll start with a Bond of your choice at level 2.

Traditional Kichi Bonds include...

- **Bond:** I can't lie about love.
- **Bond:** I must follow my heart, placing personal loyalties above duty.
- **Bond:** I must honor the Kichi traditions.
- **Bond:** I must protect the Kichi Sacred Pools and I must help visitors make offerings there.
- **Bond:** I can't resist spying on things and people that interest me.
- **Bond:** I must keep my body clean and pure, with regular ablutions and a strict diet.
- **Bond:** I must fulfill my responsibilities as an important person in the Kichi family.
- **Bond:** I must perform ritual ablutions and purification rituals regularly or feel intensely wrong.
- **Bond:** I am physically fragile and light.
- **Bond:** I must honor others' secrets when I can.
- **Bond:** I am driven to tease others with my knowledge instead of sharing it openly and forthrightly.

Do you have one of those?

Or do you have a unique Bond of your own?

Step 7: Choose Your Kichi Family Affliction

Remember what you picked to explain your being a person of destiny? Well, keeping that in mind, it's time to choose your Affliction—the coolest or scariest thing about your inherent power. A few of these options assume that you have the Kichi Family Magic and have thus learned to perform divinations and purifications in the Kichi Family pools.

Your Affliction is...

- **Affliction:** I've seen enough of the future to prepare for whatever situation I'm in.
- **Affliction:** Birds love me.
- **Affliction:** My person is sacred, and may not be touched by the wicked.
- **Affliction:** I may wear a feathered cloak to take on a bird's shape.
- **Affliction:** I may use any pure water as if it were the sacred pools.
- **Affliction:** My kimono is made of Outside-infused colored water that I can telekinetically control.
- **Affliction:** I am distantly related to the Vasilis, and can call upon the wind.
- **Affliction:** Sometimes I am possessed by a spirit.
- ...something else?

Step 8: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

As a Kichi, you'll start with four free Connection Perks (below).

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.

2 Connection: the Wishing Boy (or Girl)

This character's "ordinariness" appeals to you.

1 Connection: the Child of the Sun

You like this character's spirit of hope.

1 Connection: the Kichi

The Kichi are a pretty good family to have, I think.

-1 Connection: Nightmares' Angel

This person is scary.

You don't have to keep this Perk—it doesn't actually do you any good.

Step 9: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

Congratulations, **Kichi Shrine Maiden (or Priest)!** You've now created yourself as a member of the Kichi Family.

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in!



YOUR NAME

CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION



SKILLS

PERKS

ARC TRAITS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

SHRINE MAIDEN/PRIEST — THE KICHI

TOUCH OF DESTINY/MIRACLE

FAMILY STATUS

QUEST INFORMATION

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

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

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The Sosunov

Academics Skill: Better than Average
Sports Skill: Frail
Favorite Foods: Rice, Stir-Fried Vegetables, Cocoa
Blood Type: A
Animal: Rabbit
Genres: Pastoral, Fairy Tale
(Before playing a Sosunov Shrine Maiden/Priest in any other genre, please make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept.)



Step 1: Growing Up Sosunov

The heart of the Sosunov family is the main family home, all high white stone and red cobbled walks—their airy retreat with the blades of grass poking up between the stones and the scattered leaves drifting down, with the great domed central temple and the three-story library towers, down by the Twisting River's banks. A statue of Miruna Sosunov looks down over clasped and peaceful hands; practicing the family's meditative techniques, she is said to have achieved enlightenment, and her spirit watches over the family still.

2

It is a place of ethereal refinement, the Sosunov household, separated from the concerns of the waking world. And this is fitting, for their concern is dreams; their role, to guard the dreams of Fortitude.

The Sosunov are sacred and fragile creatures—though there's iron in some of them, like Rakkashima or your aunt Anmi. But the point is, it is their nature and their nurture to be somewhat delicate and unworldly. The practice of their magic intensifies this: I don't know that I could say that it weakens them, but it frays the ropes, a little, I think, of their anchor to the world. It pales their skin and hair: creams the coffee of a darker skin or makes lighter skin like chalk. It endangers their constitution. It makes their eyes weak against bright lights.

The Sosunov may visit the dreams of their loved ones—may speak with them, there, truly and clearly, no matter how far away they happen to be. This is the source of their wealth and influence—a merchant captain of Fortitude would gladly trade their eyeteeth to have a Sosunov magician or one of their loved ones as a member of their crew.

And into this family you are born, to be...

There's a trend towards unisex names in the Sosunov—it's pretty light-handed, and I didn't notice it until I started compiling names from their records, but it's definitely there. So that's why I've given you a set that could go either way.

For a more Russian flavor shrine maidens could adopt the last name "Sosunova." See the naming note in **A Citizen of Fortitude** or in the index of **By the Docks of Big Lake.**

Step 2: For Main Characters Only—"A Person of Destiny"

There is a touch of the miraculous on most Sosunov magicians—they tend to have one or two **Bonds**, the effect of magic shaping and exaggerating their natural tendencies into a borderline miraculous form.

But you—

You have something more. You have the touch of destiny and miracle upon you. You're meant for something extraordinary.

Even before anything campaign-specific—you were someone special. Why?

Were you...

- ...caught in some dream or nightmare that changed you?
- ...an extraordinarily pure and innocent spirit?
- ...a particular favorite of Miruna Sosunov's spirit?
- ...someone who found something like enlightenment yourself?
- ...a prodigy with the Sosunov magic?
- ...touched by the Bleak Academy's power?[5]
- ...just generally extra-awesome?
- ...something else?

Shrine Maiden Names

Miyu Sosunov
Kylie Sosunov
Brittany Sosunov
Altheia Sosunov
Lorraine Sosunov
Madeleine Sosunov
Becca Sosunov
Minerva Sosunov
Dvora Sosunov
Yui Sosunov
Pepper Sosunov

Priest Names

Julian Sosunov—*named after the current heir's dead grandfather*
Edric Sosunov
Nevil Sosunov
Xavier Sosunov
Lindon Sosunov
Raymond Sosunov
St. Dunstan Sosunov
Yamato Sosunov
Rasputin Sosunov
Shouta Sosunov

Unisex Names

Jamie Sosunov
Presley Sosunov
Yael Sosunov
Kim Sosunov
Tristan Sosunov
Kelly Sosunov
Pancake Sosunov
Taylor Sosunov
Newport Sosunov
Ondry Sosunov

5 *Beyond the furthest reaches of the Outside there is a Bleak Academy, its gates drowned in vines and groaning with the weight of years. Beyond those doors, I am told, dwell prodigies of despair and hatred: the Magisters of the Bleak Academy; though I have heard some praise as well for that far and that sunless land.*

Step 3: Family Status

The Sosunovs have a well-established main family, several cadet families, and connections to many of Fortitude's other important families. Relationships are hierarchical: the main family is generous with its cadets and cousins, and opens its home and temple to them, but they are expected to know their place.

And in this picture, who are you?

- ...I'm first or second in line to inherit the main family.
- ...I'm in the main family, but unlikely to take charge unless destiny singles me out.
- ...I'm an important member of a cadet family.
- ...I'm just another Sosunov—I'm nobody that the head would notice.
- ...I'm not a Sosunov, but my great-grandmother Chrystobel was, and when I visited the main family temple they said I had a talent for the magic and they took me in.

Step 4: Choosing Your Skills

The next step is figuring out your Skills—what you know how to do.

For a (young) Sosunov, I'd recommend—

- **(Quality of Character) 2**—You're... stern? Thoughtful? Delicate? Cheerful?
- **Merchant 1**—You're familiar with money stuff.
- **Sailing 1**—You're familiar with nautical stuff.
- **(Hobby) 1**—You're familiar with something else.

And

- **Sosunov Family Magic 3**—You're excellent with traditional Sosunov magic.

You can totally pick a completely different set of Skills if you like. If you do go with my picks, though, some suggested Qualities of Character include—

- **A Lover of Beauty 2**
- **A Lover of Family 2**
- **A Lover of Nature 2**
- **A Lover of Numbers 2**
- **A Lover of Words 2**
- **Adorable 2**
- **Austere 2**
- **Cautious 2**
- **Daydreamer 2**
- **Dedicated 2**
- **Domestic 2**
- **Driven 2**
- **Gentle 2**
- **Honorable 2**
- **Infectious Humor 2**
- **Inquisitive 2**
- **Joy in Life 2**
- **Peaceful 2**
- **Polite 2**
- **Shy 2**
- **Studious 2**
- **Thoughtful 2**

And some suggested Hobbies include—

- **Acupuncture 1**
- **Beekeeping 1**
- **Boating 1**
- **Botanical Science 1**
- **Gardening 1**
- **Genealogy 1**
- **Journaling 1**
- **Library Science 1**
- **Model Railroads 1**
- **Mythology and Analytical Mythology 1**
- **Number Theory 1**
- **Philosophy 1**
- **Quest for the Perfect Cup of Coffee 1**
- **T'ai Chi 1**
- **Western Culture 1**

—though, you can pick whatever you like, for both!

Step 5: Choose Your Sosunov Family Bond

The Sosunov family may develop Bonds relating to their magic. Sosunov are *allowed* to have up to 8 points of Bonds, although it's normal to have just 1-3, or even none at all.

If you're a Main Character, you'll start with a single Bond of your choice at level 2.

Traditional Sosunov Bonds include...

- **Bond:** Miruna Sosunov looks out for me.
- **Bond:** I fear inadvertent enlightenment.
- **Bond:** I fall in love too easily
- **Bond:** I am not good at anything outside of temple life.

For those who practice the family magic, there's also...

- **Bond:** Nightmare and delirium can drag me and the world around me into the Outside.[6]
- **Bond:** I can't let myself get upset, particularly not close to bedtime.
- **Bond:** I must defend the dreams of Fortitude.
- **Bond:** I purify things around me when I meditate.

Do you have one of those?

Or do you have a unique Bond of your own?

6 *The most notable drawback to Sosunov magic.*

Step 6: For Main Characters Only—Choose Your Sosunov Family Affliction

Remember how you were touched by destiny and miracle?

Well, keeping that in mind, it's time to choose your Affliction—the coolest or scariest thing about your inherent power. A few of these options assume that you have the Sosunov Family Magic and have thus studied both meditation and visiting others' dreams.

Your Affliction is...

2

- **Affliction:** I purify Outside dust with a touch. I calm storms by walking into them.
- **Affliction:** If I eat your memories or skills in a dream, I steal them temporarily in real life.
- **Affliction:** I'm invisible when afraid.
- **Affliction:** Ever since "that" nightmare, I can sprout/retract dagger-like nails and control my hair.
- **Affliction:** Having achieved enlightenment, my mind is protected from attack and sorrow.
- **Affliction:** Having achieved enlightenment, my vision pierces distance and illusions.
- **Affliction:** People who stare into my eyes fall asleep.
- **Affliction:** When I enter someone's dream, I physically enter their dreams. If they wake, I am physically beside them for five minutes or so before I snap back to where I was.
- ...something else?

Incidentally...

There's a standard Sosunov magical technique that lets you visit the past or future dreams of a loved one. That's pretty scary in conjunction with the last Affliction there, and I'm going to rule that by *default* the two abilities don't play well together. Much of the time attempting to exploit this for physical time travel just won't work, without there necessarily being any particular reason why.

I'm notably and specifically *not* saying that it *can't* or *shouldn't* work! It even usually should!

What I *am* saying is that I have not developing a fully-functional set of time travel rules here, so whenever combining that last Affliction with a time travel dream would send the HG into a spiral of helpless confusion, uncertainty, and despair, the HG is totally allowed to wave the whole issue away and say "the laws of time and causality won't allow that, on this particular occasion."

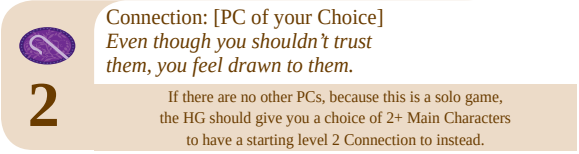
Step 7: Connections

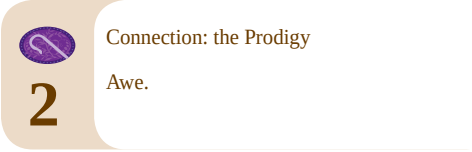
Connections are basically a measure of how well you know and *get* somebody. They're also a measure of how good you are at living somewhere or with someone. You can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

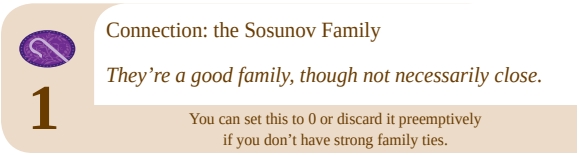
As a Sosunov, you'll start with 2-3 free Connection Perks (below).

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.







Step 8: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

Congratulations, **Sosunov Shrine Maiden (or Priest)!** You've now created yourself as a member of the Sosunov Family.

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in.

Some Worrisome Individuals

If you're playing in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** five of the eight Main Characters will probably scare you—

All five of **Nightmares' Angel, the Angel of Fortitude, the Dream-Witch, the Troublemaker,** and **the Best Friend** hit some of your instinctive panic buttons.

However, I don't know if that will turn into an "opposites attract," "opposites run screaming," or "opposites figure out that they're OK and move on" plotline, so I'm not going to outfit you with any explicit negative Connections there. Just, keep it in mind!

Some Interesting Sosunov

Arkady Sosunov has strong natural potential but he's terrified of meditation and enlightenment—he loses himself so easily to the universe that he's afraid he won't come back. He runs away from the temple now and then, trying to form some sort of life outside of his family, but it doesn't work out very well; he isn't very good at anything but being a Sosunov, and if he isn't living at home he keeps stumbling into nearby people's dreams, having little nightmares that invoke Outside effects, or getting harassed by wish spirits. There are plenty of ships that'd happily take him on board to do Sosunov kinds of things, but that's not what Arkady runs away *to do.*

Emilia Sosunov is socially awkward, pure-hearted, clumsy, and overly romantic—she's quite capable of falling in love with someone on sight and showing up in their dreams later without really knowing what to do or say there. She's a sweet and somewhat passive kid when first introduced, but she's a strong enough person and talent to harden up if that's what the story or protecting her loved ones demands.

Rakkashima Sosunov is the family's current head. He's a strong middle-aged man with graying temples and surprisingly weathered skin. He spent most of his youth as a sailor, until his wife (well, his future wife; the Sosunov magic can cross the gulf of time) showed up in his dreams to warn him that he was going to become the family head later on and he should shift his focus to magic, finance, and politics, and he did.

Anmi is one of the Sosunovs' social power-houses; she's a retired member of the Fortitude Regional Council, a meticulous meddler, and wears the most astonishing (in a good way) Victorian costume, complete with fan. I've never dared to ask if it's cosplay, personal style, or if she's just that old.

YOUR NAME



CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION

SKILLS

PERKS

ARC TRAITS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

SHRINE MAIDEN/PRIEST — THE SOSUNOV

TOUCH OF DESTINY/MIRACLE

FAMILY STATUS

QUEST INFORMATION

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

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

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The Titov

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
Genres: Pastoral, Gothic, Epic Fantasy
(Before playing a Titov Shrine Maiden/Priest in any other genre, please make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept.)



Step 1: Your Role in the Family

The Titov family home is run-down. The stone gate is cracked and the living trees are withered. Under their shrine is a catacomb: dusty and old and shockingly deep and a part, not of Fortitude, but of Bluebell Park. In that catacomb is a thing that shouldn't be kept.

People shouldn't keep it. It's not good for them.

It isn't good for you.

Maybe it's a prisoner. Maybe it's a gift to the world. But it shouldn't be kept.

The family is not large. I should rephrase. For a nuclear family it is large; you will have at least five siblings. Maybe six or seven if there are other PCs who've joined you there. For an extended family it is small; there are few Titov cousins, and fewer that acknowledge it. They are withering; but they will not die out. They have the power, if they must, to call someone by magic who will be the "right" wife or husband for one of the Titov children; or, if there is no such person, to create an heir, spouse, guardian, or ally directly from the earth.

And as for you, you are...

- ...born into the Titov family as the child of Iskandar and Nirmala Titov
  - ...as their eldest?
  - ...as their third-born, after Jason Pyotr and Ezther?
  - ...as their fourth-born, after Soramir?
  - ...as their last-born, after Isabella?
- ...born into an earlier generation—a younger sibling to the patriarch Iskandar?
- ...brought in from elsewhere:
  - ...summoned from the earth to fulfill some need or role?
  - ...bought from your original family when you were young because one of the Titovs will need you? ...to be a...
    - servant?
    - spouse?
    - bodyguard?
    - peer and confidant? *or*
    - possibly even an adopted heir?

Step 2: Choosing Your Name

Here's some names suitable for natural-born Titovs, Titovs born from the earth, and Titovs adopted into the family from outside it!

For a more Russian flavor shrine maidens could adopt the last name "Titova" instead of "Titov." I've been informed that some of my suggestions already have this but they both look the same here so it's really hard to regularize!

Shrine Maiden Names

(Born into the Family)
Tethys Milena Titova
Kaveri Titova
Malika Titova
Adél Agafya Titova
Yuliya Titov
Zsóka Titov
Jolán Titov
Athanasia Titov
Flora Kirani Titova
Aishwarya Titov

(Titovs by Adoption)
Margarita Titov
Suzu Liouba Titov
Juli Titov
Yuuko Titova
Nasrin Titov

(Summoned from the Earth)
Chrysanthe Titova
Theodosia Titova
Eudocia Titova
Indrani Titova
Hypatia Titova

Priest Names

(Born into the Family)
Rahim Xenophon Titov
Euaristos Titov
Jameel Titov
Kallikrates Olympiodoros Pankrati Titov
Setiawan Titov
Ebrahim Titov
Androcles Evans Titov
Fotios Titov
Matthias Titov
Linos Titov

(Titovs by Adoption)
Bernat Titov
Barnabas Titov
Adam Titov
Katsurou Titov
Rurik Titov

(Summoned from the Earth)
Thracius Titov
Seneca Kleisthenes
Viticus Titov
Pelagius Ampelios Titov
Lykourgos Titov

Step 3: The Titov Magic

If you are a Titov—unless you are also a specialist summoned or created to do one very particular thing—then you have learned some of the Titov magic. It is almost impossible, barring exceptional concentration on a different purpose or Skill, to grow up in their shrine and *not* pick it up.

And if you did—

It's poisoned you.

You wouldn't understand the nature of the Titov magic as a kid. You wouldn't know why everyone around you was so clingy, so loving and so hateful, so

cruel and yet so desperately important to one another. You'd meet the thing under the shrine and you wouldn't understand it either. But it's part of the Titov magic, wound in and through it, and as you'd learn that magic you'd begin to understand what that *thing* understands: that there is no such thing as a person. That there is most particularly no such thing as you. You are nothing; your emotions are pointless and futile; the world is empty, cold, and bleak.

You'd build an echo of the catacombs under the Titov shrine inside your mind; under the surface of your thoughts you would construct a place of dust and stone and dark, and in the shape of Bluebell Park. Your dreams partake of that chaos now: they strip you raw when you have them, and if a Sosunov magician or other dreamer ventured into them it would risk the integrity of their soul.

When it got you to the point where you couldn't live with it any longer, where you were going to hurt yourself because of it or maybe not hurt yourself but just run away, or curl up in the bottom of the catacombs of your mind and shut out all the world, the family gave you your first taste of the dust of the Outside.

The particulate essence of chaos, that blows in off the lake.

The gunk that people catch in their dream-catchers so that it doesn't give them nightmares or drive them insane.

They fed it to you.

It's problematic, y'know? It's psychoactive and magically active stuff. Sometimes it makes you hallucinate. Sometimes it induces a full-on psychotic break.

But it let you feel like a person again.

And it still does.

That's when you started clinging to the others in the same way as they clung to you: not just out of love but out of a tribe-need, a shared-experience-hunger.

That's when you learned to cling to them. You'll never let them go. They're the only ones who can understand. If they tried to leave you you wouldn't let them. You can stop them. That's one of the things that the Titov magic lets you do. You can stop them.

You'll never let them go; nor they, to you.

And as for you...

- ...you learned the magic. It was just that way.
- ...you were created/called for something else. You've no time to learn such things. You understand it, you suffer from it, but the Titov magic is not yours.
- ...you don't get it. You *still* don't understand why everyone around you is such a jerk. As for the thing in the shrine,
  - you're not allowed down there. *or*
  - you can't understand it at all.

The Family Titov

The patriarch of the Titov family is **Iskandar Titov.**

His wife is **Nirmala Titov.**

They are both deeply wounded by the Titov magic: Iskandar is brittle, prideful, and despairing of the Titovs and their fate. Nirmala is essentially broken: calling forth a doctor to heal Ezther Titov's arrhythmia unmade her.

Their five children are:

- **Jason Pyotr Alexei Titov,**
- **Ezther Titov,**
- **Soramir Titov,**
- **Isabella Titov,** *and*
- **Diána**.

Of these, Diána exists only by virtue of the Titov magic, called forth from nothing to heal Ezther, summoned from the earth, and never formally adopted into the Titov line. They're a broken, twisted mess of a family: Jason and Ezther possessive and hateful towards one another, Soramir resenting the comparative physical weakness that puts him under his older brother's shadow, and Isabella mistrusted by all of them as too clever by half and probably under the influence of the thing below their shrine to boot. Diána is the saddest story of them all: she conceives of helping and supporting the other Titovs as the function of her existence, but they mostly regard her (despite many of their ancestors being creatures like herself) as a lesser, artificial thing.

They can't get out from under it. Even if one of them escaped, cut their ties and left, they're all too important to one another: someone would just find the person or tool they needed in order to bring them back.



Jasmine Apocynum, aka the Ideologue

Salute! Apocynum!

Struck by a dodgeball, this Main Character achieved enlightenment and realized that the world is a lie and an illusion. Now it is the mission of **the Ideologue** to shatter the four mystical gates that protect that lie, opening everyone's mind to the True Thing beyond. Luckily, part of the dodgeball enlightenment package includes a magnificent mansion in Bluebell Park, shapeshifting ability, and the power to pull out people's hearts and turn the rest of them into a normally giant monster to pilot against a gate.

(Naturally this resolves or helps resolve whatever psychological issues might have been troubling them.)

This Main Character is usually **(Princess) Jasmine Apocynum,** a PC-aged girl, but could also be a PC-aged boy named **(Prince) Jasper Apocynum**. One weakness of her shapeshifting is that—most of the time, and regardless of what shape she wears—she has "Riders' eyes," that is, a field of night interrupted by falling stars rather than the whites, pupil, and iris of ordinary human eyes.

While she's an important character in Town, and the main character of ***Fable of the Swan,*** she isn't usually a part of Fortitude-based games; so, it may be a while before her story is relevant to your own.

Step 4: Read This Note on the Thing Under the Shrine

In a generic Fortitude campaign, the thing under the shrine might be a serpent that leaves the footprints of a wolf; its breath is ice, it may take the form of a black-clothed girl or boy, and it represents a vicious denial of the world. It's trying to pull you down into its soulless sense of things, to drag you off to live with it as its lover and its prisoner in its private purgatory beneath the shrine. It doesn't succeed; its call instead winds up forming a kind of three-legged balance with the self-destroying Titov magic and the dream-twisting Outside dust.

It is possible that this is a Mystery of the rats. Its name might be **Akhlut, or Heartless.**

Then again it might just be a thing.

If you're playing in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** instead, the thing under the shrine is a creature called **Iolithae Septimian.** It's a horror predating the known world, associated with the Bleak Academy, taking the form of a white-haired woman. She is a deadly reality-warper but also she is sacred.

One variant of the Main Character **the Dream-Witch** has her character as a Titov. In this variant it's actually pieces of *her* down there—pieces of something she used to be, back when she wasn't an ordinary person but a world-destroying horror named **Melanie Malakh.** It feels wrong to have two separate unholy horrors under the shrine—I think it's bad mythology, even if it's interestingly complex plotting—so I'm going to say that in that particular case Iolithae Septimian should congeal out of the remnants of the Dream-Witch, should be a partial Melanie Malakh, rather than having her own story as would normally be the case.

In a Horizon-based campaign, the shrine probably holds one of the gates that **the Ideologue** seeks to crack open, and anything else—the serpent, Iolithae, or Malakh—is just a distraction, a guardian, or a sideshow.

In the real world, I don't know what's down there. It could be anything. It could be a *hat!*

Step 5: Choosing Your Skills

The next step is figuring out your Skills—what you know how to do.

For a young Titov, I'd recommend—

- **Pride 3**—You're extremely good at standing up for your pride.
- **Disconcert/Taunt 2**—You're good at getting under someone's skin.
- **Domestic Skills 1**—You're familiar with the basics of life. *And*
- **Titov Family Magic 2**—You're good at traditional Titov magic.

Does that seem right?

- ...yes.
- ...no. Leave me alone. I'll choose my own 8 points of Skills.
- ...no. I was brought into their family to do something specific, so I need the Skill to actually do so.

Step 5a: Skills for the Summoned or Called

If the Titovs called and adopted you to fulfill some specific function, you may want to replace 1-3 points of the Skills above with an appropriate mundane Skill or level 1-2 Superior Skill. If they literally created you from the earth to fulfill that purpose, you're almost certain to have a level 1-3 Superior Skill. For instance, you might have:

- **Pride 2**—You're good at standing up for your pride.
- **Disconcert/Taunt 1**—You know how to get under someone's skin.
- **Domestic Skills 1**—You're familiar with the basics of life. And
- **Superior Investigator 3**—You're an inhumanly good detective.
- **Titov Family Magic 1**—You're familiar with traditional Titov magic.

Superior Investigator is just a generic superior Skill I made up as an example of something that they might need to go outside the existing family for, so if you want rules for it you'll have to be content with the generic rules for Superior Skills.

Anyway, some suggested Superior Skills here include:

- **Superior Bodyguard**, to protect someone who's been threatened
- **Superior Investigator**, to solve some mystery or track down a Titov that left home
- **Superior Resistance to Akhlut**, to endure its growing power
- **Superior Resistance to Iolithae Septimian,** to endure *hers*
- **Superior Blacksmith,** to help reforge the chains of the thing under the shrine if they have begun to crack or crumble, *or*
- **Superior Friend/Companion/Fiancé(e) for (Name) Titov**, if you were brought in to be that.

Or you could have a more ordinary Skill, if the need for such is foreseen, such as a higher level of Domestic Skills or

- **Arbiter,** to help smooth relations between family members
- **Caretaker,** to reverse the decay of the shrine itself
- **Nurse**, if an older or injured Titov needs one
- **Visionary,** to chart the family's path to a better future, *or*
- **Tribute**, if every six generations one of the family must be sacrificed to Akhlut, or Iolithae, or the Bleak Academy, or something, and the process of being sacrificed is complicated and requires skill.

Ultimately, though, it's up to you!

Step 6: Relationship With Jason Pyotr

The oldest of the five Titov children[7] is Jason Pyotr Alexei Titov. I think the best way to explain his relationship with Ezther is that when they are secure, they are very kind to one another; but it does not take much insecurity to break that down.

If they think the other is starting to run from them, they become aggressively cruel.

If they feel badly about themselves, they become passive-aggressively cruel, insisting that the other prove their love.

As the eldest and strongest, he dominates Soramir—treats the boy as something of his dog.

And as for you?

Step 7: Relationship With Ezther

Ezther was born with a heart defect and chronic arrhythmia; she would have been dead within a year or two if her mother Nirmala hadn't created cardiologist Diána Titov from the earth to treat her. Even now she is sickly; and Nirmala, as a consequence of creating Diána, is broken.

Jason is really the only important person to her. Ezther treats Diána practically like the weather, as someone whose presence and support is natural and may be assumed; whose medical treatments and concerns are unpredictable but ultimately nothing more than disruptions to the orderly process of Ezther's life. Isabella and Soramir exist to her when they are useful and do not when they are not. Some of this is doubtless because for health reasons she must moderate her intake of Outside dust, and so the emptiness in her is strong.

Ezther ignores Iskandar, even at his most terrifying—he could hit her or threaten to cast her out and she'd only stare at him blankly. Her mother Nirmala, though, terrifies her—for no good reason, since Nirmala loves

7 *Unless that's you.*

her and would be too broken to enforce her will anyway. I assume it's displaced fear of having to acknowledge her guilt *for* Nirmala's condition.

And how does she interact with you?

Step 8: Choose Your Destiny

There is a touch of the miraculous on most Titov magicians—exaggerated personal weaknesses and strange abilities, manifesting as **Bonds,** are a consequence of their magic and their lives.

But you—

You have something special. You have the touch of destiny and miracle upon you; in game terms, you have an Affliction. And why is that?

Were you...

- ...a prodigy with the Titov magic?
- ...chosen by the creature beneath the shrine?
- ...touched by its power?
- ...given a strange connection to the Outside through consumption of its dust?
- ...given a bit of the power of the sun, some last blessing of the sun goddess who died, in order that the Titovs could be freed?
- ...just generally extra-awesome?
- ...something else?

Step 9: Relationship With Soramir

Soramir Titov is a scrawny kind of kid. He's not as strong as Jason. He's not as fit as Jason. And he doesn't actually stand *out* compared to his older brother in any way. He could be a little faster or a little slower. A little cleverer or a fraction less quick. A little better at this magic, a little worse at that one—it's hard to say.

He's actually a pretty good whittler—he sells some tchotchkes and wooden ravens to the shrine's occasional visitors—

But you can't get him to believe that has *worth.*

In a family that's all about pride, he can't find much to have pride *in* that Jason isn't already sitting on—and he hates it. So he lurks in the shadows and he sulks and he doesn't go away because even if they'd let him leave that would mean that Jason had won. That would mean he'd never gotten better than his brother. He'd never meant anything.

I can't tell if he wants Ezther's love or if he just sometimes acts like he does because that's how Jason acts.

And how does he interact with you?

Step 10: Relationship With Isabella

The family sometimes calls Isabella "owl." She's always watching. She's always thinking. She's careful and she's controlled. She's the smart one. She's "too clever by half," Soramir says.

She's loyal, though, at least sort of.

I mean, she likes to see her family squirm, but she doesn't want them *hurt*. She's a Titov. They are what matters to her.

Nirmala wails that the thing under the shrine has corrupted Isabella.

The two of them can't be left alone together. Nirmala'll hit her. Isabella won't fight back, not unless the choking starts; but if the choking starts, it'll be a bad time for everyone.

And how does Isabella interact with you?

Step 11: Relationship With the Rest

Your relationship with the last three Titovs is probably simpler—less likely to be a dynamic between two people and more of your choice of reaction to the family's three fixed points.

The Titov magic has ravaged both Iskandar Titov and Nirmala Titov; they are the walking wounded. Iskandar is bitter, prideful, and despairing. He's just a shadow on your life—not likely to have real *interactions* with you unless you're the heir, and maybe not even then. You can't make him proud of you. You can't make him give up on you. You probably can't even make him really see you: he sees what you're useful for, and what he needs to say or do to get that out of you, and he doesn't see you yourself.

Right?

- ...right.
- ...sometimes his love for me shows through the emptiness.
- ...it's not like that; he's a good father. He just seems like that to outsiders.

Nirmala is a more complicated case. She sees the world in shards and shadows. She wanders in and out of flashback and hallucination. It's not precisely brain damage or mental illness: she worked too great a magic when she summoned Diána and now the part of herself that normally sees herself—the ego or "I"—is a howling void. She spends most of her life concentrating hard to cling to some bit or piece of an idea or memory that

How Not to Wind Up Like Nirmala

In game terms, Nirmala spent 8 Will at once on the magic that summoned Diána; the effort brought a Deadly Wound down upon her, and she spends most of her life with an action committed to keeping it at bay.

As a general rule this won't happen to PCs, even if they unwisely spend 8 Will at once, and the player will have a great many options for shaping the impact and attempting recovery if it does; NPC magicians are not quite so lucky and they risk Nirmala's fate whenever they attempt 8-Will-cost works.

resembles to her her lost "self." When she is startled or distracted and loses track of it, the screaming starts.

There's still a person there—I mean, she still has all her faculties save one, they're just compromised—but I still assume that your relationship with her is fairly straightforward. To you, she's

- ...an annoying burden?
- ...a burden you bear gladly?
- ...still your *mother?*
- ...a living ghost?

Like Nirmala, Diána is a person; and like Nirmala, she doesn't really see it that way. She thinks of herself as existing to help and support the other Titovs—particularly Ezther—since she was, after all, created to do just that. She's a pretty good doctor, and insanely good at treating heart arrhythmia; she's also pretty much happy to do whatever any of the others need.

Most of the Titovs think of her as a lesser existence—an artificial being.

And you?

Step 12: Choose Your Titov Family Bond

The Titov curse manifests in a Bond, so it's normal for a family member who practices magic at all to have 1-3 points in such a Bond. They're *allowed* to have up to 8 points' worth, or even (if they don't know the magic) none at all.

If you're a Main Character, you'll start with a Bond of your choice at level 2.

Some common Titov Bonds include...

- **Bond:** I see through lies. *or*
- **Bond:** I think I see through lies.

- **Bond:** I see what people and things are useful for. *or*
- **Bond:** I see people (and things) *as* what they are useful for.

- **Bond:** I cannot escape these people [the Titovs].
- **Bond:** I am entangled with the thing beneath the shrine.
- **Bond:** I can't connect to my own emotions.
- **Bond:** The dust or the thing beneath the shrine are changing me.
- **Bond:** I must consume low-grade Outside dust to function.
- **Bond:** I am sick to death of this, consumed with depression, obsessive self-loathing, or paranoia.

Do you have one of those?
Or do you have a unique Bond of your own?

Recovery from Your Bonds

Don't like your Bond?

Going by historical accounts, it is *possible* to recover eventually from the Titov Bonds, although I don't know of a case where someone did so and retained their access to the Titov magic. You can cut them away, slowly, over time. You can regain a natural connection to yourself—given time away from the shrine, their magic, and their family. You're not even really *addicted* to the low-grade Outside dust you consume; it's a medicine for you, not a narcotic, and the actual addiction is to *feeling alive* and *feeling human.*

You could have that without the dust. But first you'd have to... get away.

Step 13: Choose Your Titov Family Affliction

Remember your destiny?

Well, keeping that in mind, it's time to choose your Affliction—the coolest or scariest thing about your inherent power. A few of these options assume that you have the Titov Family Magic.

Your Affliction is...

- **Affliction:** The world darkens around me when I am unhappy.
- **Affliction:** My touch has the Bleak power of the Outside and can cut through wish power.
- **Affliction:** Looking at me is psychotropic and eventually causes hallucinations.
- **Affliction:** My singing voice fills others with adrenaline and suppresses their consciousness.
- **Affliction:** Wood and plants wither in my company.
- **Affliction:** The most sunlit direction is always the direction I should go.
- **Affliction:** What harm is done to me, is done back to the one who inflicts it threefold.
- **Affliction:** I can always see the sun and the sky.
- ...something else?

Step 14: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

As a Titov, you'll start with four free Connection Perks (below).

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.

3 Connection: the Titovs

You can practically lick one another's hearts.

1 Connection: the Prodigy

You can relate to the Prodigy's particular brokenness.

1 Connection: Nightmares' Angel

Nightmares' Angel just makes sense *to you.*

1 Connection: the Angel of Fortitude

This seems to be a useful creature.



Step 15: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

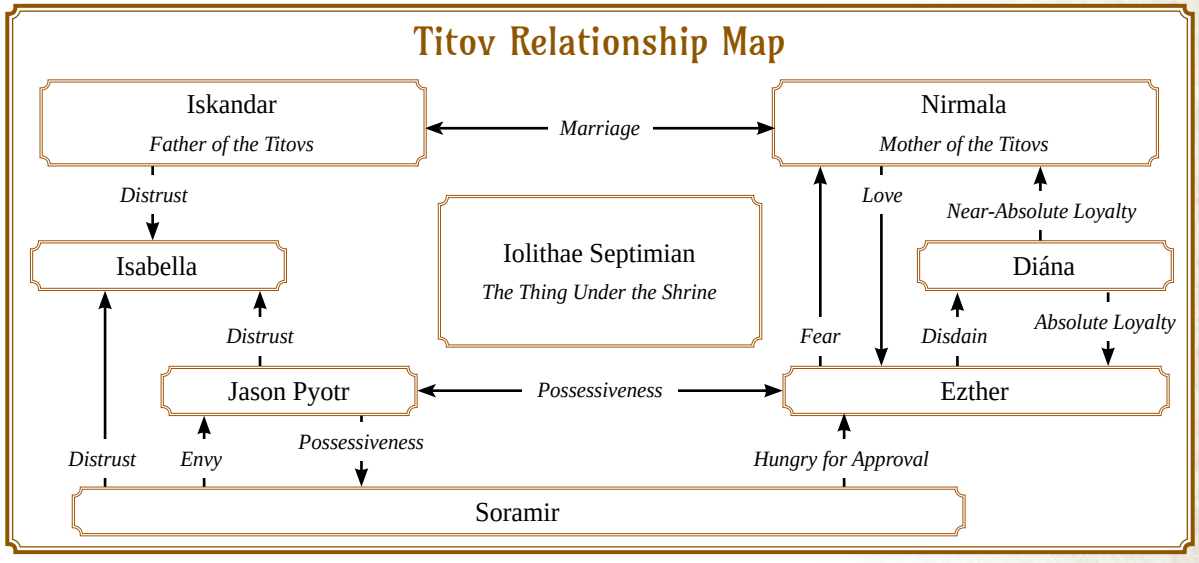
I'm so sorry, **Titov Shrine Maiden (or Priest)!** You've now created yourself as a member of the Titov Family. Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in.

Titov Relationship Map



YOUR NAME



CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION

SKILLS

PERKS

ARC TRAITS

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

QUEST INFORMATION

SHRINE MAIDEN/PRIEST — THE TITOV

FAMILY ROLE

TITOV MAGIC

RELATIONSHP: JASON PTYOR

RELATIONSHP: EZTHER

RELATIONSHP: SORAMIR

RELATIONSHP: ISABELLA

RELATIONSHP: ISKANDAR

RELATIONSHP: NIRMALA

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

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

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The Vasili

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
Genres: Pastoral, Immersive Fantasy, Techno
(Before playing a Vasili Shrine Maiden/Priest in any other genre, please make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept.)



Step 1: Growing Up Vasili

When you were just a child your parents blessed you and bound you to one of the elements. They promised you to it and it to you. I don't mean like water, metal, wood, earth, fire, although it could have been one of those; I mean, some part of the natural world. Something that everyone has to live with at least part of the year. Rain, or summer, or wind, or the bounty of the lake—

It's pretty awesome.

You're in love with that element, and it's in love with you, and it's better-behaved and kinder to Fortitude now that you're alive. Being a Vasili means having a great big family estate, and the respect of Fortitude, and an existence that makes peoples' lives better, and unless you're bound to twilight or something it makes you both a morning person *and* an evening person—

It's the pastoral life, perfected.

So, as for you, you are...

Shrine Maiden Names

Sachiko Vasili
Marilène Vasili
Demetria Vasili
Elene Vasili
Naomi Vasili
Ginette Vasili
Perrine Vasili
Galene Vasili
Denise Vasili
Takako Vasili
Zenobia Vasili
Ayako Vasili
Francis Apollonia Vasili
Irene Carol Vasili
Cyrielle Vasili

Priest Names

Judicaël Fiorenzo Vasili
Lucretius Vasili
Nathan Vasili
Noburu Tiziano Vasili
Angelos Guerino Vasili
Raphaël Ottorino Vasili
Devdan Vasili
Herakleides Vasili, Jr.
Georgio Vasili
Filippos Vasili
Romano Vasili
Arnaldo Vasili
Hayate Nikhil Vasili
Cornelio Vasili
Henri Séverin Vasili

Step 2: Your Element

What element were you bound to?

The classic Vasili elements are these—

- "the long days of summer"
- "the harvest season"
- "the wild hills"
- "the limestone cliffs"
- "the beaches and the stones"
- "the will of fire"
- "the happiness of celebrations"
- "the peacefulness of the heart"
- "the insects and the flowers"
- "the birds in the skies"
- "the roofs and their rat-roads"
- "the moonlight (and starlight)"
- "the rain and the thunder"
- "the drying of laundry"
- "the frost and the dew"

And these—

- "the bounty of the lake"—bound to the recently-deceased **Nikhil Vasili**
- "the bounty of the land"—currently bound to **Herakleides Teófilo Vasili**
- "the winds of the high places"—currently bound to **Mayu Vasili**
- "winter"—currently bound to **Asuka**
- "spring"—currently bound to **Gorou**
- "the hearth and home"—a suggested option for **the Troublemaker,** in the campaign **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** if she's a Vasili and not a Yatskaya.

You also have the option of picking a kind of weird and non-traditional element, like—

- "the health of the trees"
- "the health of the teeth"
- "packages and the post"
- "the roads and the paths"
- "the snails of the beach"
- "the caves and the tunnels"
- "the stirring of the soup"
- "bicycles and carts"
- "canning and preserves"
- "the auroras and the rainbows"
- "rumors and reports"
- "the maintenance of the account books"
- "the cakes and the pancakes"
- "money and trading"
- "recycling and garbage collection"
- "the bends of the river"
- no element at all, because of some strange incompatibility

Or these—

- "steam and electricity"—another suggested option for **the Troublemaker,** if she's a Vasili
- "the constellations"—a suggested option for a minor NPC in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** if **the Dream-Witch** is a Vasili
- "the sakura blossoms"—another suggested minor NPC option

Or something else?

You're allowed to pick any of these options, even the ones that have established owners—but if

- you're playing in a campaign with another Vasili, or

- if you're playing in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** and pick any of:
  - the winds of the high places,
  - steam and electricity, *or*
  - the hearth and the home,

...make sure you're not stomping on or overlapping with another PC's choices!

Step 3: Family Status

The Vasili family runs pretty much like a commune—running the family and owning its lands is *pretty much* a mildly onerous duty that settles on whomever is the least good at getting out of it in any given generation. So there's only two real statuses you can have, whether you're the firstborn child of Herakleides Teófilo or some random cousin five times removed who got adopted into the family early on:

- ...the family expects great things of you, and has your back
- ...the family doesn't expect much of you, but loves and takes care of you anyway

Or *maybe*

- ...something weird?

Step 4: Choosing Your Skills

The next step is figuring out your Skills—what you know how to do.

For a young Vasili, I'd recommend—

- **Spirit of Romance 2**—You can do it, if it's for love!
- **Traditional Ways 2**—You're good at formal, archaic, and ceremonial stuff.
- **Athletic 1**—You're fairly athletic. And
- **Superior Affinity for (Element/Season) 3**—You have a powerful magical connection to nature.[8]

You can totally pick a completely different set of Skills if you like.

Step 5: Honoring Your Element

The shrine families exist in part to dispose of the dust of the Outside. It blows in from the chaos beyond the world and it's the stuff of hallucination, nightmare, and enchantment; if it's not integrated or neutralized then it can accumulate and mess people and things up. Each Vasili uses rituals that honor their element in order to dispose of the dust—sometimes in little or casual ways, like regularly sprinkling a small amount of it over the stuff of their element, and sometimes in big and formal ways, as with the ritual dances Asuka and Gorou do every day at the end of winter and the beginning of spring. Mostly, though, it involves tending and honoring your element in some way and giving the Outside dust back to it; the connection you have to your element helps detoxify the dust and lets it become a vitalizing agent instead of a poison unto the land.

What must *you* do to fulfill your elemental contract?

- ...there's this whole elaborate celebration thing, like with Asuka and Gorou
- ...I have to do something mildly inconvenient, like the way Herakleides adds Outside dust to the mulch for his garden and makes the whole gardening process *so* much more difficult for himself thereby
- ...I just have to give back handfuls of the stuff to a place of my element when I get the chance, easy peasy!
- ...something else?

8 *See pg. 271 and 515, the* **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** *RPG.*

Some Interesting Vasili

Unless a PC shows up for that spot, **Mayu Vasili** is the Vasili heir. She's promised to the winds of the high places, and one day they'll take her away—she says. Maybe that means she'll vanish. Maybe it means she'll learn to fly. Maybe it's some kind of weird symbolic thing. She doesn't actually know. All she knows is that when she sits on a cliff's edge, hilltop, crow's nest, or up a tree, the wind brushes kisses on her cheeks and sings to her strange songs; that, and it's a work of gravest futility to try to wear a hat or carry an umbrella when outside. She mitigates and balances wind and landslides with her presence—when the wind is blowing fiercely, it scatters her thoughts; when it falls still, her thoughts become likewise dull; when the ground nearby is loose and dangerous, it nauseates her. Conversely, though, when Mayu is cheerful and healthy, the wind is more temperate and the earth stabler.[9]

Asuka and Gorou Vasili are twin boys promised to the winter and the spring. It is Asuka's gift to make the winters of Fortitude mild; he is beloved by the snow and by cold air, and wakes with complicated and artistic frost-mosaics on his window every winter morning. Gorou's gift is to bless the first new growth of spring; he dances daily with his brother in a month-long ritual when winter ends and spring begins, the drumming of his feet waking up the earth. It is their joint duty to mitigate the early warmth and late frost that can damage over-eager plants.

I haven't had the pleasure of meeting **Herakleides Teófilo Vasili**, though I visited and admired his garden—in a corner I found a flower that had, I thought, the most peculiar and scrunched-up little face. It was by some broken stones, and I sometimes think I imagined it; there was a white watering can beside.

Anyway, Herakleides—

I hear that he is pretty cool, in a grumpy old man kind of way!

Step 6: Choose Your Vasili Family Bond

Even though they aren't proper magicians, the Vasili tend to have access to Bonds. These are part of and an expression of the magic that infuses them.

The result is that most Vasili are incredibly *alive*—

In game terms, having Bonds without having a proper magical Skill usually results in a person who is overflowing with Will and the power to overcome their life's Obstacles. This is particularly true for the Vasili, who get this power directly from an elemental connection to the world.

NPC Vasili usually have 1-3 points of Bonds, although they *could* have anywhere from 0-8.

If you're a Main Character, you'll start with a Bond of your choice at level 2.

Some common Vasili Bonds include...

- **Bond:** I must mirror certain aspects of nature in my own moods and feelings.
- **Bond:** I mirror certain elements of nature in my physical condition.
- **Bond:** I can't get out of the performance of my duties as a Vasili.
- **Bond:** I'm lucky.
- **Bond:** I can't really imagine someone not liking me.
- **Bond:** I can't really care what people I don't care about think!
- **Bond:** I am beloved by an element of nature.
- **Bond:** I must (metaphorically) wear my heart on my sleeve.
- **Bond:** I don't really understand this cynicism stuff.
- **Bond:** I'm no good at talking about complicated stuff.
- **Bond:** I feel your pain.
- **Bond:** I must believe everything will work out all right.
- **Bond:** I can't accept somebody not loving life and the beauty of the world. I just can't accept it!

Do you have one of those?

Or do you have a unique Bond of your own?

9 *For clarity: nobody has specifically experimentally validated or measured the abilities of the modern Vasilis. The only hard data I could find is that a Vasili bound to "the will of fire" seems to reduce reported fires by about 10% and property damage and loss of life by 18%! But Mayu's abilities are anecdotally credible, at least the ones about the wind. I've never heard a satisfactory explanation for why "the winds of high places" and "landslides" should fit together, though.*

Step 7: Main Characters—Choose Your Vasili Family Affliction

Your family doesn't *tend* to have Afflictions, but since you're kind of a magical existence, it's not unheard-of either. As a Main Character, you will start with a single Affliction. It probably represents an extension of your basic elemental affinity—something becomes just plain absolutely, fairy-tale-level *true* about how you and your element get along. Like:

- **Affliction:** The wind will always find its way to me.
- **Affliction:** I'll never drown in a natural body of water.
- **Affliction:** I can see every star in the sky.
- **Affliction:** I have a fire inside me.
- **Affliction:** I cannot be hurt while my feet are in contact with the earth.

What's yours?

Step 8: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

As a Vasili, you'll start with four free Connection Perks (below).

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.

2 Connection: the Troublemaker

Rinley is the best *Rinley.*

1 Connection: the Vasili Family

You have a pretty good family.

You can bump this to level 2 without a quest if you and your family are close.

1 Connection: Fortitude

You know Fortitude well, and it knows you.

-1 Connection: Nightmares' Angel

Nightmares' Angel knows so many interesting things!

Step 9: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

Congratulations, **Vasili Shrine Maiden (or Priest)!** You've now created yourself as a member of the Vasili Family.

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in.

YOUR NAME



CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION

SKILLS

PERKS

ARC TRAITS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

SHRINE MAIDEN/PRIEST — THE VASILI

YOUR ELEMENT

HONORING YOUR ELEMENT

FAMILY STATUS

QUEST INFORMATION

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

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

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The Yatskaya

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
Genres: Pastoral, Immersive Fantasy
(Before playing a Yatskaya Shrine Maiden/Priest in any other genre, please make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept.)



Step 1: Growing Up Yatskaya

The Yatskayas mix the dust of the Outside into sacred incense. Its vapors hang heavily about their home, and that home ties only loosely to the reality of Fortitude.

So growing up Yatskaya, I think, must be *weird.*

I think... I think it must be like being on tranquilizers all the time. You breathe the drugged incense, and you live your life teetering on the edge of dreams. Yatskaya children are mostly independent from a very young age (maybe 1-2 years) and I think that there must be a sense of endlessness and timelessness to everything as you grow up.

There are two Properties of the Yatskaya temple—two *world laws* created by the incense:

- you can lose yourself in daydreams, and think them real.
- cats come and go as they please.

And in that place I think a lot of your earliest behavioral models will be cats. You might not even really grasp that there's a difference between cats and people. It's even possible, depending on your Skill choices below, that for you there *isn't*—

That cats can talk to you, and that *when* they talk to you they'll be just as smart as people are.

Or maybe you're not lucky enough or unlucky enough for *that*, but they'll still be awfully... close to being peers.

In those early years I think you will get out to see the world on occasion, but it will be pretty rare. The vast majority of your world and life will be the temple and your own dreaming thoughts.

Eventually—maybe around age 5-6—a Yatskaya can start venturing out more into the world. You'll meet the people of the Maple Hill area, whom your family is sort of responsible for. You'll start to experience Fortitude as a whole and explore a whole world where there *is* a firm line between daydreams and physical reality, where there *isn't* lightly-drugged smoke everywhere, where your own emotions are experienced through a new lens, where cats can't come and go as they please.

(I mean... well...

You know.)

I don't know when it filters in to you exactly—probably slowly, over time, with a sudden moment of formal realization and self-recognition sometime in your teens—

To be Yatskaya is not to be entirely human.

It is to be something *else.*

So just who are you, Yatskaya child?

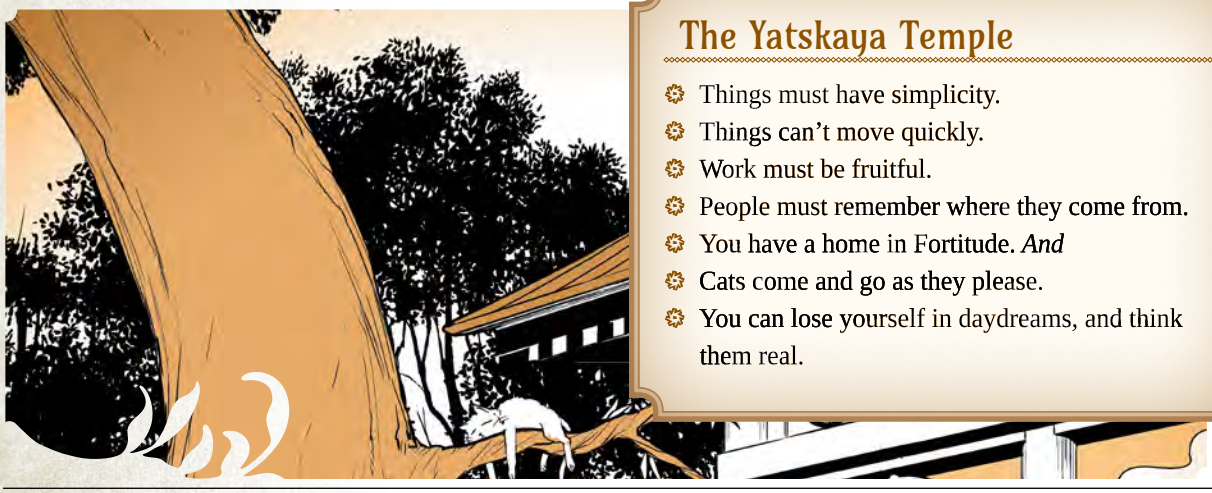
Shrine Maiden Names

Aislin Yatskaya
Denise Yatskaya
Michiko Yatskaya
Mirjam Yatskaya
Noriko Yatskaya
Kimiko Yatskaya
Gemma Fidelia Yatskaya
Iris Yatskaya
Maureen Yatskaya
Nikki Yatskaya
Keiko Gabrielle Yatskaya
Lies Yatskaya
Tomiko Yatskaya
Natsuki Yatskaya
Dairine Yatskaya

Priest Names

Ptolemy Yatskaya
Phelan Yatskaya
Oscar Riordan Yatskaya
Valentin Kurou Yatskaya
"Flip"
Ichiro Yatskaya
Hubrecht Yatskaya
Joris Yatskaya
Akio Rudolph Yatskaya
Murdoch Yatskaya
Edwin William Yatskaya
Kiyoshi Yatskaya
Kevin Yatskaya
Hideyoshi Yatskaya
Diarmiud Yatskaya

If you want a more Russian flavor boys could adopt the last name "Yatskiy" instead of "Yatskaya."



The Yatskaya Temple

- Things must have simplicity.
- Things can't move quickly.
- Work must be fruitful.
- People must remember where they come from.
- You have a home in Fortitude. *And*
- Cats come and go as they please.
- You can lose yourself in daydreams, and think them real.

Your Family

I know little of **Goro Yatskaya;** he seems mild-mannered and a little bit addled. He is often away on journeys through alien worlds.

I can say even less of **Shiori Yatskaya;** she was stolen, by a bird.

Then there are your probable siblings:

Caroline Yatskaya danced in the world of dreams and drew down to herself one of the primal fears and archetypes of the rats. Now she is a dread witch to them, most terrible and most great, and the bravos of the rats test their courage by challenging her, visiting her, hunting her, or bringing her a gift. She doesn't take this entirely seriously; if anything, she relishes the game of it, toying with the rats who come her way, rarely letting the side of her that really *is* a dread witch to the surface and only when dealing with the most heroic or detestable of the rats. Most of the rats don't take it seriously either—it's a rite of passage, mediated for them as it is for her by the fact that *she is a person* and *they are people*. They seek not to kill her but to count coup, and, under most circumstances, the converse. This isn't reliably true, though—there are always going to be rats who, seeing the dread witch of all their fears taken flesh, won't stop without her life; and there's always the risk for her that a berserk will fall upon her and she will toss a challenger in the dinner-pot. For these dual risks she has negotiated a price: each rat who visits her with ill intentions frees one cat from the census for a year. As for her, she's free to do as she likes short of actively *seeking* trouble, but the Yatskayas are bound to hand her over to the rats for trial if she kills or tortures out of malice.

Kuroma Yatskaya is her counterpart—he shares his spirit with the bleak god King Death that the rats simultaneously revere and dread. He is their nightmare, the metaphysical representation of a plague. He doesn't get any sort of polite, social arrangement with the rats. He isn't really a *person* to them, even though they're vaguely aware he *must* be. If Caroline showed up at the Rat King's Recourse, she'd get the fear, anger, and respect that the visiting leader of a hostile nation would. If Kuroma showed up they'd flee the place like a volcano was going off, or fight him off like a *kaiju* risen from the Lake. Rats still come to bother him now and again but they're not the kind of rats who want to challenge a legendary monster: they're the kind of rats who want to bargain with, or fight with, death.

Rinley Yatskaya is the youngest of the Yatskayas. It's a heavy name to carry—"Rinley Yatskaya" is essentially a legendary name in Fortitude, the name of a guy you can slot into just about any just-so story, whether it's about somebody who gets drunk and agitated and shoots down the sun; catches a gigantic tuna and loses it in a bet with sharks; wears a shrunken-down alligator for a belt; or mends the sails of an invading pirate fleet while they're burning Town, because, well, "Rinley saw as how they needed mending!" (The name probably comes from Rin Yatskaya, a historical larger-than-life hero, getting mixed up with Finley over time.) The modern Rinley hasn't done much that's notable yet, but the child *has* somehow befriended one of the princes of the rats—a friendship that's likely to do neither of them any good if word ever gets around. The modern Rinley's a girl by default, since I think the name works either way, but it'll be up to the appropriate player or HG.

Idril Nakano is not actually a Yatskaya, but he hangs out with them a lot. He's supposed to be an octopus spirit who's taken human shape. It's not clear if he got this reputation by tapping into the nightmares of the rats like Caroline and Kuroma did, or if it's just a weird story he tells, or if he actually is an octopus spirit who's taken human shape and he hangs out with the Yatskayas because they happen to get along.

Step 2: For Main Characters Only—"A Person of Destiny"

There is a touch of the miraculous on most Yatskaya magicians—they tend to have one or two **Bonds**, the effect of magic shaping and exaggerating their natural tendencies into a borderline miraculous form.

But you—

You have something more. You have the touch of destiny and miracle upon you.

Even before anything campaign-specific—you were someone special. Why?

- ...I was chosen by an exceptionally powerful spirit.
- ...I'm just generally extra-awesome.
- ...I'm a prodigy with the Yatskaya magic.
- ...I found some useful treasure while wandering in realms of dream.
  - a large, colorful stone egg?
  - something that is *not* a large, colorful stone egg? And if not, what?
- ...I'm a vaguely celestial, numinous being
  - ...with preternatural luck?
  - ...with mysterious access to luxuries or information?
  - ...with some other alien quality?
- ...or was it something else?

Step 3: Your Place in the Family

There's only really one family of Yatskaya that lives full-time in the temple—Goro Yatskaya and his three children Kuroma, Caroline, and Rinley. (Their mother Shiori is not there any longer, having been unexpectedly carried off by a giant bird when little Rinley was two.) There's also Kuroma's friend Idril Nakano, who claims to be an octopus spirit and stays over roughly two nights in three.

Scattered around the path to the temple are the "cousin houses," home to Yatskaya whose spouses couldn't take the atmosphere in the temple or who don't get along with its current head. (And their children, of course.) The cousin houses are not as far estranged from reality as the temple itself, although they still get pretty weird.

In this picture, there's room for you to be...

- ...Goro and Shiori's third-born child, after Kuroma and Caroline
- ...child to one of the cousin-houses, but raised in the temple
- ...a servant brought in young enough to pick up some of the Yatskaya magic yourself
- ...a distant relative brought into the temple in your youth because you were orphaned and/or because you had talent
- ...child of a relusive old relative of Goro's who lives in the temple but who doesn't get out of bed any longer
- ...someone who slipped out of one of the Yatskayas' daydreams and became real, typically some mirror variant of an existing Yatskaya
- ...a cat-spirit or dead cat that (re)enfleshed itself as a Yatskaya.

This is pretty much in decreasing order of likelihood, but honestly it's all good.

If you're planning to be 18+, you could also be...

- ...Goro and Shiori's first- or second-born child.

Step 4: Choosing Your Skills

The next step is figuring out your Skills—what you know how to do.

I'm recommending three different "builds" of Yatskaya:

- **"Cat-Speaker:"** you've spent your whole life around cats; you're practically a cat yourself.
- **"Magician:"** you're good at the Yatskaya magic, and can summon a spirit into your body.
- **"Claimed:"** the founder of the Yatskaya took her husband from the sea, and the sea will call you home.

Cat-Speaker

The first build looks like this:

- **Cat-Speaker 4**—Stealth, athletics, and telepathic communication with cats.
- **Claimed 1**—The sea calls you.
- **Dreamer 2**—You're extra-strong in dreams.
- **(Useful Skill) 1**—You're familiar with one other thing of your choice.

Magician

The second build looks like this (pick 8 total points' worth):

- **Yatskaya Magic 3**—You have a pact with a spirit.
- **Cat-Speaker 1-2**—You can talk to cats and do cat-like things.
- **Claimed 1**—The sea calls you.
- **Dreamer 0-1**—You may be extra strong in dreams.
- **(Useful Skill) 1-3**—You're familiar with, good at, or excellent at something.

Claimed

The third build looks like this:

- **Claimed 3**—The water owns you; you can breathe within.
- **(Useful Skill) 3**—You're excellent at something else.
- **Cat-Speaker 1**—You're good with cats.
- **Yatskaya Magic 1**—You're learning the Yatskaya magic.

The Yatskaya Family Magic Skill is about commanding cats, seeing through their eyes, and inviting spirits (mostly cat-related spirits) down into your flesh.

As for the Useful Skill, here's some of my recommendations, each with their implications as to the kind of person you are—

- **Argument**
- **Charmer**
- **Domestic Skills**
- **Figure Out Something**
- **Figure Something Out**
- **Flute and Pennywhistle**
- **Incense-Making**
- **I've Heard of This**
- **A Kind Word**
- **Martial Arts**
- **Military Strategy**
- **Naturalist**
- **Odd Jobs**
- **Sailing**
- **Scavenging**
- **Skateboarding**
- **Student**
- **Timing**
- **Visual Arts**
- **Whatever's Necessary**

Yatskaya Family Secret Techniques – General Notes

There is something in the Yatskaya that the sea recognizes—some legacy of your long-ago ancestor Finley the selkie, whose wife purportedly stole him from the sea. I'm reluctant to say that this is a physical or even a spiritual thing; I'd like to assume that the Yatskaya would be human if their temple and magic didn't make them be otherwise. I'd like to assume that, so I'll say that this is nothing to do with *you*, not in your person, exactly; it's *the sea* that remembers Finley, that claims and offers a certain comfort to his heirs.

Or would, you know, if cats and Yatskaya liked water. ...which admittedly, mostly, they do not.

The family has access to the Superior Quality **Claimed,** aka **Claimed by the Sea**. This makes the Yatskaya comfortable with the sea and able to communicate with some of its creatures. Living (and particularly growing up) in the Yatskaya family temple changes you further and eventually qualifies you for three further abilities: **Superior Dreamer, Superior Cat-Speaker,** and potentially the **Yatskaya Family Magic.**

Here's how this works in play.

A typical modern Yatskaya has **Claimed 1**, which means that if they *had* to, they could do awfully well in a situation involving water—but it's all talent and no Skill, and they need a different Skill if they want to be *really* good. Most Yatskaya don't bother developing one; these days, they are mostly creatures of the land. A throwback Yatskaya with a love for water and the ability to turn physically into a seal would upgrade this to **Claimed 3**.

For all that it's the Sosunov and not the Yatskaya who are responsible for Fortitude's dreams, **(Superior) Dreamer** is much more common among the Yatskaya. Growing up in the Yatskaya temple habituates a person to unreal worlds and conditions and vaccinates them against losing themselves in dreams or nightmares. The Yatskaya are extremely good at coping with the strange, the horrific, the alien, and the holy. This technique doesn't come with any active magical or supernatural abilities; it just makes them quasi-lucid dreamers with minds, souls, and wills that are incredibly robust in the presence of the strange. Most Yatskaya have 2-3 points in this; there's a story that the Devil himself came to Fortitude once and made a play for Rinley Yatskaya's soul—flush from a victory or two with the Sosunovs, the way the Yatskayas tell it—but on realizing that Rinley was a Yatskaya, he bowed his head three times, apologized, and left. "Now there's a soul," the Devil said, "that would make some trouble for me in Hell!"

Yatskaya Family Magic

The last of the Yatskaya abilities is **the Yatskaya Family Magic,** described on pg. 223 of the **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** RPG. This ability is not universal within the family: some Yatskaya develop an ordinary Skill or two or pump up their Cat-Speaker instead.

Unlike Claimed, Dreamer, and Cat-Speaker, the Yatskaya Family Magic is an actual magical Skill—it doesn't reflect an innate inhumanity but rather a learned technique for cheating at the world. In particular, this magic allows the Yatskaya to bind themselves to strange archetypes or spirits—principally to the nameless gods of the cats and the terrifying enemy-god Mysteries of the rats. I think it might be possible for them to connect to human deities or archetypes but I've only heard of one ambiguous case where it might have been so. Every Yatskaya who practices the family magic develops at least one Bond, representing their connection to a specific archetype or spirit they have called down into themselves; either the Bond is a bland statement of that connection or a quirk of the Yatskaya's nature deriving from the spirit's communion with their soul.

Note that between Claimed, Cat-Speaker, Superior Dreamer, and the Yatskaya Family Magic, a magician has a lot of stuff to spend points on; they're unlikely to be good at much of anything else.

Step 5: Choose Your Yatskaya Family Bond

Yatskaya magicians often develop Bonds relating to their magic. In fact, all Yatskaya magicians have at least *one* Bond for each spirit, archetype, or individual cat they connect themselves to.

Yatskaya without the family magic probably *don't* have Bonds—they can have foibles, flaws, bans, obsessions, and things they care about, but they're probably not meaningful *enough* to count as Bonds, to give them Will, to help them overcome Obstacles. If you're the HG and you're building a non-Main Character, non-magician Yatskaya, buy these kinds of things as Skills or just roleplay them—Bonds aren't really *for* sleepy cat-people who laze around the Yatskaya temple all day.

Either way, as a Main Character, you'll start with a single level 2 Bond.

(Superior) Cat-Speaker

(Superior) Cat-Speaker is the third and last of the Yatskaya Superior Skills, and I'll go into a little more detail on it. Most Yatskaya have 1-3 points in this Skill. As a supernatural ability it lets you talk to cats, understand cats, and make a social/empathic connection with cats—

- **Cat-Speaker 1:** *like any other cat person can,* but as competently as a veterinarian familiar with the cat in question's case;
- **Cat-Speaker 2:** *by talking aloud,* as if the cat were the animal sidekick in a buddy movie;
- **Cat-Speaker 3:** *by talking aloud,* as if you shared a common human language;
- **Cat-Speaker 4:** *by talking aloud or telepathically,* as if you had a common language and weak mind-to-mind contact;
- **Cat-Speaker 5:** *with eye contact,* as if you and the cat become one entangled person for a moment when you look into the other's eyes.

This also gives the cats in question the necessary intellect to make this worthwhile, at least in their direct interactions with you; at level 2, the cats become cunning, at 3-4 they become capable of intelligent conversation, and at level 5 they can cope with the entire burden of your mind.

Cat-Speaker also functions as a generic Skill at doing cat-like stuff.

Traditional Yatskaya Bonds include:

- **Bond:** I don't understand human ways.
- **Bond:** a little simple or naive
- **Bond:** I cannot fight without risking becoming animalistic and berserk.
- **Bond:** Rats trouble me.
- **Bond:** I must look out for the interests of the cats I know.
- **Bond:** I must protect the Maple Hill community from threats and from change.
- **Bond:** I am driven to lurk in high places and stare down at people.
- **Bond:** I am drawn to water.
- **Bond:** I hate water *so much*.
- **Bond:** If I don't get my fourteen hours of sleep how do you expect me to get through the day?
- **Bond:** I like to play with my opponents.

- **Bond:** I act like I'm drugged, in a trance, or half-asleep even when I'm not.
- **Bond:** I act *really ridiculous* when actually drugged, and it doesn't take much catnip to get me there.
- **Bond:** Insects are really tasty. And catching them is fun!
- **Bond:** I get really, *really* hyper sometimes.
- **Bond:** ooh shiny
- **Bond:** destiny's patsy
- **Bond:** I have no destiny at all.
- **Bond:** I've bound myself with Yatskaya Magic to an ancient cat god.
- **Bond:** I've bound myself with Yatskaya Magic to an archetype feared by the rats.
- **Bond:** I've bound myself with Yatskaya Magic to the cats of a given neighborhood.
- **Bond:** I've bound myself with Yatskaya Magic to a specific cat.
- **Bond:** I've bound myself with Yatskaya Magic to the cats of a non-Fortitude Region.
- **Bond:** I've bound myself with Yatskaya Magic to oversee the death, birth, growth, territory, or other element of the life of cats.
- **Bond:** I am not good at anything outside of temple life.

Do you have one of those?

Or do you have a unique Bond of your own?

Step 6: Choose Your Yatskaya Family Affliction

Remember what you picked to explain your being a person of destiny? Well, keeping that in mind, it's time to choose your Affliction—the coolest or scariest thing about your inherent power.

Your Affliction is...

- **Affliction:** Nothing can make me betray the secrets of a cat.
- **Affliction:** I can make giant cat's teeth strike upwards from or sink into the ground as fast as I can visualize it happening.
- **Affliction:** Reality around me fractures when I'm very angry.
- **Affliction:** Like all cats, I have a right to be anywhere, and look at anyone.
- **Affliction:** There is useful information in the pictures on my colorful egg.
- **Affliction:** I can regain Will and a sense of purpose by hugging my colorful egg.
- **Affliction:** Everyone admires me for having such an amazing, cool, colorful stone egg.
- **Affliction:** I am preternaturally lucky.
- **Affliction:** I am never without access to goodies.
- **Affliction:** I can dance around someone to turn them partway into a cat. And maybe back?
- **Affliction:** I can see through your disguises.
- **Affliction:** I can't be imprisoned by anyone who doesn't know my name.
- **Affliction:** No matter what happens, I always land on my feet.
- ...something else?

Step 7: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

As a Yatskaya, you'll start with three free Connection Perks (below).

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.



2

Connection: the Troublemaker

Rinley is normally your kid sister or kid brother.



1

Connection: the Dream-Witch

Intriguing!



1

Connection: the Yatskayas

You're at home in the Yatskaya shrine.

Step 8: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

2

Congratulations, **Yatskaya Shrine Maiden (or Priest)!** You've now created yourself as a member of the Yatskaya Family.

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in.



YOUR NAME



CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION

SKILLS

PERKS

ARC TRAITS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

SHRINE MAIDEN/PRIEST — THE YATSKAYA

TOUCH OF DESTINY/MIRACLE

FAMILY STATUS

QUEST INFORMATION

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

DIVINE

TOUGH

NORMAL

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2





The Hayashi

Academics Skill: Good
Sports Skill: Average
Favorite Foods: Casserole, Fondue, Crunchy Breads, Pizza, Mozzarella Sticks, Apples, Ham Steaks
Blood Type: O
Animal: Monkey
Genres: Pastoral, Epic Fantasy, Adventure Fantasy
(Before playing a Hayashi Shrine Maiden/Priest in any other genre, please make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept.)

Step 1: Growing Up Hayashi

I think the Hayashi are a pretty normal, hard-working family of glass-makers. The fact that their glass is magic probably helps fill their lives with a little more wonder and oddity than you'd expect, but honestly?

It's not *that* magic.

It's magic enough that one or two weird accidents probably happen in your childhood. Maybe they're your fault, maybe they're not. Maybe they're scary, maybe they're just weird. Imagine that your family is working with a dangerous toxin every day, only, it doesn't corrode your lungs or sinuses or make you throw up for a day if something goes wrong. It enchants you with backwards speech or a locust-attracting curse or makes you hallucinate or traps you in an ever-slower moment of time or something, instead!

So there's *some* magic.

But mostly it's just—

You mix the dust of the Outside into the glass you work, and you make really beautiful glass. Then you seal it up in regular glass or lacquer or something and wait for the sun to shine through it for five to eight years until it's clean.

That's, like, 90% of the thing.

There was probably a piece of glasswork one of your aunts or uncles made when you were born. They detoxified it for eight years in the sun. Then, on your eighth birthday, they shattered the outer coating and gave you the beautiful thing inside. Maybe it's a trinket or keepsake. Maybe it's a little magical, or lucky.[10] Maybe it was just a new window for your room. There were probably actually three or four pieces made, just in case one of them came out cursed, and you probably have the responsibility of deciding who gets to buy the other two or three.

(Not to sell them yourself, exactly, or to keep the money or anything. Just, to *decide.*)

I don't know most of the Hayashi secrets. I don't really know a lot of what they do. They make mildly enchanted glass. They make really beautiful glass that I'm not sure if a normal Earth glassmaker could make. (But then again, real normal Earth glassmakers are pretty awesome sometimes, so I could be wrong.) The Hayashi have weird things in their home and business, like, I've heard stories of mirrors so dangerous they have to be hidden inside other mirrors, and glass that shows reflections of the future, and the like—

But magic isn't front and center for them like it is for most of the shrine families. It isn't all wound through their lives. For the Hayashi, the glass-making is central, and selling it at the House of Crystal is important; and the magic part is just a sideshow. They're like low fantasy instead of high fantasy or street superheroes instead of the galactic fighters. Does that make sense?[11]

Anyway! Your name is...

Shrine Maiden Names

Karissa Hayashi
Dahlia Hayashi
Ramona Hayashi
Nessa Hayashi
Jocelyn Hayashi
Suzume Hayashi
Keeva Hayashi
Tsarina Hayashi
Mitradora Hayashi
Anna-Maria Hayashi
Tomoko Hayashi

Priest Names

Maynard Hayashi
Finnbarr Hayashi
Reed Jameson Hayashi
Brian Weston—*a Hayashi Cousin*
Izzy Hayashi
Stewart Hayashi
Zeke Sheldon Hayashi
Antonij Hayashi
Cathal Hayashi
Haruki Hayashi
Jiro Hayashi

Unisex Names

Emerson Hayashi
Sile Hayashi
Reagan Hayashi
Ennis Hayashi
Sora Bevin Hayashi
Tibby Hayashi
Sorley Hayashi
Minoru Hayashi
Kyo Hayashi
Sláine Hayashi

Step 2: Your Place in the Family

The Hayashi are pretty much defined by their business. They make and sell glass out of the House of Crystal up near Ceiba Quay. If you have a place in the House of Crystal, then you're a Hayashi. If not, you're—

Well, your family name is still Hayashi, and they still come to your birthday parties!

But something would be lost.

It goes the other way around, too: the family tends to marry their apprentices and workers, people who've worked for them for seven years plus and learned most of the lesser secrets of their trade. It's not a *hard* rule, not since a young apprentice got too cocky about

10 Sometimes, if you do it right, a bit of beneficial enchantment lingers even after the main magic in the glass is gone.

11 And yet I do think a Hayashi PC would be OK in an epic game. I guess I believe they can scale up!

The Glass-Maker's 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."

— FROM THE CAMPAIGN PREMISE FOR
FORTITUDE: THE GLASS-MAKER'S DRAGON

The Hayashi will be near the center of things in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon—**

In particular, **Professor Hideo Hayashi**, and the incidents surrounding the glass dragon that he may or may not have made, and his mostly leaving the family and no longer making glass afterwards—

But only in a kind of moral, metaphorical sense.

You won't be at the center of great events, really. You won't be in the thick of the action. It's just that glass will be a core symbol in that campaign, and you'll be able to do things like use Hayashi Glasswork to understand the glass dragon and its shards, and a lot of people will have motivations that connect to your family—unless the player of **the Dream-Witch** chooses a character variation where they don't connect to your family, or that connection just never winds up manifesting in play.

For that campaign, a Bond option is:

- **Bond:** I'm driven to understand what happened with the glass dragon.

2

great-aunt Eilis' lack of options a couple generations back, but it's still how things tend to go.

So it's pretty much down to one of these options:

- ...you're an established member of the family and the business
- ...you're still learning
- ...you're not happy at the House of Crystal, and will probably leave the core family one day.

Step 3: Choosing Your Skills

The next step is figuring out your Skills—what you know how to do.

For a young Hayashi, I'd recommend—

- **Hayashi Glasswork 3**—You can do some amazing things with glass and Outside dust.
- **Shopping 2**—You enjoy shopping and you're good at finding bargains.
- **Clever 2**—You're pretty smart when you have to be.
- **Well-Met 1**—You're pretty or handsome and generally well-groomed.

You're also totally allowed to throw this list out and pick whatever Skills you would like!

Step 4: Choose Your Hayashi Family Bond

As a Main Character, you'll have a level 2 Bond.

For a Hayashi-flavored Bond, you might pick:

- **Bond:** I'm pretty sensible!
- **Bond:** I understand what's going on.
- **Bond:** Ancient evil things like me.
- **Bond:** Most magic passes right through me like light through glass.
- **Bond:** I love sunlight.
- **Bond:** I love working at the House of Crystal.
- **Bond:** My locket makes me lucky.
- **Bond:** I want my family to reconcile with Professor Hideo Hayashi.
- **Bond:** I'm spiritually aware.

On the other hand, mortals don't usually have Bonds unless they're magicians, and the Hayashi aren't really magicians. So if the Hayashi flavor doesn't fit, you're even more free than usual to discard these picks

entirely, figure out a central truth of your life, and pick *that* instead.

What's your Bond?

Step 5: Choose Your Hayashi Family Affliction

Again, the Hayashi aren't very magical. They don't normally *have* Afflictions. So it's quite possible that you don't have a "Hayashi Family Affliction" at all—maybe you have a special power from something *else*.

Or something!

You can pick an Affliction pretty freely.

But if you want a miraculous power or curse that relates to your status as a Hayashi—

Well, the Hayashi work with poisonous stuff and with reflections and such, and they're used to caging the malevolence of the Outside in glass; so possibly a Hayashi of particular destiny would have an Affliction like:

- **Affliction:** Poison barely hurts me.
- **Affliction:** I'm never lost.
- **Affliction:** The Bleak Academy wishes to commission me to build...
  - a glass chimera, and teach it to hate the world?
  - a glass prison, to imprison a god?
  - a mirror, to turn the world inside out with?
  - a glass salamander, to set reflections on fire?
- **Affliction:** My glasswork can contain the power of the Bleak Academy or the Outside.

What's yours?

Step 6: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

As a member of the Hayashi family, you'll start with four free Connection Perks (below).

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.

2 Connection: Nightmares' Angel

He seems fun.

2 Connection: the Troublemaker

She seems pretty cool.

1 Connection: the House of Crystal

This is the Hayashi home. You know what's going on here.

0 Connection: Professor Hideo Hayashi

He left the family and you don't really understand why.

You don't have to keep this Perk—it doesn't actually do you any good. That said, the fact that you don't have a Connection with him is often on a Hayashi's mind.

Step 7: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

Congratulations, **Hayashi Shrine Maiden (or Priest)!**

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in.

YOUR NAME

CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION



SKILLS

PERKS

ARC TRAITS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

SHRINE MAIDEN/PRIEST — THE HAYASHI

FAMILY STATUS

QUEST INFORMATION

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

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

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The Watanabe

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
Genres: Pastoral, Immersive Fantasy, Techno
(Before playing a Watanabe Shrine Maiden/Priest in any other genre, please make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept.)



Step 1: Growing Up Watanabe

On the day the sun went out Lily Watanabe lost—you lost, I mean, your family lost—

I mean,

Fire fell from the sky and hit the family dinner.

So went Tora Watanabe, and Makoto; Akemi and Mayumi; Hiroshi and Keiko, Kazuko, and even Yuuko died. And there you were, you and Lily and two grandfathers and a great-aunt and you were what was left.

Maybe you were eight?[12] It could have been younger, but maybe eight?

Old enough for it to be the most important moment of your life, but young enough to heal.

That's what Lily tells me, anyway.

Listen.

You make candies. That's your "shrine family" deal. You take the Outside dust, and you do stuff with sugar and cooking and whatever, and you turn it into *watanabes*, chewy little clear candies that taste more or less like butterscotch. Unlike raw, uncooked Outside dust, they don't induce psychotic episodes, hallucination, or enchantment. So that's pretty great.

It's probably not as important as the falling fire from the sky.

Who are you, anyway?

Lily's Imaginary Little Sister?

Ivy Watanabe	Mami Watanabe
Ai Watanabe	Kaori Watanabe
Mai Watanabe	Marika Watanabe

...or Brother?

Daisuke Watanabe	Kenta Watanabe
Takuya Watanabe	Silas Watanabe
Naoki Watanabe	Arata Watanabe

Step 2: Choose Your Skills

The next step is figuring out your Skills—what you know how to do.

For you, I'd recommend—hrm.

Well, not *magic*, because the Watanabe don't have that. But I think that maybe being able to handle the Outside dust safely, maybe that means being the kind of person on whom enchantments don't really take.

You've got some *Cool*.

So, for a young Watanabe, I'm thinking something like—

- **Conversationalist 3**—You're an excellent socialite.
- **Know Your Candies 2**—You know your candies.
- **Chores 1**—You're familiar with pitching in.
- **Be Awesome and Magical 0**—You are not actually awesome and magical.

And maybe the special Skill

- **Cool 2**—You're surprisingly collected and hard to hurt.

Step 3: Choose Your Watanabe Family Bond

As a Main Character, you have a level 2 Bond.

Only, mortals don't usually have Bonds unless they're magicians, and the Watanabe aren't really magicians. So where could yours come from?

I guess that I'm going to suggest some Bonds that are just general exaggerations of shrine family life. Could you have a Bond like one of these?

- **Bond:** I have a deep connection with my family's business.
- **Bond:** I grieve for my family.
- **Bond:** I'm driven to keep things clean and pure.
- **Bond:** I resist the stuff of the Outside.
- **Bond:** I know all the traditional ways and customs.
- **Bond:** I know how to counsel people in their troubles.
- **Bond:** I'm good at keeping demons and monsters away.
- **Bond:** My clothes are awesome.
- **Bond:** I always have a few Watanabe candies on hand.
- **Bond:** I really want...
  - coffee in the mornings;
  - love;
  - money;
  - to have adventures;
  - to investigate mysteries;
  - to be important.

Or do you have a unique Bond of your own?

12 It usually happened when the default PC age was 8, which is to say, 7 years ago, unless there's a reason to change that, in which case it was probably either 12 years back instead or it's about to happen soon.

Step 4: Choose Your Watanabe Family Affliction

On a similar note, it's probable that you don't have a "Watanabe Family Affliction"—maybe you got a special power from something else? Or an extra power from some campaign-specific source?

But if you want a miraculous power or curse that relates to your status as a member of a shrine family, you could try an Affliction like—

- **Affliction:** I reinforce reality with my presence.
- **Affliction:** I'm well-respected in Fortitude.
- **Affliction:** I'm inherently likeable.
- **Affliction:** I never break or ruin things by accident.
- **Affliction:** If I work hard I'll always find a way.
- **Affliction:** If I'm alone and lost I'll always find a friend.

What's yours?

Step 5: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

As a Watanabe, you'll start with six free Connection Perks (below).

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.

2 Connection: the Child of the Sun

You can see that you can trust her.

1 Connection: Lily Watanabe

You are probably close to your sister.

1 Connection: Fortitude

You have a place in Fortitude.

1 Connection: the Angel of Fortitude

You do not fear this man.

1 Connection: the Wishing Boy (or Girl)

You and them are inclined to click.

-1 Connection: the Dream-Witch

This person confuses and distresses you.

You don't have to keep this Perk—it doesn't actually do you any good.

Step 6: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

Congratulations, **Watanabe Shrine Maiden (or Priest)!** You've now defined the Watanabe Family elements of your character.

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in.

YOUR NAME



CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION

SKILLS

PERKS

ARC TRAITS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

SHRINE MAIDEN/PRIEST — THE WATANABE

QUEST INFORMATION

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

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

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Creating a Shrine Maiden or Priest from an Original Family

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: ??

Genres: Variable

(Please try to fit your Shrine Maiden/Priest design to whatever is the genre of the game!)

Step 1: Growing Up in a Shrine Family

The dust of the Outside blows into Fortitude. It's dangerous stuff, and there's only so much of it that people can safely dispose of themselves. It needs people able to take in large quantities of it and neutralize it or convert it to a safe, non-toxic form.

That's what the shrine families do.

The dust of the Outside is the stuff of magic and enchantment, and it responds favorably to spiritual practice. So the shrine families *tend* to be magical and spiritual themselves. They start with a technique for disposing of the low-grade dust, or occasionally (e.g., the Kichi) for *using* the high-grade dust, and over the generations they'll tend to become somewhat magical and/or spiritual themselves. That's not a *hard* rule—the Hayashi and Watanabe are pretty secular, for instance; and anyone can collect the higher grades of dust in their dream-catchers, refine it in a crystallern, and have a useful home remedy for eye infections, a tool for discouraging ants and termites, and a bit of added flavoring for molasses or other sweets. That doesn't make you spiritual unless the molasses is *really* good! And then there's the distillery that makes Old Indescribable, which is run in an entirely secular fashion by Steven Burke and Akari Tohru.

Still, you probably grew up with some kind of magic and some kind of spiritual tradition. You've probably attuned yourself to the spirit world in some fashion; you likely have some sort of minor magical power; and you're probably generically or specifically holy.

Is your family tradition descended from:

- ...Shinto, as is most common?
- ...Buddhism, with some Shinto influence, as with the Sosunov?
- ...Russian Orthodox Christianity?
- ...something cobbled together by your ancestors, possibly from half-baked theories?
- ...some other religion?

Or

- ...are you secular?

Does your family

- ...use relatively pure Outside dust to reinforce the magic of some sacred place or practice?
- ...dispose of/purify low-grade, toxic Outside dust?
- ...or both?

What does your family actually use the dust for?

What general powers does this give you?

Step 2: Choosing Your Name

I've put together some Fortitude-style names that strike me as suited to a shrine family. What do you think of these?

For a Shrine Maiden

Gabriela Romanov
Galina Suzuki
Yelena Kuznetsov
Lilia Takahashi
Aksinya Bogomolov
Akane Tachibana
Yustina Miyamoto
Vasilisa Oshiro
Hitomi Vasilyev
Rada Tsukino
Midori Yamada
Praskoviya Yamamoto
Linnaea Yakovlev
Anita Immaculata Sterling
Amaryllis Sato
Ayako Kaminski
Precious Nakahara
Zina Hambleton
Margarethe Sokolov
Ritika Lauritsen
Ione Calandra

For a Priest

Octavian Kurosawa
Nazariy Mizushima
Daiki Wolanski
Yamato Konstantinov
Rurik Orlov
Pyotr Kobayashi
Ichirou Gavril
Adrian Spiridon
Makari Matsushita
Igor Stanislavovich Markovic
Takeshi Filipov
Martyn Yamada
Eduard Tracey
Marcellin Schermer
Taranis Vásquez
Erasmos Hisakawa
Mykhailo Iliev
Rémy Ivanov
Vasyl Nystrom
Alonzo Janvier

If you don't like these you might look into a more generic Fortitude name—see **A Citizen of Fortitude.**

Step 3: Choose Your Skills

The next step is figuring out your Skills—what you know how to do. For a young priest or shrine maiden, I'd recommend something like—

- **Traditional Ways 2**—You're good at formal, archaic, and ceremonial stuff.
- **Domestic Skill 2**—You know how to keep things neat, calm, and home-like.
- **Archery 1**—You're familiar with the bow, mostly as a hobby.
- **Library 1**—Your shrine has an interesting collection of old books.

And maybe

- **Superior Holiness 2**—You have a sacred energy in you that helps you resist the Outside and may sometimes let you perform small miracles, exorcisms, or healings.

— but you can ditch all of this in favor of figuring out your own 8 points of Skills, if you'd prefer.

Step 4: Choose Your Shrine Family Bond

Your starting level 2 Bond probably reflects your shrine family's magic—but I don't know the details! So if you want to come up with something that fits your family's traditions, that's fine and in fact best. I'm going to start by suggesting some fairly generic Bonds for a "priest" or "shrine maiden" type—

- **Bond:** I have a deep connection with my family's business.
- **Bond:** I'm driven to keep things clean and pure.
- **Bond:** I resist the stuff of the Outside.
- **Bond:** I know all the traditional ways and customs.
- **Bond:** I know how to counsel people in their troubles.
- **Bond:** I'm good at keeping demons and monsters away.
- **Bond:** My clothes are awesome.
- **Bond:** I really want...
  - coffee in the mornings;
  - love;
  - money;
  - to have adventures;
  - to investigate mysteries;
  - to be important.

Do you have one of those?
Or do you have a unique Bond of your own?

Step 5: Choose Your Shrine Family Affliction

You've been touched by miracle and destiny—you have a miraculous power. It takes the form of an **Affliction.**

Most people from most shrine families don't have these—even the inherently magical Vasili and Yatskaya tend not to. So it's possible that your Affliction isn't related to your shrine family—maybe it's unique and personal or related to the campaign.

If so, you're pretty much on your own; but if you want a miraculous power or curse that relates to your status as a member of a shrine family, you could try—

- **Affliction:** I reinforce reality with my presence.
- **Affliction:** I'm well-respected in Fortitude.
- **Affliction:** I'm inherently likeable.
- **Affliction:** I never break or ruin things by accident.
- **Affliction:** If I work hard I'll always find a way.
- **Affliction:** If I'm alone and lost I'll always find a friend.

What's yours?

Step 6: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

In a typical Fortitude campaign, you'll start with five free Connection Perks (below).

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.

2 Connection: the Child of the Sun

You can see that you can trust her.

1 Connection: Fortitude

You have a place in Fortitude.

1 Connection: the Angel of Fortitude

You do not fear this man.

1 Connection: the Wishing Boy (or Girl)

You and them are inclined to click.

-1 Connection: the Dream-Witch

This person confuses and distresses you.

You don't have to keep this Perk—it doesn't actually do you any good.

Step 7: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

Congratulations, **Shrine Maiden (or Priest)!** You've now defined the Shrine Family elements of your character.

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in.



YOUR NAME

CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION

SKILLS

PERKS

ARC TRAITS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

SHRINE MAIDEN/PRIEST

FAMILY TRADITION

HOW WE USE DUST

QUEST INFORMATION

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

DIVINE

TOUGH

NORMAL

PERMISSION IS GRANTED TO PHOTOCOPY THIS PAGE FOR PERSONAL USE



Fortitude Rats

Academics Skill: Good
Sports Skill: Very Good
Favorite Foods: Fruit, Candy, Melons, Tomatoes, Cheese, Yakitori, Eggs
Blood Type: B
Animal: Rat
Genres: Epic Fantasy, Adventure Fantasy, Fairy Tale
(Before playing a Fortitude Rat in any other genre, please make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept.)

Step 1: Childhood

The ordinary Fortitude rat grows up on the roofs. You may have been a *baby* in the Deep Under, that happens sometimes, some mothers are burrowers and just can't handle the first few weeks of a baby's life up high, maybe even some fathers too[13], but by the time your eyes were open your parents were probably already discussing how to move you home, and certainly by the time that you were weaned.

So even before you were "a knight of the rooftops and the lake;"

Before you were a heroic adventurer—

Your earliest memories were probably memories of the roofs. You'd play around up there, with the tiles and the chimneys, the laundrylines and whatever little shelters, nests, or stable cottages with their metal stoves that your mother and father construct. Hide and seek, racing, and play-fighting would be your favorite games, and exploration your favorite non-game hobby.

You'd spend a lot of time on the road—the rats take the whole "knight of the roofs" thing very seriously, and are always looking for adventure even when there's no actual trouble to get into; what I mean is, your early memories were probably "adventures" even if there were neither wars nor monsters to worry about.

You'd hunt down a lost kite or floating leaf; you'd have "the adventure of the blue genealogy," where you talked to your whole extended family including the really far-away ones to assemble all the family tree into a small blue book; you'd have contests and tournaments and you'd steal from your own family's warehouses, because just owning something isn't a good reason not to practice guile and derring-do in its acquisition! You'd rescue one another from cardboard or imaginary ogres if you can't encounter any real ones.

There might be actual little skirmishes, too. It's my understanding that the rats haven't had an *actual* war since the Autumn Dynasty so most of these are *mock*-wars—play-fights writ large, exaggerated and dramatic disputes full of scenery-chewing, bellicose grandeur, and little or no actual animosity at all. There are also a few bitter feuds, mostly non-violent, mostly driven by romantic troubles or property disputes, which can flare into trouble now and again.

The hope is that in this time—the first few months of your life, which are notionally comparable to the first five or six years of a human's life—you won't have anything actually scary happen. It's rare to see a feud so bitter that a rat would do anything worse to another rat's child than make dismissive, annoyed noises at them; it's rare for the shadow of a Mystery to fall upon a rat at such an age.

A handful of young rats are born on-ship or raised in the same. It's perfectly possible for the first few months of your life to be spent at sea in the near Outside—Big Lake isn't really big enough to justify keeping a kid on board just because they were born there, but some rat voyages beyond the Lake itself can last a year or more. If you grew up on ship, that's actually pretty awesome for you: a life of adventure and climbing the rigging, straight from the start! It's probably much more nerve-wracking for your parents, though, since if you'd managed to run off and get lost on an island somewhere you might have grown up an *Earth rat*, a *Yahoo*, fallen back into the sleep of rats and never grown up at all. Or of course you could have been snatched and eaten by a flying snake or drowned or something. Still, parental anxieties aside, if you make it back alive then being a sail-kit is lucky and speaks of a great destiny ahead. Getting raised on ship if you *weren't* born on a long, adventurous voyage is a little rarer—your parents can't be rich, because if they were rich at least one of them would take a break from the sailing to raise you on the roofs; your parents can't have good relationships with any extended family on land, or they'd leave you with them; basically, growing up on ship if you weren't born out there is a sign your family was pretty strapped for options. That doesn't make it any less cool for you, of course, except that they're more likely to stick to safe routes than to finish out epic odysseys.

It's also possible that you were raised Deep Under—in the cavern-homes of the rats.

Like I said, that's rare—it's a kind of monastic, austere upbringing, like being a novitiate somewhere. It's a way to grow up a polite, unworldly child, the kind of child who is widely understood to be unnaturally dignified and far too bookish for their own good. If this was you, you'd grow up in darkness and great echoing chambers: you'd be surrounded by a richness of genealogy, history, philosophy, and culture; you'd grow up among natural wonders and a *vastness*, most comparable, I think, to the Big Lake. The impression I get is that a family could travel for timeless days without

13 Rat mothers tend to win child-raising disputes, because in any parenting contest between two badasses the badass that has to actually nurse the children tends to win.

meeting another soul down there—not that they always *would*, I mean, rats are extremely social, but they *could*.

It is a healing darkness but it is a lonely darkness.

Somewhere Deep Under is the throne of the King of Rats. It is vast and crystalline and would dwarf a full-sized Jotun who dared to sit in it; but when the King of Rats moves upon it, his attention and his shadow sweep the room. There are underground dormitories near the throne where the royal family and certain associated families live.

If you grew up Deep Under it is possible that you're royalty, or near-to; or the child of a prisoner, for prisoners are more easily kept Deep Under than on the roofs; or, most likely, that you're the child of scholars and savants, either in residence at one of the underground Mystery cathedrals and universities or simply living somewhere in the deeps.

Anyway, all that said, what's your story?

Where did *your* life start?

Step 2: Given Names

Rat names are pretty similar to human names. Which makes sense, of course: by the time they've consciously lowered their voice into the human range in order to say a name that the great lumbering bipeds can hear, and Town's exemption from the curse of Babel has translated it into something the hearer can understand, it's only *natural* that it's going to sound like a human name. If a rat's named, basically, *standard name for a well-loved boy child*, then of course they're going to be "Ivan." If they're named *like that awesome girl in Spirited Away*, then of course they're going to be "Chihiro."[14] I don't even know if it's possible to *tell* how much of that means anything about the interactions between the cultures of the humans and the rats.

Standard names for the rats are generally the standard names for Fortitude—Russian and Japanese, with a smattering of names from everywhere; the more traditional names, names of the monastic and noble rats of

Female Names

Alyona
Dominika
Evgeniya
Florentina
Inessa
Marta
Vasilisa
Zhanna

Akane
Chihiro
Kaeda
Manami
Miki
Miyu
Natsumi
Rin

(More Traditional)

Danka
Milica
Nada
Ružica
Sandra
Suzana
Svetlana
Verica

Constanta
Elena
Elisabeta
Gabriela
Ioana
Maria
Violeta

(More "Hip"/Exotic)

Buffy
Esoterica
Federated Identity Solutions/Management (Phasma)
Jelly

Palpatine
Pantene
Plankton
Sailor Moon
Superhighway
Value

Male Names

Anatoly
Boris
Denis
Igor
Oleg
Pavel
Sergey
Valery
Big Ivan—*probably with a little brother named Ivan*
Little Ivan—*probably with a big brother named Ivan*

Daichi
Daisuke
Kaito
Kazuya
Ryouta
Shota
Tsubasa
Yuu
Yuudai

(More Traditional)

Alexandru
Beniamin
Ilie
Marin
Mihai
Tudor
Vasile
Božidar

Gavrilo
Slobodan
Vladan
Jezdimir
Ratimir—*yes, really.*
Milivoje
Vasko

(More "Hip"/Exotic)

Meriadoc
Solo
Maglev
Invisible Jack
Sagan

Lethargical
Kung Fu
Umbrella Tea
Leverage
Globalization

14 *Fortitude rats are surprisingly likely to be audiophiles or videophiles, and there's a huge nesting industry in re-chromatizing popular films for rats. The result has an eerie grandeur IMHO!*

the Deep Under and the like, tend to sound more generally eastern European to my ears.

It's all basically standard human naming, in short, except in one respect:

Since human culture is secondary to the rats, they're a lot more likely to steal the *weirdest* pop culture or historical names and use them for their kits. America tends to frown on parents who name their children "Optimus Prime," "Amtrak," or "Dictionary," and I don't think you could *get away* with naming your kid "Reaganomics"—like, wouldn't the doctors grab the parents and sedate them or something first? But rats won't twitch a whisker at the idea of naming a kid "Pandora," "John Wayne," "Snow White," "Tie Fighter," or "Casablanca"—and "Consolidated Mutual" is in fact, in my experience, totally on the table. (As was explained to me quite seriously, "It has such a beautiful sound and meaning, Jenna!")

This is probably just a cultural thing; I mean, it probably doesn't actually say anything at all about the rats, humans giving their children foreign-culture names are probably just the same. I just wanted to point it out. It's real!

Anyway, what's your given name?

Step 3: Family

What kind of family did you grow up with?

It's normal to have a pretty big family—septuplets are the norm, ranging up to tridecaplets in a normal birth, and that's just in a single litter! It's rare for a whole litter to survive to the age of awareness though[15]—did you have

- no littermates at all?
- a single littermate, who later died?
- 1-2 littermates, including at least one who's still around?
- 3-7 littermates, mostly survivors?
- 3+ littermates, brutally culled down by events?
  - to just you?
  - to just you and 1-2 more?
- a vast, hearty, and rambunctious litter, mostly still around?
- Do you make up new names for your siblings every time someone asks?
  - Keep track of them sarcastically by number?
  - Or do you just use their actual names?

What about other siblings? Did your mother have another litter later? Earlier? Did your pop have children with someone else?

- I have older siblings!
  - It's so awesome! They're like extra parents, whom you can't get in trouble with!
  - They're kind of self-important, though.
- I have younger siblings. They are so *small*. This is concerning.
- I am but one of a vast legion.
- I have some half-siblings.
  - Relationships are a little strained.
  - Because I'm part of this big family *thing*, it's all formal and stuff.
  - Which are basically like real siblings!

As for the rest of your family—is it anyone we've heard of?

- Yes! I'm an **Andrews,** so if you buy any fine Andrews products, you have *me* to ~~**thank**~~... be vaguely related to that fact!
- Yes! I'm an **Augustine!** We're a mysterious shrine family. I'm totally skipping to and reviewing the rules for making up your own shrine family now.

P.S. The Augustine Family

I'm not sure how many shrine families the rats actually have; I only know about the Augustines because they perform dust disposal for the Rat King.

Demographics suggest that there might be one or two more? but maybe it's just them. If you're playing a rat-focused game you might want to move one or two of the other shrine families down Under.

I don't know the details of how they purify Outside dust, but I'm pretty sure it's musical—sometimes, from the vicinity of their underground shrine, a sonorous and beautiful harmony in hundreds of rat-voices rises. I suppose it's also possible that they purify it in some unrelated fashion and just happen to run the Rat King's choir.

The last name "Augustine" references their purported descent from Emperor Augustus of Rome.[16]

15 *Kit mortality rates are horrifying.*

16 *Yeah, I don't know either.*

- Of course! I'm related to the King of Rats, you know!
  - a **Fujimoto**—only great-grandmother's discretion kept her off the throne!
  - a **Križ,** one of the legendary scholars!
  - a **Kysely**, from the royal house!
  - a **Takahiro,** definitely related to the throne. Definitely! Somehow!
- Yes! I'm a **Kovac!** Blood of heroes! ...want to see me make a muscle?
- I don't think you've heard of my family, but...
  - We do run a pretty famous ship.
  - Mom? Dad? Grandma? did do something awfully famous once.
  - We do have a cool business.
  - I'm going to call myself a Prince, Princess, Knight, Duke, Duchess, Lady, or something *anyway*.
- Nope! Toiling in obscurity, that's me!

I've used a lot of exclamation points but honestly when you were a kit probably so did you. Many of them were so shrill *they could not even be heard by the human ear!*

Step 4: Family Names

Family names are not a big thing for Fortitude rats. There are only a few thousand of them, and the main reason there are only a few thousand of them is that that's the "right" number for the space they have—they're pretty aware of one another, even if on an individual level any given two rats might be mutual strangers.

They do have the *concept* of family names, of course, and rats will freely appropriate their parents' names if they like them—either a parent's family name, a parent's given name, or a matronymic or patronymic deriving therefrom (e.g. "Beniamin Johnwaynevich")—but mostly a rat's last name is something that they eventually pick out for themselves. They *do* have the matrimonial tradition where a wife often adopts the last name of her husband; I'm pretty sure they picked this up from humans.[17]

The biggest exception to the kind of laissez-faire treatment of last names is rats hoping to go into the family business. An Augustine from the Augustine shrine family is probably going to want to be an Augustine; if your family runs the Eliade book-bindery, and you want to be a book-binder, you'll want to stay an Eliade! A Kysely, connected to the royal family, is going to want to be a Kysely; and a Fujimoto, half a hair short of royalty, is going to stay a Fujimoto!

Anyway, do *you* have a last name yet?

- Nope! Still thinking.
- Nope! Don't need one, neither.
- Yup.
- Yup, though it's tentative.

And in the last two cases, it's...

- something recognizable, like...
  - **Andrews,** a family of good repute
  - **Augustine,** marking you as a shrine maiden or priest
  - **Fujimoto,** high nobility
  - **Ivanov,** suggesting "from a large family" or "undecided"
  - **Križ**, a notable family of scholars
  - **Kovac**, a well-known and heroic name
  - **Kysely,** putting you at the heart or at the edge of the royal family
  - **Takahiro**, arguably high nobility
  - ...or something else?
- something that could be from your family or just something you made up or picked out, like:
  - whatever sounds good to you *right this second: or...*
  - **Boric**
  - **Czerny**
  - **Dimir**
  - **du Lac**
  - **du Toit**
  - **Gabriel**
  - **Iodain**
  - **Ionescu**
  - **Lionel**
  - **Kent**
  - **Merlin**
  - **Korhonen**
  - **Kuznetsov**
  - **Mikhael**
  - **Morozov**
  - **Novák**
  - **Natase**
  - **Ozols**
  - **Petrov**
  - **Pikante**
  - **Schulz**
  - **Smith**
  - **Skype**
  - **Solovyov**
  - **Trite**
  - **Vanag**
  - **Vasilyev**
  - **Volkov**
  - **Ward**
  - **Waynwright**
  - **Wright?**
  - ...a patronymic/metronymic variation on one of those?
  - ...or something else?

17 *And, specifically, use it to legitimize their marriages and loves in human eyes. But it could be something to do with the ancestral savannah.*

Step 5: Schooling

The earliest education of a rat takes place on the rooftops, but at some point a rat is old enough to go to the Deep Under for their schooling. The rats are actually more serious about this than a lot of the humans of Fortitude—you can *have* a rat who doesn't hold with a formal education, but it's a lot weirder than you'd think. That early training is like... military service in Switzerland? Or something? Elementary school in the States? It's not considered a choice, exactly. It's just *what you do.*

This is a timeless period and it's lived richly—the rats teach in stories layered on stories; everything is full of spiritual implication. It isn't always the same length of time down below as it is up above; it's long enough to take a rat from "old enough to deepen" to and through their childhood's end. I think it might even be possible for there to be a kind of an inverse Rip van Winkle thing where they spend years down there and come back up only a year and a little old; or maybe even the other way around?

Anyway.

This is where rats pick up most of their math and most of their literacy. They get some basic physical conditioning and practice for the sword-fighting they'll learn later on—but a young rat is physically just a *rat*, so they can't actually do most of it yet. You could already think, and stuff, you were already a *person*, when you went down to the Academy, but there were some parts of you that were still missing, like the vividness of your dreaming, and a certain kind of independence, and the physical changes that let Fortitude rats walk on their hind legs easily and hold a sword.

You probably didn't get very far into the academic or the physical stuff at this point.

I mean, you *could* have. If you were really interested in comparative literature or forensic science or advanced number theory or whatever, you could have studied it here. I wouldn't think that's the kind of thing most rats are very good at, but the ones that *are* good at it can compete at any of the universities in the world. And similarly, you wouldn't have been that much to speak of, physically, but there are rat kit prodigies of strength and occasionally of grace.

But mostly, you probably just learned the basics, enough math and literacy not to disgrace you as a hero—

And you studied the Mysteries.



The Mysteries are the gods of the rats. I guess. The center of their spirituality. It just so happens that the gods of the rats are also their greatest enemies. They are your predators. Your totem spirits hunt and curse you. And you dream, in turn, of learning enough about them to conquer them one day—to make the Rat King a King also of the Mysteries, and then the conqueror of the world.

To worship, for a rat, is to wrestle with your patron angels.

The great work of the rats is to master the Mysteries, who are mostly vaster than rats, vaster than humans, vaster than the *kaiju* of the Lake. The great work of the rats is to learn how to live in a world that has not merely rats but also King Death, and the King of Shadows; Unicorn, who is also Numinous; Typhon, the great gold snake.

I should tell you that their ambition exceeds that of most great human nations. I should also tell you that they are five thousand, five hundred heroes—more or less—and so it is reasonably likely that one day they shall succeed.

So—

That's my take on the central Mysteries of the rats' studies and spirituality.

Please bear in mind that I am just Jenna Moran! I am only me! I am not a rat nor an anthropologist. This is the quick outsiders' picture of their faith at best.

And, just so you know—

I mean, so that you can play this right? So that you don't get the idea that you come out of the Academy as some kind of superstition-addled zealot?

The Mysteries are real.

It's dimly possible that you missed Academy. That you didn't go Deep Under. It's... not likely, but it can happen. It's *most* likely for a ship's brat—particularly the kind of rat who goes almost all of their childhood before coming back home to Fortitude. Imagine how that must have been, your parents pale with fear that they didn't get you back home in time at all, that you're not *going* to grow up; and then presumably you actually do—

Right?

But by then you've never known the rat culture of Fortitude itself, just adventuring on a ship.

Or maybe you're the child of weird rogues and exiles. Or a member of a splinter group that lives, I don't know, out in the Walking Fields or something. On an island somewhere. Not in Fortitude.

Anyway, rats like that are considered ruffians, brutes, and scoundrels, even if you're the most delicate little flower of a thing—and particularly if you're not. You may be admired, but you're admired as the kind of barbaric friend that a *real* hero is likely to have, not as a real hero yourself. There's probably a plus side in that people'll think you're unpredictable, dangerous, and likely awesome—

People meaning rats, I guess, because, um, human culture just doesn't differentiate between rat warrior archetypes that well—

But still, it's a thing.

And conversely, I think, there's a social concept of the "Academy rat," who is meek and soft and spends far too much time down there studying to be a proper hero—a damsel in distress type even if you're a vast overmuscled brute with steel-capped teeth[18] or happen to be wearing a necklace of feline bone—but that kind of reputation is harder to pick up because, after all, every rat's supposed to be down there for at least a little while.

Eventually—around the end of your fourth season—you get this several-month-long growth spurt and you become definitively and physically no ordinary rat. You'll reach adult size (finally!) and your brain will change quite a bit. Your spine will become more

Age

I'm going to assume that a typical Fortitude rat PC is about three years old—old enough to have a few adventures under your belt, young enough to really like human movies, and at just the right age to start putting together a cadre of destined companions and make your mark on the world.

Mental age from a human perspective would be... maybe 15-20?

That said, feel free to be older if you'd rather!

P.S. If you need to play your PC in a flashback that predates their existence, the traditional approach is to pick and play an ancestor of some sort. Alternately, just show up as you are, and if anyone gets confused, blame their inaccurate human sense of time.

18 In the long term this implies some sort of disability, since if your teeth are endlessly growing like rat teeth ought to be then capping them is pointless, but the great rat epics are rife with punks and heroes with some such disability and this particular badass prosthetic.

flexible, allowing you to stand up properly. Your hands will get strong enough to comfortably wield a sword. Your dreams will richen and deepen and you start needing to use a dreamcatcher to keep the Outside dust from getting in. Sometimes you'll have your first nightmares or lucid dreams ever, although both *have* been observed in younger rats.

You'll have a chance to graduate from the Academy at this point—

Some stay, but even most scholars leave and then return—

And emerge back into the world, now ready to do things like take long voyages on a ship, learn the sword, and look for love.

Anyway, how was your time at the Academy?

- I loved it! I'm looking forward to going back, or I already did.
- I found my passion there.
- I found my destiny there.
- It... happened, I guess?
- I met someone. ❤
- I didn't get the chance to go.
- ...something else?

And what were you thinking your destiny would be when you returned?

- Obviously I am a knight of the rooftops and the Lake!
- I want to explore everything! See everything!
- I want to protect people.
- I am haunted by the Mysteries, and my fate is to confront them.
- I'm going to work on my family's ship.
- I'm going to work in the family trade.
- I've got a business idea of my own!
- Enh, whatever, destiny. I want to have a lot of kids, live a long time, and have a lot of fun along the way.
- That's been decided for me—
  - I'm from an important family.
  - There was a prophesy.
  - I have a special talent of some sort.
- It's not really *my* destiny—*gesturing towards a friend or SO with your head*—it's *that* one's destiny that'll matter.
- …something else?

Step 6: Life

So the rats basically borrow the human agricultural base. They *can* farm, but it's weird and not very effective. They can gather and scavenge too, and I think there is a fair bit of income into the rat community from the rats who dig up strange things from the Deep Under or bring them in from far away—but that's not the core of what they do either.

Mostly they are heroes errant; and after that, they are sailors; and then there's some traders and scholars; and only way down on the list below all that do you get all the other careers. I am not quite *sure* where all the money comes from for this, but it certainly helps that a meal for a human is a feast for two-score rats.

Basically, rats live like a military aristocracy, save perhaps with a more real (or, arguably, "more romantic") sense of *noblesse oblige* than you got in the medieval world. And even that may only be because humans are so much physically stronger, so much bigger, so that genteel condescension is simply more practical than aristocratic contempt.

What that means for teenaged you is that you won't have to worry about survival money.

At least, not at first!

Your family *might* be hard up but even then a rat's not going to starve or have to put their nose to the grindstone—particularly not in *Fortitude*. You should be a lot more scared of disappointing people, being an embarrassment, or being eaten[19] than of not getting enough to eat.

After your time in Academy you'll probably learn sword-fighting from one of the schools on the roofs. You may learn a trade, too, if your family does that kind of thing, or just spend a while on a wanderjahr exploring Fortitude and the realms around it from the perspective of a newly-adult rat. You'll learn your way around the Fortitude roofs and docks, at least; and at some point you'll hook up with someone experienced or a group and begin investigating the more dangerous realms of the Far Rooftops or Big Lake.

19 Not that a Fortitude rat is an easy meal for any of the typical predators, but, you know, stuff happens.

So, what's your life about?

- I work on one of the rat ships.
- I *captain* one of the rat ships.
- I hang out on one of the human ships—my family's on hard times, and I want to help them out.
- I'd never admit it, but basically, I'm part of an entourage.
- I'm part of a rat business—
  - a book-binder?
  - an errand runner?
  - something to do with import/export?
  - something to do with audio/video?
  - a shop of some sort?
  - warehouse security?
- I'm an entertainer—I
  - do stand-up comedy?
  - act?
  - write fiction?
  - write travel books?
  - paint?
  - write for Fortitude's newspaper?
- I patrol Fortitude and keep it safe.
- I'm studying to be the best swordfighter ever!
- I'm a scholar.
- I have many adventures on the Lake.
- I'm investigating a Mystery, out on the Far Roofs.
- I find things and do acquisitions, sometimes by commission.
- I do a bit of this and a bit of that.
- I don't know yet! I just don't know!
- I pretty much just live, and ends meet one way or another.
- I teach.
- I invent things. It is perfectly ordinary science, so please ignore my neighbors' allegations.
- I am in service of the crown.
- I'm a knight of the roofs.

Step 7: Choose Your Skills

The next step is figuring out what you're good at—what you know how to do.

For a rat, I'd recommend starting with something simple—

- **Superior Fortitude Rat 2**
- **Alertness 1**
- **Explorer 1**
- **Stuff I Learned at Academy 1**
- **Way of the Sword 1**

And then divide another couple of points among those Skills and/or stuff like:

- **Brawling**
- **[Business]**
- **[Catchphrase]**
- **Domestic Skills**
- **[Hobby]**
- **Sailor** *or*
- **Tenacity**

The "Superior Fortitude Rat" Skill (pg. 208, the **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** RPG) covers all the stuff that you're good at just because you're a rat, like hearing into the ultrasonic and being a heroic adventurer; it gives you either the necessary Skill or a bit of Edge when it comes to understanding the Mysteries, knowing how to get around Fortitude as a rat, and the like.

For the most part I wouldn't give Fortitude rats weird, interesting, or goofy Skills like "Cut Vegetables without Looking" or "I like to keep everything neat." They feel more elemental than that. They're larger-than-life. They hone themselves. Their lives are short and to the point. So it just feels more honest to give a rat simple Skills like Sailor or Tenacity. I might even replace "Way of the Sword" with something more generic like "Knight" or "Knight of the Roofs," except that I wanted to separate it a little more conceptually from "Superior Fortitude Rat."

Step 8: For Main Characters and Others—Your Bond

A Bond can make you larger-than-life. A Bond can take you past yourself, past your ordinary limits. A Bond is something that only triggers to make your Skills better when there's an Obstacle in your way—it's kind of heroic and epic, so it's not *totally* unusual for a rat to have one. A Main Character will have a single level 2 Bond, but it's OK to assume that a whole lot of rat NPCs have a level 1.

This *could* be an epic flaw, but it's usually not. I'm not even going to list examples of those.

It's going to be...

It's going to be something that makes you feel *alive*. Something that you're deeply connected to. Something you're *proud* of, as often as not, or something you love.

This is where a rat's catchphrase tends to go, if they have one.

This is where you can site the core of your heroism. Right here. This defines what makes you something more than the ordinary lot. Something like—

- **Bond:** I'm a knight of the roofs
- **Bond:** I can get into anywhere.
- **Bond:** I'm an adventurer!
- **Bond:** I'll protect you.
- **Bond:** I've been everywhere.
- **Bond:** I know all the stories.
- **Bond:** I'm a rat of the world.
- **Bond:** I will never be afraid.
- **Bond:** Loyalty over life.
- **Bond:** Flawless.
- **Bond:** These are the teeth that will chew through the heavens.
- **Bond:** I love being the star.

Or maybe something goofier, like:

- **Bond:** I love movies.
- **Bond:** I love books.
- **Bond:** I love exploration.
- **Bond:** I love the lake.
- **Bond:** I love (my SO)
- **Bond:** Coffee is better than life.

Did you pick one of those? Or do you have a unique Bond of your own?

Step 9: For Main Characters Only—Choose Your Affliction

There's no real reason for a rat to have an Affliction. The only way I can explain it is that you are something special. You are something extraordinary, set apart. I think the best way to do this is to assume that you have a minor magical gift.

A little knack.

And further, I think it should be OK to leave it pending—to not know what it is yet. That means that if you really need to be awesome in some way to fulfill the PCs' faith in you, or whatever, you can discover the knack and have it help you out.

Anyway, we're talking stuff like:

- **Affliction:** I'm incredibly strong.
- **Affliction:** I can turn practically invisible while I'm holding my breath.
- **Affliction:** I can fold my cloak three times over something to make it disappear.
- **Affliction:** I can spit to knock birds out of the air.
- **Affliction:** I've got a sense for the best kinds of deals.
- **Affliction:** I can tame any animal, even an animal-god.
- **Affliction:** I can start a toasty fire even while being rained on.
- **Affliction:** Even the finest thread supports my weight.
- **Affliction:** I know a short-cut.
- **Affliction:** I can come back from the dead three times.
- **Affliction:** I cannot be killed by bullets.
- **Affliction:** I can turn my cloak into a parachute or gliding wing even if it's not realistic.
- **Affliction:** There's always some of anything in my pack.
- **Affliction:** I can make anyone sneeze by gossiping about them. Even a god!
- **Affliction:** Nobody can knock me over.
- **Affliction:** I can bite cleanly through anything.
- **Affliction:** My tears make anybody sad.
- **Affliction:** My laughter makes anybody want to laugh along.
- **Affliction:** I can double-jump.
- **Affliction:** I can turn into a bear for three seconds.
- **Affliction:** I can scare off any animal with a glare.
- **Affliction:** I have a bolt-hole within three blocks.
- **Affliction:** Nothing bad ever happens to me when my eyes are closed.
- **Affliction:** I can't lie. Or, at least, when I try, a bee comes out.
- **Affliction:** I can fly on a dead leaf, if there's wind.
- **Affliction:** Humans don't get tired if I'm riding on their shoulder cheering them on.
- **Affliction:** I always know where home is from here.
- **Affliction:** I can dodge just about anything and scurry through any gauntlet.
- **Affliction:** I can sew severed body parts back on.
- **Affliction:** If I fill my cheeks and blow it's enough wind to move a boat.
- **Affliction:** I know the weather three days in advance.
- **Affliction:** I can get my paws on movies that haven't even been filmed yet.
- **Affliction:** My book accurately records the story of my life.
- **Affliction:** I can glow in the dark. Just a little.
- **Affliction:** I can climb anything.
- **Affliction:** If I do that samurai move where I end up on the other side of someone with my sword extended, they may fall over dead or unconscious even if there's no physical way that move could have *happened*. Works on targets up to roughly elephant size.



Step 10: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

As a Fortitude rat, you can pick up to three of the Connections Perks below, or take a single Connection Perk to anything of your choice at level 2.

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.

1 Connection: the Roofs of Fortitude

You're comfortable on Fortitude's roofs.

1 Connection: Big Lake

You know the stories of the Lake.

1 Connection: Deep Under

You know some of the mysteries of the Deep Under.

1 Connection: the Rats of Fortitude

You get along with the other rats.

1 Connection: the Humans of Fortitude

You get along well with the Big Folk.

or…

2 Connection:

You have a pretty solid Connection to...

You can choose this, and its target, instead of the normal rat Connections.

Step 11: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

Congratulations! You've now created yourself as one of the rats of Fortitude.

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in.

YOUR NAME

CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION

SKILLS

PERKS

ARC TRAITS

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

FORTITUDE RAT

YOUR FAMILY

YOUR SCHOOLING

YOUR LIFE

QUEST INFORMATION

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

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

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The Shop Fox (or "Tenko")

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 their blood feels "heavy" in a human's veins.)

Animal: Fox

Genres: Gothic, Immersive Fantasy

(Before playing a Fortitude Tenko in any other genre, please make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept.)

Step 1: The Story of Your Family

So here's the deal!

The "Tenko," or shop foxes, are families with some fox-spirit ancestors. You have fox ears on top of your head and a kind of exotic, glamorous reputation—it's kind of like being the kid of a celebrity on Earth, and being forced to wear a sign on your head all the time that announces it. You get a lot of attention, most of it reasonably positive, but it's also kind of a pain!

There are about 150 Tenko in Town, mostly concentrated in the Shopping District—running stores and small businesses and the like. There are seven of you in Fortitude: two small families and a drifter.

So here's what I figure your usual story is: you're a kid about the campaign default age.

Your parents have a little shop in Fortitude. One of them works pretty hard every day to keep the shop going. 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.

You might have a brother or sister. They're probably older.

As for you, you help out!

Right?

Step 1a: Right!

The one who works hard every day is my

- ...Dad
- ...Mom

and the other one, who lounges around in the back room,

- ...is naturally frail
- ...is incredibly spoiled
- ...has to look as lazy as possible, even if they're *not*, as a condition (a "Bond") of their powerful magic.

I have family over in the shopping district

- ...but I don't visit very often.
- ...but we're estranged.
- ...and I write letters to them every day!

OR...

Step 1b: That Isn't Right at All!

That is not what my family is like. That is not what I am like! Some of the discrepancies include:

- ...I'm not *their* kid. I'm just staying with them.
- ...I only have one parent. The other is dead.
- ...A shop? As *if*.
  - My family is incredibly wealthy.
  - At my family dojo I study the ninja arts.
  - My parents are teachers.
  - I will make our *restaurant* famous with my culinary genius!
  - We can't afford to be that public.
  - I'm just here because the lake air is good for my weak lungs.
- ...I'm not here with my family. I'm an emancipated fox.
- ...I'm not here with my family. I'm an adult.
  - It's *my* shop (or whatever.)
  - I'm looking for whatever work I can find.
  - I'm retired.
  - I'm having a little fun before settling down in the family business.
- …something else?

Step 2: Choose Your Name

All right then! That settled, your parents are:

Fāng and Hitomi Kanda—

a family of no great import or wealth; and you are

- **Kaho Kanda ("KK")**
- **Emily Kanda**
- **Jordan Kanda**
- **Case Kanda ("CK")**
- **Hideki Kanda**
- **Seth Kanda** *or*
- **Digory Kanda ("Digger")**

Chadwick and Genevieve Hashimoto—

a family of minor note; and you are

- **Christine Hashimoto**
- **Marie Hashimoto**
- **Isadora Hashimoto**
- **Cousin Lucie Homura**—*staying with them*
- **Alex Hashimoto**
- **Kenji Hashimoto** *or*
- **Cousin Oda Kazuakira**—*staying with them*

Vincent and Megumi Sūn—

an old fox family; and you are

- **Teokritos Sūn**
- **Piros Sūn**
- **Tadashi Sūn**
- **Rikal Sūn**
- **Lavinia Sūn**
- **Leukothea Sūn** *or*
- **Helissent Sūn**

Liu Julian and Ionela Zhāng—

a well-established fox family; and you are

- **Juan Zhāng**
- **Zhāng Wěi**
- **Vulponidas Zhāng**
- **Camelia Zhāng**
- **Acetaminophen Zhāng ("Zeto")**—*poor thing!*
- **Leelo Australia Zhāng** *or*
- **Isako Sakura Zhāng**

Or are Your Parents Someone Else?

- **...and you are?**

(Optional) Step 3: Choose Your Shop

Does your family actually have a shop? What is it?

- ...**Master of Antiquities,** a store selling mysterious curios, bric-a-brac, and oddments?
- ...**Bric-a-Brac**, selling candied popcorn and party supplies?
- ...**Fox Tea**, selling milk tea and various snacks (and a lunchtime oden on Sundays)?
- ...**the Rock Lord's Dream**, a used book store?
- ...**Interchange**, importing rare weapons and books from Soma Village?
- ...**[Last Name] Apothecaries**, e.g. Kanda Apothecaries, selling herbs and extracts?
- ...**[Last Name] Hardware**, e.g. Hashimoto Hardware, selling tools and the like?
- ...**Bramble Rose's,** a diner and catering company?
- ...**Great Wheel of Karma,** a bicycle store?
- ...**A Far and a Sunless Land,** a vaguely upscale goth fashion store?
- ...**Brookman's,** a favor exchange, accounting, and time capsule rental facility that predates your family's proprietorship?
- …something else?

Step 4: Choose Your Skills

The next step is figuring out what you're good at—what you know how to do.

For a young shop fox, I'd recommend—

- **Help Out in a Shop 2**—You're good at inventory, cleaning, customer service, &c.
- **Lithe and Nimble 2**—You can get up to high places or wriggle through small holes.
- **Hobby (your choice) 1**—You're familiar with something else.

And two abilities with special rules:

- **Tenko Magic (Perception) 2**—You're good at illusions and divination.
- **Superior Grace 1**—You're unnaturally elegant.

Does that look right to you?

- ...yes!
- ...mostly! Instead of illusion/divination magic, I want
  - **Fire and Lightning magic**, for summoning fox-fire and blasting people
  - **Transformation magic**, for turning into a fox and back
- ...mostly! I don't think "Help Out in a Shop" fits—how about
  - being incredibly rich, and having **Spend Vast Family Wealth** instead?
  - being a ninja, and having the Skill **Be a Ninja** instead?
  - replacing "Help Out" with some reasonable but still pretty cool Skill like
    - **Awesome Gourmet Chef?**
    - **Cryptographic Genius?**
    - **Medical Training?**
    - **Practical and Level-Headed?**
  - something else?
- ...it looks mostly right! I'm going to fiddle around with the exact point expenditures, though, maybe see if I can get a Skill to 3 so I'm a little more competent.
- ...not at all! I'm totally ditching all of this and picking my own 8 points of mundane abilities.

Step 5: Choose Your Bond

The world is full of stories about the shop foxes. "They can't resist deep-fried tofu," people say. "They keep their lives in special magical pearls. They fly around the sky at night as magical sky-foxes. They can talk to the moon and play dice with the sun."

It's mostly just stuff people say—

But as long as your fox-spirit ancestors still look out for you, and the magic of the foxes clings to you, *some* of it will be true.

You can pick one **Bond** to fuel your magic—one fairy-tale rule about you that's actually true. One weakness, flaw, peeve, or problem, or one source of supernatural Skill. A Bond can't give you new powers from scratch, but both kinds (the weaknesses and the perks) can make your existing Skills and abilities stronger!

Pick your favorite option! I've marked the most useful options with a †.

- **Bond†:** I am not always in complete control of myself around deep-fried tofu. M*m*mm!
- **Bond†:** People are really weird about the tail and ears sometimes.
- **Bond†:** I'll always repay a favor.
- **Bond†:** I can see right through your lies.
- **Bond:** I can wriggle through the tiniest cracks.
- **Bond:** Dogs terrify me.
- **Bond:** I must maintain an appearance of indolent uselessness.
- **Bond:** I can never admit to anything outright.
- **Bond:** It takes a lot of concentration to hide my tail when disguised as a human.
- **Bond:** If I'm separated for too long from my special magical pearl I'll die.
- **Bond:** My ears are really sensitive—loud sounds can hurt, and grabbing them is a submission hold!
- ...something else?

Particularly disreputable Tenko may have a Bond like:

- **Bond:** What is property to me? I take what I want and live where I choose.
- **Bond:** I'm addicted to playing with human minds and hearts.

Tenko with Bonds like that are sometimes known as "Yako" (field foxes/evil foxes) or "Jackasses" (evil donkeys).

Step 6: Choose Your Affliction

Then there's something even *more* magical—an **Affliction.**

You're not just an ordinary shop fox. You've been touched by destiny, by miracle, or by some wild power; or perhaps your fox-spirit ancestor is particularly fond of you, and particularly powerful, and his or her magic clings to you still.

Pick your favorite option! I've marked the most useful options with a †.

- **Affliction†:** I'll always repay a favor.
- **Affliction†:** My eyes see through illusions.
- **Affliction†:** I can hear distant voices on the wind.
- **Affliction†:** I've always got some money in my pocket.
- **Affliction:** I'm pretty lucky.
- **Affliction:** I fly around the sky at night as a magical sky-fox.
- **Affliction:** I can talk to the spirits of the sky.
- **Affliction:** I terrify the wicked.
- **Affliction:** If I touch noses with a fox, I turn into a fox. If I touch noses with a human or a Tenko, I turn back!
- ...something else?

Step 7: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

As a Tenko, you'll start with three free Connection Perks (below).

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.

2 Connection: the Best Friend

There's something likeable about this person.

1 Connection: Arcadia

You know where to find stuff in Town's shopping district.

1 Connection: Tenko and Youkai

You have shared experiences and culture with Town's tenko and youkai.

Step 8: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

Congratulations, **Shop Fox!** You've now defined the shop foxiest elements of your character.

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

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YOUR NAME

CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION

SKILLS

PERKS

ARC TRAITS

CAMPAIGN INFORMATION

NAME

GENRE

IN-GENRE ACTION NAMES

THE SHOP FOX

YOUR FAMILY

YOUR SHOP

QUEST INFORMATION

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

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

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The Vampire

Academics Skill: Typically 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."

Genres: Pastoral, Gothic, Epic Fantasy

(Before playing a Fortitude Vampire in any other genre, please make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept.)

Step 1: Reflect Upon Your Nature

Greetings, **Vampire.**

You've come back from the dead and now you're just the kind of boy or girl that parents warn their children about. "Don't fall in love with *that*," they'll say.

"It'll only lead to pain!"

You are a forbidden, seductive, dangerous creature. The power of love and romance in you is broken: your love burns like a fire, it consumes you, you are loyal, you are fierce, you are dedicated to love, but it is a night-fire, a dead-fire, a vamp-fire, because you don't know how to be *friends*. You don't know how to open up to people without drama. You don't know how to handle intimacy without getting weird and irrational. You don't know how to care about someone without being a jerk.

You can be as selfless as an angel but you're as self-*centered* as the very damned.

That is your curse. To see others—to really *see* someone, as themselves, and not as what you dream for them?

That would burn you, like the sun.

Step 2: Recall Your Name

Let's start by picking a name for you.

Vampiric revival selects for vampiric names. That's not to say that you can't be Eleanor Eisley or Manfred Williams or whatever. It's just, if your name was Alucard or Elvira or something, you were pretty much doomed from the start. In Town, vampire names skew towards the Eastern European; I don't have good statistics for vampires outside of Town.

So, what's *your* name?

For a Girl

Elvira Tsutano
Belladonna Inoue
Hemlock Ruvinovna
Calonyctia Ivanovna
Drahomira Matsumoto
Kvetoslava Hayashi
Ilyana Sudovic
Beatrix Shiraga
Eleanor Eisley
Constance Marianne Esfir

For a Boy

Alucard Sunadori
Vladimir Mikazuki
Czcibor Frolov
Marku Shiotori
Ambróz Nukaga
Gregorius Cole
Constantin Dairaku
Vilhelm Kaminskiy
Kazimir Yoshirou Ryuunosuke
Manfred Williams Heath

Step 3: A Second Life

So that was you. That was you; and then you died.

...and came back.

You didn't stay in the ground or under the lake. You came *back*. Why?

- ...for a Fortitude reason. For something simple and honest:
  - ...your parents needed you.
  - ...your kid sister or brother needed you.
  - ...your friends needed you.
  - ...you had chores to do—
    - ...jam to make
    - ...a wall to fix
    - ...whatever.
  - ...you didn't want to miss something:
    - ...your mom making your favorite stew
    - ...that boat trip out to the coast off Rio to catch marlin
    - ...whatever.
  - ...you were lonely
  - ...something else?
- ... for a mystical reason, like
  - ...another vampire "turned" you
  - ...you suffered an evil curse
  - ...you bound yourself to a vampiric spirit
  - ...you ate too much octopus before you died[20]
  - ...something else?

Step 4: Coming to Fortitude

It's rare for anyone to come back from the dead in Fortitude itself. It's just not the kind of place where that happens. People don't *do* things like that here.

Now, in Horizon, just over the hills—

Or in the Walking Fields; or in the wilds Outside of Town; or even if you fell from a boat and managed to drown yourself in Big Lake—

There, that kind of thing can happen.

But *here?* No, no, no.

So you probably died somewhere else, and you came to Fortitude, where vampires are pretty rare.

Why?

- ...it's where I came from. My family's here. So I came back, all broody and corpse-y and fearful of the sun.

20 and therefore rose as a vampire, eternally cursed, the living dead

- ...I don't have anyone. Not here. Not anywhere. So one day I looked east towards the sunrise and thought, "That way. That way, even though it hurts. I'll find somebody there."
- ...something else?

Step 5: Vampiric Adoption

So, you could have a second family now. Maybe.

Sometimes a new vampire is adopted into one of the established, ancient vampire families of Horizon. You'd have to square that with your living in Fortitude, but it's not *that* hard to justify it if that's what you want to do.

Do you have one of those?

- ...no. I don't really socialize that much with other vampires.
- ...no. It's never really come up.
- ...yes. I'm grateful to them for taking me in.
- ...yes. (conspicuous silence)

Which family?

- ...the Celdinar Family. We built Horizon, back when there was no sun in Town; we would have named it Night London, but then... well.
- ...the Witherspoons.
- ...the Forsyths.
- ...the Doyles.
- ...the Antonescu.
- ...the Fidatofs.
- ...the Strix.
- ...the Sukasshu.
- ...the unsubtly-named "Vampir."

If adopted, you can reasonably wear either their last name or your own, as circumstances suggest.

Step 6: Do You Drink Pillow-Teeth Tea?

There's a drink. "Pillow-teeth tea." It softens your fangs and makes them squishy like marshmallows. It reduces the predatory vibe that your body language gives off.

It also prevents cavities.

You drink it, right? You're safe, right?

- ...of course.
- ...yeah, sure, whatever.
- ...I'm not drinking it to make humans happy or anything. I just like the taste.
- ...who the hell are you to tell me what to drink?
- ...um, no. "makes your teeth squishy like marshmallows?" No. Just, no.
- ...I can't.

Step 7: Skin Sensitivity

Sunlight sets vampires on fire. But that's kind of not fun. It's *extra* not fun because there's a sun goddess living in Fortitude right now. So...

If you're a PC vampire, or even a major NPC, I'm going to assume you are strong enough to deal with the sun, or weak enough that it doesn't bother burning you.

Which is it?

- ...I am strong enough, vital enough to go about in daylight (as long as I use a parasol.)
- ...I laugh at the sun.
- ...I'm a "half." I didn't quite die properly in the first place, maybe because one of my parents was a vampire or because the doctors got to me in time, so I'm still a little bit alive. The sun is uncomfortable but it doesn't burn.
- ...as terrible as it is, as difficult as it makes things, I am actually really flammable. The sun will hurt me badly if I go out in it. I plan to be a shut-in with telepathy as my big vampire power or something.

Step 8: Choose Your Skills

The next step is figuring out what you're good at—what you know how to do.

My standard recommendation for a vampire character is a set of four abilities with special rules—

- **Vampire 3**—You're a proper vampire.
- **Superior Vitality 3**—You're overpoweringly strong and tough.
- **Superior Physical Control 1**—You're fast, graceful, and precise.
- **Cool 1**—You're composed and hard to mess with.

Does that look right to you?

- ...yes!

2

- ...mostly! I need to move a point or two around, starting with...
  - dropping **Vampire** by a point so I'm just a half-vampire *and/or*
  - dropping **Superior Vitality** by a point, leaving me roughly two-strong-men strong

  in exchange for
  - increasing **Superior Physical Control** to superhuman levels of grace *and/or*
  - picking up a point in *some* mortal Skill, like
    - **Storytelling**
    - **Baking**
    - **Studying**
    - **Hunting for Bargains**
    - **Life/Living Death Skills**
    - **Photography**
    - something else?

- ...not really. I need to make a fair few adjustments. I'll write up my own set of Skills!

If you can't get your Skills quite high enough for you, note that you'll have a chance to improve things a bit in step 9. It's not *ideal*, but if you get frustrated because you just can't have everything you want, be aware that there is a chance to redeem it shortly.

Step 9: Choose Your Bond

Now it's time to write down a rule—a **Bond**—governing your cursed existence.

Everybody's heard tons of rules like this about vampires.

You might have a classic vampire *weakness*, like "I can't cross running water."

Or a classic vampire *strength*, like "I can hypnotize you if you look in my eyes."

What's yours?

Vampire Skills: General Notes

The basic quality of *being a vampire* is represented as a level 3 Superior Skill—if you can only afford level 1-2, that makes you some sort of weak-sauce vampire, incomplete vampire, or a half. It's *OK* to be a weak vampire, mind; it's fine to sell it back to level 2—that just makes you the kind of vampire you get in "weird tales," you know, where you're never quite *certain* that the person in question is a vampire at all, but they still drink blood and negative emotions, survive scary things, and radiate danger. Going down to level 0-1, though, means that you're not really a vampire at all, just sort of vaguely vampire-*like*. In sum,

- **Vampire 0:** You think of yourself as a vampire. You maybe act a bit like one?
- **Vampire 1:** Your night vision is good, you're resilient, and you can survive unusually long off of blood.
- **Vampire 2:** You're a vampire, but your fangs are small, you still need food and air, and you'd be really bad at having vampire children of your own.
- **Vampire 3:** You're a full-on classic vampire: you're dead, but you walk. You can eat negative emotions. You have predator body language, you don't age, you don't need air or food (except for a bit of blood or negative emotion now and then), and you can make new vampires if you like.

The basic vampire Skill only really covers the basic state—you might be able to *use* it to be strong, fast, cool, and graceful, but that's outside the normal range of competence and you won't get any free Edge. To make up for this, a typical vampire has level 3 Superior Vitality—that's enough that they can casually throw humans around and stand a good chance in a one-on-one with a grizzly. Lowering this by a point is OK, although it makes you puny by *vampire* standards; going up by a point or two gives you epic, superheroic strength. A vampire will also typically pick up Superior Physical Control to add a bit of grace to their basic Skillset—just how many points you spend here are up to you; it's all in how fluid you want your motion to be!

Step 9a: A Classic Vampire Weakness

If you choose a vampire weakness here, then your Bond will give you Will or MP when it becomes a problem for you and you may sometimes get bonuses for doing frantic things to work around the problem.

Do you have a weakness like this?

Like...

- **Bond:** Romance always gets me into trouble.
- **Bond:** The light of the sun burns me.
- **Bond:** I cannot enter private residences without an invitation.
- **Bond:** Animals do not like me.
- **Bond:** Holy symbols repel me, even when wielded by people of ordinary faith.
- **Bond:** The cross repels me, no matter who wields it.
- **Bond:** Garlic repels me.
- **Bond:** I cannot cross running water.
- **Bond:** I am driven to count scattered seeds / rice grains in my immediate environment.
- **Bond:** I am driven to count things in my immediate environment in general.
- **Bond:** Stakes make me very nervous.[21]
- …something else?

Step 9b: A Classic Vampire Power

Bonds can enhance your mundane and miraculous actions. So any vampire power that just gives you... *more* of what you already have is a good use for a Bond. Bonds marked with * overlap a bit with standard vampire Skills, so you could use them to pump up a weak Skill or enhance a good one.

Your vampire power is...

- **Bond*:** I cannot suffer age or mortal frailties.
- **Bond*:** My senses are sharp.
- **Bond*:** I can climb with preternatural ease.
- **Bond*:** I am unnaturally intimidating.
- **Bond*:** I am stronger than you.
- **Bond*:** I am faster than you.
- **Bond:** I am prettier than you.
- **Bond:** I am crueler than you.
- **Bond:** I can hypnotize you with my eyes.
- **Bond:** I can command animals.
- **Bond:** I can see into others' hearts and souls.
- …something else?

Bonds work best when they're enhancing actions you can reasonably attempt anyway, so choosing flight, telekinesis, wall-walking, necromancy, or other powers like that as a Bond is probably a bad idea. Save that for your Affliction, below!

Step 10: Choose Your Affliction

Then there's something even *more* magical—an **Affliction.**

Afflictions are serious business—they're power on the level of the vampiric curse itself. Most vampires won't even *have* an Affliction unless it relates directly *to* that curse: a weakness to sunlight, say, or the fact of their being the living dead, or something that spreads decay and plague wherever they go.

That said—

A sun weakness at that level isn't going to be fun in a typical campaign, and Town's vampires don't normally do that whole spreading plague and decay thing, so the only relatively "normal" option here is the statement that you're already dead. (Which is an extra layer of protection against getting killed or whatever.)

But...

I want to give you multiple options, and *you in particular* are a vampire touched by miracle and destiny. So you can reasonably choose anything like:

- **Affliction*:** My body language unnerves and terrifies mortals.
- **Affliction*:** I'm already dead.
- **Affliction*:** I heal very quickly.
- **Affliction:** I have a deep well of "vampire power" inside me.
- **Affliction:** Gravity does not bind me.
- **Affliction:** I am a creature of many shapes.
- **Affliction:** Objects move to my will.
- **Affliction:** I command the dead.

The starred ones are, again, those that may overlap with your standard Skills (specifically, in all three cases, the Skill **Vampire.**)

My favorite choice here is the very first one, because an Affliction is *way* better than a Skill as a way to represent the fear that vampires inspire—but I won't blame you if you'd rather choose to be able to fly, or something, instead!

21 I'm phrasing the whole stake thing that way because normally the vampire weakness is that stakes kill or paralyze them. But "being killed is a problem for me, so I get some bonus Will when I explode into a cloud of dust" isn't really a very good use of your Bond, because the one time in this whole game when a little extra Will won't help is when you're dead.†

† ...I mean, well, you know, MORE. Dead MORE.

Normally most of these "powers" will work by, essentially, fiat. If you are a creature of many shapes, then you should be able to use a mundane action to shapeshift with a relatively small Obstacle. So the HG could decide, e.g., that for you to turn into a bat is Obstacle 0, while turning into a wolf or giant wolf is Obstacle 1-2 respectively. This would make you a much better shapeshifter than a normal human, who would probably just start acting animalistic, or a magician, who would probably face an Obstacle of 4-5.

The actual *rule*, though, is that the HG controls the power of your Afflictions and decides when they apply. You might lose control of your powers for story reasons, or have them blocked, or whatever. Similarly, on a specific occasion or in general, the HG could raise the effects of this power up beyond the level of a mere mundane action.

Instead of a standard vampire power, you might also consider picking an Affliction that shelters some portion of your life from the "wishing power" of the human heart, e.g.:

- **Affliction:** I'm invincible.
- **Affliction:** I make it look easy.
- **Affliction:** Nothing can keep me from the side of the one I love.

This would let you do awesome stuff, too, sometimes, but the big win is that if someone uses wish power to overcome this Affliction, they'll need to first spend MP on Strike.

Step 11: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

As a Fortitude Vampire, you'll start with four free Connection Perks (below).

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.

2 Connection: the Angel of Fortitude

The Angel awes you and attracts your loyalty. You don't even really know why.

1 Connection: the Prodigy

You feel a strange bundle of fear, interest, and rivalry here.

1 Connection: the Wishing Boy (or Girl)

You'd feel weird eating this kid. Somehow.

-1 Connection: the Child of the Sun

Something about the Child of the Sun makes you uncomfortable. It may be the way that when she beams happily at you it can set you on fire.

You don't have to keep this Perk—it doesn't actually do you any good.

Step 12: Continue with the Main Character Generation Process!

Congratulations, **Vampire!** You've now defined the vampiric elements of your character.

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in!

YOUR NAME

CATCHPHRASE

EMOTION XP

BOND

AFFLICTION

SKILLS

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ABOUT PILLOW-TEETH TEA...

ABOUT DAYLIGHT...

ARC TRAITS

QUEST INFORMATION

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES AND POWERS

WOUNDS

HEALTH LEVELS

DIVINE

TOUGH

NORMAL

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2



The Immigrant from Earth

Academics Skill: Typically Good

Sports Skill: Typically Good

Favorite Foods: (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.

Genres: Variable

(Please try to fit your Immigrant from Earth design to whatever is the genre of the game!)

Step 1: Growing Up Foreign

Look. You know and I know that we of the wider world are not all cool-as-cucumber badasses who like to toss out clever quips before exerting our limitless physical courage and heroism.[22] And I am personally an American who can't even *shoot* a gun, much less chug a delicious American beer in one hand[23] while ricocheting a bullet off of a couple of street signs to hit my target with the other. I hardly ever even sue anybody![24]

Still, I think it's well-established in Town's stories how *foreignness* works.

You grow up in heavily stylized memories. Maybe they're sepia toned and narrated by luxurious French voices. Maybe it's all minimalist black and white. Maybe it's even animated. I don't know. Something. Then something happened. Your... dramatic incident. Something you had to follow up on. You followed up on it all the way to Town. Probably you did a lot of staring dramatically off into the horizon and maybe even smoking as you went.

Right?

I guess that's the first thing to decide:

- ...are you a badass, stylized foreigner based on
  - ...stereotypes about the country or region you *as a player* come from?[25]
  - ...a certain film or fiction genre?
  - ...completely made-up stereotypes, e.g. a Belgian who likes to do things "*the Belgian way*," which you're making up as you go along?[26]
- ...or are you weirdly realistic?

Then you can pick your name. I'm going to suggest:

- ...your actual name, or some close variant
- ...an extremely generic name like Mary Smith, Alexandr Smirnov, Shou Satou, Wang Tao, or Júlia Silva *or*
- ...an over-the-top fictional name like Drake Laser, Dynamite Murai, Harmonica James, or Anastasia Hypothermia Maccabees—

What's yours?

22 *I am NOT just saying this.*

23 *???*

24 *But don't try to resell this IP to a shadowy conglomerate of evil puppy-eaters without talking to me first. I'll sue!*

25 *It's just better comedy if you're from your own country.*

26 *Probably involving a mix of action-movie stereotypes and inexplicable behavior, which may be partly explained later on with a big reveal that you're not actually from Belgium.*

Step 2: Why did you come to Town?

So, Town doesn't really have tourism. Nor do Town's businesses tend to post their job openings abroad. If you live on Earth, in one of the cities still out there, you probably haven't even heard that Town *exists.*[27]

So, how did you hear about Town?

- ...I had a relative from Town, or a relative who moved to Town
- ...I had a pen pal from Town
- ...I met someone from Town once
- ...I stowed away on the wrong boat.
- ...I had a vision or read a prophecy
- ...there was a disaster, and a passing boat from Town saved a few people
- ...I'm hunting or following someone or something, and it led me here.
- ...I'm kind of like a ghost hunter—I research all this kind of stuff.
- ...I'm kind of like a secret agent—I research all this kind of stuff.
- ...I heard a weird rumor that if you needed to escape from the world, there was a guy whose boat could take you right off the map.
- ...something else?

And why did you come here?

- ...I needed a new life. I couldn't stay on Earth any longer.
- ...I've always dreamed of magic and wonder.
- ...my pen pal or family in Town needed my help
- ...I'm hunting or following someone or something and the trail led me here
- ...I had a vision or read a prophecy
- ...like I said above: there was a disaster, and a passing boat from Town saved a few people
- ...a shard of a glass dragon got into my body, mind, or soul; it impelled me to come.
- ...something else?

27 *Yes, I know, there's this RPG. But seriously, without other evidence, I don't expect even Nobilisers to believe me that the Earth is drowned in chaos and a place like Town exists. That's not what this game is for! It's more to help people who do have other reason to believe in it, or people who want to have fun playing a game.*

Hey, what actually tipped the balance for you? What was *the thing* that got you onto the boat? What was going on as you left?

Have you left people behind?

Are you planning on going back? And if so, when?

Step 3: Choose Your Skills

What are you good at?

For a comparatively realistic young immigrant from Earth, I'd recommend—

- **(Aphorism you Live By) 3**—And it guides you well!
- **(Your Best Skill) 2-3**—Teenagers will probably cap at 2.
- **(Thing You Care About) 1-2**—You're good with this.
- **(Thing You Care About) 0-1**—You're familiar with this.
- **(Thing You Care About) 0-1**—You're familiar with this.

Regrettably I can't give you much guidance as to what exactly these should be. There's literally a whole world of options out there.

For a more cinematic character, I'd go with:

- **Glamorous Foreign Ways 3**—Show them how it's done—in [[*your country!*]]
- **Action Hero 2**—Quip, then laugh into the face of death!
- **Pursue (Your Reason for Coming to Town) 2**—You're good at this!

And

- **Cool 1**—You're composed, graceful, and hard to mess with.

You might also replace some of this with a specific foreign ability, like a huge wrestler with **Superior Vitality 3,** an American with the Magical Skill **Do it With Guns,** an anime-style mecha pilot or magical girl, or a superior or magical skill associated with your "smart phone."

Or just choose whatever Skills you like!

Step 4: Choose Your Bond

Bonds are actually pretty special—most ordinary people don't have one. If you have a magical Skill, then it's probably related to your magic somehow, some taboo you have to follow or some kind of magic that you're good at. If you're *dramatically* foreign, it might emphasize that. Otherwise, your Bond is usually something that makes you feel *alive*—something that you're deeply connected to.

Summing it all up, we're talking about things like:

- **Bond:** My exotic American charisma is irresistible.
- **Bond:** If my smart phone rings, I must answer.
- **Bond:** I can make anyone explain things to me repeatedly, even if I already know them.
- **Bond:** I look like I'm really important, probably.
- **Bond:** I'm always reaching things that are too high for any *normal* townsperson to reach.
- **Bond:** I can cook food spicy enough to bring tears to anybody's eyes.
- **Bond:** I can tolerate ridiculous extremes of temperature.
- **Bond:** My knowledge of [[manga? television? fashion?]] is absolute.
- **Bond:** American cheese sharpens my senses and gives spring to my step.
- **Bond:** I'm better at everything after a pint of proper American beer.
- **Bond:** Naturally, I can do it, if it involves baseball!
- **Bond:** I love my new home here.
- **Bond:** I'm tree-climbing champion of the world.
- **Bond:** As an American, I must clean my guns every day to reinforce their magic.
- **Bond:** As a Canadian, I must regularly explain that I am not an American.[28]
- **Bond:** As a Californian, I cannot die.
- **Bond:** As a foreign delinquent, I must maintain my intricate pompadour.
- **Bond:** To protect my special magic as the child of an Interpol agent, I must help solve any crimes I encounter.

28 I am kind of breaking my own rules here by suggesting a Canadian stereotype, but it's basically the same country, right?

You might also enjoy something that emphasizes your nature as someone who comes from a normal place and gets involved with strange events, like:

- **Bond:** I'm driven to improvise ways to overcome supernatural threats.
- **Bond:** I can shake off spells that would control ordinary Townspeople.
- **Bond:** Villains of the appropriate romantic leanings are surprisingly interested in me.
- **Bond:** I'm not a part of things here.

The last, of course, doesn't have any intrinsic value, but it can obviously come into play as often as you can find ways to make it do so.

What's your Bond?

Step 5: Choose Your Affliction

People from outside Town wouldn't normally have Afflictions, either—your having one is a sure sign that you've been touched by destiny. Perhaps you're bound in some way under a different mystical law than the people of Town:

- **Affliction:** I can break enchantments and magical contracts with a touch.
- **Affliction:** I can resist or ignore most of the Region Properties of Town.
- **Affliction:** My dreams connect directly, with an easy path, to the dreams around me.
- **Affliction:** I am destined to re-enact the murder of Jade Irinka.
- **Affliction:** My dreams don't have walls around them to keep other people's dreams out.

To be honest, those actually fit best, but—they also kind of risk messing up the game. I want you to choose them if they fit perfectly, but I don't want you feeling like your only choices are like those!

So here are some other options.

Maybe some key foreign item that you have is protected under an Affliction:

- **Affliction:** I never run out of foreign snacks and clothing.
- **Affliction:** My smart phone always has reception.
- **Affliction:** My broomstick lets me fly.
- **Affliction:** My notebook holds unlimited information.
- **Affliction:** I have a limitless supply of jelly babies.
- **Affliction:** My clothes are Versace, so of course they launder and repair themselves.

Or you have key cultural knowledge and proficiency:

- **Affliction:** I dealt with a similar problem once, back home.
- **Affliction:** There's a story from my homeland about this...
- **Affliction:** I know how to clean *anything.*
- **Affliction:** If nobody around me knows how to do it, then *I* probably *do*.

Or you have a unique foreigner power:

- **Affliction:** I can count anything at a glance.
- **Affliction:** I can squeeze wine from a mushroom.
- **Affliction:** I can balance on the thinnest threads.
- **Affliction:** I never lose at blackjack.
- **Affliction:** I can bring anyone to tears with my country[']s music.
- **Affliction:** I can catch fish even where there aren't any.
- **Affliction:** I can make thread out of acorns.
- **Affliction:** I can make explosives out of random cleaning materials or shoes.
- **Affliction:** My faith sustains me.
- **Affliction:** I can knock animals out by tickling their bellies.
- **Affliction:** I can patch up just about anything with duct tape.
- **Affliction:** I can tame strange animals.
- **Affliction:** I fit in so well nobody believes I'm actually foreign.
- **Affliction:** I can detach my head without dying, and fortune will help me get back to it if separated.[29]

What's your Affliction?

29 *Because I'm American!*

Step 6: 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 can have a permanent connection to someone, which is just another form of a Skill, but most Connections take the form of disposable "Perks."

As an immigrant from Earth, you'll start with one free Connection Perk (below).

In addition, you may start with Connections to one or more PCs—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!

Later on, you'll be free to discard Connections that you don't want or to improve your character's Connections as the reward from an appropriate quest.

2

Connection: the Child of the Sun

You feel less lost when the Child of the Sun is around.

Step 7: Continue to the Campaign-Specific Character Generation Process!

Congratulations, **Immigrant!** You've now defined the Earthican-specific elements of your character.

Time for some campaign-specific details!

If you're playing in a kind of generic Fortitude campaign, where there's no special details and you don't have any miraculous powers to start, you should finish out with the "final touches" for that campaign on pg. 120—

- choosing your basic quest;
- choosing your bonus XP emotion;
- choosing 1-2 more starting quests.

In an informal miraculous campaign you'll want to talk to the HG about whether you can start with any miraculous powers and whether you get any bonus MP and Divine Health Levels. In an official campaign, you can move on instead to any final character generation details for *that* campaign, instead—for instance, the "character creation (part 2)" in **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon,** which'll give you a pair of Perks and talk a little bit about when your next 4 MP and Divine Health Levels will grow in.

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THE IMMIGRANT FROM EARTH

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Character Dynamics

2

The last few choices in character design aren't really about Fortitude. They're about dynamic elements of your character, about how they fit into the story of the game.

In particular every character is going to need an "XP Emotion"—a mood or reaction that you're trying to get from the other players—and a couple of starting "quests." I'm going to cover enough information here so that you don't need to switch between books if you know what you're doing, but if this is your first time building a **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** character you'll probably want to consult:

- pg. 62, 88-102 and 450 of that book for more on basic quests;
- pg. 46 and 60 of that book for more on XP Emotions; *and*
- pg. 80-88 and 103 of that book for a broader insight on what storyline quests are all about.

Step 1: Choose Your Basic Quest

In a typical **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** campaign, every character has a "basic quest"—a thing they're always doing, in the background. Every now and then this will earn you a precious memory or cool thing (a "Recharge Token")—specifically, at the end of each 15-XP repetition of the quest.

For instance, you could...

- spend a lot of time staring at the sky, or the birds (pg. 300);
- spend a lot of time walking the local beach (pg. 306);
- spend a lot of time out on, or dreaming of being, out on the water (pg. 351);
- hang out with a friend, or in a place you care about, a lot (pg. 238, pg. 239);
- hang out with and pay attention to the local stray cats and dogs (pg. 302);
- obsess over stuff relevant to the voyages of a ship you crew for (pg. 339);
- occasionally kind of randomly praise/admire a ship that a friend or family or idol of yours crews for (pg. 341);
- think a lot about the layout of Big Lake (pg. 345);
- or just about directions and navigation in general (pg. 349).

...but if possible, I think you should pick a basic quest that you'll design yourself using one of the templates below.

Once you've chosen a quest, make, copy, or download and print the relevant quest card.

A Worldview

There's something you're always thinking about—a filter you're viewing the rest of your life through. For instance,

- do you spend a lot of time thinking about what makes other people tick?
- or the right way to live?
- or wondering about how things got to be the way they are now?
- or remembering relevant stories of the past?
- or wondering about distant lands?

It forms a lens, through which to see everything in the world—

And if you like the quest card on the next page, then that can be your basic quest.

A Private Struggle

There's something you pretend to be that you're not—you put on a public face as someone

- competent?
- cool?
- folksy?
- gloomy?
- grown-up?
- kind?
- respectable?

...only you're really *not*.

Your Worldview (Basic Quest)

There's something you're always thinking about. It's a lens that you see everything else through:

XP

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by **proposing a new theory about that thing you're always thinking about.**

Make sure to actually stop and *consider* the theory—I mean, it's OK if someone stops you, but the point isn't to come up with something goofy to say, the point is to come up with new thoughts to *genuinely consider.*

Or maybe the struggle isn't about what you pretend to be but what you really are: you pretend to be normal, but underneath there's something really bugging you, something messing you up. Like,

- Titov magic cost you your sense of personhood?
- you're torn up over the loss of a family member?
- you're embarrassed about some condition, like poverty, depression, or having been born as a seagull?

Should that sound like a good candidate for your basic quest, the next step is to express it as a standardized pair of ideas for "when I'm saying/expressing *this*" ". . I'm really thinking *this*" that'll either amuse you or make you feel cool when it comes up in play.

For instance, you could express an "Aura of Competence" to others, while what's really going on in your head is ". o O (*aaaaaaaa!!*)" Would that inner scream of IC panic every time you show off your character's aura of competence make your player smile?

Or you could have something more melodramatic, pairing a public face like "I'm Totally Fine" or "a small smile" with a private *it hurts* or *this is all I deserve*—do you feel cool when playing characters who hide their pain that way?

If something like that that works for you, then the difference between your public and your private face can be your basic quest.



Your Private Struggle (Basic Quest)

2

There's something you're trying to do or be. It's probably even a good thing!

...but this quest comes with a psychological or social burden—a private cross to bear. Something you can't handle as well as you like to pretend. Something you have trouble processing. When you're saying or emoting *this* to everyone...

Some deeply- or shallowly-buried part of you is actually thinking *this:*

Create or pick out a two-sided sign: one side is your public face, the other shows your hidden thoughts. 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.

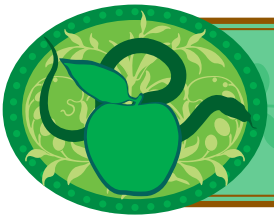
XP



Public Face

Private Thoughts





Two Modes of Being (Basic Quest)

You're torn between two worlds or two selves; between:

_____

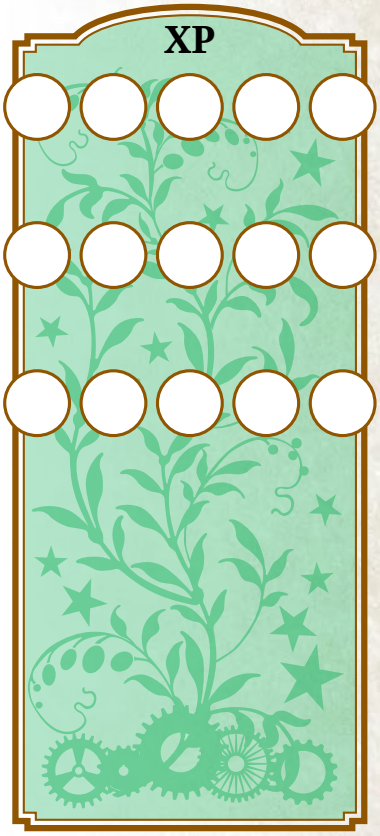
and

_____

Ideally, you'll make 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 the two states.

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





Side A

Side B



Two Modes of Being

There's some way in which you're almost like two different people at different times—usually, that means you have a kind of down-to-earth mode and a spiritual/obsessed/silly/super-intense mode, but any significant change of state can work. For instance,

- **Just Another Idiot / Analysis Mode ON**
- **Ordinary / Sacred**
- **Confident / Dispirited, Disillusioned & Depressed**
- **Daily Life / OTAKU MODE**
- **Citizen of Fortitude / Old Soldier**
- **Cute Kid / Master Criminal**

If you can think of something like that where flipping into the weirder mode, or maybe even into the normal mode, can be funny or meaningful in play on a regular basis, then that change of state can be your basic quest.

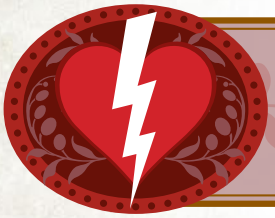
Something You Really Love or Hate

There's something you really love or hate—e.g.,

- you spend a lot of time listening to stories,
- you really like shopping,
- you love living in Fortitude,
- you can't stand the weather (almost any weather, really, although you'll claim it's only whatever today's weather is that bugs you and you're fine with the rest), *or*
- you just *adore* some kind of snack.

— and it's such a big part of your life that you have a standardized catchphrase (even if you don't say the same thing *every* time) to show that it's caught your interest. For instance, "Ah, I'll die!" could be your generic signal for either enjoying or being denied something, or "Stupid weather" could indicate that you really don't like it.

If this all makes sense to you as your character's *thing*, then that can be your basic quest.



Love/Hate (Basic Quest)

There's something that just rivets your attention when it happens; or when you think about it; or when something fits your thoughts about it.

Something you love. Something you fear. Something like...

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 what you say to show that your attention has been totally caught:

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) with an emote or a statement that goes basically like that!

XP

A Hook for Small Adventures

There's something you're doing:

...and you get really worked up over it. Well, you do, or the world does. Ridiculous, absurd things happen. Things get hectic.

So, look. Arrange for a sign.

It should say **"Over the Top."**

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) when your quest, or its consequences, or what you do about it, gets a little over the top.

Or, for that matter, when you decide to *take* them a little over the top.

When that happens, 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 be willing to hold up a sign. It's even OK if sometimes you're being ironic or making a suggestion instead of an observation, as long as an observation is more typical.

XP



A Hook for Small Adventures

Sometimes there's something going on in your life that's sort of interesting, but only if there's *plot*—like, all your romantic relationships turn out to be with disguised monsters, or people are always challenging you to duels.

I want to unblock your creativity here, so if this is your basic quest—the thing that's basically going on in your life *all the time*—the golden/fiery quest card offers incentive to go with it whenever things get kind of goofy and over-the-top here, as well as pushing them in that direction when they're not.

Something Simple and Honest

There's something simple and honest that you spend a lot of time doing—e.g.,

- doing chores;
- helping people out;
- studying something;
- fishing (see also pg. 339);
- talking with friends about stuff;
- practicing your art

— and an associated catchphrase, like, "Well, it's got to get done."

If you think you can have fun and evoke your character by bringing in that catchphrase, then that can be your basic quest.

Unlikely Options

There's two more standard options for a quest, and I guess it's *possible* for your basic quest to be one of them—

- something you just have to live through, *or*
- something mystic and indescribable—

But both of those actually seem like things that *shouldn't* be your basic quest, because they're things that end. People can keep their worldviews and passions and do simple and honest work their whole life; keeping their temptations and struggles is rarer, but even those can last a really long time. But things like grief and the shadow of the numinous—things that use Background or Symbolic quests—are pretty rare to keep for your whole life.

If you don't actually care about any of that, I'm sorry! Just pick the appropriate quest card and you're good to go. ^_^



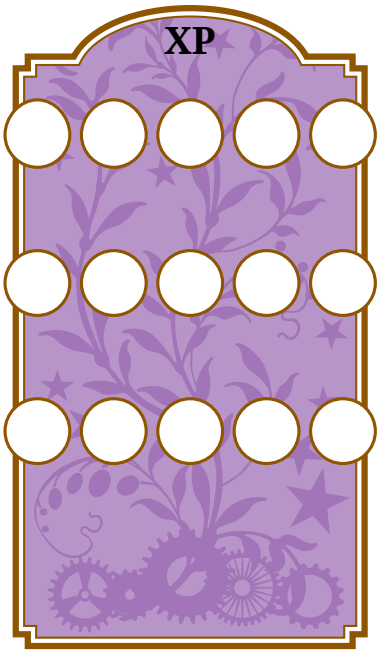
There's something you're working on:

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 thing you're doing.

Pick a standard phrase to indicate this, and then just say that phrase or some close variant when you want to claim the bonus.

What's your phrase?

The idea is that by saying that, you either confirm that something is about the thing you're working on, or you make yourself a little goofy and perhaps overly earnest.



Something to Live Through (Basic Quest)

There's something you just have to live through, day by day.

And there's something—some experience—that helps mark out those days. There is something that draws your attention when this quest casts its shadow or its light upon your life.

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by directing attention to this experience. This usually relies on a specific catch phrase—e.g., your attention drifts to the birds flying out over Big Lake, and you say, "Listen to those birds."

...or whatever.

What catch phrase do you use?

XP

Something Indescribable (Basic Quest)

There's something going on. You think it means... you think it... it *relates* to...

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 it, the thing, the it, the miracle, the strangeness, the dissociation, the unnameable, the it, the thing

— 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. Clenching muscles in your arms. Hunger in the sky. Whatever. Random rambles and chill sensations across your back, gnashing stars in the glory beyond the world. That kind of experience, the taste of bugs chattering in the summer, and that brings you in a bonus XP for this quest.

XP

Step 2: Choose Your Bonus XP Emotion

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. Maybe you're a hapless character, and so you're looking to get "head-desks" from them. Or maybe you're a weirdo whose thought processes are so strange that you can regularly get "(overacted) speechlessness" from others.

You'll find some thoughts on how to choose your XP emotion on pg. 60 of the core rules; the standard options are:

- *Aww!* **XP—**if players will "aww!" at your sorrowful circumstances
- **Head-Desk XP—**if they'll head-desk at your goofiness
- **Fist-Shaking XP—**if they'll shout your name while shaking their fist
- **"Oh no! (Name) is in Trouble!" XP—**if you're highly kidnappable
- **(Overacted) Speechlessness XP—**if you're good at ranting nonsense
- **(Overacted) Shiver of Wonder/Terror XP—**if you're kinda creepy and/or holy
- **Putting my Faith in You (with this XP token) XP**—for big brother/sister archetypes
- **Offering you Comfort (with this XP token) XP**—for neurotics
- **Finger-snap and beckon over XP**—for natural minions
- **Fist-Pump/Salute XP**—if you're kind of stylized and larger-than-life
- **Thumbs-Up XP**—for characters kind of quiet and sweet

The goal is to get that reaction from the other *players* through your character's actions—e.g., if you have thumbs-up XP, and you get other players to be happy for your character, and give you a thumbs-up, you'll earn an XP! An XP emotion like this can give you up to 1 bonus XP/15 minutes of play.

In addition to the standard options, I'd like to introduce two new XP emotions here—

- **Gratitude XP—**for people who make others' lives better
- **Groan/Eyeroll XP—**for exasperating kid sibling types

—to help fill out the character archetypes for a Fortitude family. They're a little more complicated than the emotions above, but only a little:

Gratitude XP focuses on what I like to call "gratitude hands." That's—all the different hand gestures people use when a verbal thank you isn't enough. When I'm overacting gratitude, or when I'm experiencing the heartfelt form, "thank you" just won't cut it—there's this impulse to take someone's hand as I thank them; or to salute them; or put my fist over my heart, or my palm over my fist while I sketch a bow; or to fist-bump them. An impulse to offer a thank-you that *moves.*

The kind of character that gets gratitude XP is someone who brings light and safety to the lives of other people around them. Someone who makes people smile. If you choose the gratitude XP condition, then you're trying to get those smiles and those gratitude hands from others.

Groan/Eyeroll XP is what you'd expect—you get XP from people groaning or rolling their eyes at you—but I wanted to note that I'm specifically hoping that you'll get there through goofiness. This isn't meant to be an XP condition for proud characters; it's an XP condition for awkward kids who are trying too hard. It's an XP condition for playing someone who is kind of a dork.

As an example of what I mean, a kind of dumb "I don't believe you *said* that" pun is probably a better source of groan XP than a really clever one.

Step 3: Choose Your Starting Quest

In a proper **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** game, every character is on some sort of story/character Arc. If you're playing a pre-designed campaign like **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon** you may have some quests chosen for you by default; otherwise, you'll need to pick a quest to start out your Arc. If you can't decide where to start, or want to keep your options open, you can also take two starting quests (with an eye towards dropping one or declaring it a side quest later on.)

Here's some places that your story could start.



At Society's Edge 1:

Are you the kind of person who's always working with dangerous, wicked, and/or forbidden things? Then maybe your story starts with your getting involved with some new dangerous, wicked, or forbidden thing—or maybe it's just generally about what that lifestyle's like.

Good starting quests here are:

- From the main rules:
  - **Science!:** you investigate something. What is it?
  - **Bind:** you bind some captive horror.
  - **Mental Training:** you're studying!... maybe some sort of wicked magic?

- From this book:
  - **Drawn into the Titovs (pg. 273):** you're drawn into the story of the Titovs.
  - **Explorer (pg. 345):** you explore the paths of Big Lake.
  - **Friend to the Street Cats and Dogs (pg. 302):** you take care of the local stray cats. Defiantly!
  - **Joining the Yatskaya (pg. 282):** you visit the Yatskaya often.
  - **Love for the Water (pg. 351):** you spend time out on Big Lake.
  - **Shrine Duties (pg. 229):** you work at/with a shrine.
  - **Trouble in Dreams (pg. 267):** something gets *into* your dreams.

...and afterwards you'll usually hammer out a working relationship with that new thing you got involved with, or, if that doesn't seem to fit, you'll reach a new level of acceptance of your life and yourself.

Formally, that completes a **Bindings 1** quest.

Icon

"I can turn it down... if you like?"
—Jasper Irinka, **The Child of the Sun**, offering to dim the sun a bit for a friend with a hangover

- Character Type earns: **Gratitude Hands XP**

Emotion XP

Annoying

"No! No turning down the sun! It's... curtains for you!"
—Rinley Yatskaya, **The Troublemaker**, objecting to Jasper Irinka's solution.

- Character Type earns: **Groan/Eyeroll XP**

Emotion XP

Aspiring 1:

Are you going to *be* somebody? Somebody important? A doctor? A member of the Regional Council? A magical warrior? The Guardian of Time?

Then you'll probably start your story Arc with a dream of what you want to be, or even an ambition about something you *don't* want to be, but with no real sense of how to get there from here.

Get a sense of what you want to be, and the first step of your journey is...

2

From the main rules:

- **Adventure GET:** you will adventure and you will become that!
- **the Refusal of the Call:** you don't want to become that!
- **the Object:** learn to look the part before you can be the part!
- **Mental Training:** let's studying!
- **Taking Care of a Small Child:** "Parents can have destinies too, you know."

From this book:

- **Dependable Person (pg. 253):** you're trying to be one.
- **Friend of the Beaches (pg. 306):** you work on Fortitude's beach.
- **Friend to the Street Cats and Dogs (pg. 302):** you have friends among the local strays and semi-strays.
- **Friend to the Birds (pg. 300):** you keep or befriend local birds.
- **Generic Project (pg. 224):** you've been working on a big project.
- **Ship's Friend (pg. 341):** your life's centered around someone, or a group of friends, crewing or running a ship.
- **Stale Life (pg. 328):** you feel *stuck.* You're looking for a change**.**
- **Up-to-Date (pg. 254):** you try to keep up on peoples' lives.

At the end of this quest you've put a name to what you want to become, if all you had was a concept, and you've set your feet on the path to being that.

Formally, that completes a **Knight 1** quest.

Another World 1:

Or does your story start with strange otherworldly experiences?

Are you a shaman? Are you being eaten in your dreams? Visiting some kind of fairyland? Addicted to an MMO?

Then your Otherworldly Arc might begin with...

From the main rules:

- **Science!:** Your dreams are calling you to a place of danger...
- **Changes:** You are becoming someone else. *Something* else.

From this book:

- **A Brush with a Mystery (pg. 297)**
- **Drawn into the Titovs (pg. 273):** you're drawn into the story of the Titovs.
- **Joining the Sosunov (pg. 270):** you involve yourself with the Sosunov family.
- **Joining the Yatskaya (pg. 282):** you're spending more and more time at the Yatskaya temple.
- **Love for the Water (pg. 351):** you spend time out on Big Lake.
- **Shrine or Park Guardian (pg. 255):** You help to maintain a shrine.
- **Stale Life (pg. 328):** you feel *stuck.* You're looking for a change.
- **The Northern Beach (pg. 309):** you wander the northern stretches of beach.
- **Trouble in Dreams (pg. 267):** something gets *into* your dreams.
- **Troubled Divination (pg. 262):** the Kichi pools warn of danger to someone you love.

At the end of this quest you'll know what you have to do about all this, or at least, have the choice between 2-3 paths.

Formally, that completes an **Otherworldly 1** quest.

A Mythic Figure 1:

Are you a kind of archetypal figure, blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality? A magician who tells stories that turn real? A creature out of fable? A spiritual phenomenon?

Then maybe your first quest starts with your playing around with something kind of new and neat:

- From the main rules:
  - **A New Job:** it's so exciting!
  - **A New Hobby:** even more awesome!
  - **Adventure GET:** you find a neat story to get involved in...
  - **Fascination:** someone is alluring/fascinating to you. Are they a mythic figure that will lure you into their world, or *vice versa?*
- From this book:
  - **Explorer (pg. 345):** you explore the paths of Big Lake.
  - **Joining the Yatskaya (pg. 282):** blurring the boundaries between fiction and reality, are you? You'll be in good company here!
  - **Little Ship (pg. 347):** you're fixing up your own little ship.
  - **Ship's Crew (pg. 339):** you've signed up on a big ship!!
  - **Ship's Friend (pg. 341):** you love a particular ship and its crew.
  - **The Great Dread Witch Hunt (pg. 254):** you become involved with a group of rats who are targeting Caroline Yatskaya**.**
  - **Up-to-Date (pg. 254):** you hunger for gossip!

Eventually, though, it stops being new and interesting—though it might still be fun! At that point, you've completed a **Storyteller 1** quest.

Training/Studying 1:

Are you training to be the best? Are you striving to reach the peak of academic, athletic, or some other sort of achievement?

Then maybe the story begins with you at a plateau—it's *hard* to go any further than this. Your first quest could be...

- From the main rules:
  - **Mental Training:** an intensive program of study
  - **Physical Training:** rigorous physical training!
  - **Above the Fray:** first, you need to clear your head and take a while to think about some stuff that's gone on or happened to you.
  - **Beautiful and Far Away:** your training's fallen apart, to be honest; you've retreated from the world to a secret place.
- From this book:
  - **Love for the Water (pg. 351):** you spend time out on Big Lake.
  - **Sacred Child (pg. 257):** Fortitude has recognized you as a sacred child.
  - **Shrine Duties (pg. 229):** you work at/with a shrine.
  - **Stale Life (pg. 328):** you feel *stuck.* You're looking for a change.

At the end of the quest, you push past whatever was holding you back, either beginning a new climb or jumping to a new level/plateau. Formally, you've completed an **Aspect 1** quest.

Guardian/Guide/Protector 1:

Do you think you might one day be able to guard or protect others? Make or build things? Guide, teach, or bring out the hidden power in others? A story like this often starts with your ordinary day-to-day life, e.g.…

From the main rules:

- **Connecting with Someone:** you're making a conscious effort to connect to somebody. Who?
- **Down:** you're having a really hard time lately.
- **Beautiful and Far Away:** you've hidden yourself away among your precious things.

From this book:

- **A Good Life (pg. 238):** you're trying to live one.
- **Dependable Person (pg. 253):** you're trying to be one.
- **Friend of the Beaches (pg. 306):** you work on Fortitude's beach.
- **Friend to the Birds (pg. 300):** you look after the birds of Fortitude.
- **Friend to the Street Cats and Dogs (pg. 302):** you help take care of the local strays.
- **Generic Project (pg. 224):** you've been working on a big project.
- **Getting to Know the Vasili (pg. 277)**
- **Good Catch (pg. 339):** you're learning to bring in a good haul of fish.
- **Joining the Kichi (pg. 264):** you become entangled with the Kichi family.
- **Joining the Yatskaya (pg. 282):** you're spending more and more time at the Yatskaya temple.
- **Keeping a Good Place (pg. 248)**
- **Little Ship (pg. 347):** you're fixing up this sweet little ship.
- **Ship's Crew (pg. 339):** you're learning the ways of a particular ship.
- **Shrine Duties (pg. 229):** you work at/with a shrine.
- **Shrine or Park Guardian (pg. 255):** You tend the grounds of a shrine or park.
- **Stale Life (pg. 328):** you feel *stuck*. You're looking for a change.
- **Trying to Fix Some Social Problem (pg. 233)**

Afterwards, a new responsibility falls on you and you'll have completed a **Shepherd 1** quest.

Troubled by Chaos, the Outside, or Death 1:

Are you someone troubled by the power chaos and the Outside has over your life? Over your heart? Are you a creature of wickedness? A holy person who tames it? Somebody broken and in despair? Someone being transformed into something *else* by the touch of the Outside? Someone with a hollow place in them that nothing in the world seems to fill?

A story like that also begins with your daily routine, with a focus on how you live with that strangeness.

From the main rules:

- **Bind:** you try to humanize some vampire, evil ghost, or awful power.
- **The Object:** the story of your hat, diary, or flute.
- **Physical Training:** exercise will help you keep control.
- **Someone's in Trouble:** you stumble on someone *like you* in some important way—can you help them out?
- **Changes:** you're in the process of transformation.

From this book:

- **Crisis of Confidence (pg. 230):** you are troubled.
- **Friend of the Beaches (pg. 306):** you walk on Fortitude's beaches.
- **Friend to the Birds (pg. 300):** you stare at the sky a lot.
- **Friend to the Street Cats and Dogs (pg. 302)**
- **Good Catch (pg. 339):** you spend a lot of time fishing.
- **Joining the Kichi (pg. 264):** you become entangled with the Kichi family.
- **Keeping a Good Place (pg. 248)**
- **Love for the Water (pg. 351):** you spend time out on Big Lake.
- **Ship's Friend (pg. 341)**
- **Shrine Duties (pg. 229):** you are connected to a shrine.
- **The Northern Beach (pg. 309):** you wander the northern stretches of beach.

At the end of the quest, you(re ready to) make a change in your life; formally, you'll have completed an **Emptiness 1** quest.

Mystic 1:

Are you the kind of person who puts your life into the hands of greater, holy powers? A mystic? A saint? A demigod? Someone blessed? A pawn of fate, destiny, or the gods? A person who is nothing more than a shell for a divine being evolving within them?

Then your story starts in a time of portents—a time in your life when *something is coming*, when a big change has been foreshadowed, as represented by a quest something like these...

- From the main rules:
  - **Down:** this is a really rough time in your life. Magic hasn't shown up to save you yet, or at least, the big stuff hasn't.
  - **Changes:** you're in a process of evolution, and you don't know where it's going yet!

- From this book:
  - **A Brush with a Mystery (pg. 297)**
  - **Crisis of Confidence (pg. 230):** you are troubled.
  - **Drawn into the Titovs (pg. 273):** you're drawn into the story of the Titovs.
  - **Friend of the Beaches (pg. 306):** you walk Fortitude's beaches.
  - **Friend to the Birds (pg. 300):** you stare at the sky a lot. You think about omens.
  - **Little Ship (pg. 347):** you're fixing up your own little ship. Strange things will happen...
  - **Love for the Water (pg. 351):** you spend time out on Big Lake.
  - **Stale Life (pg. 328):** you feel *stuck*. You're looking for a change.
  - **The Northern Beach (pg. 309):** you wander the northern stretches of the beach.
  - **Transcendence (pg. 241):** you're falling into a greater power.
  - **Trouble in Dreams (pg. 267):** something strange has slipped into your dreams.

At the end of this you'll encounter a miracle, and will have completed a **Mystic 1** quest.

Other Options

You're not limited to the quests above—if you've found some cool quest in another book, or come up with something yourself, feel free to take that instead. As noted above, you also have the option to start on two different quests here—just figure out which one is the defining character/story Arc quest and which one is the spare before you start *finishing* them.

Anyway, have you chosen a basic quest, an XP emotion, and 1-2 storyline quests?

Great!

You've now completed your **Fortitude** PC!

Experiences

Home and Family

a Preamble

You have a home in Fortitude.

— from Fortitude's list of Region Properties

3

There's a place in Fortitude that'll always welcome you. It smells of cooking: bread in the oven, sometimes; soup on the stove, maybe; or meat on a grill, frozen meals in a microwave, cheese or fruit left sitting out, Turkish coffee brewing, maybe, or even old grease left sitting in a pan. It's full of the sounds of family, of people you love and who'll welcome you in, going about their lives. It's a place of easy comfort, of talking over tea or soda, beer or wine, where you can smile when you see someone in the morning and wish them a good evening at night.

You'll notice the dark of the wood and rugs of the building. It's a place of deep, cool shadows.

Maybe someone is smiling at you, unexpectedly, with sharp unfrightened eyes.

The law that commends you to such a place is a subtle and light-handed one—it is pregnant with mysteries and amenable to a thousand circumstances and excuses. It doesn't force you into anything, is what I'm saying; it's as inexplicable as any theological point. And so it's possible that you can go to Fortitude once, twice, a dozen or a thousand times, and not actually find the family that you have there. It's not a commandment from the world that you have one, not exactly, but rather a statement of consanguinity and symmetry: there is nothing there that does not have, or *cannot* find, its proper home.

Because people need people, don't you know?

And so it is that even if you don't have a natural family there, even if you don't have any reason or means to fit yourself into a place there, the elemental social and structural forces of the place will push you in the direction of a home. People will recognize you as just a little bit at a loss, a little bit unanchored: you will stand out like a splash of color on a mountain, and they will look at you in such a way as to—not so much judge you for not having a place there, but to speed you gently along your way to finding one, or, if circumstances fit and personalities align, to take you in themselves.

The best of all worlds is where you have another PC or two in your "family." Don't worry if that doesn't happen, though—just try to get them on as good terms with your family as things allow.

How did you find your home?

The Lost Kitten Way: Maybe you were shivering and cold. Why was that, by the way?

- Were you too distracted or upset by the things you were thinking about to find shelter?
- Were you punishing yourself for some reason?
- Did you forget that you *could* still get cold and sick, or were you trying to still act as if you could?
- Maybe you even legitimately didn't have any place to go?

Anyway, maybe you were shivering and cold and there was this gray cloud in the sky like a spear cutting through the other clouds; and then they found you and they took you in.

The Community Method: Or were you visiting this... this

- bookstore?
- café, maybe?
- pub?
- club or park down by the docks?

...and you felt comfortable, like you were at home, for the first time in a while? And the people there became your family?

Expanding Circle Style: Or maybe you knew someone here, maybe you were visiting or working with someone here, and you became friends. And then you met *their* friends and family.

- Someone didn't approve of you at first, but they accept you now. Who was it?

- Someone took to you instantly on first meeting. Who were they?

...and afterwards, at some point, you realized that you had found your home.

Going Without: Or... have you not found it yet?

Are you new to Fortitude, or unlucky, or just so wound up in your own stuff that you haven't let it happen yet and you don't believe that it will?



Population

Trying to get a sense for who's in your neighborhood?

Fortitude has a rough population of 40,000, broken down into:

- 33,800 humans
- 5,500 Fortitude rats
- 400 vampires, *and*
- 300 miscellaneous non-human people

The population density is pretty low, although it approaches respectable modern levels in the regional center—but we're still talking a family or two per city block. It's got a backwoods, comfortable sort of sprawl.

Regarding the Rats

I want to summarize why I keep talking about rats here, since if you don't spend much time in Fortitude you might not know.

So.

The rats that you find in Fortitude are people.

They've *woken up*, they think, they talk, they're as smart as a human, and they're about twice as big as your ordinary rat—a foot or more in length, plus that much again in tail.

They're mobile creatures—they get about. You'll see them fairly often.

They keep mostly to the rooftops and the underground, but if you head down to the docks there's a reasonable chance you'll encounter a rat or two out on the streets or on a human associate's shoulder. If you're staying inland you might catch a glimpse of a rooftop rat a couple of times a week and have actual interactions with one five or six times a season.

If you see a regular-looking rat the odds are good that it's an adolescent that hasn't hit its growth spurt yet and isn't bothering with clothes. It *could* be a regular rat—there *are* a few; the rats call them Yahoos—but they're way outnumbered, since even if the regular rats don't wake up after getting to Fortitude, their children always will.

Some common names include Anatoly, Pavel, Daisuke, and Shota; Alexandru, Tudor, Vasile, and Gavrilo; or Meriadoc, Sagan, Kung Fu, and Leverage for boys; and Alyona, Dominika, Inessa, and Kaeda; or Ružica, Nada, Gabriela, and Elisabeta; or Buffy, Palpatine, Pantene, Phasma, and Value, for girls. Last names are rare but royalty might be surnamed Fujimoto, Kysely, or Takahiro, shrine rats might be surnamed Augustine, and the Kovac family are legends as heroes.

Talking Things Over With Family



Shared Reactions

3

This bit is about what it's like to go home and talk to your family about stuff that's happened or is happening in your life.

You're welcome to, of course. They told you that once.

Did they put their hand on yours and say, "I want to know about you?" Did they laugh away your fears and say they liked to listen? Did they just point out that it's the way of things, in Fortitude: that a person *ought* to be able to talk about things with family, here; emphasizing, if necessary, *"and you're family, right?"*

It must have been something like that, anyway.

They smiled, and there was light on their face and darkness behind them. They made sure you knew that if you needed to work out how you felt that there would always be a place for that at home.

How it Starts

Now, their promise to listen doesn't mean that they're never busy. That doesn't mean you have full rights to their attention. You're important but you're not the *only* important thing.[31]

There's this guy who lives down the way, for example. He's lean and strong and he's kind of hot. He spends a lot of his time steaming and bending wood for the ribs of the rats' ships. If his steamer's running, he can't just wander off and talk. Unless you're dying or something, even if you're family, you've got to wait to bug him until the wood comes out of the steamer and he bends it and wrestles it into the clamps of the ship-rib jig.

There's a doctor who lives up the hill from the docks. She mostly treats colds and scrapes and stomach disorders but if someone's come in with a break or a concussion she's not going to send them home just so she can talk to you.

Even people without time-critical tasks have their own stresses, their own lives, and may well want to finish putting in a load of laundry, getting dinner into the oven, writing a letter, hanging pictures in their darkroom, or reading an article in the paper before they turn their attention entirely to you.

So if you just show up with your story you'll hear a lot of "Sure, just a sec—let me take care of this and we can talk." Maybe think of it as a chance to get into their rhythm and help them out before you start?

Where You Talk

In Fortitude serious talk isn't meant for meals. It's not something you do over dinner, much less with breakfast or with lunch. It's a separate social occasion.

If it's raining or it's hot, you'll talk inside, of course. Maybe you'll sit or lie on an old stiff, fuzzy couch (or more likely, a wooden couch with a thin layer of cloth for cover) and you'll notice the ridiculous complexity of the geometric pattern on the pillow that's under your left arm: somebody's grandmother or grandfather must have spent ages on it, you realize, working hour after hour making fireworks and unfolding fractals in gold and orange thread!

Or maybe you're more formal or more informal than that. You could find a pair of wicker chairs in the study, library, or guest room, instead, and admire old books from foreign places, play with the tentative tendrils of a throw rug fringe, or think about the flavor of your tea while you talk. Maybe you're the kind of person in the kind of family where you can just sit by the walls of a mostly-empty room, stare at the cracks on the ceiling, drink, and talk.

Hey, by the way:

- if there's mess or clutter here, are you more likely to shuffle it or clean it while you talk?
- And if neither, just what *do* you do with your hands while you're talking about this stuff?
- Are you leaving a mess of your own behind?

On a nicer day, in Fortitude, you wouldn't sit inside. You'd go outside, either to sit or walk. Your family might have a nice porch or garden. Even the curb outside can be pretty nice if you're close to or have a view down to the Big Lake. For a really serious talk, about life or souls or weddings or something, a garden or porch or yard is definitely best. If the talk is not so serious, or if you don't have a great place that you can sit, though, there's always errands to run and nice places you can visit. It's the basic assumption of Fortitude life that you'll spend a fair bit of any given week walking: an hour's walk to visit a friend, the market, or the docks

31 Probably.

is nothing worth considering, and anything under thirty minutes is basically "next door."

The upside to staying home is that you can sit with a cold glass on a warm day and watch the ice cubes clink from place to place inside a pale peach or ginger drink. The upside of a walk is that you'll pass trees with screens of wispy foliage hanging down. You'll step on or between plant seeds scattered on the ground. You'll see a bird land on a nearby tree, black with a shockingly blue breast, its feathers spreading apart and then folding in on each other with the movements of the muscles of its wing. You'll pass shops you might want to dash into—a comics shop, a book shop, something selling a pastry or a skewer you like, maybe even someplace that actually has a television so you can gawk at interesting news. You'll see a spider's web that in an act of incredible bravado spans an entire road and waits to catch the next big truck to happen along.[32]

"Its dreams," you might remark, at least the first time, "will probably be crushed."

At least you might have if I hadn't spoiled that remark for you. I'm sorry! Perhaps you can courage up your face and say it anyhow, as if the line's your own.

Out in Fortitude, no matter where you go, there's probably the sounds of people. Children scream in the distance, having stumbled onto something cool or gotten into a fight with their parents or scraped their knee upon the road. People walk around in groups and talk. Sometimes you'll hear the rumble of an engine—most likely a truck transporting fish—or the sound of a bicycle bell. Sometimes somebody selling CDs, typically pirated, sets up sound equipment and plays random hits from Earth or other regions to draw customers in: that's how you might be surprised, one day or evening, when you're walking along and talking about your life, to hear the music of Lady Gaga or Billy Joel suddenly begin.

And, anyway, you talk.

Stuff You Don't Want to Think About

If it's hard to talk, if your brain wants to think about anything else, then you'll notice the little things that aren't so great about being in Fortitude. Like: it's hot. A lot of the time, it gets really hot. You're trying to talk about important, big, scary or happy things that happened, but how can you *think* or figure out how you feel when it's so *hot*? It makes your head feel like a small dog that was accidentally run through the dryer until its fur puffed out like a sheep's and its brain went on the fritz. It makes the world wobble in and out like somebody's hitting saran wrap with a hammer and the world's on the other side.

Or maybe it's not so hot, but you notice that the wood of the chair, or sofa, or floor is cracking. Maybe you find a bit of mold or mildew growing. Water must have gotten into it. It's really hard to keep a house totally dry when you're living in a place like Fortitude, and getting the damage fixed is always an enormous pain. You might even realize that it's probably best to move the furniture and check the whole area and make sure there isn't a bigger problem to deal with. That's a good way to distract yourself from the things that you don't want to say.

Sometimes the noise of the streets and the birds and the wind is overwhelming. That can work for distraction too.

Hey, by the way, if it's night: did your host light the fire, or is the night too warm?

The Level of Their Understanding

Your family might or might not understand you.

"Take it slow," they could say, after you go on about your thoughts. "Take it slow," or "Give it time." Maybe even "You need to not get so wrapped up, I think, in these modern kinds of ideas." They're immersed in traditional values and calm dignity, in Fortitude, and if

Shared Reactions

Condition: You're having a relatively open discussion with someone—something that touches on stuff that matters to you, and isn't just formalities and etiquette.

Action:

- **Reach out to them. Try to connect.**

As an optional rule, you can get a second group XP for this if you make yourself a little vulnerable—if at some point you do something that shows some level of trust for or weakness in front of the people around you, or if someone shows that level of trust or weakness to you.

You can reach out to either PCs or NPCs and get the bonus XP, although it's usually better connecting to PCs.

32 *For clarity, it is a small ordinary spider, and this will fail.*



you don't want those things to be the answer, then you might not like what Fortitude people have to say.

They're storehouses of traditional wisdom, usually, at least. The people of Fortitude remember where they come from, they know the stories of their lives and their ancestor's lives, generations back, and there's usually *something* in that canon that can help. You might be in the middle of dismissing their ability to even understand your problems when they'll correct you: no. Your uncle, or their great-great-grandmother, or even they themselves, too, once went through what you are undergoing now. Oh, they're not like you, of course, not exactly. They've never been afraid that they accidentally killed God, if that's what you're telling them about—but they did hit that worthy deity with their boat once, and shattered Him to pieces, so don't say that they *cannot* understand. Maybe He put Himself back together. Maybe He didn't. Theology is difficult and the world unruly. He certainly wasn't dead. But having hurt almighty God *at all*, that pained the heart—

They say.

Or, did an evil-tainted wasp inject an evil egg into your soul?

Well, that happened to old Peter, too, or something like; or to ancient Vasilika, Kimiko, or Inoue. Maybe even to the person you're talking to, back in their wild youth, when wasps were more plentiful and evil wasn't quite so rare.

You aren't the first to be romanced by a vampire either, you know, or even by a machine. And wasn't there someone back in the old country, even before your family came to Town, who tried like you are trying now to build a spaceship out of scrap?

Your particular soul-destroying job or situation in the outside world might confound them with its details, but it's not completely out of reach. They did once travel far, you know, and join an "Eye tea startup," in some sweet-smelling distant land.

It's part of the comfort that is home:

That you are *not* alone in this, whatever "this" may be, and even if you thought you were.

Snacks

Your family will offer you things to drink or eat if you stay long enough. Some of them are tasty. Others might scare you, just a bit. Fortitude coffee is plain awesome. Their tea isn't all that—the local tea plants have a bit

more tang and body than a typical black tea but nothing that would attract or even discourage a serious connoisseur. It does very well, however, when made into Hong Kong-style milk tea, which has therefore become quite popular in the docks. There's a cream soda variation served with rose petals; I don't know what the petals are for, or what they add to the drink, and I don't really like that they are there, but the cream soda, at least, is good. So there are good things to choose from. Conversely, there is a sour bread-based soda. A reasonable person might view this with some concern. There is a tuna-flake flavored tea. There is a seaweed- and Outside-dust-based liquor which Fortitude calls "Old Indescribable," and this is more or less correct.

Meals and snacks usually involve some kind of fish or shellfish and often some kind of bread or broth. Skewers of seasoned fish are common and tasty, as are variations on the pierogi. Deep fat fryers are just beginning to catch on in Fortitude, so people get surprisingly excited about things like fried dumplings, fried cod, fish and chips, fried eel slices, fried cheese cubes, and the like. If you actually stay for dinner, though, you're more likely to have soup or stew. It's considered acceptable for anyone under the age of 50 to turn up their nose at pickled lake snails: they're an old person's food, for people "wise enough to appreciate them." If you're under 25 and eat them with any sort of enthusiasm, in fact, even your own family will laugh at you as an old woman or old man. Conversely, nobody will understand at all if you refuse to be excited by boiled tongue, salted or pickled herring, kaiju meat, or spider-cake.[33]

So, all that said, you've talked, and you've either eaten, or, well, you have not.

Near the End

When you're done, you'll sometimes find that your family knows you better than you know yourself. They may say something insightful, that lets that show, but more often they'll just look at you thoughtfully, like there was more in what you said than you knew you were letting out. "No, no," they'll say, if you ask them what that was, and they'll shake their heads. Maybe they haven't really formalized it to themselves, at that, even if you could read their thoughts.

There's something, anyway, that they've picked up from what you said.

I wonder what it was?

Talking About How You Live



Shared Action[34]

This bit is what it's like to tell your family about the way you live your life. It's about talking to your family in Fortitude about the choices you're making, the things you've done, the prices you're paying, and the skills you're learning. It's like boasting, only, instead of having to convince people that they should care about and approve of what you've done, you know that they basically will.

Mealtimes are full of this in Fortitude. It's a time for old captains to talk about the color of the clouds and what weather that'll bring—which can be useful information or ominous foreshadowing, of course, but can usually be summed up instead as "The sky is neat! And look how much awesome weather-stuff I know!" It's a time for fishermen to talk about their weariness from hauling nets, and this one fish that got free and flopped out of Albert's hands and managed to jump all the way from the deck back to the sea. It's a time for you to talk about the neighbors you spoke to, and the ideas you had, and the thoughts you thought, and how you were walking to the laundromat and passed under a tree just as a sudden rain started up and for a moment you thought, *oh, it's only raining on this side of the leaves.* It's a time for knitters to rave about their patterns and avid readers about their books. It's time for children to tell expansive stories about everything they've seen and done that day: how they squished a red crayon and it didn't have any tomatoes inside it even though Stefan had said that it was made out of tomatoes, and how they made a horse that was red and a cowboy that was also red that stood next to the horse. This will be very funny

33 *In fairness, though, and with due apologies to every Fortitude child who's ever tried to make spider-cake dishes from ingredients found at home, the "spiders" in spider-cake are actually an awkwardly-named relative of the crab.*

34 *Why is this called "Shared Action" and not "Shared Reactions?"*

Because I think telling people how you live your life, how you want to live your life, and what your values are can be a simple, honest action, even if you're at home having dinner or stuck in bed sick or something and not actually out there doing it. You're not clearing the air or sorting through your head: you're expressing the same simple, honest values you would be if you were physically doing stuff.

Of course, practically nothing would change if it were Shared Reactions. It'd just feel wrong to me!

because nobody rides horses in Fortitude. Amidst the clatter and the chewing apprentices will go over the lessons that they've learned and the old will discuss their memories of youth. There's a buzz of conversation, mediated only slightly by seniority and decorum, that boils down to: *I'm here! I'm here! This is me!*

Responded to, in silence or in words, with: *I see! I see! I know!*

You'll find that a heroic life isn't much different than anyone else's, here. If you've decided to scale up to wrestling *two* tigers every morning instead of one, or set yourself to challenge death instead of that snotty kid who sits in front of you in class, that's just like any other way of living, here.

"That sounds really tough," your family might say. Or "Two tigers? But wouldn't they fight one another?"

You don't have to try to be ordinary, in short, any more than you have to try to be extraordinary. If there's a gap in the conversation, or you're just bursting with the need to talk about something, then talk about it. Your family wants to know how you're getting on.

That said, you shouldn't expect to get through a story without interruption. Not in Fortitude. It's one thing when you're talking about something that distresses or concerns you, but when you're talking about decisions made and events already past, someone's going to burst in with an "oh! That's just like when —" or a "Did I ever tell you about..." or even something completely unrelated, particularly if they're young, like "Susie says, she says, her family doesn't eat giant monsters, she says, even—even when people catch them."

It is all right if that relates. I will not go back and revise this. But Susie's family, well, usually, it will not.

Meals

Usually the food's good, too. You might notice that you're talking too much, that it's hard to get through your whole bowl of soup, or your whole plate (crumbled corn tart, salad, and noodles with smoked trout, say) before the warm gets cold and the cold gets warm. It could go the other way around: you're in the middle of talking, and then you slip in a spoonful of soup, and you get completely distracted by the tomato and the lemon that you taste. If you're playing with your silverware as you talk instead of eating you'll probably notice the light glinting and rolling in your spoon.

Sometimes, of course, the food is scary instead. At one point you might have made the mistake I made, which is, to expect a reasonable taste from a pie-like concoction made occasionally in Fortitude from yam, onion, rice noodles, ginger, sour cream, and fish. I will confess that I can eat a small amount of this dish now and again, and one day may even grow to like it, but my first response could be best put as: "In this world there is no God!" In such cases a mental game of tag with your food—tag being preferable to Chess, as it gives you an excuse to avoid consumption—may occupy your attention now and again throughout the meal.

Talking About Your Life, While Walking

Here's what it's like to discuss these things with your family when you're out walking.

It's still: *I'm here! I'm here! This is me!*

But the response, whether you make it or they do, is much closer to *mm-hm! Mm-hm? Mm-hm!*

Walking is distracting. The world is much more in motion. So are your thoughts: there's much more to remember, when you're out and about, then when you're in a single place and eating. You'll talk, and listen, and then suddenly the wind will practically knock you off your feet, and all you can think about it is: *wow, if only I had wings*, or *this is ridiculous*, or *why did I wear a hat?*

You'll talk, and listen, and then you'll hit this section of road that's cobblestone, and you'll feel it through

Shared Action

Condition: Someone's doing something simple and honest, like cooking, cleaning, or practicing their martial arts katas.

You're hanging out with them, socializing or helping.

Or, you're the one doing simple, honest stuff, and someone else is interacting with you!

Action:

- **Reach out to them. Try to connect.**

As an optional rule, you can get a second group XP for this if you make yourself a little vulnerable—if at some point you do something that shows some level of trust for or weakness in front of the people around you, or if someone shows that level of trust or weakness to you.

You can reach out to either PCs or NPCs and get the bonus XP, although it's usually better connecting to PCs.

your shoes, hard, bumpy and complicated. Or you'll be gesturing, and you'll realize you're passing a wooden pillar-beam that's holding up an eave, and you can grab it and spin yourself around it as you talk. You'll remember you're close to the bank. Do you have to go to the bank? What about the post office?

I wonder if it'll rain.

When you're out in the world it's easy to get distracted from your talking and wind up in a Slice of Lifestyle travel scene instead.

Small Talk With Family



Slice of Life/Discovery[35]

This bit is about what it's like to make small talk with your family in Fortitude. Stuff like "So you wake up tomorrow and you have superpowers. What do you do?" or "Did you see the Kumazawas' new satellite dish?" or "I don't think the secret of soylent green is timing at *all*."

You'll probably be doing other things while you're talking. This is the kind of conversation that comes up while you're sitting around knitting, or during the commercials of a radio show, or while you're straightening up, or a couple of people are playing connect four while the rest read or take naps or pet a local cat. It fills the interstices. It can also slip in during mealtimes and walks when there's nothing actually meaningful to say.

You'll find when you're talking like this that your family in Fortitude generally have a pretty strong sense of who they are. They're sharp, particularly the old folks, and they're of good humor. They're not as mentally or verbally agile as the folks of some Regions but they see right through to the heart of things.

I fly, they'll say, because they've always dreamed of it.

Or *most ridiculous thing I've ever seen, they don't even like TV.*

But if you get too weird, or try to throw them, they might come back at you with nothing more than "That's because that's the secret of comedy, dear. The secret of soylent green was anthropophagy, wasn't it?"

And if you try to explain that anthropophagy is actually quite funny they'll probably just inform you that *Gilda Radner* never had to eat anybody to be funny! If modern comedians are starting to engage in blasphemous, unholy feasts on human flesh then that's just another sign of the degeneracy of the modern age.

They'll admit that they're teasing you, I suppose, eventually.

What it really comes down to is, the conversation in Fortitude is slow and rich and unaffected. It's like drinking really thick hot chocolate with whipped cream on the top. Small talk doesn't generally bring on any great urgency to respond, so people'll mull over their answers, and the folk of Fortitude don't tend to involve themselves in elaborate conceits.

This one time I was talking to Mrs. Sato about how the U.N. in an AD&D world would probably need to use assassins as translators and she held up a hand to stop me. "Jenna, dear," she said, as calm as snails, "We're playing 3e now."



Slice of Life

Condition: You've just had an emotional reaction—an action or emote—to something in the world. (A tasty cake? A pleasant view? A sorrowful scene?)

Action:

- **The image/moment sticks with you; or**
- **You get lost in that mood.**

That moment will set the tone for your life for a while.

As an optional rule, you can get a second group XP for this if the scene had *two* people emoting about something—even if it's just as simple as you looking at the sunset and sighing, and someone else nodding and agreeing, "Yeah."

35 *I'll tell you about Discovery on pg. 171.*

Household Chores



Shared Action, or Slice of Life

3

In Fortitude, life is lived slowly and in richness.

The tasks waiting on your efforts slip one by one from the list of things to do onto the list of things you've done. You tend to focus not on grand ambitions but on humble ones: the next day's cleaning, the next day's meals, this to mend, this to bake, this that's needing done. Life is a wall built stone by stone. Life is a sun-warmed cobble path, step by step sensations under your bare feet. Even the grand ambitions such as building a ship or constructing a world-changing social or technological initiative play out as a series of smaller things.

You'll identify, as you play in Fortitude, a number of things that ought be done; and many of them are worth the playing through. Your character isn't just a hero or a deity or whatever, after all; they're someone who lives a life, and whose laundry must be washed and hung if they are to have clean clothes for hero-ing.

Any time you're not sleeping, eating, or working through something difficult with a friend, the answer to "What are you doing?" is most likely "Something that needed to be done," whether that's putting a coat of new white plaster on the walls or gutting the sorted fish.

Keep track of the tasks that your character commits to in their weekly, monthly, and season-by-season life. It's good to create a sense of continuity when you're identifying things to work on in the future. You'll generally not have to worry too much about things that go un-done because of work you took on in other places—the rule of Fortitude that work must be fruitful has a certain preservative effect on your in-Fortitude possessions and projects while you're working somewhere else—but you'll want to make it obvious, when you're wondering what your character should be doing next, what tasks would suit their lifestyle and would follow on from the tasks they've done before.

Here's some ideas for things to be doing around the house when you've got the time to get something done.

Checking for Rust

Fortitude's air is humid and often contains particulate elements from the Outside. Part of living here is making sure to go over all the house machinery for rust on a regular basis, including wriggling into crawlspaces and under the sink to check out pipes and stored items, pulling things like heaters and refrigerators away from the walls, and going over unused or stored stock (e.g., the irregularly used ice cream maker, last year's bicycle, or the backup water purifier everyone tries to keep in case of Outside or *kaiju* contamination in the aquifer). It's critical to check the gutters for rust on a regular basis, and if you have a bicycle, a set of woodworking tools, or (heaven help you) a car, you'll want to eyeball it and maybe even oil it at least once every day.

Outside-particle corrosion is particularly finicky and nasty stuff. It isn't *strictly* limited to metal and it gets the most remarkable places. You can pile up your winter clothes on a closet shelf and two months later your grey knit hat will be sporting the most remarkable orange or greenish tarnish (strictly speaking, "yoxi," or yarn oxidate) that threatens to spread down to your mittens. You might even find a *rusted spiderweb* one day, complete with an abalone-colored insect husk that turns into a shower of gold dust when you touch it with your finger or a broom—I've heard that Annolyn Mojmir found one, anyway, when renovating the Immrik place, and if she didn't, well, all the more reason that someone like you might. Only raw stone and living things are generally immune to Outside rust, and only if their iron content is relatively small. That's why you have to check under, behind, and on top of basically everything at least once a season if you don't want your emergency MRE food supply, inherited china, or vinyl record collection to rust.

Not that it's *that* common, you understand, for the rust to get into places that it wouldn't normally, and when it does it's usually near wire or a wall. You're more likely to lose a book or porcelain pig to fire or water than to rust. It's just, well—rust is subtler. It pervades.

Fortitude's traditional answer to existing rust is the pumice stone, though there are more than a few residents who'll either swear by vinegar or try it first now and again. If you're a chemist or just pretty handy, you might try *electrolytic rust removal* instead: soak the item in a conductive solution with a few sacrificial anodes, run power through it, and bam, the rust flakes away. This won't harm the underlying item except inasmuch as the rust already has. Unfortunately, not all Fortitude rust is ferrous and not all rust is on items that you can conveniently dip in a bucket of solution and electrify. People have figured out solutions for most of these things over time, but if you want to remove rust from delicate items like books, souls, high-iron-content babies, or silk clothing, you'll probably want to look up a specialist.

It's usually near the end of the cleaning process that you'll be able to deal with the Outside particles themselves—I'm not sure if this is a folk-wisdom cleaning trick or part of the magic of it, but it's after the cleaning, when everything's been tidied up and the rust cleaned away, that a last wipe-down with a dry dust-cloth is most likely to come away with a sifting of dust or small crystals like bright-colored quartz. You can store this dust for a few days in fresh water, immediately take it to a shrine for purification, or just rinse it off in the sink if there's hardly any and your pipes are clean.

Cleaning and Cooking Fish

This is a cleaning and cooking task that's particularly evocative of the Fortitude environment. It's an iconic task at the heart of a Fortitude meal. Your PC is not actually going to spend that much of their life doing this—ultimately, there's only so many fish that a person can eat in a day—but it's disproportionately reasonable to perform this chore in play.

Traditional Fortitude cooking starts with taking a fish fresh from Big Lake or the sea beyond it, scraping off the scales, cutting off the head and fins and tail, cleaning out the guts, washing out the fish, splitting it, and taking out the bones. This isn't really considered *work*, though it's a pain: it's a way of connecting to the Lake and to your forthcoming meal, instead. Sometimes you'll even hear a cook mourn, when they're making a more Eastern-style dish that keeps the whole fish all the way to the table, that they can't really *get to know* the fish that way.

What is this?

Chores are generally **Shared Action** if you're concentrating on the work. You're doing some chore, and it's simple and honest, and it winds up being an opportunity to connect to somebody. They talk to you as you're working and that helps, or you let them take care of some part of it that you need help with, or you just bond through the medium of working side-by-side.

Chores are **Slice of Life**, instead, if they're just kind of a background activity that leaves most of your brain free for talking and emotion. If you're just tidying up a little, or cooking, or even doing some complicated machining chore, but that's not what *matters*—if you're doing it on autopilot and having a conversation with someone or just *being in the world* is what matters to you? That's a Slice of Life.

In practice the two experiences have basically the same goals for you and will involve similar declarations in play. Both of them can earn you XP under basically the same conditions and there's no rule requiring you to balance the two action types out. The only real difference in practice is *your character's experience:* are you focused on the chore, or is it just keeping your hands busy? Can you afford to let your concentration slip?

That's a choice you're making when you're setting up or identifying the action and situation that earns you that XP.

Like chopping vegetables, cleaning fish is a task suited for men and women, children and adults, amateurs and experts in the kitchen alike. Sure, the people who like it *too much* are weird: you'll probably get a little squeamish if you see a cook tasting the fish viscera to get a sense of the fish's character or sucking on a fish's eye as they cook the rest. But they're not as weird as the people from the rest of Town or the broader world who can't even touch the goop inside a fish without freaking out.

"'Oh no,'" you might mock them, if you've been living in Fortitude a while, "'I've got *fish guts* in my *hair.*'" Then you can roll around laughing at the person who freaks out over that, not even realizing that it's *good* for hair, that guts make your hair a little stronger and a little shinier, however smelly it might be between that moment and the bath.

Medical Care

Medical Treatment

Clinics/Small Hospitals	~30
Dental Clinics	~10
Independent doctors	~100

Cut yourself cooking? Ate some bad fish? Chip a tooth on your stove?

There's a reasonable number of general health clinics and small hospitals in Fortitude—the line between them's a little blurry—and an even larger number of doctor's shingles. Unless you're out in the boondocks, the closest doctor is probably 10-15 minutes away and the closest clinic's within half an hour. Dentists'll take a bit more looking for but there's probably one within a couple miles. By the way, if you *are* getting dental treatment, don't forget to drink a cup of pillow-teeth tea! (pg. 307)

Two of the Fortitude medical clinics keep ambulances, and Aaron Nevsky at the Nevsky Station has a siren and a stretcher for anything worth emptying the ice cream out of his truck for. That said, most medical care is either handled by house calls or clinic visits; someone loading you into an ambulance and taking you over the hills to the Cramsie Hospital in Horizon is a rare and an awful event!

3

Now, I will note even as I encourage you to cook fish in play that this isn't actually a task with much risk of inherent drama. It's hard to get into trouble or even have something interesting happen while you are cleaning fish.

I guess maybe you might cut yourself (although really, how old *are* you, anyway? That's embarrassing!) Or maybe you'll notice that there's something problematic about one or more of your fish. Occasionally, you might even discover something neat inside the viscera of a fish you're cleaning out, like a magical ring or an RFID tracking tag or a tiny sealed up bottle with a message in its inside. This is overdone and pretty unlikely and so you must be careful, but it is, at least, more realistic than finding something like that inside your cabbage, onions, or a carrot.[36]

Anyway, if some difficulty arises that makes this chore more than just a background activity to the game, it's likely to fall along the lines of

- "I'm not really sure what to do to bring the flavor of this thing out properly,"
- "Aagh, how can I be out of counter space already?" or
- "I'd planned on cooking *this* dish, but you know, this fish is really better for *that* one instead!"

Cooking in General

Here are some things you could be cooking, if you want to capture the flavor of the docks.

- a basic brown, red, or white stir fry;
- a cold fish and jellied fruit salad, probably with pickled herring;
- dumplings and shredded vegetables with dipping sauce;
- "eel's nests" (crispy baskets of woven fish-cake holding eel, peppers, and aspic or meringue);
- an experimental "fry everything and see what happens" meal, possibly starting with bread, cheese cubes, fish, eel slices, potatoes, candy, and snails (shells and all);
- hominy bread or grits with jam;
- a hot pie or casserole (like a potato, leek, and salmon pie, or a mako casserole);
- limestone-cooked salmon with ginger;
- a mixed-fish jambalaya, probably served with knotted bread;
- pecan-crusted trout;
- salmon with lemon juice and rice;
- salted grilled whole mackerel;
- savory pancakes with sour cream, green onions, potatoes, and herring or eel;
- a slow-cooked fish stew with fresh-baked herb bread;
- snails with garlic butter;
- spider-cake with potatoes and mixed vegetables;
- a thick chowder and some sort of crispbread;
- a tomato or beet-based soup with crepes, buns, or crackers; *or*
- whatever the most-recently caught giant sea monster would suggest.

You also have the option of terrifying the other players. Create a roll, casserole, dumpling, soup, or pie featuring either herring or whatever sort of fish or shellfish has just come in. Add some believable standbys like oil, cream, mustard, salmon, bleu cheese, garlic, spinach, beets, or leeks. Then throw in whatever other ingredients you think you can *just barely* convince

36 *HELP RABBITS ARE EATING M*

the other players are actually used in food and potentially tasty in your dish—clay, bullfrog, okra, fish eyes, grasshoppers, tongue, natto, lawn clippings, boiled nettles, puffed kid's cereal from the supermarket, butter crackers, a sheep's heart, mint jam, or whatever![37] Just try not to go so far that you lose your own suspension of disbelief or that of the other players entirely. Heat your meal until it achieves the desired color and texture—and serve!

Note that the conditions of life in Fortitude are such that beef, pork, and to a lesser extent chicken are rare delicacies, while fish from all over the world is at least intermittently available. The cheapest meals are going to use seafood from the "normal" portion of Big Lake—clams, snails, pan fish, walleye, and trout—but even rare seafood like swordfish and king crab can be a cheaper meal than beef if some ship's recently brought it in.

Emptying the Dust-Catchers

One good way to reduce the influx of Outside elements on a Fortitude home is to hang dust-catchers (basically dream-catchers) about the home. The strong orderly influence of the weave, the symbolism of the various associated personal effects, and the gaps between the strands all help to draw in particulate chaos and trap it there. Your house will develop less rust and a better environment with a few well-placed dust-catchers hung here and there. Better yet, dreams that happen to pass through the dust-catcher will integrate some small portion of the chaos that is contained there, becoming wilder, stranger, and more meaningful but (for reasons of compatibility) still benevolent in their general character. The last benefit of a dust-catcher is that "high-quality" dust will occasionally crystallize within; in such a case you may refine it in a crystallern, producing a refined product useful in treating eye infections, adding flavor to certain liquors and candies, and disrupting insect colonies.

It's important to check and empty dust-catchers regularly, particularly if there's someone in the household who isn't having nice dreams—if there's too much dust built up, then first, that's a dangerous concentration of chaos; second, it will start acting as a barrier to good dreams rather than letting them through; and third, there is a risk that a dream will force its way through anyway, scattering concentrated, crusted Outside dust all around the floor and furniture near the dust-catcher and carrying a good chunk of the rest directly into someone's sleeping mind. Needless to say, the good dream that fate, your subconscious, or the cosmos had in mind for you will not wind up being so very good after all, after that; in fact, you're likely to wind up borderline psychotic for a day or two.

If you do a daily cleaning, it's OK to bang the dust-catchers out over a garden or even the street. If you do it intermittently or weekly, you'll want to wash the area down with fresh water afterwards (ideally adding a touch of essence of mint) to disrupt and purify any lingering enchantment. Either way you should probably do a monthly or every-other-month complete scrubbing out down by the lake or at a designated purification zone—many of the shrine families (and in particular the Hayashi, Sosunov, and Yatskaya families) have ways of denaturing or detoxifying Outside waste, and so they keep such zones.

It's fairly common to discover that someone you care about has either been having recurring nightmares or hasn't been sleeping in the house by noticing either that their dust-catcher is pretty full or that they've suddenly begun cleaning it out assiduously every few days. If someone's dream-catcher gets too full you'll want to either clean it out for them or monitor their mental state pretty carefully—the dust of a full dream-catcher is the very substance of fear, disruption, and enchantment.

Garden Maintenance

Your character might garden. If you garden yourself OOC, then this poses no difficulty: simply plan out a garden appropriate for a warm lakeside environment with moderate winters and occasional pollution from Outside the world.

If you do not (as a player) garden then you might find yourself somewhat more confused as to what gardening actually entails. Here are some miscellaneous tips for the non-gardener about the kinds of things your character might be doing when tending a garden in Fortitude. You might be:

- constructing a raised bed or structure;
- thinking about the soil and what to plant when you start a new planting soon;

37 *I don't recommend this as a real-life cooking technique, you understand, even if you come to Fortitude, but it's a mad lib that is surprisingly appropriate for generating things like the dishes I have actually seen. The only real difference is that real Fortitude cooking is more likely to actually work. Well, and has the essential nature of being actual Fortitude cooking!*

- preparing the soil, e.g. clearing a section for gardening and adding compost;
- staking the ground and tying string between the stakes to visually mark off planting areas;
- planting and covering seeds;
- sitting back on your heels and admiring your awesome garden;
- spreading fertilizer;
- spreading mulch (loosely packed forest-floor-like stuff) to protect the root environment;
- surveying the garden's progress, potentially with a thoughtful frown;
- protesting that you're too filthy to save the world or go to a park or whatever right now;
- pulling weeds and chucking them in a bucket;
- removing diseased plants or portions thereof and chucking them in a bucket;
- checking for problem insects, plucking them by hand, and dropping them in soapy water;
- clipping, pinching, or cutting away dead flower-buds;
- tying fragile plants to stakes or support wires;
- harvesting fruit or vegetables;
- collecting seeds and cuttings;
- preparing a "cold frame" to cover the garden in winter, or when forewarned of an unseasonable frost.

You may also be watering your garden, as we shall discuss below.

Miscellaneous Things That I Have Counted

I have found 3 hardware stores, 3 housewares stores, and 12 plumbers in Fortitude. (The plumbers are also the best people to talk to when dealing with weird rust.) I have found 8 fish markets; I am probably drastically undercounting them but these are what I found. I have found 3 post offices, 1 non-professional office supply store (it's in the owner's home), and 1 unofficial post office/mail supply/P.O. Box kind of place.

Going Over the Books

Someone in any Fortitude household needs to go over the household books, receipts, and projected income and expenses at least monthly and likely more often than that. This takes some level of concentration and so it's not a very good activity to feature in play, but it *can* lead directly into troublesome and interesting incidents such as:

- discovering a budget shortfall and figuring out what to do about it;
- discovering that something that someone has been relying on has gotten too expensive to maintain;
- discovering that money has gone missing, or, conversely, has appeared out of nowhere.

For an accounting-related chore that *can* turn into something interesting in play, consider double-checking or investigating one of the previous conclusions.

Mail Day Chores

Fortitude's a serious adopter of the *culture* of correspondence and many citizens of all ages spend hours every week writing letters to family and friends. That said, it's a bit of a cargo cult adoption. It's like somewhere along the way the people here got so excited about the possibilities of a post office and sending letters that they didn't listen to the complete explanation of how it should *work* or what it would be for.

There's no comprehensive mail service in Fortitude. Really important mail sometimes comes to the house by courier or errand runner. Sometimes if they know that a given recipient is elderly, house-bound, or politically influential, the post office will bribe or draft a likely-looking teenager into taking their mail by. Everyone else sends out their mail, though, and picks it up, by taking a monthly or seasonal bag full of dozens and dozens of letters and non-perishable items down to the post office and picking a comparable bag or two of incoming mail back up. Pen pal networks, love letters, and amateur press associations are as much time capsules as they are serious correspondence, forming a time-delayed and time-stamped record of the lives of yourself and your friends in Fortitude.

As absurd as outsiders find this when it comes to communicating with friends living five or ten miles away—occasionally, in fact, *substantially closer* than the post office, and visited more often—it has the

particular advantage that correspondence with acquaintances, friends, and family in distant lands isn't actually any harder than writing to someone nearby. When you pour the incoming letters out over your desk at home and spot an update from a friend on 136199 Eris; or in London; or in Seattle; or from underseas, it isn't necessarily *that* much more surprising than your letters from Mandy down the block. Exchanging candies with Parisians and dried cuttlefish with Erisians (as the

136199 Eris

Eris is a massive dwarf planet orbiting the sun. It is populated by melancholy, sentimental batfolk convinced of the imminent victory of evil but content to remain more or less humane themselves on any given day. Their principal exports are music, liquor, and carved bone divination sticks (which may or may not be efficacious); their principal import is pillow-teeth tea, which they consume for reasons as yet unknown. They give me a vaguely Mythos vibe, except for the way that they're not actually incomprehensibly monstrous—I guess it's something to do with how they live their lives out there in the cold and barren dark.

Purportedly the planet was set into its orbit by **Nightmares' Angel**, a nightmare scientist who returned to Town after a stint at the Bleak Academy. By default this Main Character is a PC-aged boy named Leonardo de Montreal, although you could substitute in a girl named Dulcinea de Montreal, a priest and sorcerer with the last name d'Avignon, or an amazing mechanical person named Leonardo or Dulcinea VII.

This Main Character is sometimes titled **the Rival**—it depends on whether they're focused on showing up Chuubo with their "Incomparable Nightmare Engine" or more engaged in doing their own stuff.

Leonardo De Montreal, aka Nightmare's Angel





saying goes) is easier when you can send such things out to everybody that you know at basically the same time.

So the chores associated with mail in Fortitude generally break down into:

- updating your friends and pen pals register, crossing off people who you think might be dead or people who you just can't stand talking to any more (or changing the name you use for them, if you've decided that you really can't stand them in person but you can't give up on them as a correspondence friend);
- writing letters to people, updating them on your life, sharing your thoughts, and inquiring into theirs;
- lugging the outgoing mail down to the post office and bringing the incoming mail back;
- pouring out the new letters, identifying anything that might actually be urgent or important, sorting them to decide what you want to deal with first, and making sure that anything you're not going to read right then is safely and dryly put away;
- taking important or time-sensitive packages down to the post office in a separate trip from casual letter runs so that you can properly impress the circumstances on the people of the post.

Shopping for Food

Groceries

Full-sized groceries	~7
Little groceries	~20

Are you wondering how accessible groceries are?

If you're in the main settlement, you've probably got a little market within 20-30 minutes, and you can probably get to a larger grocery within an hour. If you're outside the main settlement, though, it could be a trudge!

Making Jam

When it comes to off-season fruit Fortitude has it better than the rest of Town—its dingy little ships can, after all, travel the world and in fact multiple worlds on a relatively tight travel-time budget. On the other hand, there are not *that many* ships, and even fewer of them that dedicate themselves to trading. Whether your family home has a little orchard or whether you're taking advantage of the crop at a public-access or shared-crop farm, the best way to make sure a seasonal largesse of fruit lasts through the year is to convert it into preserves or jam.

Fortitude doesn't have or do anything particularly special here. The jam-making techniques are much the same as anywhere in the world, although they'll tend to cook the jam a little slower and with a little more confidence in the result. Here's what it entails:

- cleaning out the jars you hope to use;
- picking the fruit (and optionally[38] traveling out to where the fruit is and back);
- washing, sorting, peeling, cutting up, and portioning the fruit as necessary;
- stirring in a bit of lemon juice;
- sweetening;
- depending on the fruit, stirring in a bit of pectin or a shredded apple over medium heat;
- adding sugar to achieve a roughly 1:1 sugar:fruit ratio and boiling hard for a minute;
- testing, possibly adding more pectin or apple and reboiling;
- filling and sealing the jars;
- boiling the jars—careful of your fingers!; *and*
- putting the jars somewhere to cool.

In the event of a jam emergency the Fortitude Regional Council maintains a Jam Line—OK, it's actually just the office phone for councilmember and jam guru **Amelia Kozlov**—offering helpful advice for any sort of difficulty. She *always* says, "I see, so you're in a jam" at some point during your explanation of the problem, even if you attempt to forestall her by using the pun yourself; it is best to just accept this eventuality.[39]

38 If you are not near the fruit this part is actually not optional.

39 I assume it is modally possible to prevent this but I am not actually... 100%... sure.

Roof Repairs

Roofs and gutters worldwide are prone to needing frequent low-level maintenance and to having regular disasters visited upon them. They're even more important in Fortitude than in the rest of Town since the rats are prone to use them as a causeway. There's nothing more embarrassing than having a roof too filthy for the rats to use, or so treacherous and rickety that only their bravos and adolescents dare. Conversely, if your roof's well-cared-for, well-designed, and convenient, traveling rats are likely to take a moment to fix any loose or damaged shingles that they pass. Neither of these conditions apply, of course, to the roofs of isolated buildings (although many such homes have awesome roofs for the sake of the owners' pride), roofs with substantial birdcotes that simply can't be kept completely clean, or the roofs of houses that own an unsafe cat. You'll probably want a clean, well-maintained roof even then, of course, but you can relax a little, since you won't be having what amounts to guests over on it all the time.

Most Fortitude roofs are low-pitched or A-shaped gable roofs with a relatively simple design. Roofs often extend to cover porches or walkways. Shingles of limestone, slate, or terracotta are the most common roofing material but reed thatching is not rare.

Some things you'll need to watch out for, roof-wise, include:

- rusty nails, or "nail sickness," where the roof's shingles remain strong but the nails begin to rust;
- loose, broken, or detached shingles in general;
- blistering, cracking, or open seams on non-shingled roofs;
- damage to any highway signs that the rats may use;
- rust in the gutters, or clogs in the gutters that could produce seepage or rot;
- in winter, ice blockages in the roof's gutters on the coldest days;
- sagging ridge beams or rafters;
- faded paint on painted tiles or faded glaze on clay; *and*
- cracks in the beams connecting the main house's roof to the roof over a porch or walkway.

You may also want to actively scrub the causeways once or twice a year.

Simple Cleaning

Often when you think your character is "doing chores," you really mean that they're cleaning. Here are some miscellaneous options to consider when you wonder *what kind* of cleaning your particular character might be doing in their sometimes unrealistically clean and sometimes unrealistically complicated, dirty world.

You are going from room to room...

- airing out the house
- changing the beds or towels
- cleaning the vents and changing their filters
- dusting
- picking up
- sweeping out the house
- washing the floors
- washing the windows

You are heading outside to...

- bring in some firewood
- bring up water from the well
- buy some necessities
- shop at the local fish market
- take the laundry down to the local laundromat
- take some trash down to the local dump
- visit the grocery

You're inside, casually...

- cleaning out the refrigerator
- de-cluttering the pantry
- sweeping out the storage room
- figuring out if you can repair some household device or bicycle

You're outside, casually...

- beating the rugs
- hanging the laundry
- sweeping the patio
- washing down the walkway stones

You're pretty thoroughly concentrating on...

- cleaning the crawlspace or attic and checking for fungal or vermin infestations
- organizing a closet or set of drawers and checking its back for mold and rust
- performing delicate repairs on machinery of some sort
- scrubbing the bathroom (or toilet area specifically, or bath area specifically)
- scrubbing the kitchen (or sink area specifically) *or*
- weeding the garden. Phew!

Information Technology

There is no Internet here. It is *really* annoying. I found a tea house offering free wifi that *didn't actually know what that was.*

("Free," she said, beatifically, gesturing broadly and emoting the three-line wifi signal, as if to indicate that the oolong would release the wifi of my soul.)

Town is, broadly speaking, *aware* of computers and information technology. It even has access to them. It just hasn't really integrated them into its society. A computer is something you get to play games or do intensive data processing. A network is something set up by weird hobbyists to let their Wii avatar visit their friends'. All of my friends think that the reason I write on a laptop is that my handwriting is unacceptably bad.

Steam computing outpaces Earth's technology but it's even *more* esoteric and niche—you can purchase a near-AI "speaking engine" that manages records and queries for you or a self-motivated robotic lifeform, but it's going to be something handcrafted over the course of years. You won't be able to buy new software for it later or hook it up to someone else's machine; I mean, they could be built to do that, but they're not. That's not how it works. Steam tech is just... what it is.

It's possible that there's Internet access and I just haven't talked to the right people, or that there will be Internet access by the time your campaign starts. I actually have my suspicions about the rats—oh, they don't have net access in Fortitude proper, but they may have some kind of access in the Deep Under or on the Far Roofs, you know, places where they'd probably be willing to take me but not for a casual browse. In short, there may be Internet access if you're playing in an **Immersive Fantasy, Techno, Epic, or Adventure Fantasy** game—

I've listed some ideas over in the main rulesbook for what that would be like.

But in a simple, laid-back Pastoral game? I suspect that it's just not there.

3

Tending the Smoker

Naturally, in any location with fish as a prominent feature of its cuisine, people will smoke that fish. Many of the better-off families who live up the hills from the water will have enough space and construction budget for a full-on traditional smokehouse. It's harder to buy and maintain enough land for that closer to the water, meaning that an old and established family that lives down the hill towards the lake is either "too poor for a smokehouse" (meaning that they couldn't maintain a larger uphill estate) or "rich enough for a smokehouse" (meaning they can own substantial grounds even on more expensive land down near the shore.)

Tending a smoker or smokehouse isn't much work, although preparing meat or fish for smoking does generally involve brining or a rub and the actual smoking process requires copious frowning, intermittent cocking of one's head while doing that frowning, interruptions of the thoughtful frown to drink or rhapsodize about the virtues of smoking food, and regular checking of the temperature and the fire paired with adding a bit of wood or charcoal to it as needed. Sitting on the porch may also from time to time be required.

Tending the Stock

Meat is not favored in Fortitude—what there is of it is expensive and rarely preferred by local tastes. That said, in any neighborhood, there's usually at least one house willing to maintain a meat stock and share it out when someone needs a bit of stock for sauce or soup. If that's your house, then the stock needs tending: every day in summer and every other day in winter you'll want to take it up from the larder, prepare a clean kaiju-shell or metal pot for boiling it, and boil up, skim, and finally cool the stock. If the catch is poor a lamb-based ragout will be popular in the docks.

When you're tending stock, you're mostly just staying near the kitchen and enjoying the smell. You can't leave the house but you can do other small chores, goof around, or talk with your friends and family. Incidents that can occur include:

- oops! You forgot the stock and it boiled or something. Now it won't be as tasty!
- you're tired from lugging stock around
- you scald yourself pouring the boiled stock into earthenware to cool
- you get someone's help to avoid one of the previous fates
- not having a dishwasher, you have to spend fifteen minutes scrubbing the metal pot before you can start
- you and someone you're talking to enjoy the smell of cooking

- ...or it attracts a neighbor
- ...or it attracts a local dog. You really need to fix that broken latch on your front door!

Watering Plants

There isn't usually enough time to have a scene while watering houseplants (although do feel free to water them instead of just letting them dry out and die). Watering a garden or hose-watering a substantial lawn, on the other hand, can take enough time to hold a conversation or fit a plot point in.

Typical incidents while watering the garden or lawn include:

- it's hot! (You could splash water on people if you wanted)
- the plants are suffering or dying due to
  - ...the heat?
  - ...an early frost?
  - ...a mystery problem?
  - ...something else?
- your path to watering the garden is obstructed by a scary spider
- you're confused about whether a given plant needs more or less water than it's getting, particularly if you're not actually the normal gardener

Wall Repairs

Rock walls make excellent property boundaries and accents to a garden. They're even used here and there as exterior walls in the more antiquated Fortitude houses. A good rock wall can theoretically last forever, but in practice water and the dust of the Outside can get into the mortar between the stones, the ground can shift to put new stresses on the wall, and insects and small animals can work the smallest stones out of place. Every now and then you'll realize that it's time to mix up some cement, put on your kneepads, and get your wall back in shape. This is an arduous but conceptually simple process so it makes a great backdrop to a slow and thoughtful conversation scene. Plus, that's a great excuse to get the other players to help you fix the wall.

During the course of this work you'll:

- prepare and adjust the color for the concrete you plan to use;
- take out loose stones and brush down the wall;
- take out cracked mortar;
- apply new mortar;
- set new or previously loose stones; *and*
- apply an additional coat of mortar to strengthen the whole.

Watching a Child

Do you have a small child to juggle?[40] Not sure what one actually *does* with one, beyond the old standbys of heating bottles, changing diapers, and burping sufficiently young ones over your shoulder?

Here's some thoughts. You might be—

- prepping a meal for them
- casually keeping an eye on them
- giving them a bath
- changing their clothes and getting them ready to go out
- performing a ritual set of actions they enjoy (e.g. toothbrushing, vitamins, story, bedtime)
- overseeing some activity they can't do without supervision (fingerpainting, computer games, possibly free-roaming)
- cleaning up after mysterious disasters, e.g., the apple that somehow made the ceiling sticky
- lugging them around because they're tired/want to be high
- cutting their hair
- taking them outside to walk around or to sit out a fret that was disturbing your friends or family inside
- fitting them for hand-me-downs
- making yourself appear to have "got" their nose, when in fact, you have not
- explaining things about the world, including how easy they have it compared to you
- teaching them songs and telling them stories of far away
- teaching them games and crafts
- sitting beside them when they are sick
- herding them into or out of a designated area while ensuring they do not run off or eat from the floor *or*
- comforting them when something bad happens and they start crying.

40 do not juggle small children

Walking Through Fortitude



Slice of Life (Travel)

3

If you spend a lot of time in Fortitude, you're going to spend a lot *of* that time walking. There are a few buses, and bicycles and cars exist, but travel in Fortitude is fundamentally pedestrian. The first time you go out exploring the area the roads might feel like a funhouse river. They'll slope up for a block or two and then twist in an unexpected direction and bend down. They'll flow past new colors of trees and houses, through new and cool patches of land, and by little fields covered in purple flowers where the insects sing loud as orchestras. After a while, you'll get used to it and the winding paths to your common destinations will become just another part of home.

You might need 45-60 minutes of walking to get home from the docks or the bus stop every time you come back to Fortitude from Earth, wherever else you've been, or Town. If your family (pg. 136) lives kind of out of the way, the walk might even take two or three whole hours. Even if your way home isn't that bad, there's at least *one* vital service—laundry? Materials for your hobby? The only doctor you really trust? Your absolute favorite fish-ball soup?—that you'll have to walk several hours for, sweating and wiping at your forehead in the summer, beleaguered as a wet kitten for if it rains, and laughing and cheering your friends on as you go when and if you manage to drag some of them along. That's just the way Fortitude life goes.

If you're up for it, please draw a simple map of your journeys through Fortitude in the game. You don't have to detail every street and every turn. Just sketch out the kind of path you take, and mark the interesting things you've seen along the way. *Here's* that pumpkin curry restaurant you liked. *Here's* that bookstore. *Here's* the garden where you saw a crane. It's not really important to nail down exact directions or distances unless you're planning to micromanage your schedule later on, but recording a place helps give it life.

Here's some places that might stand out in your memory.

What is this?

I want to give you a sense of what some random places in Fortitude are like. I want to give some memories that you could randomly claim as your own—some things to anchor you here in Fortitude.

But I'm still focused right now on how you'll experience things in play.

I'm focused on how you experience things in play, and I think the most likely mode for just being somewhere in Fortitude—whether you're hanging out or passing through—is as a Slice of Life action. So I'm going to skimp a little on stuff like how many centimeters high each building is and the details of the economy and focus on describing these places as places you can *feel*.

Above the Forest

This bit's a long way from the docks themselves, up the hill towards Town or one of the really prominent family residences.

The road you're on here winds along the hill, and below you things are *steep*. You can look down and see trees, trees, trees, this sea of broccoli-puff tree-tops, and scattered among them red plants, brown plants, I don't know, yellow-green grass, I guess, and the red, white, and gray roofs of houses. Beyond that, there's a mottled puff of red and white buildings along the shore and then Big Lake itself, great and rippling, a wash of upside-down blue sky.

It really is—is *like*, I guess—the sky. It really is that wide, that vast.

And maybe this one time, here, you looked down and it was this *shock* because of how strongly Big Lake struck upon your senses. Because of how powerful it was, how overpowering it was, how vast and all-consuming and deep and cool and stuff it was. It was like your eyes landed on it and it hit you free from the world and flesh and your soul yanked skywards and the lake filled your mind with glimmering and blue.

Like that.



Chowder House by the Docks

This bit's down by the water. Here's a memory you could have.

The sky was white and the sand was white and there was a bit of black-pebbled beach down below the boardwalk. You were walking with someone. Who was it? You could smell the richness of the chowder house's soup in the air. You could see a white gull in the sky with black lines on the feathers of its face. It looked like the chowder house was weighing down the dock it was standing on, like it was bellying itself low, like it was one of those iron kettles with a fake face and fake arms and legs to stand on caught pushing its kettle-stomach down towards the sea. The windows of the building were sort of staring at you, like big dead eyes. It was a little disturbing. It still smelled really good, though.

The place was just called ***the Chowder House.***

Maybe you saw one of Fortitude's red lake snails on a wooden post as you walked by. That's actually kind of funny and neat, if you know anything about the snails, because they're really pretty finicky about their living environment and don't usually travel very far from home on their own. You wouldn't normally find one that far south. But maybe this time you did.

Convenient Trash Can

This bit could be anywhere.

Here's a long sidewalk. It's along part of a longer walk that you sometimes take. It's shaded by heavily-leafed trees. There's a trash can here. That's not unusual in itself. There are a lot of convenient, over-engineered trash cans in Fortitude. They're these strong-looking metal barrels inside neat circular crisscross fences. They have tops like the roofs of fancy houses. They're awesome if you like that kind of thing and pretty cool even if you don't, but they're all like that and so this one is nothing unusual.

What it is, though, is perfectly placed.

If you buy a drink at the last cold drink stand you'll see in a while—if you grab a soda, a bottled water, or an iced milk tea or coffee—and if you're drinking at a reasonable pace, not too slow and definitely not too fast, then you'll finish drinking just as this trash can comes into sight. It's like magic, it lifts your heart, or at least, it'd lift *my* heart, every time. You might even call it trash-can-*sama* as an indicator of your respect.

And oh! Not far past this there's a concrete sidewalk square that a cat ran through when it was wet. The cat left a row of hurried footprints. That means that this is a trash can blessed by a harried god of cats!

Clothing

Clothing stores

- Imported ~2
- Used/Charity ~2
- Specialty ~7
- Tailors & Local Clothing ~20

Looking for some clothes? Trying to sort out your outfit for the day?

Clothing in Fortitude tends to be locally made and simply cut. Work and daily clothes are generally linen, light cotton, or denim without much pattern to them—shorts, trousers, slacks, jeans, skirts, polo shirts, t-shirts, dress shirts, blouses, and dresses. Fancier clothing has a similar cut and design but comes in embroidered, multicolored, and occasionally layered silk. Light jackets are popular when the weather allows; belts, caps, and straw hats are popular in all seasons. Sandals, boat shoes, and going barefoot are popular; boots are a more common alternative than dress shoes or running shoes. Heels for women are comparatively low.

You can get a broad range of brand-name and high fashion Western and Eastern clothing if you look for it over in Arcadia—if the local fashion doesn't work for you aesthetically, if you want something exotic, or if you have special needs or sizes. It's *expensive,* since it all comes in by ship, but since the baseline manufacturing is probably cheaper outside of Town some of that balances out. There's a warehouse in Fortitude itself that stocks and sells all kinds of miscellaneous foreign-style clothing, if you're willing to sift through a random multi-decade selection, and then there's Sylvie's, which—

I don't quite understand how Sylvie's works.

I *think* she brings in clothes from American department stores by way of a magic mirror. It's kind of neat but I can't afford her and apparently she doesn't do interviews for RPGs.

Fish Market

Fish markets are all over the place near the docks, with their hubbubs of market noise.

These'll have buckets of clams and eels. These'll have snails in the shell. They'll have bubbling water tanks, mussels growing in 'em, and maybe live crabs and fish and whatever else besides. Mostly, though, they'll have dead fish cut open, sprawling in their separate divisions on the ice, their black eyes staring, their mouths gaping, their gills lightly splayed, and their scales slick and individuated and bright.

There's this one stall at this one market that could stand out in your memory, if you like. It had this fish that was an astonishing red on the inside and with a sharply-contrasting black and purple skin. It sat on a bed of ice cubes with holes in them, and you noticed that each of the ice cubes had this branching striated pattern in its frost, like amber snowflake-fingers reaching through it. The light and shadows moved inside the ice bed in uncountable different ways. It gave it this incredible sense of *depth*.

It was the color of the fish, probably, that made the details of the ice snap so suddenly into focus, but as soon as they had, the whole display, and not just the fish, seemed to *shine*.

You didn't try one, though, even if you wanted to. You couldn't buy fresh fish that day.

You didn't have the cash.

Fisherman's Path

This is pretty close to the water.

So this street is an ordinary street in and of itself. It's got a little grocery that sells pickled eggs, some other stuff, and that soda that you don't like. (What's its name again?) This street has houses. It has a clothing store. It has a kiosk. It happens to be on a convenient travel path for you, and also for fishermen bringing their catch to market, so you'll see those fishermen a lot. Specifically, you'll see the children and the intelligent rats who crew the rat-ships coming in at ***Ceiba Quay*** traveling this way—usually they're taking fish to the market or coming back, but sometimes they're just passing through!

You'll see young sailor boys, here, or the occasional sailor girl, running lightly down the street with a shoulder-yoke and two fish buckets dangling thence. The yokes don't slow them down at all, not even the really young ones—the children who work the rat-ships are scarily strong and fit. Now and then, though, you'll see a kid staggering along behind a *barrel* of fish, instead; that slows them down a fair bit, as it's usually bigger than they are, or close to, and makes it hard for them to see. You'll also see a large number of the rats going to or fro, their shirts and cloaks in vivid colors. If you don't find rats unpleasant, they usually look rather sharp.

This one time you were on this street trying to figure out whether you had time to make it home before it rained when a lavender-haired sailor boy with a checkered neckcloth, a rat on his shoulder, and a bucket of yellowtail came wandering by. He was laughing and gesturing and talking to the rat but when he caught sight

of you he stopped and he grinned at you like you were the savior of his world. He waved you down. Sam, he called himself, and he tried to sell you some fish at a discount (or so he said). He explained that he was tired of walking to market and he'd even throw in the bucket; and as for the rat, it was protesting at his prices, begging him to see reason, and apologizing to you for the bother its charge was causing you, like the most charmingly tiny British butler in the world.

Flower-Smelling Bookstore

This bookstore's on a corner not too far from somewhere you often go anyway—right down the street, for example, from your bike supply shop, your favorite florist, or from ***Hennessey's Café.***

The bookstore sells a small selection of perfumes at the counter. They set the bookstore's atmosphere. You always wind up noticing this slightly heavy floral scent, sweet with a note of musk, as you go by.

The selection here trends towards popular fiction and magazines. There's not much in the way of resource or genre books. There is, however, an awesome selection of writing pads, notebooks, diaries, journals, and pens. You know this because the first time you were here a friend or stranger spent like four minutes talking to you about how incredible this one brand of notebooks was, and more generally about the place's selection, while you tried hard not to laugh at the fact that it was *this* particular topic summoning forth such great enthusiasm.

You might also remember coming here another time and having this tall and severe-looking guy give you a kind of chillingly speculative look. If you're like me, you might not have come back there for a while after that.

The name of the bookstore is ***Ah, Those Words.***

The Guy Cleaning His Grill

This bit's in the middle of a street of shops.

Everything's red and gorgeous here. The shops look very dignified, but they have quite ordinary and even silly posters and advertisements in their windows. There's this old guy, Marios, who hangs out under the eaves of one shop. He's got a grill that he sets up there and a sign offering grilled fish. That's pretty common. The funny thing about Marios, though, is that you've hardly ever seen him actually *selling* fish. Usually he's cleaning the grill, instead, or sitting next to it waiting for a good time to fire it up, or he's just sold out and he's

Media

Bookstores	~22
Comic Stores	~1
Imported Videos/Music	~6
Lending Libraries	~2

Looking for something to read, watch, or listen to?

If you're in the main settlement, there's usually a small bookstore somewhere nearby selling a mix of light novels, blockbusters, and manga. If you want something special, or American-style comics, you'll have to go a bit further out of your way. Books mostly come in by ship—there may be a rack with stapled books produced by a local amateur press association, but the bulk of a store's stock is "whatever some trader thought was worth importing, plus whatever someone else asked to have brought in."

Video and music stores are rarer and smaller—recorded music never really caught on in Fortitude, only about 1/3 of the Fortitude families have any way to play a VHS or DVD, and even those that do tend to buy a movie or two a season and a boxed set of something every year. There's really no such thing as a dedicated video or music store, accordingly: there's a few bookstores or groceries with a decent selection; a few people who can hook you up with the latest movies or whatever if you swing by their house; and the closest thing you can get to a Tivo, "Movie Time," which is literally a rat swinging by your house with a new DVD when the rat feels either like you should see it or that they want to watch it with you.

Expect a library trip to be a bit of a walk, but on the plus side, they don't expect you to return books more often than once a season!

Going Out

Restaurants and diners

Food carts/grills	~350
Little restaurants	~130
Coffee/drink shops	~100
Big restaurants	~70

Are you looking for a place to eat?

By the numbers you're probably right next to one—but restaurants tend to cluster, of course. If you're in a residential area, you may have a food cart, grill, or home-operated noodle shop nearby; otherwise, you're probably about 10-15 minutes' walk from the nearest restaurantine (cauponine?) cluster.

shutting it down, or something else like that. Marios is a cheerful guy. He likes people a lot. He's even totally admitted, if you ever happen to have asked, that the grill's just an excuse to hang out and people-watch. He only ever actually cooks and sells fish when he feels like making some for himself.

You might have seen a cloaked rat standing on the roof gable above Marios' grill, once, sniffing at the air, her features sharp against grey clouds. Her whiskers twitched and her nostrils flared in and out. Marios had been saying that there weren't enough customers around that day to bother firing up the grill, so you thought about pointing out the rat and saying, "Look, there's a customer! That makes two of us! You'd better cook!" but the rat turned away and padded off before you could.

3

House of Crystal

This bit's up in the north. It's near Ceiba Quay.

You're in an elaborate web of light. The sunlight is yellowed and dimmed. You've gone into the House of Crystal. Now you're surrounded by shelves and shelves of old and beautiful crystal objects and under the gaze of row after row of windows—north, south, east, west, every side of the building has rows of windows stacked three stories high, with a central eight-faced minaret facing glass casements in every direction. This building is structured somewhere between a warehouse and a store, with the glassmaker's workshop and houses towards the back.

The Hayashi family who own this place are enthusiastic about their work. They'll explain their work at length, if you give them the opportunity; they'll show you their techniques and their works-in-progress at the back. They'll brush away their sweat and give you these marvelous grins, surrounded by their web of colored light.

"It's to dispose of the dust of the Outside," Jordan Hayashi will say. "That's how we started, anyway."

He's melting down raw dust and sand into a syrup, stirring the pots of proto-Hayashi glass over a row of stoves. Or he's taking that syrup and he's pouring it out over an iron table. Or he's grinding and polishing the result—"hours and hours this takes," he says, "hardest part of the whole thing, but just *look* at what you can get."

And he'll show you a piece of shining light and color in his hand; or, rather, glass.



Soma Village

Follow the Track north through the Walking Fields and out of Town; into the Outside, and out again. It will take you to Soma Village, in the shadow of Kailas Mantra's peak.

It's a pretty little place. It's a magic place. It's full of old, sun-bleached buildings, steep slopes, and majestic views. There's a monastery and a labyrinth and a bunch of rustic houses and sheep and goats and ducks and St. Vita's Academy for Wayward Girls. It's maybe twelve by twelve kilometers and it hosts maybe twenty thousand souls.

And books, of course—

In limitless profusion, though principally unreadable. Underneath the Ronan Monastery are the Ronan Library Catacombs, whence are mined books not writ by any mortal hand. Sometimes they are bland. Sometimes they are boring. Sometimes they are from the interminable "Blood Fang" series, a vein of risible supernatural romance that I *must* believe is only popular because it has been painstakingly restored and illuminated by kung fu monks after being naturally written by the Earth—

But sometimes, too, they are up there with Vance, Tzavelas, or Duane; and I cannot say that I have read a finer book than Ronan's book "Indifferent to Success."

Soma Village Properties

- Truth arises from mystery, but the mystery remains.
- This moment is like no other moment. It is *Now*.
- Go and look, and you will see the vastness of the world.
- Go and look, and you will see events and landscapes staged for you.
- The world is showing you the pieces of your heart.
- Enchantments and spiritual forces haunt you.
- You may find peace with your misfortunes.
- You are at risk of becoming a legend, or a god.

If you're lucky Hayashi Caiofe'll be making crown glass that day. She'll blow it into globes and then spin them out on a soft wooden disc—like potter's wheels, of a sort—so that they widen into great glass discs. She can get four or five of them going all at once; it's magical, like an orrery, like standing amidst the mad revolutions of the planets.

"The stuff is still Outside, though," she'll say. She'll brush her forehead and leave a translucent, glittering smear. "Dangerous as heck. That's what the painting or out-glass is for."

They seal it over with a fibrous, translucent lacquer—as thick as the old masters' paints—or sometimes even wrap it in an outer layer of ordinary glass. "It isn't ready for sale," Alex'll tell you. "Not for five or eight years after that. That's why we have so many windows in this place—it's so sun and wind and rain can cure the enchantment, the bad luck, and the unnervingness right out."

On the weekends you might catch them shattering the outer glass or stripping away the paint. That's always fun because of the sheer joy they take—most of them, anyway—in the discovery of the inner glass, pure and clean and carrying something of the Fortitude air in it.

Maybe you just wandered in because it was pretty. Maybe you came here to buy something. They sell ordinary glass, ordinary crystal, windchimes and glass floats and windows and glass lamps. Or maybe you're here for the beautiful glasswork and glass art they can make by melting down detoxified glass and reblowing it; or for the "lucky" glass that came out of the purification process still carrying a slight, but now beneficial, enchantment.

"Can't tell you all of our secrets," Alex will admit, if you ask about the lucky glass, or one of the prettier bits of Hayashi work. "This one's a three-casing piece, though—broke the outer layer every year and a half and put on a new one. That helps culture a piece, if it's naturally decent already. But as for *that one*, over there —"

He laughs. "Let's just say we brought out its natural beauty, and leave it there."

There's a tabletop in their shop—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. It's one of the most gorgeous things that I've ever seen; but maybe you found something even more precious, once.

Imported Cold

This bit's near Big Lake.

There's a bus stop down by the ferry dock. Most people coming in from Town will get off there. Not far from the stop is a collection of vending machines including the unique vending machine named ***Imported Cold***. This machine stocks expensive drinks from foreign lands, including a rare Japanese soda so ridiculously expensive to ship into Fortitude that only three are stored in the vending machine at any given time. Maybe you read about it in the informational signboard posted next to Imported Cold. Maybe a boy on the bus told you all about it, over and over again, while you were sitting next to him on the way into Fortitude, instead. He'd saved up enough money to buy one of these sodas, you see, but regrettably—if you happened to follow him to the machine—all three were already sold out on that particular day.

Slowly at first, then faster, it began to rain.

Inexplicable Field

This bit's part of a long hike somewhere you sometimes have to go.

You're walking along and it's tiring. There's houses of important people on one side of the road. They have pretty gates and large yards and stuff. On the other side, though, there's just this—squarish empty grass lot, surrounded by a hedge. The grass grows weirdly spiraled there.

It's an inexplicable field.

Maybe you suddenly found yourself wondering, back when you noticed it the first time, if maybe there's a body buried there, or if the clearing was some kind of aliens' fault, or something. You might even be wondering that now.

Don't be ridiculous! This is Fortitude. It's just an inexplicable grass field.

Maybe somebody's planning on growing something there, later on?



The Dream-Witch

Long ago a prodigy of despair and hatred—a "Magister of the Bleak Academy"—came to Town to end the world. Its name was either **Melanie Malakh** or **Reginald Malakh.**

It seduced Hideo Hayashi, bound his will to its.

Together they made a glass dragon, and taught it to hate the world. It raged and would have destroyed all things; only, it shattered, instead.

The reason for its shattering, and the implications thereof, and its nature—all of this stuff is the meat and drink of **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon**, so if you think you might play that campaign sometime, you probably shouldn't let it come into focus for right now.

All you need to know right now is that Hideo stopped caring about glass-making afterwards. He left Town for a while, and when he came back, he took over Fortitude's archive instead of returning to the House of Glass. And later on he sort of informally adopted **the Dream-Witch,** a young girl touched by Melanie Malakh's power or possibly a young boy touched by Reginald's; and once that set a precedent, found himself taking in four or five other troubled teens.

If you plan to play through this stuff, but don't want to think about it too much,

- The Magister brain-whammied him;
- He may have also felt genuine friendship or (if orientation-appropriate) love for Malakh, too—how would he know?
- He remembers building the glass dragon, making beautiful glass as the Magister worked spells into it, but his memory of what happened after that is sketchy;
- He feels responsible for what happened, and also for the Dream-Witch;
- 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.

All of this could go by the wayside, of course, if the HG is either running and has read **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon**, or is definitely planning *not* to run that campaign, and therefore is able to come up with a different take.

Anyhow, **the Dream-Witch** is a Main Character option, usually a PC-aged girl named Miramie Mesmer but sometimes a PC-aged boy named Reynard Mesmer. They could even have been adopted into a shrine family instead of Hideo's archive.

She's usually hoping to bring in some money for the archive—

She's refurbishing a manor down the street from the archive and trying to set up a kind of art shop, garden, and café. Except for a vague association with masks, dreams, glass, and Melanie Malakh, she's a pretty OK person—you shouldn't judge her on her title alone any more than you should Caroline Yatskaya (pg. 67).

Owl-Eyed Seeker

This bit's a place you found once, but never again—a bookstore called *The Sign of the Owl-Eyed Seeker,* or possibly just a single glyph that conveys that intent. The girl running the shop—well, she mentioned something about it being her mother's—had a strange accent, which you still wish you could place.

You tried to find it again, later, when you were looking up something to do with astronomy and remembered a book that you'd seen there, but the bookstore was down a bit of a sideway and you really aren't sure where it was. You walked around and around and found a neat little garden with flowering willows and a shortcut to a kind of cool grocery, but why couldn't you find the place you were hunting? You really should have ought to have done!


THE SIGN OF THE OWL EYED
SEEKER
早
SALE

Peach Trees

This bit's part of a long walk or bike trip somewhere.

There's a large roundabout here where two streets of houses cross. It's got a pair of blossoming peach trees planted in it. The branches mess up your sense of depth and perspective a little. Sometimes two branches at different angles and distances will follow the same line for a while, from where you're standing, or match up from here with the lines of the crisscross wooden fence of the house behind the trees. When the lines diverge again it gives rise to a pleasant but kind of disorienting sense of visual fuzz.

Then there's a gust of sudden wind and the branches are swaying around instead and the world becomes a thing of a different order.

Pinwheel Umbrella Garden

This bit's down almost on the water.

There's this spot where you can look through a fence and past an unplanned arch of tattered hedge and see the patio of a café and also a little garden park. You can hear the clinking of silverware and plates. You can hear people conversing over their meals. You can see them as they sit and talk. One time you might have seen this ten-year-old kid with a big ruddy face taking a paper umbrella from her father's fancy drink and spinning it between her hands and letting go. It would have flown up about five feet and floated over about ten before the wind would have suddenly picked up and taken it sideways into a tree.

The café behind the fence is called **the Bywater Park Café.** There are usually ducks and sometimes people walking around on its garden path. If you went a little ways out of your way you could go around the fence and get into the café or the garden.[41]

The Pip

This is up the hill, in one of the more scenic places. It's along this long path you have to take sometimes to get somewhere you go.

There's a... there's a pip.

There's really nothing else to call it. It's like a milestone without numbers or a fancy tombstone without a name. It's small and rectangular and it has a gold rim and four square blue marble faces. It's fixed very tightly in place just off the side of the road. You don't know why there's a pip there. Nobody knows what the pip is about. It's an eternal mystery.

...well, OK. Someone might know, someone probably even *must* know, I guess. But it's definitely an in-obvious, subtly-originated pip. It's a great trail marker but it could have been better. I think. Like, with numbers and markings on it, it'd still be memorable but you would know what something like it was called.

This one time, though, this one time it had birdlime on it. It was kind of disgraceful. So you took a handkerchief and you cleaned it off yourself.

Because, well. Fortitude is a good place. It ought to have a shiny pip.

Pumpkin Soup

This restaurant could be anywhere, near or far from home.

This place is actually named ***Pumpkin Soup.*** The logo shows an old woman cooking soup in a Halloween pumpkin. It is not clear why the soup does not fall out through the holes that are the jack-o'-lantern's nose and

Money

Wondering how you handle money?

Town is mostly a cash economy, and mostly coinage to boot: you'll probably have a good chunk of copper and silver cash, often cored and strung; gold coins are a weighty matter. Large amounts of foreign currency are held by the Regional Council or authorized trading consortiums for use in foreign trade; it's disbursed before an actual trading trip. Smaller amounts mix fluently into local exchange, with dollars, yen, roubles, euros, and other currency reasonable alternatives in any given transaction. Rates are essentially automated—if you ring up five dollars or two hundred yen or whatever in a local cash machine, it'll pop up a number that it thinks is that amount in cash. Even vending machines will automatically translate most currency, within the limits of their slots and their capacity for change. It's roughly 2-3 cash to the dollar, with silver worth a couple bucks and gold about a hundred unless it's one of those big chunk coins that can approach the value of a house.

You can get a bank draft if you want to work in weird or large amounts; mostly, though, in practice, it's just copper cash and small bills floating around to maintain the economy's flow.

41 That might not be a good idea, though—see sidebar (right)

mouth and eyes. If somebody were to wonder about this in your presence, you could always tell them, "It is because the soup is merely painted on. It's just part of the logo" or "almighty God decreed it thus."

Inside the restaurant it smells of tomatoes and beets and fish and not so much of pumpkin. It serves many of the traditional flavors of the Docks, prominently including tomato- and beet-based borscht, fish and noodle soups, herring dishes, crab dishes, savory pies, baked or fried dumplings, various forms of cooked fish with rice or potatoes or bread and sauce, sandwiches, skewers, bacon-wrapped shrimp, lake snails with garlic butter, and oil-brushed flatbreads with walnuts and cheese. Naturally, it also offers a full suite of pumpkin-related dishes, curries, and soups.

This restaurant is surprisingly big inside, in part because it's two stories tall, and glass walls divide its interior into a number of smaller rooms. Maybe you told someone a secret here once, but what was it?

Don't worry! I won't tell!

Red Rocks and a Bird

This bit's somewhere up the hill from Big Lake.

There's some cleared ground to one side of the road with large red rocks scattered about on it. Beyond that there's a hill going up pretty steeply. Ahead a little ways, there's a set of stairs with a railing-wall of that same red rock. It's a stair of wooden planks and it goes up the side of the hill. The road you're on doubles back, eventually; the stair would let somebody in a hurry skip a little of that walk.

You saw a bird sitting on the red rocks once. It wiggled its tail. It looked at you. It watched you the whole time that you were walking by.

Ridiculous Seafood Restaurant

This bit is down by the water.

This building is ridiculous. The mermaid mural on it is very bad art. It's sublimely goofy, like, it's clearly meant to be a siren on a coral reef beckoning you in, but it's actually more like, *grr! I am lopsided and showing you the back of my hand! Also I am balancing on the tip of my tail! Admire my balance, pitiful 3d human!* There are also little fish that you are pretty sure were painted using as a reference model a dog or perhaps some sort of largish oyster. The signs are generally very excited about the specials, implying that the availability



Bluebell Park

Bluebell Park is a place of spectacle. It is a place of wonder and horror where symbols take on life. It's where you go when you want to find an elaborate transformation sequence, musical number, mecha and monster summoning sequence, or the like. It's where things like that are *from*.

It's full of stuff, in short, that really *shouldn't be happening*, and quite possibly isn't.

It's a place of archetypes and repetition, of formula and strangeness. It's a labile, sensitive world that reacts to your emotions; it's a depersonalizing world that cannot recognize you as yourself.

I am told that it is best to avoid the Bywater Park Café because it is not truly a part of Fortitude, but rather of Bluebell Park. I am told that the families that gather there are always the same families; that they do not live, that they do not dream, but they only eat and laugh and clink their glasses, there in Bluebell Park.

This is at minimum an exaggeration but I will admit that for all of them I cannot remember any element of their face.

Bluebell Park Properties

- Emotions must have a tangible impact on the world.
- People must honor customs and forms.
- Events must repeat themselves until something transformative happens.
- The lake must be tranquil.
- Everyone must have musical talent.
- A terrible power must sleep among the bluebells by the lake.

Hair Care

If you're looking for a haircut, there are about 30 places to get one in Fortitude. There's probably one within 20-30 minutes of you if you're in the main settlement.

If you're looking for something more complex than just a cut, you might have to look a little harder—barbers are a little more common than stylists, and stylists can be a little hit or miss, so you might have to walk for a couple of hours to get to the one you *like*.

of the restaurant's herring noodle or stuffed flounder is an apocalyptic, revelatory event.

The restaurant's name is ***Kakeru Hut.***

Sunlit Patch

This is in an open, scenic area. It's probably down near the lake, in one of the beachless regions, but there are places like it up on the hills or in the middle of the drier parks as well.

The trees just open up suddenly, here. There's a bit of barren ground, dead earth but brilliant with sun. The light is coming down like a shower curtain, this wash of translucent light fluttering over the ground, full of little iridescent bugs, moisture, pollen, or maybe dust. Beyond that is somebody's house, tucked out of the way here, with an old shack or possibly toilet area behind it.

Teacup Store

This bit is on a street of shops, probably down near the water.

This is a bookstore. It's also a lending library, sort of—you can rent a book or handful of books instead of buying them, or keep an account that lets you borrow a certain number of books at once. They've got a great collection: the place is huge, with rolling rows of shelves in front of other shelves. You rolled the front sets out of the way once, looking for something to read, and you found a teacup on the back shelves instead. It was just sitting there among the books, beautiful and white and clean with flowers drawn along the edge. The owner left it there by mistake!

This bookstore's name is ***Harmless Dreaming.***

The Telephone Pole Looks Like a Sail

This bit's not that far from a street of cool shops. It's not directly on the water.

There's a huge house, two stories tall and half a block long, with white trim and glass windows. There's a family name written above the door. Whose is it? (And do you think it's someone you'll make friends with later?)

This is on one of Fortitude's arterial roads: the street is wide and asphalt and now and then you'll even see a car drive past.

You might remember how you were looking down this very path when you saw a ship's mast and sail, like it was sailing on the land. Only, it wasn't a ship's mast and sail at all—you realized instantly, or after five or six seconds, or anywhere in between—but a telephone pole perfectly framing the white sail-colored roof of a house further down the way.

Where the Chicken Foot Got Away

This bit's a little out of the way, but not that far.

There's a store with something useful. Linens, or something you like for your hobby, or kitchen supplies, or tools. Not far away there's a little restaurant called **Simone's** which is pretty good but not worth going out of your way for. Across the street there's **Happy Every Day**, which has excellent coffee, milk tea, and this insanely good pudding and strawberry soda drink, to drink there or to go, as well as little sandwiches. Regrettably the fact is that even an insanely good drink with questionable ingredients can't compete, in terms of defining what this place *is* to you, with the fact that this is where, one day, you or someone you know saw a chicken foot, attached to the fork of someone who was gesturing too freely, slip away.

It escaped slowly. It slipped free from the fork with a frame-by-frame kind of elegant grace. You could see the customer's face, eyes widening, hair bobbing at the sides, as they recognized what was about to happen. *Surely the chicken feet were better behaved in the old country!* their heart must have wailed, but this, of course, this was not true.

If I'm remembering right, the chicken foot made a run for it. But maybe that wasn't so.

It turns out chicken feet taste basically like cuticle, only squishier and chewier, so if you ever start and then want to stop biting your cuticles, you could probably go to Simone's and take up chicken feet as a kind of patch.

The Wildly Creaking Harbor

This bit's on the water, of course. It's right out there with the boats.

This is a boardwalk that's attached to and maintained by a small harbor but open to pedestrian use. There's all kinds of food smells, and you can buy fresh fish and clams right from the buckets or ice boxes. If none of the fishing boats are unloading you can run out on the docks and listen to the overwhelming creaking of the wood—you know that *some* creaking is normal in a harbor, of course, but it's like every other board out *here* is worse than somebody's squeaking shoes. You look up at the swaying lines of the masts of the ships and you're kind of surprised they're just gently swaying

and not rolling around like an avalanche's stones. It's the kind of place where sometimes the seagulls get incredibly excited and all start crying out at once and you might not even notice.

Maybe it's not *that* bad. You might think I'm exaggerating a little. You might think that it's just a little louder than the usual harbor tends to be. It's OK if you think that. I don't mind. On this point sensible people can disagree. That said, ***Kokoryov Harbor*** is just called *Noisy Harbor* by just about everyone in Town.

At night the lights on the ship masts look like the glowing eyes of endless evil gnomes. Or, if you prefer, like Christmas.

Bridges Between Moments



Slice of Life (Travel)

After a Slice of Life Action, when does the scene itself end?

In Fortitude that's usually signaled by the weather.

The scene change after a bit of Slice of Life is heralded by clouds rolling in or clouds rolling out. Rain starts or stops. The wind blows, heaves, or ceases to blow.

Or maybe there's some other large-scale environmental shift: The cicadas start singing really loudly. The sun sinks down below the horizon or dawn lights up the sky. If it's in the early morning, or just after some troublesome event, you could break off a Slice of Life bit by saying that people are starting to wake up, set their shops up, and go about their days.

It doesn't have to be sudden. It's not like Slice of Life experiences are marked by frantic energy—they rarely are. They trail off into appreciation for the world instead. In fact, it's almost *never* sudden; it's rare to see two Slice of Life moments without at least fifteen minutes of in-game time between them, and they're more likely to be separated by several hours.

Avoiding the High-Speed Blender of Life

As an optional rule, when someone's just done a Slice of Life action, the HG can refuse additional Slice of Life actions until something's happened to bridge between them. I think the HG should invoke this when it feels appropriate, in the first few sessions, and eventually either abandon it or begin a rigorous enforcement thereafter.

Shadows pass away, or loom.

That's the only really good endpoint if you're alone in a desert or something. If there are other people around, though, there are a few more options:

- you take a wrong turn and end up in unfamiliar territory;
- you have to stop what you're doing and rest or take temporary shelter;
- you meet a friend, a new friend, or group of friends; *or*
- you get into trouble, but not the scary kind—it's the kind that you're completely confident in being able to handle. Perhaps you're an über-competent hero and encountering a venomous snake is just an opportunity for you to show off. Or maybe you're not so über but you're still not terribly worried by a group of neighborhood children demanding that you prove your worth in battle.

All of these are a good place to conceptually draw the curtain on your Slice of Life Action; to take a "commercial break," as it were; and when you come back, whether or not time has passed in game or out of it, a new scene's begun.

Living by the Water

a preamble

3

It's the water that sets the rhythm for the docks. It's the water that puts Fortitude in touch with nature and the world. It's the source of life. It's where everything comes from—it's the heartbeat and the driving power of the place. It's the central organizing force, and the layers of Fortitude built further from it and higher above it are like the bleachers to its basketball court or like a treasured garden's wall.

It's hard to spend much time in Fortitude without acquiring family or friends who are connected to the Lake. Maybe it's just someone who works at a cannery or processing plant or someone who spends their leisure time out on the water enjoying the winds and the water and the speed. Maybe it's someone who spends their weeks out catching fish. Have you ever heard that a boat came back in tatters, or a fleet without a boat, and had your heart jump to your throat, your mouth dry out, your body fill with worry as you went down to see *were they the one?*

The big events in Fortitude rise from the lake. A week of good catches and food will get cheaper and the whole place start to smell of fish and spice. If the boats find themselves in the Baltic Sea cod, herring, and sprat will dominate; if it's easier to reach the coast off Rio then a good catch of marlin and sailfish will come in. Traders intermittently bring in luxury goods from the old countries, from America, Russia, Japan, Brazil, Romania, and Greece; from Locus Imsety, where one may buy true prophesies for fortune-telling festivals and cookies; from the Keep of Lady Mugain, where the smallest quantities of levirock[42] and dryrock (for the construction of floating and desiccating devices) may be obtained. When such a ship comes in it's an occasion for small festivals, for buying the cheaper knickknacks in a free-for-all market at the docks, bidding on the more precious goods, and greeting any emigrants who have arrived. When a fishing boat comes back with a fey light in its crew and captain's eyes and some Outside-caught monster-god dead or squirming in its nets, the whole of Fortitude will celebrate: that is a "kaiju day," and if the thing is edible it will dominate their cuisine for days. If it's not, then scavengers, industry, and scientists will do their best to find *something* that it's good for before the decaying of the corpse.

Like, this one time, they brought in a crab larger than any three of the larger boats. Were you there? It came in roped between an entire fleet, like a rock star amidst his entourage, and everyone screamed with delight at what a feast it'd surely be. But it wasn't! Remember? The people who tasted it: you've never seen such appalled and disappointed faces, like kids who thought they were getting green tea ice cream and you gave them a bite of wasabi paste instead. Maybe you even tried it yourself—they got a lot of mileage out of selling people little tiny bites, just so they'd know what everyone was complaining about—and oh, it was bitter, and mushy, and wet, like biting a handful of tissues dipped first in skunk oil and then the sea. That wasn't the end of it, though. There was a ton of speculation and exploration, people wondering, well, is this oil good for anything? And what about the shell? And that's why every house in Fortitude that can afford it has a pan or pot or thermos made from the body of the crab: light, easily-cleaned and sturdy, and unless you're using industrial machinery, it'll never ever break.

Were you there for the last shipment of levirock? The bulk of it went to the Reserve, of course, and to the industries that need it, but still! They had pieces of low-grade floatstone, won't hardly go higher than twelve feet and sometimes five, for the kids to buy, not to mention slightly better pieces for roping to laundry in the sun. Those ridiculous goofs with their skysails put on a show. If the stuff didn't need to soak up heat to be effective it would revolutionize our lives.

The docks are the freewheeling, joyful heart of Fortitude, full of people and color and the wind billowing on colored cloth. It's not because the rats can walk and talk that the humans of Fortitude tolerate the human-rat great truce. It's not because they've agreed to limit their consumption of human stores. It's because the rats have ships of their own, trim and beautiful little things, and when a rat-ship fleet comes in it's all the action of a human fleet's arrival *plus* the adorability of

42 *aka floatstone*

tiny things. They are brave and swashbuckling adventurers, the rats; but for an adventurers' port, it's worth observing that the docks are astonishingly calm. You won't get your stuff stolen here, at least, not typically.[43] You won't get abducted for a ship. The merchants won't pressure you, at least not too badly, and there's always a place to slip away from the crowds—for, oh, there certainly *are* crowds—and sit by yourself, or with a friend or two, at the end of a pier and feel the sun and wind and hear the lapping of the lake.

The lakeside extends beyond the settled portion, out to vast stretches of beach and stone and sometimes cliffs. There aren't enough people in all of Fortitude to *settle* or to *tame* Big Lake. If you're called to work the beaches, to tend the snails, to collect the shellfish, or to hunt the treasures, princes, and miracles that now and again wash up, then you'll find that you've got as much solitude as you need to work there. There's always people, but they're scattered across the greatness of the strand. If you go far enough north, you'll find some variation in the coast: alien creeks, where the pressure of Outside pushes water up the hills a ways only to have it circle back again; the Easter mangrove swamp; and an uninhabited tangle of driftwood, stone, and barren ground, barely navigable by those who occasionally make the hike around Big Lake, that borders on the Outside. If you've ever hiked that path, you'll know that there's no real point to it save the conquest. The footing's unsteady, it's slippery in the rain and stinking hot in the sun, and that part of Big Lake has a weird, vaguely rotten smell. That said, if you make it all the way around, you can say: I've walked around Big Lake! And it is a pretty primal and simple place to walk, just water, wood, sun, sky, and stone. If you'd rather bike, the James Hardie Trail is the closest equivalent: it's got a navigable road, and it circles the lake at a gorgeous height, but it passes through the Outside at several points and on one portion of its path veers far enough away that the Lake is lost to view.



43 *Skip's Pickpocketing and Kidnapping Service* does *arrange show pickpocketing, kidnapping, and general acts of piracy for kid's birthdays and the like.*

Climate

Looking to anchor your sense of Fortitude's climate?

Fortitude is a humid subtropical environment, with generally dry and mild winters and hot, humid summers—mean temperatures range from 2°C (35.6°F) to 29°C (84°F) over the course of the year, with snowfall and droughts both rare.

Fortitude sees about 1300mm of rain a year. Storms come in both mundane and supernatural forms: I'd guess about a tenth of the mild rains and half of the major storms and gales bring in pollution from the Outside at some point during their run. That means chaos, magic and enchantment; gouts of crystallized Outside dust; and a sense of gathering potential, of weighty, numinous foreboding, that comes before the rain.

The temperature smoothes out as you move north or west, with the northern beach forming a consistently tropical microclimate and the hills to the west protecting the maritime climate of the other Regions of Town.

3 Chores by the Water



Shared Action

So if you're a local, you might have chores or weekend work. If you're an adult living here and you don't have anything better to do—not very likely as a PC option, but it could happen—you might even have a full-on job. Even if you're not really a part of the Fortitude community, you might have to step in for someone, or do someone a couple of favors while you're here.

So this bit's about what it's like to work down by the water.

There's a pervasive absence of shelter. You'll be under the sky. Maybe if you're just buying stuff, there'll be a roof or a tarp, but most likely you'll be under the sun's heat, stuck either working through or taking temporary shelter in the rain, and open to the winds and the sense of vastness that you get when there aren't mountains, tall buildings, and roofs to keep away the open air.

Maybe you'll spend your time out on the beaches or in the shallows. Then you're surrounded by openness in *every* direction, not just the up. There'll be sandhoppers in the summer, little jumping shrimp; you'll see them more as *arcs* and *sudden motion* than actual *things*, like the motion sensors in your brain shouting at you "hey! Something just did a tigger bounce!" There'll be bits of sticky tar and random lakeshells washing up on the shore. The water's usually fresh and clear to swim in, without particularly heavy waves. It's brackish with some regularity, though, as you go north along the shore—everywhere the ocean currents find their slippery paths in.

Out in the water it's luxuriously cool and the shadows are blue and green. The bottom is sand and stones, with tiny fish and green and brown plants when you swim further out. In sections—particularly the brackish sections—Fortitude's established substantial beds of clams. The snails of Big Lake are principally land creatures, living in the rocks of the snail farms, although they lay their eggs out in the Lake.

The nature of Fortitude is to reward slow and steady work; thus, the character of all the lakeside jobs is to require dedication without urgency, endurance and fitness more than strength or speed, and to give you ample opportunity to appreciate the experience of the water and the world. To work on the beach, as much as on the boats, is to grow healthy, clean, strong-lunged, and lean and strong of limb. You'll remember long sweet days where you lose yourself in the expanses of the world. Where a line of footprints in the sand becomes your memory. Where your thoughts fill up with the rough feel of the clams or dollar fish you pick up from the sand; and the shifting smells of salt and fresh water that reach you with the changing wind; and the air that flows along the top of your mouth, behind your teeth. You'll remember calling out to a friend and wiping the sweat from your forehead, only vaguely aware of where your thoughts have been. You'll remember grinning, and your awareness of the darkness of your mouth and the whiteness of your grin. Most of all you'll remember how it makes you quiet, inside and out, to spend your time there, in the presence of the shore.

Maybe you'll work on the boats without taking actual part in the fishing. Whether you build boats, fix boats, or just run the laundry between a boat and a laundromat or stream, that makes you part of the fishing and trading community. You'll get to wander the decks and feel the wood of them with your calloused feet. You'll learn the ropes, in the most literal of fashions, because there's always going to be someone asking you to tie something off or fix a line. You'll get to know the rocking and swaying of the boats, the endless *movement* of

The Outside (or at least, the Near Outside)

The Outside is a terrifying country, a vast hot barren waste scattered with points of inexplicability. It is a place that makes you lost. It is a place that makes you frightened. It is a river that rives you from your sense of self and sense of place. The world blurs. Time melts. You don't know who and you don't know where you are. Everywhere around you is strangeness and something about being in the Outside hurts.

The Outside is the other side of the coin from places like Bluebell Park. It's not too much to process but too little. It's not divine forces intruding on your life so much as dreams seizing you free from it and abstracting you from your world.

It's dream-like, chaotic, it roils with tempest, but it is a very empty roiling.

In the Outside you are little and alone and you are surrounded by an endless world that does not play by the rules you know. In the Outside you are being judged to standards that you do not know and therefore cannot meet. Little pieces of it are explicable and even pleasurable: you can find meal-boxes hanging from trees, or see prairie kittens poking their fuzzy heads out from their adorable kitten-holes. The problem is that without any ability to understand why those things are there you cannot realistically distinguish them from poison-boxes or trapdoor kittens—you lose the agency to live as yourself, on your own terms, as a fully developed person, and instead become a creature at the mercy of the world.

The fundamental phenomenon of the Outside is that the more you understand and experience it, the less unreal it becomes. Or rather put: the more you learn your way around it, the less *the Outside* it is at all. That's why it's possible to come back from getting lost in it—why it's possible, and almost inevitable. That's why it's not clear to me whether the Earth exists out there normally in the Outside or whether it died and is being recreated through our explorations. If you learn the path to the satellite village Soma, for instance, then after a while you stop feeling like you're Outside when you're on that road. It's just the road that goes to Soma Village. Or: the first time you sail to Rio de Janeiro, you might pass frequently through straits of the Outside on your way from Big Lake to the oceans to Brazil; but after a few voyages, it's more like you're just sailing through reality on a weird, Outside-flavored route.



Outside Properties

- 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.
- The Outside recedes and a normal world returns in the paths and places you know well.

them, and the kind of feel that'll help you tell a good and healthy ship from one that's gone bad or sick. The people of the ships have a rough and tiring life but one that errs just a little bit towards abundance: Fortitude is a blessed place in that *work succeeds.* There are tragedies and there are accidents and there are lean times but there's never a working ship that goes out and comes back in without *something*, and something *meaningful*, to show. Throw in an occasional bounty and you get a community of sailors and adventurers who are remarkably cheerful about their lives and prospects on the waters of the world.

It's pretty easy to get involved in getting the goods off ship and to the families and stores. There's a whole weekend industry of kids sorting through the stuff that comes in off the ships, finding good deals or tasty food for their family or taking a cut on anything amazing

they find that some patron grocery can sell. There's also always work helping to transport stuff to the canneries and processing plants, at least, if you're talking about ships too poor and canneries too dinky to just ship everything by truck. You get involved in this and it's all about the feel of the fish and shellfish as you're sorting them, the conversations as you're walking, the way the stuff you're carrying seems to put on a sudden twenty pounds just as you're getting to the steepest hill, the joy of hunting for interesting things—at least, if you're not just carrying stuff that other people hand you—and the pride of confidence when you get good at getting cool things quickly to where they need to go. Can you beat twelve minutes up to McGregor's place? Will you ever find a golden deep-sea watch in the belly of a shark again? Wow, sailors really *do* stink up their clothes!

Further Experiences

3

I want to talk about some actions and experiences that aren't necessarily Fortitude-themed. You won't always get XP for them—they're the meat and drink of other genres, but in a Pastoral game you'll handle them informally unless the HG or group really wants to handle them as an XP Action—but they're still floating around in the world as things you might engage in and things that tie into how the **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** world works as a whole.

Let's start with five experiences that have direct relevance in Fortitude.

These aren't things you *need* to understand to use this book. However, you might find them helpful in figuring out how I expect something to play out.

For instance, when I talk about the dust of the Outside as a psychoactive toxin, that might leave you at a bit of a loss about what to do if your character gets poisoned with it. Are you meant to lay around weakly in bed moaning about it? Are you meant to hang out with your friends working through your feelings about the psychoactive toxin that's reached unsafe levels in your bloodstream?

Nope! I've tagged it below as a probable **Obsessive Action**, so you know that the normal course of action is to act a little weird, then get more and more worked up, and then eventually to go entirely over the top. Maybe you get XP for that and maybe you don't—

In a Pastoral game, these actions only give XP if the HG or the group thinks that it's important enough or on-point enough that you should really play it out by the action rules—

So maybe you get XP for it and maybe you don't, but Obsessive is what that experience *is*.



Foreshadowing

You pay a lot of attention to something. Logically, looking at that from the outside, it must be foreshadowing.



Obsessive Action

You get worked up about something. Best if you build slowly but eventually go right over the top.



Discovery

You explore somewhere you've never been, or something you've never done. You discover something neat, scary, or mysterious!



Decisive Action

You've been monologuing about your hopes, dreams, actions, plans, or thoughts—and now, you decide to *do* something about them.



(Suffer) Adversity

You experience something awful. So awful!

Exploring Fortitude



Discovery

This bit's about what exploring Fortitude is like.

Fortitude is a fairly defined space, and it's a home-like space, so you're likely to pick up a rough familiarity with the place quickly. For that reason, you're not likely to find yourself an *accidental* explorer very often. Most of your exploration experiences are going to come out of a conscious choice: deliberately going down streets you don't have to go down, taking turns you're not sure about, paying attention to things you don't have to pay attention to, and in general having an active will to find something new or to treat the place *as* something new.

That isn't the *only* option—there are some pretty weird corners of Fortitude, like the ghost world or the topless tower,[44] and obviously things relocate and new stores open and old stores close and all that kind of thing over time—but that kind of conscious exploration is *usually* what we're talking about when you're exploring new corners of Fortitude.

So listen.

I think that when you're exploring, you're kind of hoping on some level that you'll find something with strong valence. Something creepy, spooky, scary, or threatening. Something mysterious. Something amazing, awesome—*neat.*

Of those things...

You're not likely to find anything terribly creepy or spooky here. If you're looking for haunted houses or whatever Fortitude isn't the right place for that. Try going over to Horizon, over the western hills!

I'm not saying you *can't* find spooky or creepy stuff here; there's witches, vampires, ghosts, and monsters in Fortitude, if you turn over the right rocks—but the witches are incredibly rare, the vampires drink pillow-teeth tea, the ghosts are generally nice, and the most notable monsters are the ones the fishing fleet brings home to *eat.* It's like saying that America is spooky because it has alligators, nukes, pit bulls, and drunk drivers.[45] It does! But you won't bump into them near as often as you might think.

Mysterious things are probably a lot more common. Fortitude's one of the most "normal" parts of Town, to an Earthly sensibility, but frankly, there's nowhere you

Vampires and Other Creatures of the Night

I've mentioned vampires and monsters a few times so I should explain that!

So, vampires are rare and tend to be a little introverted and standoffish. You shouldn't expect to interact with them. But they are a noticeable presence!

Real-world vampires don't need human blood to survive and for the most part they don't actually drink any—they feed off of ambient negative energy and emotions, instead, worry and fear and such, so they hang out near clinics and by the windows of sick children and the like. At least, allegedly. ("Sick enough to call the pale man" and "Don't worry your parents, the vampires'll come!" are Fortitude expressions, and if you actually *do* spot a vampire when you're a sick child it's kind of like a badge of honor.)

In related news, Fortitude does have ghosts but you hardly ever see them.

Beyond that...

There's a handful of quasi-human creatures about—a few ogres living in the hills, at least one talking heron, and the like. Then we get into more ambiguous cases. There's a few hundred people who self-identify as non-human, who don't *quite* match up to the set of people with the identifiable visual markers of the same, some of whom are modified *homo sapiens* and some of whom are not; all in all, I'd guess there are about 80 miscellaneous people who don't look human at all (including maybe 30 of the twig-people) and a couple hundred who look like modified or altered or just atypical humankind.

The standard Fortitude boogeyman is a "witch," which term refers to a magical creature, often masked, who comes in off the Lake and makes trouble. These are actually pretty rare—there's maybe one witch every couple of generations who manages to rate as a Regional emergency and five or six about as troublesome as a cat burglar or bad storm. There aren't enough of them to worry about, in other words, but people talk about them as if there were!

44 *The rats told me about this one. It goes up at least twenty or thirty floors, apparently, making it the tallest building in Town, but I can't find or even spot it from the ground and their aerial route won't take my weight so I don't know.*

45 *Don't eat drunk drivers!*

can go in all the world where you *aren't* surrounded by mysteries. Why do people leave straw baskets of onions just lying out in the streets in Taiwan? What the heck is the deal with Australian platypuses? Why doesn't anyone help the melting people in Seattle? They're melting! It's so cruel! Finding a random empty building in Fortitude with stacked white and black pipes in the back is comparatively speaking a breath of sanity, elucidation, and fresh air.

Lastly there's always the hope of finding something neat—a cool view, a shop you've never been to, some quirky aspect of Fortitude life that you hadn't previously encountered. The first time I saw a laundry line held up by floatstone I stared for at least half a minute in total blank surprise before I fell down laughing. I couldn't help it! It was like finding out that Pizza Hut is a gourmet food in China! Processing it was just *too much!*

Ultimately I'd guess that most of what you find is going to be either plot-related stuff or stuff that the players come up with on the fly. But I'd say the general options, in roughly decreasing order of likelihood, include:

- an interesting variation to the architecture or the road
- a scenic building or garden
- flowers
- an interesting statue or mini-shrine
- a little shop with something that you haven't seen available in a while
- a gorgeous view
- a random dog wandering around
- a little shop with something you were looking for, or were going to need soon
- a cool little park
- someone you weren't expecting to meet
- a store or grocery that might have something new but is mostly kind of uninspiring
- something kind of surprising which I mentioned in this book somewhere (your first ghost sighting, your first floatstone sighting, whatever)
- an awesome bargain or giveaway
- some people doing something interesting, like playing a game you like or doing a mini-concert or selling fresh-baked pies from a one-day-only stand
- one of Fortitude's rare cars, probably permanently parked
- something inexplicable, like a step-ladder in the center of a clearing
- a wandering deer (or other animal, e.g. a little pond and some ducks)
- a new shortcut
- accessible berries or fruit
- an old friend *or*
- a genuine mystery or danger

Discovery

Condition: You're doing something you've never done, exploring somewhere new, or investigating an anomaly. And you notice that you've just found or discovered or learned something unexpected!

Action:

- **Declare that it's neat, mysterious, or scary enough to have an impact on you.**

As an optional rule, you can get a second bonus XP from **Discovery** if someone (which can and often should be you) emotes a reaction to what you find.

Arts, Music, and Crafts

Looking for arts or craft supplies?

First, I want to note that there's a textiles market large enough to leave me utterly confused, probably also having related craft supplies. If that's what you're looking for, just head to midtown, over by the cherry blossoms, and ask someone to point you the rest of the way. That's your victory!

Otherwise, there are ~20 miscellaneous arts and crafts supply stores—for beading, yarn, wirework, and the like. That summary probably doesn't tell you whether there are resources for any craft in *particular;* rather, it tells you that if you wander aimlessly for a day, you'll probably encounter a new craft store at *some* point.

In terms of my personal needs, I've found two good stores for notebooks and pencils and one wholly inadequate site for yarn. I looked for a good music store for a while and didn't find one, but I also stopped looking—I met a neighbor down seven blocks that'away who could make a new flute for me so I don't know where you'd go to get, e.g., guitars.

Decisive Action



Decisive Action

This bit is about what it's like to take decisive action in Fortitude.

Most decisive actions are taken in the context of Big Lake. This is a motif and not a rule—there's nothing stopping you from changing your life while in bed or at the breakfast table—but the most common setting for any life-changing decision, or even small but meaningful decisions, is by the water; or on the water; or while or after looking out across Big Lake.

It's the sound of the water that pushes you to a decision. It's the keening of the gulls. It's the smell of the water and the knowledge that the Lake opens out onto the world.

If you talk about your hopes and dreams, for instance, while you're at the breakfast table, that's probably **Shared Action.** The conversation will tend to lead around to an explanation of who you are right now, how you do things right now, to an affirmation of your existing purpose. And in a way that means that you're *not* really talking about your hopes and dreams; you'll tend to flit backwards towards your accomplishments, your decisions, you'll feel a little weird making the long-range goals the point of the talk because there's the right now, the right here, the right *there* to be alive.

But if you're at the water—

I mean, it's vast and blue and beautiful and beyond it, or on it, or through it, anyhow, is the entirety of an infinite cosmos, the Outside and the islands and the Earth. And that opens your heart to changing things.

If you talk about your hopes and dreams while you're looking at the water, there'll be this current in you and moving through you that says: hey. If this is what I want...

If this is what I believe...

Then *this* is what I should do.

You reach a point of shaking things up, when you're looking at the water. You reach the big choice points in your life. You reach the end of the path you were on, and you start a new one. And, if you can—

If it's possible, at the time—

You take a metaphorical or literal step forward. You do something to *commit*.



Decisive Action

Condition: You've been narrating or explaining your hopes, dreams, plans, actions, or thoughts. Or, someone/something else has been doing that *for* you!

Action:

- **Take an action that you can't retreat from—something decisive or definitive!**

As an optional rule, you'll get a second group XP from this if there was an audience for your monologue—someone *listening* to it and at some point making an emote or response.

The HG also has the option to go double or nothing on actions like this, warning you of some terrible consequence to befall if you go forward and putting in another group XP if you do it anyway. If you don't, of course, the XP Action doesn't happen at all!

Adversity



Adversity

This bit's about what it's like to suffer from fear and torment in Fortitude.

I won't say it can't happen. Disasters do.

It's a good place, but even in good places, sometimes, your house catches on fire. Sharks put on legs, learn to breathe air and even fresh water, and stalk up to hunt their parents' killers down. You fall down the stairs and now you're stuck in the basement with a broken leg and nobody can hear you calling out. Whatever.

It's almost never going to happen—except to PCs, for whom "trouble is rare" turns into "trouble isn't central, but it's still got to be pretty common"—

But even for NPCs, it happens *some*.

I think that in Fortitude, these often serve a function as part of stories of grace or community. They're stories of how, just when things seem darkest (and they will seem pretty dark), the people who love you step in to help you out. They're stories of how strong you really are, and how good the world really is: how you live your life in fear of stuff like this happening, but then, when it does, it's not the end of the world.

That isn't how it works everywhere. I don't want to pretend that it does. I don't want you to think that it does, that really, all those other people who have disasters are really just fine and learned a salutary lesson about goodness from it. That's not how it is.

But in Fortitude—

The thing is, that's what strong communities are *for*. This is what the traditional way of doing things is *good at.* You don't live somewhere like Fortitude to self-actualize or have privacy or to make the world a better place or to conquer destiny. You live somewhere like Fortitude because if you fall down the stairs and break your leg and nobody can hear you call out, someone will find you anyway. You live somewhere like Fortitude because if your house catches on fire, people will help you. You live somewhere like Fortitude because if and-sharks start hunting you, the community around you won't let you just... fall through the cracks.[46]

46 *This is not a shark-related pun, but readers may feel free to come up with such a pun and write it in!*

Police and Emergency Services

Fortitude keeps roughly ten police stations and five fire stations—they're all pretty dinky, too, with seven jail cells between them (five at the eastern Kirov Station.) I say "roughly" because there's some blurring of the lines: some of the police stations have fire or medical response equipment, and most of the firefighters are empowered to keep the peace.

The settlement employs ten constables to keep the stations, with the help of a deputy or their family; about five deputies and about 35 officers of the peace. Their role is mostly keeping tabs on things, helping people out, and arbitration. There's another ten full-time firefighters, distinguished by the fact that they practice response and keep track of the fire stations; the bulk of fire response is handled by volunteers.

There's another four stations—ranger stations, I guess, they're mostly just called local stations—outside the settlement. Two for the northern beach, two for the hills. That's not really enough, but the families that live on the hills are usually big enough and organized enough to handle anything that comes up!

There are roughly 10-15 fires and 10 hazardous conditions per year, including about 5 life-threatening emergencies yearly and maybe one really serious problem (something to remember the year by) every 2-5 years.

Adversity

Condition: You're in a really unpleasant place and situation. It's getting harder and harder to think of anything but how much this really sucks.

Action:

- **Tip over the edge into delirium; or**
- **Just... give up.**

As an optional rule, you can get a second group XP from this when someone else emotes their reaction to your troubles—when your suffering is interrupted, or possibly *not* interrupted, by someone expressing their concern, horror, amusement, panic, or whatever at your state.

Signs and Portents



Foreshadowing

This bit is about what it's like to encounter hints, portents, omens, and foreshadowing in play.

I think that a lot of this, in Fortitude, is going to be character-driven. That is, I don't think that Fortitude is the kind of place where the hand of deity (e.g., the HG) drives plot by handing out highly specific prophesies and frissons of supernatural warning: instead, it's the things that the PCs pay attention to and *treat* as foreshadowing that turn out to be actually ominous or important in the end. There's certainly plenty of room for direct fortune-telling—you can buy a fortune from a shrine, for instance, or consciously read the grounds of your coffee after you've drunk it up—and encounters with traditional stories or warty statues at strange shrines will tend towards being a sign or portent naturally, but I still think that "the players/characters are paying a lot of attention to this" is the core and classic mode.

So really that's the heart of it, in Fortitude.

That's what local Foreshadowing—Fortitudeshadowing?—is like.

To experience foreshadowing is to have your attention caught—to have it arrested, to have something take you out of your sense of place and immerse you in the experience of a timeless thing. To experience foreshadowing is to have something acquire a sense of intrinsic significance to you—to have it suddenly *stand out* from the world and time around it. Like the movie of your life stops clicking along, the projector rattles, and for a moment the world's just flickering back and forth around that screen.

So **Foreshadowing** is an action, like Slice of Life or Shared Reactions.

It doesn't always earn XP, not in a Pastoral game, it's not an in-genre action, but it's still something that you do. It's something that emerges from the player, at least, if not precisely from the character.

It's you saying, literally or implicitly: *whoa. This is an important thing.*

If I talk about Foreshadowing as the mode for an experience later on, that means that that experience only really matters if you're saying that. It means it's only meaningful, at least as Foreshadowing, if you *let* it catch you up. If you're not paying attention to that thing, if you *refuse* to pay attention or if you're just not that into it, and nobody else is either, then it's not a Foreshadowing action. It's not a Foreshadowing experience. It's not meaningful, it's just a thing; or, quite possibly, it is no thing at all. Conversely, if you put that weight on it—

Even if you're doing or experiencing something completely ordinary, like savoring a slice of cheese—

Then it's a Foreshadowing action/experience, and you should consider thinking of it as such.

So you should listen—

Well, listen, or look, or taste, or whatever; I mean, when that happens, you should pay attention for a while. Then and only then—after and only after giving it a long listen, taste, or look—give a strong reaction to it. Later, see if you can't keep that stuff in mind and work it in, making your Foreshadowing scenes and other players' Foreshadowing scenes retrospectively thematic or relevant to what's going on.

Theaters

Looking to take in a show?

Fortitude only has one two-screen movie theater, with relatively rare updates in its films. It has the North and South Live Theaters (technically "the Levskaya" and "the Oyster"); the Reese Windway Concert Hall; four rentable amateur stages, mostly along Ficus Street; and a handful of various clubs.



Foreshadowing

Condition: You notice that you're paying a lot of attention to something.

Action:

- **Get caught up in it!**

As an optional rule, you can get a second group XP here if you watch/listen for a while—enough for one or two more things to *happen*—and then react to whatever went on.

Obsession



Obsessive Action

This bit is about what it's like to get worked up over something unnecessarily in Fortitude.

This is something that happens when you're touched by the power of the Outside or spend too much time dealing with Horizon, the settlement over the western hills. It's not really a part of the natural condition of Fortitude, which is relaxed and laid back—but when you have storms rolling in regularly from the Outside, and people and horrors coming over the hills; when the best hospital and the best School are over in Horizon and the wind passes through the Outside on its way to you—

Well, that can disrupt the clean sense of place and purpose that you build up living in Fortitude, and push you towards worry, uncertainty, and fear instead.

It doesn't help to know that, really.

You can probably feel it—that you've been tainted by something alien—when the stress, the fear, the worry, and the obsession start to settle in to your mind and heart. But that doesn't actually make you less stressed. Maybe if you're well-enough adjusted it won't make you *more* stressed, but it definitely doesn't *help*.

The things that seemed ordinary and safe stop seeming ordinary and safe.

Fears and obsessions start to exert this unnatural allure. They swell in your mind, they become compelling in ways that they oughtn't be. They take up more and more of your mental real estate, leaving you less and less cognitive space to realize just how messed up you are. You'll find yourself reaching for a sense of safety or completeness that you can't find—

The world seems to stop cooperating with you, it's always unnaturally hard to reach the things that you think are safe, or happy, or worthwhile, and then even when you find them it's not completely satiating, not

Street Names

Here's something to give you a quick sense of the street names of Fortitude.

The most popular street names are numbers and fish. Second Avenue, Ebi Circle, Mahi-Mahi, Seventh Street, Hammerhead Park, Bluefin Boulevard, First Street, Pollywog Bend, Flatfish Circle, Fourth and Main Esplanade, Tobio Quay and Tobio Causeway, and so forth. I'd guess that somewhere there's a Red Snapper Junction and an Eel Street, and possibly it's possible to easily distinguish them from the Fuedai and Unagi Roads and possibly it is not.

Then there's all the standards like Main Street, Center Street, Oldway, and New Street—in fact, there's a lot of New Streets, New Places, and New Courts. I think people are a little embarrassed of houses built in the last fifty years. Or maybe they're proud. I don't know! Speaking of which, there is a Pride Street (and a Chastity Hill.)

Sun words—Jade, Irinka, Sunrise, Sunset, Sunsview, and the like—are copious. The Sosunov family has done a lot of work to improve and decorate Irinka Way. Elizaveta, whose craftwork won the heart of a swan prince, has at least three streets named in her honor.

Family names are common too: Markovic's Crescent, Smirnov Avenue, Koryo, Watson Way, Apeldoorn Avenue, and the like. A surprising number of streets appear to be named after Mongols—Kublai Road, Begich, Chelubey Avenue, and the like. There's even a Beylerbey Ridge.

(In stories, "the Beylerbey" is a Mongol warrior who comes to Fortitude to find a lost treasure that will re-establish the Mongol Horde or awaken and bind the ghost of Genghis Khan. He's a villain, though he's also usually honorable and kind of cool.)

There's a reasonable number of streets named in one fashion or another after the other regions of or near Town: Horizon Street, Arcadia Road, Lakeside Avenue, Island Road, Molder Street, Old Molder Street, Soma Avenue, Walking Way, and the like. There's a tradition of calling roads where you don't know where they go "Outside Alley;" this occasionally becomes the actual name of the street, morphs to "Sideway," and gets a prefix (e.g. "Bamboo Sideway") over time.

As ever, animals, plants, and terrain make good last-resort names for a street: there's a Foxway, an Eagle Street, a Mulberry Road, a Rockway, Limestone Avenue, Fig Street, and an Apple Way.

completely satisfying, sometimes it's as little as a few seconds before you're scared or hungry once again.

There is often thunder. There is often lightning. There are sometimes little weird effects, hints and shadows of the Outside. It sometimes blurs a bit into the corruption or ritual scenes that we'll talk about more below.

Mostly there's just this awful intensification of Murphy's Law; where you know you're being irrational, and you expect to stop being irrational as soon as you just get this one thing done, this one step of your plan—but you can't get there. You just have to find this one book that you mislaid, and then you'll stop and take stock of whether you're worrying about losing things too much. You just have to deal with this one spider that's got into your house. You just have to get this one meal tasting right. You just have to figure out what's wrong with this one month of your household finances. You just have to finish this one letter. You just have to talk yourself out of being scared. But it's further away than you think, or you're not as lucky as you can expect; it's always drifting malevolently further and further out of reach. You can't finish that letter. The spider gets away from you and now it's hiding somewhere and you don't know where. You can't find the book, it won't turn up again. You can't get the meal tasting right.

It's exhausting and horrible and in the end I think it drives you to collapse.

Eventually you'll give up and you'll go out. You'll go out and be *among Fortitude*, and it will slowly soothe you. Or you will find someone, or they will find you, to be your pillar, your anchor, to connect you to peace and serenity again. Or you'll just slump, fall over against the overt, loud sensations of the bookshelf or whatever behind your back and the wood or rugs that are the floor.

Though, it's in the nature of Obsessive Action that before it ends, either as a peak or as a spike after a lull, there'll be one crowning moment of freaking out—one moment of going way over the top—to expunge or express some of the anxiety within.



Obsessive Action

Condition: You're getting really worried or excited about something. It's taking up a larger and larger portion of your character's thoughts.

Action:

- Tip over the edge into obsession; or,
- Just... kind of short out and shut down mentally. You're done.

As an optional rule, you can get a second group XP from this when someone else emotes their reaction to your going over the top—when your frenzy is interrupted, or possibly *not* interrupted, by someone expressing their worry, fear, amusement, or whatever at your obsession.

Outside-Dust Poisoning



Obsessive Action

Outside-dust's that way too. That's a lot of why I've talked about Obsessive Action. The dust gets you into an Obsessive frame of mind.

That's what this bit's about—

About what happens if you get a toxic dose of the substance of chaos, if your dreams or soul are overloaded with the Outside or if you're over-exposed acutely or habitually to its dust. About what it does to you if you get a face-full of Outside dust while trying to dump it out after sweeping; or if you try to homebrew Old Indescribable and add way too much of the particulate essence of chaos; or even if you just forget to empty out your dreamcatchers during an extended stay down by the docks.

When you're exposed to the Outside, when too much of it gets in you...

Things stop making sense.

It's a lot like you're suddenly out of your element. Like suddenly,

- everyone's expecting things from you that you don't know how to do;
- you suddenly feel like you don't know where you are;
- there's something you have to tell someone but you can't figure out how to say it;
- there's something you've forgotten, you can't figure out how to recall it; *or*
- there's something wrong, it's *important*, but you can't pinpoint what it is.

Like

- you're suddenly in an alien land; like
- you're suddenly missing some key piece of clothing in the company of strangers (and you're not even sure which); or maybe, if you're lucky, like
- you're suddenly on an adventure or a vacation.

Everything that was familiar is suddenly less so.

It's different for everyone and it's different every time but that's the core of it. Things that should be familiar and safe, things that should be ordinary and sensible, don't feel familiar and safe any more. They don't feel ordinary and sensible any longer.

And you get worked up over this. You always get worked up over this. You can't help it, if the dust is in you. You get worked up. If you're *lucky*, then it's a good thing, like, you feel *excited*, *exalted*, *pleased as punch* by this, like the world is suddenly amazing.[47] Most of the time it's more like having an impending test in a subject you just can't seem to understand.

Sleep Deprivation

If Outside toxicity goes on long enough—if it's a severe dose, an untreated dose, or a slow accumulation—it'll start leaking into your dreams and you'll have nightmares and you won't get rest. You won't get the *effect* of rest, anyway, so you'll have all the usual effects of sleep deprivation:

- Low mental resources—it'll be hard to do two actions at once.[48]
- You'll be clumsy.
- You'll be weary.
- You'll feel uncertain about what you're doing.
- Hyperfocus.
- There's dissociation.
- Hallucinations.
- And sensory processing issues.
- Feverish communication style. I mean, you'll have one. Right?

47 *It is luck, too, by the way; it's tempting to blame it on personality, and in fact personality type will bias this a lot, but I've seen people have both reactions, even in a relatively short time frame, so not about, or at least not entirely about, how you think or who you are. It's some kind of chaotic fork process, it's about luck and circumstances, instead.*

48 *The action rules probably break if you actually limit yourself to one action at a time, but assume that that's basically what it feels like—that you've got to focus on one thing because if you focus on a second thing then you lose track of the first.*

Disconnection from Physics

Then you start to lose track of ordinary norms. You start to get weird ideas in your head about how the world works. Usually this manifests as a small-scale superstition, notion, or rule—like, believing that it's really important that you keep things in groups of eight, or that if you rub your nose hard enough then whatever you're looking at will float off the ground. Your brain will do what it can to fit this into your worldview—

I remember one time *realizing* that I hadn't cleaned the dreamcatchers, *knowing* that that was why I felt it was so important to go back and forth a few times whenever passing through a doorway, but realizing that I could probably put so much stress on my brain if I didn't, what with the accumulation of Outside toxicity, that I'd have a brain hemorrhage if I didn't.

That's not what happens, by the way. That's not a thing that the dust does. It can't happen. Or, well—

Let's say that it never *has* happened to anyone, at least.

The reason that I can't tell you outright that it definitely *won't* happen is that *sometimes*—about one case in ten? Twenty?—the stuff that you fret about actually starts happening. *Something* actually starts happening. Your delusion bleeds through into the world. Or possibly it's not a delusion at all, possibly it's an *enchantment*, and it just behaves kind of like a delusion would.[49]

These delusions usually run on dream rules, which means that if my brain *had* "hemorrhaged," I would have gotten dizzy and bled from my nose and ears and passed out, but been fine, because I don't actually know how a brain hemorrhage works. And in fact the biggest feature would probably have been someone pointing and yelling something like, "That girl! Her brain! It's hemorrhaging! Get her to the hospital. Stat!"

Endgame

So you get worked up. And over time, after each or really *for* each new Obsessive Action, you get more and more worked up, more feverish, more locked into these a-rational trains of thought. Eventually it reaches a pitch of completely goofy or terrifying, and then it goes completely over the top.

The big risk at this point is that you'll do something stupid or damaging. You're unlikely to do anything actually *wrong*—it messes your information processing, not your moral sense—but you might do something profoundly *dumb*.

The next biggest risk is that you'll get physically drawn into the Outside.

Or—

Not *drawn*, really. You don't teleport or anything. But there's a risk when you're walking around not sure where you are, when you're walking around *feeling* like you don't know where you are, that you'll turn a corner that isn't there and wander off into the chaos. If you were hypersaturated with the stuff the room you're in might even fall into a sudden sinkhole of the place.

Outside-Dust Treatment



Shared Action or Adversity

Medical detox for Outside dust is more dangerous than the stuff itself is—a mis-administered antivenin can *crystallize your blood*, and having a Sosunov priest or shrine maiden purify the stuff while it's inside you will have you throwing up glitter for days—so the normal treatment is a hot drink, bed rest, and a friend or family member watching over you. If you have some sort of systemic issue keeping you from processing it—with your kidneys? I guess?—then convalescence on Little Island is recommended; something about the place is a sovereign tonic for dust-dreams, which means that at least you'll get some rest.

If you're forced to use a painful or difficult treatment, that might be more like Adversity than Shared Action. Things are terrible and awful. Play up that awfulness. Your suffering might not even give the group XP!

49 The difference is that enchantments aren't personalized to your pre-existing concepts like delusions are.



3

Little Island

If you're sick, you might consider a little time on Little Island—a restful storybook island near the middle of Big Lake.

Fluffy sheep dot its green hills. Clouds float across its bright blue sky. There are rumors of mermaids off its shore; wind spirits play; the place is beautiful; and nothing ever changes there, well, hardly anything changes, it's the same as it ever was, just like it's always been. People grow their grapes and catch their fish and tend their sheep, there, on the Little Island in Big Lake.

At its heart is a temple to Jade Irinka, who is dead, and who before her death was honored as the goddess of the sun.

Little Island Properties

- Things can't change before they're ready.
- Things must show their true natures.
- Things can't lie.
- Things must be beautiful.
- The sun must shine brightly.
- You can never experience the night

A Quick Refresher on Skills

You'll find the actual rules on Skills in **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine**. For now, here's what you need to know.

In play, the players will add [their Skill + spent Will] to form Intentions with a given numeric rating. They'll spend 0, 1, 2, 4, or 8 Will on any given Intention. They'll have up to two Intentions going at any given time, and that's what lets them actually *do* stuff. After subtracting any "Obstacle" that gets in their way, they'll get results like:

0. it doesn't really help anything
1. at least they made themselves feel happy/competent/at peace/whatever
2. something actually definitely happens
3. they perform the task properly
4. they perform the task effectively
5. they perform the task productively
6. they're pretty awesome
7. it's super-effective!
8. it's extremely productive.
9. it's the right thing to do, for some nebulous meaning of "right."

When they're done, if they spent Will on an Intention and succeeded or failed, they get 1 Will back. If the Intention just kind of petered out, they don't get it back at all.

If you want a Skill that lets you cheat at the world, doing things you really oughtn't be able to do, then you can designate that Skill as a "magical Skill," and it'll be better at letting you do that. If you want a Skill that makes you unworldly, inhuman, but also just plain better, you can designate it as a "Superior Skill." Superior Skills *tend* to give you an edge, or "Edge," when you use them, which is sort of like an Obstacle when it comes to beating you.

Intentions go away, and the pool of Will refreshes, at each fresh Sunday's dawn.

The Seasons

Fortitude is a slow and measured place, and it tends to bring both visitors and residents into its own pace. You'll mark out events in terms of passing days and weeks instead of hours; when you get old enough, or settled enough, you might even think most comfortably of time in terms of whole seasons in a go. It's OK to worry about what you're doing now, or a few moments from now, or next week, but trying to plan out or think out how to spend every little hour in between risks losing sight of the bigger picture and making yourself stressed.

Accordingly we're going to ask you to think of your life in Fortitude mostly in terms of weeks, months, and seasons. I don't want you to feel the need to rush, to try to accomplish everything immediately or in a single day; so, many tasks will only *allow* you to make progress on them a few times a week, or even a few times a season. Sure, there are obviously *some* things you can do in an arbitrarily fast hurry (c.f. the three-second shower, or losing at Jenga). And adventures and other dramatic things take up whatever time they take, of course, and at whatever pace you need. In fact you'll be allowed to *play* at any time or pace you want: there's nothing stopping you from spending any number of sessions on a single week if that's the way play takes you—

But there are certain formal actions that I'll require a more measured pace for; things you'll only do once or twice a week, like pick up bonus XP or recover "Will." Ideally that's going to influence how you handle everything else.

I want to take a moment below to talk about getting things done in play—about what you can do in a week, about what actually breaks time down into weekly units in these rules.

And then, when I've done that, I want to talk for a while about the seasonal calendar, to give you a sense of what *happens* over all those weeks of play. It's not as simple as just doing your thing over and over again until you're done with it—the world has its cycles, and every few weeks there's probably *something*, something Fortitude-wide, that is going on.

That's what this section, broadly speaking, is about.

Will, XP, and Time

So, when you're facing your task list and thinking about the things you must get done, you'll have a certain natural and trained aptitude for each of them—for, well, just about anything that you'd want or need to do.

This'll be represented by your **Skills** (pg. 19, pg. 180).

And as a core incentive for thinking of and scheduling your life in terms of weeks, you'll have a certain amount of extra will, energy, and ability that you can add to that every week—a certain finite reservoir of cope, hope, energy, optimism, stick-to-it-iveness, perseverance, and engagement. A weekly stash of *get-stuff-done*, in short, of time and additional ability, which we'll give to you every Sunday's dawn as an 8-point pool of **Will.**

If you go around trying to top yourself on everything you're doing, from breakfast to the first chores of the day on, you'll run out of cope by mid-week; if you take things slowly and properly, as a Fortitude person should, 8 Will should let you get plenty of living done.

So you can look at each week—at each one-week chapter of your life—as

- a pool of 8 Will, to help you get things done;
- a probable task list;
- a self-contained unit of your life;
- a possible setting for one of Fortitude's holidays;
- 2-3 chances to earn XP for the group; *and*
- (though I haven't really talked about this since the main **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** RPG) a chance to earn 1 XP towards each of certain "quests."

Each Sunday's dawn is thus like taking a new breath: you gain new power to get things done, and a few new options appear for things to do.

Let's look around and see what might be going on in the world around you over the course of 52 weeks.

Spring A CALENDAR OF OBSERVANCES AND EVENTS

1st Week:	2nd Week:	3rd Week: Spring Vacation Begins
4th Week: Spring Vacation Continues **Holiday:** Sorrow's Week	5th Week: Spring Vacation Continues **XP Bonus:** Flower viewing festival	6th Week: Last Week of Spring Vacation
7th Week: School Begins **Holiday:** Easter **Now in Season:** Pineapple	8th Week: **Now in Season:** Figs	9th Week: **XP Bonus (Kids Only):** Children's Day
10th Week: **Holiday:** Celdinar Day **Now in Season:** Raspberries	11th Week:	12th Week:
13th Week:		

Sorrows' Week



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

In the fourth week of spring, "Sorrows' Week," Fortitude mourns the angel of the sun.

Her name was Jade Irinka.

Not all that long ago—perhaps in your lifetime; definitely in your parents'—a man on a white horse rode out across the sky of Fortitude, drew his black bow, and shot her from the sky. Jade died; the sun died; and for a short period the world was entirely without a sun. Luckily a new sun kindled into being.

It wasn't supposed to. That's not how the world *operates.* But it did.

This bit's about the celebration that honors Jade.

The entire week is given over to the ritual of mourning. Fortitude dedicates itself to remembering Jade both as a person, for she was a person, and as a goddess. This holiday is a time to reflect upon the death of the sun and on the miracle of the sun's rebirth. People will wear grey and mourning white—the guy who shot her wears black, so Western-style mourning black would be inappropriate—and many people dangle mourning chimes from their wrists. Flowers and a sort of hanging potpourri are put about the main paths. The nights are left mostly dark, like Fridays in a house observing Shabbat. People hang small red pouches about which represent the dying sun; they might watch both sunsets and sunrises in a dish of water. Goldfish-scooping is a thing (for some reason) but other than that there aren't many festive elements—it's a very quiet, restrained time.

On the fifth day there are fires; incense is burned and sent after Jade Irinka.

At several points during the week there are major dances and performances. These aren't really for enjoyment but more for expiation of emotion; they have what feels like a dervish edge.

What do you do during this celebration? Do you...

- keep vigil as the sun rises, watching its reflection in a bowl?
- talk to your elders about Jade Irinka and history?
- walk along the scented streets and think and feel things quietly?
- mostly ignore it because you don't really get it?
- daydream about Jade as a ghost, or about heroically interceding to save her?
- listen to seasonal music?
- draw pictures of the death and rebirth of the sun?
- use the time to get studying or chores done, but take a moment now and then to contemplate?
- something else?

Empathy for the Sun



Adversity

It's not a Pastoral action so this isn't something that the game will push you towards—but sometimes, for some people, the celebration isn't comfortable at all. It's a terrifying, harrowing experience.

It usually takes some level of outside influence—you've failed to clean your dream-catchers so there's Outside dust in your dreams, or you've been spending a lot of time with Horizon creatures like the vampires (or maybe you *are* a vampire, for all I know), or you've been visiting Bluebell Park, or staring out at Big Lake a lot, or something. Something unsettled you.

And when the celebration starts it hits you too hard.

You feel it all.

Each sunset things are darker for you. You feel the oncoming night like an arrow in your heart. The constant repetition of the theme that not all that long ago somebody *shot the sun* makes you feel like at any moment, your body could be killed and left to bleed out into the cold; that your mind and life could be interrupted, like a snuffed-out flame; that everything that was bright and clean and beautiful could go away and turn into a stuttering, awful mess of disjoint sensation.



It gets hard to breathe when you think about it. You start feeling pains and chills.

The dances and other formal elements are really the worst of it. You watch the ritual re-enactments—I mean, that's mostly what the dances and performances *are*, or express anyway, even the ones where it's all completely shrouded in symbolism—and your heart beats and your vision gets all clouded with darkness and you can't orient, you can't understand what's happening to you, you can hardly breathe, your attention is totally fixated on the dance, and then the arrow, then the arrow, then the spreading blood—

Listen.

Jade was a person, not just the sun. She loved her life. She was an angel so maybe she loved it in a fierce and distant and alien manner but she was about *love of being*, she was a celebratory figure, a joy, a giver of light and life, and then she was murdered by this guy.

Some say it was the Devil. Some say it was the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy, which would be really bad in a lot of ways because he was her lover. Some say it was Yi the Archer, which is even worse, because it implies that Heaven (including her own people) is still in the business of sending out assassins to kill off suns.

It can be too much. Sometimes it's just too much. It can be too big for you. Maybe it's empathy, maybe it's spiritual significance, but it just overwhelms you, and it gets worse and worse until you break.

Sometimes there's something good after that. Sometimes the worst of it is on the fourth day, and the incense burning on the fifth day helps you out. Sometimes you'll get the chance to work through some other, previous personal issue during all this by walking along the sweetly-scented roads in darkness and realizing that it's not all that bad; or realizing, amidst that darkness, how much light the moon and stars and dim and scattered house-lights still provide. Sometimes it'll matter, on the seventh or eighth day if not the days before, that the sun comes up again.

There's nothing wrong with feeling it that hard. It's a way of honoring her, really, and Jade Irinka deserved that honor, from everything I know.

Sorrow's Week as Foreshadowing



Foreshadowing

If you get really absorbed in the celebration—

If you're paying so much attention that it makes the HG start making up a bunch of extra details, or your character is paying so much attention that *you* do, and particularly to a performance or a dance—

That tends to be foreshadowing.

Symbolically, the death and rebirth of the sun can stand in for just about any dark time, ended by any miracle; or a change in understanding; fear, and its ending; or more generally darkness or lostness turned through hope or patience or miracle into light or being found. So the foreshadowing of such a celebration presages a dark time in your life and its ending, or some connection between your life and the story of the sun.

Flower-Viewing Festival



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

The flower-viewing festival, normally in the fifth week of spring, offers a special opportunity—each PC can earn a bonus XP for the group with an XP Action relating to this festival, and it doesn't count against the normal limit of two per week.

Do you...

- enjoy a picnic in the park?
- visit one of the more boisterous parties?
- take a ceremonial walk among flowering trees and flower beds with your friends?
- huddle sadly under an umbrella or behind a rain-streaked window, staring at the flowers that you wanted to get out and see?
- sing silly, traditional songs?
- stare at the pretty flowers, say, "ooh, flowers," and then not really know what you're supposed to do next?

That's OK! Any of these can earn XP, if you find someone to do them with. (Or if you can't, and pick up some **Isolation** instead.)



Easter



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, Foreshadowing, or Slice of Life

Easter is something of a covert holiday in Fortitude; it slips in, as if ashamed to remind us but intent on mentioning that on a certain day (so says the Christian Church) Christ died, and not long after rose again. It feels strange, I think, in a Town still dealing with the death and incomplete resurrection of a later holy spirit; in a Town where Christian observance is worked deeply into the origins of the culture but not into its modern practice.

Still, it happens; it is not forgotten; around the sixth or seventh week of spring Lent fades into Easter's Holy Week.

Lazarus Saturday

On Lazarus Saturday, the Church commemorates Christ's resurrection of Lazarus of Bethany, focusing on it as a presaging of Christ's resurrection and as a study of how he was both human and God. It's traditional to eat caviar and to dress the church in green.

You'll probably only notice this if you're Christian; Fortitude as a whole doesn't really care.

Willow Sunday

Willow Sunday is a bit more popular. Children like to tap one another with the willow branches even if they're not sure whether they're re-enacting Christ's scourging or his triumphs; sometimes they'll wear masks and tap adults, which is supposed to be kind of blessing for both sides. Even non-Christians often have a sense that *something is happening*, and many Christians who are not otherwise heavily observant will attend Church on this day. There is sometimes a small but ornate procession through the streets.

Services focus principally on Christ's triumphal entrance into Jerusalem.



Arcadia

Town's shopping district, **Arcadia**, is a fast-paced whirl of fun, materialism, and delight. It's the place to go for new books, comics, games, toys, and clothes, not to mention food and fun. It's got karaoke, miniature golf, skate parks, regular parks, and an active flea market, as well as Town's only serious electronics depot, its largest arcade, most of the best pancake and noodle shops, and *the* best pie and meat bun shops, Mrs. Porridge's and the Golden Phoenix Bun Shop respectively, in Town. It's designed to be the kind of place you can lose endless hours to whether you have a few coins in your pocket or a fresh week's allowance or paycheck to spend.

Most of the time when characters visit Arcadia they'll either take a whirlwind trip through vistas of fun and somewhat materialistic joy or they'll settle down in some park, shop, or restaurant for a meal with their friends. It's a good place for bonding experiences, for showing off how your character does things, and, of course, for getting overly distracted by possessions of various sorts.

Arcadia is where most of Town's *youkai* live—not that there are terribly many, of course, but the few that there are mostly live here. It's the kind of place where fox-spirits sometimes dally with humans, umbrellas and old kites sometimes turn into monsters, and fox-people, tree-spirits, and teenagers meet up on the weekends to mill, dance, read books, listen to music, and dress up in cosplay or visual kei fashions.

The flower-viewing festival represents a kind of incursion of Arcadia onto Fortitude; for this one day, there are regular outbreaks of parties, shopping, and festival that operate on Arcadia's Region Properties and not on Fortitude's own.

Arcadia Properties

- Time must pass quickly, except during meals.
- You must spend more than you expected.
- You must have a good time.
- You must be kind to others.
- You must want things you didn't get.
- Boys must carry packages for girls.
- Stray cats must be fed.
- Nobody can experience wondering where money or goods actually come from.

Holy and Great Monday

Services on Great Monday celebrate Christ's withering of a fruitless fig tree. A fig tree offers him no fruit, he curses it, and it withers; from this one may understand the efficacy of prayer.

Fortitude does have fig trees, and they grow reasonably well, but they're usually not in season until a week or two after Easter. Even then it's a smallish "breba" crop before the main harvest in summer. Naturally children spend a lot of time re-enacting the cursing of the fig tree.

The wishing power of the heart—the power of a person's dreams and wishes to make things happen—is a big theme in **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine.** This absolutely wasn't what Jesus was talking about, but it will potentially make this service resonate on a level more mystical than theological with some PCs.

Holy and Great Tuesday

On Great Tuesday, most Churches teach the parable of the ten virgins, thus: ten virgins went to meet their bridegroom for a wedding feast. All brought lamps to wait for his arrival; five were wise and brought extra oil as well. The bridegroom delayed; they slumbered; at midnight, they were awakened by a cry that the bridegroom was coming. The five that had brought oil woke their lamps. The other five asked them for oil, but the wise virgins rebuffed them, worrying that there wouldn't be enough and sending them out to buy oil at the market. While they were gone, the bridegroom arrived, brought the five wise virgins in to the wedding feast, and shut and locked the door, saying, when the others returned and clamored to be let inside, "Surely I do not know you."[50]

I think there's actually some meat in this as the central metaphor for a story arc, so consider stopping by a church to hear the service on this day and getting your Easter foreshadowing on.

Other Holy and Great Days

On Great Wednesday is sung the Hymn of Kassiani, a demanding and emotional composition that many attend Church just to hear. The focus of the day is on Christ's impending death after his follower Judas Iscariot sold him out; the hymn itself speaks of a "sinful" woman who washes Christ's feet before his crucifixion.

Great Thursday sees the consecration of the "chrism," the oil of anointing, with which faithful are inducted into the Church; it also often sees a special anointing of even the established flock. The service focuses on Christ's last supper with his apostles before crucifixion and his commandment to "love one another."

On Great Friday there is remembrance of how Christ—according to the Christian faith, the incarnate son of God—allowed himself to be crucified, that humanity could be freed from the original and innate burden of its sins. On this day the priest will dress in mourning black. Great Friday is a fast day; the faithful often refuse to eat anything at all.

On Holy and Great Saturday the focus is on how Christ descends into Hell to free the souls held captive there, before his impending resurrection. The Church is very clear that this is Hell or Hades but parents sometimes refer instead to the Bleak Academy when telling the story to a child.

50 The trappings of this story are probably one of the reasons why Easter is ashamed of itself, but you've got to admit it's got a great narrative structure.



The Bleak Academy

Beyond the furthest reaches of the Outside there is a Bleak Academy.

Some say that its existence is the most monstrous of crimes—that it stands between us and paradise. Others say that it is a thing from which paradise, nirvana, and hope suspire. Which is true, I do not know.

They say that if you want to be more than what you are, you may go to the Bleak Academy.

Maybe they'll help you. Maybe they'll kill you. Maybe they'll cut you open and pour out worms into your head.

Bleak Academy Properties

- Here is the True Thing, beyond perception.
- Here the red world and the falling stars.
- Here is the dream that dreams do dream of.
- Here is the nightmare that nightmares hath.
- Here the wish that is beyond wishing.
- Here is the thing beyond the world; the Bleak Academy, that is beyond the end of life.



Easter

This is the first holiday since Willow Sunday (with the possible exception of Wednesday's Hymn) that Fortitude as a whole really notices.

On Easter Sunday and Easter Monday, residents eat red-dyed eggs, chocolates, and easter breads. There are easter egg hunts and blessings; in some cases the eggs are offered to the dead. If an easter egg turns out to be hollow when cracked open, even the most atheistic neighbor is prone to exclaim, "Christ is risen!" and, if they are of the *youkai*, turn immediately to smoke and fly away.[51]

Children's Day



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

This holiday celebrates the happiness of children and expresses gratitude towards mothers. Elementary and middle schools let out for the day. People fly carp and blackberry banners and eat mochi and other treats.

Do you...

- wrangle a kid or two on a fun excursion through Fortitude?
- take a bath sprinkled with iris leaves and roots for good luck?
- savor a delicious rice cake?
- savor far too *many* delicious rice cakes?
- try a Watanabe candy (pg. 80) for the first time?
- participate in an event highlighting children, like a play or music recital?
- go up on the roof to help put up streamers?
- meet a friend in some park?
- spend your allowance on some special treat?
- disdain all of this because you're really too old and dignified for children's day, but make sure that that disdain is expressed while out and about having fun with friends and eating delicious rice cakes that you're really too old for?

51 This hasn't happened for a long time, but Town records suggest that the last time it happened, they landed none the worse for their experience on a tree branch in the Walking Fields.

Young PCs and Caretaker PCs

Is your PC basically a kid in the 2-12 human years' range? Or a regular caretaker for someone who is?[52]

Then you've got another special opportunity here—

On Children's Day, normally in the ninth week of spring, each young PC and each PC who regularly watches over a young child can earn a bonus XP for the group with an XP Action relating to this festival, and it doesn't count against the normal limit of two per week.

Cheated of Your Childhood

As a special rule, if you're not a child but were somehow robbed of your childhood—you were magically aged, born full-grown, locked in a cellar or stranded on an island while growing up, or whatever—you can earn one bonus XP for the group by doing something kind of goofily indicative of that, like sneaking off at midday to try one of the celebration's mochi while sitting under a tree, discovering that it's really good, and having a kid giggle at your expression. Or flying a little carp streamer for yourself.

Up to one PC can earn this bonus in any given year.

Celdinar Day



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

"Celdinar Day," normally falling in the 10th week of spring, is a raucous evil-banishing festival focusing on the folly of Mayor Celdinar. He was a vampire who crossed Big Lake and found the then-sunless Town. He dreamed of building a new London there, a *Night London*, and bringing an age of progress and prosperity to it under the vampires' thumb.

It worked, for a while.

The vampire's Night London grew and zeppelins filled the skies. Humans swarmed and vampires ruled and smoke billowed across the land. Factories pumped out machinery; tens of thousands purchased cars. The Mayor he wore top hat and tails and he strutted like a lord.

Then the gods of dream and nightmare turned on him—

Or so the story goes.

An earthquake shattered the urban heart of Town; the great sprawl of Night London became *accursed* and *forsaken;* the fire of "progress" dwindled and faded and it was lost, and still Alexandrel Celdinar might have recovered, only, not long after, the sun followed him to Town.

The first sunrise over Town marked an end to the one-time Mayor's dreams.

On Celdinar Day, people dress up as Mayor Celdinar and get chased by laughing children through the streets. People bake and eat zeppelin-shaped cookies, as well as drinking honeyed raspberry cider and eating raisins, dried apples, and cheese. There are charity and recycling drives. There is a sacred dance where "the sun" chastises "the demons of progress." It's all very good-natured and happy; Alexandrel himself even shows up now and again in his tails and top-hat and puts up with children chasing him around and hitting him with sun-shaped balloon-sticks.

I...

I *think* this is because he is a sucker for children, no pun intended, and is either a conscious comedian or an incredibly good sport. Like, he can't rule Night London, but he *can* be a kind of trickster Santa Claus, a

52 *1000-year-old horrors who look, think, and act like 9-year-old kids: you count. 13-year-olds who mostly socialize with 12-year-olds: you count. Rats before your growth spurt: you count.*

...people who supernaturally appeared as fully mature adults, even if it was only 2-12 years ago? You don't count!

beloved demon, and take a kind of reverse-psychology credit for the state of things, and so he does.

It probably helps that the sun doesn't actually hurt him, particularly if he's got his top-hat on; he's strong enough that it just weakens him instead of setting him on fire.

What do you do during this celebration?

Do you...

- dress up as Mayor Celdinar?
- make cookies?
- shop?
- admire the sacred dances?
- participate in a sacred dance?
- enjoy the festivities a bit in the evenings but mostly just go about your life?
- sit on the edge of a rooftop and think deep thoughts about progress, tradition, and zeppelins?
- daydream about being a zeppelin pilot?
- sort out some stuff to give to charity?
- drink pillow-teeth tea with a vampire friend?
- make a cool zeppelin-shaped kite or remote-controlled toy?
- visit a shrine to burn offerings for good luck, hang out with a friend, and get a fortune?
- drink honeyed raspberry cider?
- …or something else?

Stories of the Old Days



Foreshadowing

It's pretty common to tell and listen to stories of the old days around this time—after all, everyone's mind is on Night London and the Celdinar Mayoralty and the short industrial time of Town.

Some things to keep in mind when telling or coming up with these stories—

- People talk about this as if it was practically once-upon-a-time, but I think it was roughly 1800s Gregorian.
- Deviant steampunk science was/is a thing—something about Town facilitates it.
- "The god of dreams" and "the god of nightmares" are important figures.
- Town was a *youkai* Town back then. It wasn't a human place.

Let me slip out of the bulleted list to talk about that last one.

What I mean is, before the Celdinar Mayoralty, the *youkai* dominated Town—it wasn't a human place but rather a place of demons, monsters, spirits, giants, and magicians. Humans were nothing more than a dingy little settlement (that is to say, Fortitude) that the *youkai* allowed its furtive existence and a collection of slaves and servants taken into the manorial *youkai* homes.

It wasn't a terribly harsh rule at this point—

If it had been then I don't think both humans and *youkai* would have survived it.

But it was definitely a *youkai* rule. Juridical power and property rights were vested in supernatural entities and spirits; humans were simply allowed to be around. This was changing, slowly, because humans and *youkai* were interfertile and romantically compatible, but in the early days of the Mayoralty it was the fact of life.

Nor did power pass directly from there into any human hands.

Celdinar's industrial revolution, his vast construction project, and his wholesale import of vampires and humanity left the *youkai* paralyzed with future shock. They couldn't cope. They lost track of what was happening. And while they were flailing around and trying to figure out what was going on, humans stopped thinking of them as feudal masters and started thinking of them as household gods; then as mascots; then as something like their daft but wealthy relatives who couldn't seem to keep up with the times. The *youkai* lost their power, and the vampires and the practitioners of deviant science stepped up to fill their role. Town's aesthetic slid towards Victorian Gothic; Mayor Celdinar was as a King.

Only when the dust cleared after that first sunrise—

Only when the earthquake had humbled nightmare's scientists, as if by the hand of God; only when the sun had burned dozens of vampires and sent the rest scurrying into hiding; only when Night London was abandoned, to later be resettled as Horizon—

Did Town actually enter a human age.

Summer A CALENDAR OF OBSERVANCES AND EVENTS

1st Week: Now in Season: Blackberries	2nd Week:	3rd Week: Now in Season: Sandhopper Soup (pg. 168)
4th Week:	5th Week: Now in Season: Peaches, Blueberries XP Bonus: Star Festival	6th Week: Holiday: Landing Day
7th Week:	8th Week:	9th Week: Summer Vacation Begins Holiday: Spirit-Honoring Day
10th Week: Summer Vacation Continues XP Bonus: Harvest Festival	11th Week: Summer Vacation Continues XP Bonus: Apple Festival	12th Week: Summer Vacation Continues
13th Week: Last Week of Summer Vacation		

The Star Festival



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

The Star Festival, normally in the fifth week of summer, offers a special opportunity—each PC can earn a bonus XP for the group with an XP Action relating to this festival, and it doesn't count against the normal limit of two per week.

For the Star Festival, people write their wishes on small pieces of paper and hang them and other decorations from roofs and trees—most typically bamboo. Fireworks, festival accoutrements like food stalls and carnival games, specially decorated clothing such as light night-sky robes, and romantic walks are major features.

What do you do during this celebration? Do you...

- admit privately to someone what you've wished for?
- have a romantic walk?
- poke about Town looking for something cool?
- keep changing your hung wish out for something else?
- tailor and adjust your robes?
- play carnival games?
- play other games with friends?
- laugh with friends while eating your favorite foods?
- admire the fireworks?
- make friends with a star spirit?
- drink festival iced tea?

The Starry Fields

The starry fields are the backdrop of the sky. There, if you could get there, the stars would seem to be mutable fires—they may flit about in the shapes of fireflies, ravel themselves out to comet-tail dragons of argent fire, fluff out like sheep when they munch upon the local grass and dandelions, or make themselves over as pale and glowing children or adults. The last is difficult for them: to condense their fluttery consciousness into the solidity of an adult mind costs them centuries or millennia of life, and can kill them in a matter of days, and so it is for them a very solemn and special thing.

Roaming the fields of stars are the great constellations too; they may, unlike the individual stars, become entirely solid creatures—or, at least, as apparently solid as any Mystery. They are not *the visible constellations* but *the order of things, which causes a constellation to be*, halfway between stars and shepherds, and their physical form is not an assemblage of component stars but a locus for their guiding consciousness.

Lately strange horrors are sometimes seen in the starry fields—scary shadows among the stars.

3

You can't actually get to the starry fields—they're just an idea, a concept, for now, although I will speak more on this point at another time.

You can't get there—but on this one night, they coexist just a little bit with Fortitude. The sparks of light that drift around aren't just the usual wish spirit will-o-wisps of Town but stars, I think; and certainly, at certain moments in the deepness of the night, the Properties of Fortitude give way to the Properties of the starry fields.

- It is a magical summer's night.
- Your emotions are enhanced and overwhelming.
- Your dreams can come true.
- There's no point in hurrying.
- You could stay here forever.
- A terrible beauty must reside in everything, though it may hide beneath the surfaces of things.
- Things change.



Big Decisions



Decisive Action

There's something about the Star Festival that encourages people to take a big step forward in their lives—to make big decisions, chancy decisions, risks, gambles, and hard decisions. In the moments when the stars seem to be drifting around you; in the moments when you're thinking about your wishes, and maybe looking off towards the Lake—

It's like it's all leading somewhere.

It's like you suddenly understand what you have to do.

So the Star Festival is a common time to do things that you were otherwise maybe stalling on doing. It's a time for first kisses and for breaking ground on new projects. It's a time for deciding what you have to do to get your wish and going for it.

Explain or emote what led you here.

Then act.

Landing Day



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

Landing Day, normally in the sixth week of summer, celebrates the human arrival in Town. There are bonfires; things kind of like "flags" of rough and rough-cut cloth are used as streamers or curtains; there are re-enactments with a small regatta-like arrival of whatever's available sailing in; and lots of people will carry an iron nail in their pocket for the day.

This isn't a big holiday, really. In American terms it's like St. Patrick's Day or Earth Day—

Everyone knows about it, you can usually tell that it's going on, but it's not a core cultural holiday so much as a neat event. I don't know *why* that's the case, but I suspect making a bigger deal of it would be a little too self-aggrandizing for Fortitude. It's the cultural consensus that it's important to remember how people came across Big Lake and found themselves in a land

A Bit of History

In the old days Town was a *youkai* Town. It was a place of giants and monsters, ruled over by the gods of dream and nightmare.

Best-loved of all who lived there were the swan people.

Now when the humans came to Town and settled Fortitude and brought their iron and their crosses with them, the Jotun resolved to destroy them. Humans and *youkai* moved to a condition of war—well, war for the Jotun and participating *youkai*; a desperate struggle to survive, for humankind—

Until one of the swan princes saw and coveted the clothes that Elizaveta, a human, made.

Such was the love the Jotun held for the swan people—such was the love *everyone* had for the swan people, in those days, except perhaps humanity—that the Jotun then stayed their hand, ended the war, and accepted the human presence in Town. Now there are very few of them remaining, outbred a thousandfold by their part-human descendants: these days "Jotun" is more of a cultural identity than anything else, though even a modern Jotun will have some trouble with crosses and iron:

And all for the sake of Elizaveta's needle and a swan prince's love for clothes!

The Idol

The Idol (which is to say, the biggest mega-idol superstar of all the students at Horizon's School) is probably a modern-day swan person—though why a magically lovable swan person should suddenly appear after generations of their being merely "pretty glamorous" is a mystery to me. Perhaps it's not *actually* got to do with the swan people and it's just that the Idol is just. That. Cool.

Vain, maybe. Pretty sleepy. A little patronizing. Self-involved. A bit over-the-top with the fashion, really. There are a few little personality faults. But *still* just. That. Cool. The most beautiful, amazing, perfect, magical, incredible thing you can imagine.

By default this Main Character is either a PC-aged boy named Soun Shounen or his PC-aged sister Soun Shoujo.

Soun Shounen, aka The Idol



of strange wonders—their courage, and the fact that they're your roots, if you live here—but it's a little rude to make too big a *thing* out of it.

Still, this is a good occasion to talk about long voyages; and how the people who came to Fortitude with practically nothing built a happy little Town.

What do you do during this celebration?

Do you...

- admire or participate in the regatta?
- think about Fortitude's history?
- hang out around a bonfire?
- talk with your friends about what it must have been like to stumble on Town, back when people weren't used to Big Lake yet and Town didn't have a sun?
- do your sewing, in honor of Elizaveta? (pg. 193)
- clean away discarded iron nails so that the handful of residents who can't cope with iron don't get sick?
- ignore the whole thing?
- reminisce about how you watched the reenactment once and liked it, but ignore the holiday anyway because you have other stuff to do?

Spirit-Honoring Day



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

Spirit-Honoring Day, normally in the ninth week of summer, is a day for making offerings to the dead. It's a day for tending graves, and hanging lanterns to guide spirits to the living world, and burning or leaving out offerings, and dancing in honor of the dead.

On this day the ghost world is very close. You will see many ghosts—

Faceless, under-drawn forms in elaborate costumes; or, rather, not quite faceless, but each with just an ideograph or a few movable emotion lines upon their otherwise blank face. They will fade into view, walk silently around a corner, and vanish. Some of them may be your ancestors. Others are clearly not.

It would be nice to know who they are exactly or why they come; but the ghost world is not hospitable to those who hunger for such answers as that. It is not generally kind to those who would like to find some ghost, pull on their sleeve, have them turn around, and



know *for sure* that *this* is the parent or the child they had lost; that *this* is the great-grandmother written of in books; that *this* little hopping faceless animal is the rabbit pet you had, that died. If you want that kind of connection it is better made in daylight, with the tombstone—sweep it clean, burn incense or leave it flowers, run your fingers along the stone, and talk to the memory of the ones you've lost.

You can find the ones you've lost inside your memories. You can surely find them there.

The ghost world is not that way.

Ghosts are echoes. On this day, more than any other day, they are present but as echoes; on this day they are masks and faceless. A ghost that you meet on any other day may eventually resolve itself into a person—into someone whose face you can see, whose words you can hear, whose hand you can hold. But on this day the ghosts are the dolls of memory, of your memories and your ancestors'; it is only towards the end of the holiday that the ghosts of *real* people begin to make their way into the world.

Sometimes at midnight they and you are given a few seconds.

Sometimes at midnight you may feel your dead love's hands around your face, or hold the hand of a lost child; curl into the arms of parents you can no longer touch; give a rice cake or a candy to a friend who left you when they died. Sometimes for a few minutes there is sweetness; if you are lucky, if you are blessed, there is such a moment; but then it is time to take down the lanterns, to set them in Twisting River or push them out into Big Lake, to lead the world of ghosts away from the living world again.

Why you should have to do this I do not know.

It is simply what must be done.

There isn't a bonus XP action here—you can ignore the holiday if you like, and if you want to do something ghost-related, you'll have to consciously make time for the dead. That said, I'd recommend it. The living are healthier if we don't forget.

And what do *you* do on this special day?

Do you...

- tend somebody's grave?
  - is it someone you knew really well?
  - is it someone you'd like to have known better?
  - do you have to travel very far to get there?
- burn offerings?
- arrange unburnt offerings on the appropriate shelf of your house's shrine?
- stay out of people's way and try to be good?
- tell stories to a crowd that might or might not have included ghosts?
- have a spooky encounter?
- participate in the dances in honor of the dead?
- watch the dances in honor of the dead?
- walk the streets and think?
- talk to your memory of someone dead, even though they don't show up as a ghost and you can't make it to their grave?
- pray for the dead?
  - at home?
  - in a park?
  - after making a trip to a shrine?
- participate in a choir singing/chanting in honor of the dead?
- meet someone you think might have been a ghost?
- meet a ghost that you think might have been a specific ghost?
- have a chance to reunite with someone important at midnight?
- watch the lanterns as they float down the river or out into the lake?
- sit in a high place somewhere and wonder?
- talk to a ghost you already knew from previous, non-holiday encounters about life and death and what they mean?

Ghosts

Fortitude doesn't have many ghosts.

The rules for Town say that you can see ghosts sometimes. They are hard to see in detail. I think that is why they dress so elaborately for the spirit-honoring festival—it helps you get a better visual on their clothes.

They're ephemeral. They're distanced from you by their nature. They fade in and out and their words are hard to understand. Their faces are usually blank with a few black "emotion" lines on them to help display their moods. However the longer you know a ghost, the more often you see them, and the more realistic their facial features are. Eventually they're just a person who you can interact with normally whom you remember to be a ghost.

There are a ton of them in Horizon, mostly at the School. Fortitude—not so much, except on this one particular night.

The more **Isolation** you have the easier it is for you to interact with ghosts—particularly in an accidental or unwanted fashion, but also in fashions direct, tangible, and sweet. In some sense the trait just tends to pull you away from reality and into the world of ghosts.

3



The Ghost World

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.

I've listed the ghost world's Properties here, but note that they don't intrude on Fortitude's very often—not even on this holiday. Mostly they're just here in case you die for a while or something and find yourself in the world of ghosts.

Ghost World Properties

- 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.

The Guide

an example Imperial miracle

Type: Imperial Miracle
Cost:

- 0 MP—guide a lost spirit home with a lantern from the spirit-honoring festival, 1/year
- 1 MP—guide a lost spirit home a second or later time per year, or without a lantern
- 4 MP—guide a lost spirit home a second or later time per season

Once per year, with a lantern from the spirit-honoring festival (pg. 194), you may invoke **the Guide** and lead a lost spirit home. Name someone that you think is lost; this power guarantees—

- A mechanism for you to reach them, e.g.:
  - a vehicle that will take you to them,
  - a map that will guide you to them,
  - a set of indications that will tell you which way to go when going to them, *or*
  - a magic road that leads to them.
- Enough communication to speak to them and ask them if/where they want to go;
- A way to lead them to whichever is most appropriate of:
  - your home;
  - their home;
  - where they "should" be.

If you don't want to use this power on the festival itself, you must keep at least one festival lantern lit from the festival to the time of invocation; if you fail, then you can't use this power without spending at least 1 MP.

The higher your Arc Trait's rating, the more practical the mechanism that leads you to the lost individual—at an Arc rating of 4-5 you can likely perform this casually, while the HG is encouraged to make Arc 0-2 mechanisms quite baroque.

This is the kind of power you might pick up from the second quest on a miraculous Otherworldly Arc or the fourth quest for a miraculous Shepherd. The HG could even offer a few powers like this from mundane Arcs if they want a mostly but not entirely non-miraculous game.

Gaming Terminology

Miracle—the kinds of things warring gods and demons do. A flare of power rises from the heart and burns its truth into the world.

Imperial Miracle—the kind of thing that world-dreamers, subtle deities, and cosmic principles do. A wish whispers out from the heart to shape the world.

MP—the power source for miracles and Imperial miracles. Sometimes I will speak of this as wish power, "the wishing power of the heart," or "the power of the wishing heart to change what's possible." However for the miracles of the Bleak Academy I suspect it is not something so glad.

The Harvest Festival

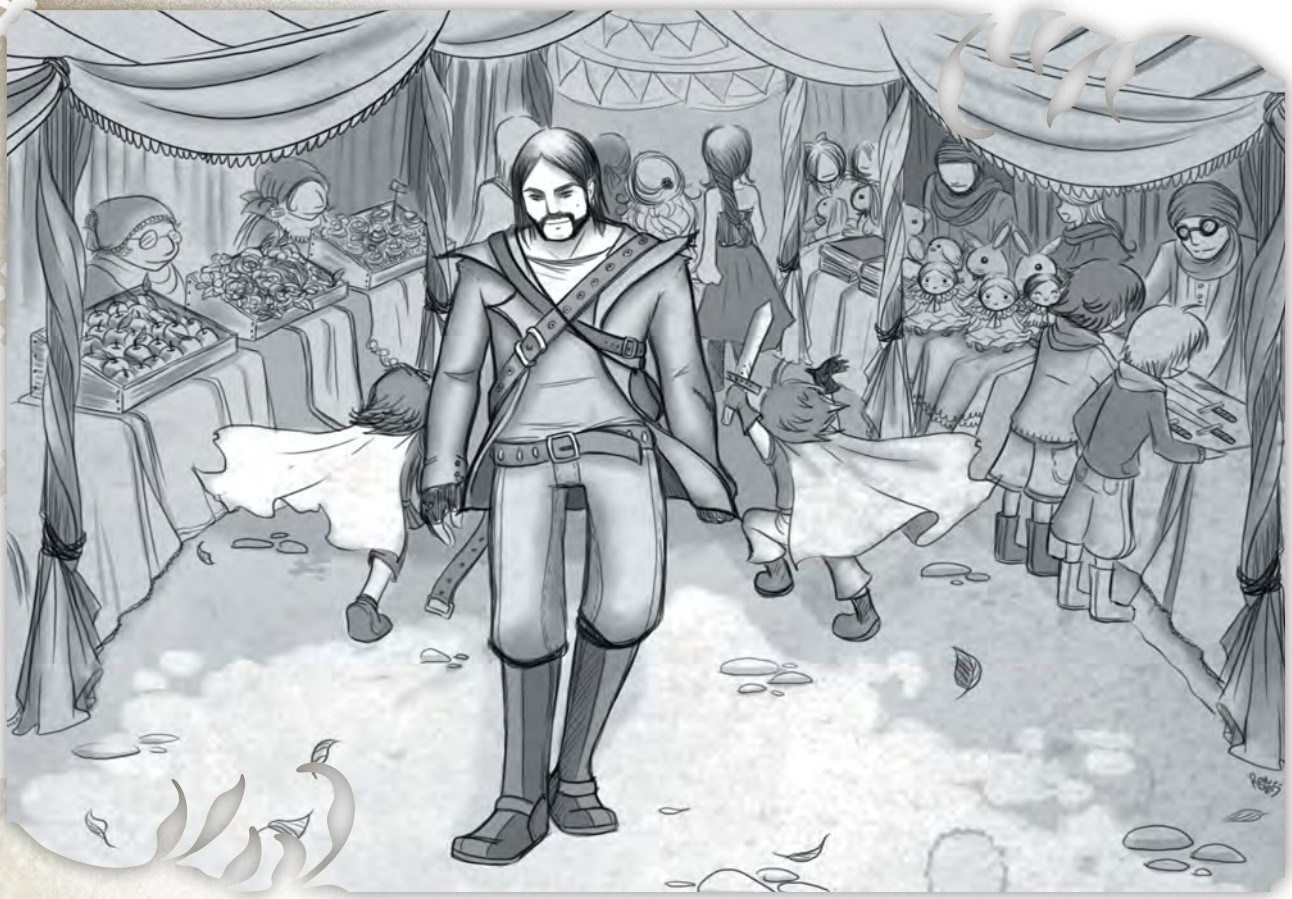


Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

The Harvest Festival, normally in the tenth week of summer, offers a special opportunity—each PC can earn a bonus XP for the group with XP Actions relating to this festival, and it doesn't count against the normal limit of two per week.

Fortitude does have a certain amount of agricultural development—it provides most of its own rice, for instance—but it doesn't really have a *harvest*. I mean, farmers do, but *it* doesn't. Instead, most of this festival is driven by the farmers of the Walking Fields out beyond Horizon, over the western hills. This festival celebrates their harvests of oats, spring wheat, and barley, as well as the increasing availability of their honey.

There's an abundance of food (mostly breads, cakes, cream, and berries); games; races; and general



3

The Harvest

The principal food crops of Town are wheat, corn, soybeans, potatoes, and barley, with rye and beets not far behind. Potatoes are oddly difficult and unruly and have only maintained their prominence owing to their familiarity to the Russian palate; there are claims, though I do not admit to believing them, that given sufficiently lax oversight a pile or field of potatoes will come to life.

Onions, green onions, and leeks—though sometimes almost as suspicious as potatoes—are also grown locally in great quantity, as are peaches, pears, plums, and apples in their season. Fortitude itself has an unexpectedly rich crop of berries and citrus in addition to a certain amount of dragonfruit, pineapple, lychees, and other tropical fruits. Squash is popular in summer dishes, with cabbage, spinach, carrots, celery, and sweet peppers becoming more popular as the year moves on.

Boiling it down: fruit is plentiful, tubers are weird, and there's a whole lot of wheat and corn.

convivial spirit. The festival typically goes on for most of the week, and actually overflows right into and through the next one, but it's not very intense—it's like American Christmas season, I think, where there's this whole block of days where you don't actually *celebrate* Christmas so much as wander around admiring the flavors and decorations of the season and feeling a kind of dissociated holiday spirit. Another point of similarity is that in both the Harvest Festival and American Christmas kids'll run around doing most of their celebrating on their own, but good parents will be sure to come along at *some* point and make a handful of family memories.

So what do you do here?

Do you...

- emote love for these little cakes that are available in harvest season?
- drool over the tasty honey?
- make homemade granola?
- make yourself a grain, berry, or flower crown and wear it about town?
- participate in the games?
- participate in the races?
- wander around looking for cool decorations and events?

- drink and get giggly?
  - as a kid who probably shouldn't do that?
  - as an adult who totally could?
- help transport the food in?
- cook tasty stuff and sell it at a stall?
- set off some fireworks even though they have nothing to do with this celebration?
- …something else?

The Apple Festival



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

Apples become plentiful a little later on—sometimes a little after the main harvest festival finishes, sometimes towards its end. There's going to be a special day set aside in celebration of apples, either way, with apple jellies, apple pancakes, apple syrup, candied apples, fried apples, apple bobbing, apple blessing[53], and, of course, the eating of apples.

The apple festival is another festival offering a bonus XP opportunity.

That is, in the eleventh week of summer, each PC can earn a bonus XP for the group with apple-festival-related XP Actions. In fact, you don't even have to focus on apples—if you'd rather, you can have another harvest-festival-related action instead!

53 What could be more important than taking your apples to the local priest to get his blessing?

Autumn A calendar of observances and events

1st Week: School Begins	2nd Week:	3rd Week: XP Bonus (Elders Only): Respect the Elderly Day
4th Week:	5th Week:	6th Week:
7th Week:	8th Week: Holiday: Halloween	9th Week:
10th Week:	11th Week: XP Bonus (Very Limited): Shichi-Go-San Now in Season: Tangerines	12th Week:
13th Week:		

Respect for the Elderly Day



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

In the third week of fall Fortitude celebrates its elderly citizens—honoring them for their long life and their accomplishments over its course. The community celebrates the most impressive of its older members, children make gifts for their grandparents and the local elderly, and various ceremonies and programs honor the aged. Symbols of longevity are popular, such as butterflies, turtles, and cranes. The celebration considers age as relative to lifespan rather than in absolute years, so an elderly rat of seven or ten earns as much respect as a human grandparent or centenarian and hardly any vampires qualify at all. That said, a certain respect for the elder species—for Jotun, maybe vampires, and the like—comes into play here even in regards to individual members who are relatively young.

What did *you* do to honor your elders on this day?

- ...to be honest, not all that much!
- ...I wore a butterfly hairpin or something else like that.
- ...I thought about how amazing old people are.
- ...I prayed for their health.
- ...I was vaguely respectful if I saw any of 'em.
- ...I was *really polite* if I saw any of 'em.
- ...I visited an elderly relative or friend.
  - ...and talked and paid respects?
  - ...and brought a gift?
  - ...and did small favors, like tidying up or bringing cookies?
  - ...and made sure their life was going well?
- ...I attended some cool event
  - ...that was kind of generically festival-y?
  - ...where the elderly raced or danced or showed off?
  - ...talking about the accomplishments of the local elderly?
  - ...in honor of some specific person with many accomplishments?
- ...I spent a long time reading about the great things that my older relatives have done.

And your grandparents—your great-grandparents, if they're alive; your elderly neighbors—how are their lives going? Are they happy? Are they well?

Elderly PCs

Is your PC a human over about 65? A rat of seven or more years? Something else on that order?

Then this celebration is for you!

You've got another special opportunity here—you can earn a bonus XP for the group with an appropriate XP Action during the festival. Go participate in the races or athletic events featuring the elderly. Play out a member of the Fortitude Regional Council visiting you to honor you for your years. Whatever.

You've got a lot of life left in you, and this is your day to let it show!

Halloween



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

Town's missed most of the historical opportunities to pick up a solid Halloween tradition. In fact I figure it probably wouldn't *have* one—except that there's a lot of imported Western media, and occasionally there'll be sailors out there on Earth in late October noticing the celebrations (in person or on a bar TV) or whatever and thinking stuff like, "This is great! We should do this at home!"

It's not *rooted* here, in short. It doesn't grow out of these people. Halloween just drifted in.

Accordingly most of the Halloween traditions in Town are a little loose from their historical moorings—people from Town are perfectly *capable* of arguing that Halloween is a perversion of a pagan holiday or an extremely mobile version of the Hallowmas feast but mostly their tradition doesn't come from that. It comes from having Halloween given unto them from outside culture as a day one's "supposed" to be watching creepy horror movies, wearing costumes and going trick-or-treat, or setting out carved pumpkins. It didn't evolve on its own... and so trick-or-treaters are mostly rewarded with the same treats they might have gotten just for *visiting* somebody anyway and the traditional Halloween movies are comparatively tame fare like *The Nightmare Before Christmas, Kiki's Delivery*

Service, and *Escape to Witch Mountain*. It's common to tell spooky stories about things that happened to you on this day, normally set "last year on this day" or "while I was outside just now."

And what do you *do* in the eighth week of Autumn, when Halloween rolls around?

Do you...

- dress up and try trick-or-treating out?
- make elaborate carved pumpkins with your friends?
- watch a Halloween movie?
  - at the theater?
  - at a friend's house, with a VCR or DVD player?
  - at your own home?
  - and is it a family classic like *Kiki's Delivery Service* or *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown?*
  - something a little scary like *Them, Nosferatu*, or *The Twilight Zone?*
  - something to leave you genuinely terrified, like *The Shining, Alien*, or *Suspiria?*
  - tell spooky stories?
- have a strange encounter?

Shichi-Go-San



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

This is a holiday celebrating children three, five, or seven years of age—it celebrates their early developmental stages and their passage into middle childhood. On this day children are dressed up and paraded around, taken to temples and feted with candy and attention. It's common to have them pose for portraits and have them blessed by a Christian or shrine family priest. The rats call this the "Autumn Child Festival" and celebrate young rats born earlier in this season.

This is one of the easiest holidays to miss if you're not a parent or a child—there *are* parades and events, but they're pretty scattered and small-scale. You're most likely to just notice that there happen to be an unusual number of extremely well-dressed tiny kids around, often eye-meltingly cute in their kimonos or western costumes with a parasol, banner, or wooden sword to complete their look!

Do you...



The Angel of Fortitude

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.**

By default this Main Character is a 22-year-old male scholar named **Entropy II,** an alternate identity of the Principal of Horizon's School, although you could substitute in the female **Attaris II,** the *secretly* female **Entropy II,** or make them a kid the PCs' age. You could even declare them the Headmaster of St. Vita's Academy for Wayward Girls, over in Soma Village, or a Magister of the Bleak Academy.

- get fussed over today, being a young child yourself?
- have a young child to dress up and show off?
- have a friend or family member with a young child, and visit them today?
- occasionally spot awesomely-dressed children or bits of festival?
- fail to notice the holiday altogether?

Young PCs and Caretaker PCs

Is your PC a human kid aged 3, 5, or 7 years? A rat born in autumn? Or a regular caretaker for someone who is?

Then you've got another special opportunity—

On Shichi-Go-San, in the eleventh week of fall, appropriately-aged PCs and any PCs who regularly watch over them can earn a bonus XP for the group with an XP Action relating to this festival, and it doesn't count against the normal limit of two per week.

Winter A CALENDAR OF OBSERVANCES AND EVENTS

1st Week: School Begins	2nd Week: Now in Season: Winter Cabbage	3rd Week:
4th Week: Partial Holiday Week Holiday: Christmas	5th Week: Christmas Holiday XP Bonus: Cleaning Day Festival	6th Week:
7th Week: Now in Season: Strawberries	8th Week: XP Bonus: Cultural Festival	9th Week:
10th Week:	11th Week:	12th Week: XP Bonus (Lovers Only): Valentine's Day
13th Week: Pancake Week		

Christmas



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

Fortitude has a lively Christmas tradition, with roaming groups of singers (often in animal costumes), tinsel and Christmas trees, Christmas punch and parties, presents under the tree, a fast among Christians and holiday enthusiasts that lasts until the first star shows up in the sky in the evening, and a feast roughly as ritualized in its ingredients as an American Thanksgiving's: bread, mushroom or sauerkraut soup, garlic, honey, cod, fresh fruit (ideally winter figs, if they're still available), nuts, lentils and mashed potatoes, peas, parsley potatoes, honey biscuits, and red wine. A "busy Christmas" or "simple Christmas" meal, on the other hand, is just Christmas fried chicken and cakes. A traditional sport for this holiday is street hockey, which kids play raucously but pretty badly around this time of year.

Many children believe that Santa Claus flies around the world on Christmas Eve in an Outside-immune sleigh. He wins a yearly fight with the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy, driving him back into the darkness, and descends their chimneys to leave presents—toys for the good children and rum for the bad. He is generally understood to sweep the floor and shatter any video cameras before he leaves. Other children contend that the entire activity is in fact masterminded by "the Christmas Witch," or that she and Santa are in some sort of contention.

Christmas itself tends to fall in the fourth week of winter, but the holiday extends through the fifth. White Christmases are rare—Fortitude doesn't get much snow, sadly—but at least there's easy access to tinsel, holly, and pine.

What do you do over Christmas?

Do you...

- sit around with your friends on Christmas Eve talking and having fun?
- wander Fortitude admiring the Christmas lights and banners?
- enjoy the elaborate Christmas Feast
  - prepared by someone else?
  - prepared at least in part by your own hard work?
- have a "busy Christmas" meal instead?
- have an unexpected sighting of something that could have been Santa or the Christmas Witch?
- exchange presents with families and friends on Christmas Day?
- attend the Christmas service at a local Church?
- spend a lot of time shopping for presents?
- spend a lot of time making presents by hand?
- have a romantic walk with a love interest?
- take turns pulling a traditional Christmas carriage/rickshaw with your friends?[54]
- cheer an unexpectedly white Christmas, since that's almost unheard of in Town?
- play a bit of street hockey?
- watch for the evening's first star?

Cleaning Day Festival



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

Christmas holiday occupies the whole fifth week of winter—I don't really *expect* you to be doing anything else, which is why it's not a "special" opportunity. I mean to say, most of your group's XP-bearing actions in the fourth and fifth weeks of winter are probably *already* about Christmas, so that's why Christmas doesn't come with an extra shot.

But I *will* give you a Christmas bonus anyway.

Two days after Christmas day in Fortitude, there's a special day for cleaning up—not just for picking up any trash left over from the presents, that was probably taken care of on Christmas, but for taking the time to go out and help get Fortitude itself into shape. It's a day of giving back to everything and everyone, and making everything nice and neat—a day of freshening up the



54 *Town has few horses and Fortitude even fewer!*

community and the people and the spirits and making everything bright and clean.

So on this day each PC can earn a bonus XP for the group with XP Actions relating to the Cleaning Day festivities, and it doesn't count against the normal limit of two per week.

Clean inside the house, sure, if that's been waiting—

Particularly if you have a family, but even if you live alone. And clean the outside, too, and your own yard, and stuff. But mostly, it's not a day for that; it's a day for street cleaning and beach cleaning, for pitching in to help anyone who might have trouble cleaning up their own place on their own, and just generally getting the whole community looking amazing and neat and Christmas-y before whenever (probably in the ninth or tenth week of winter) all the decorations must come down.

Why a Cleaning Day Festival? Why then?

There's a sense, I think, that Christmas itself is a little unruly—a little too magical for a place like Fortitude. So after Christmas has had its day it's time for a synthesis, for a bringing things down to pace, and for getting everything all orderly and put away.

You've had your Christmas Eve and Christmas. You may still have dates or strolls or post-Christmas shopping in your future. But this is an XP opportunity to show what you do on this particular day.

Do you...

- get into some chores you haven't done?
- mostly just pick up around the house?
- go out and do whatever seems to need doing with whomever seems to be doing it?
- clean up something targeted, like the beach or your house's street?
- clean up in a targeted way, like specifically pick up trash or trim dead plants?
- help a friend out who's had trouble keeping up with their cleaning?
- organize something, like, build new shelves for your home to better have a place for Christmas gifts?
- go out to a shrine family and "participate" (you probably can't do much, unless you want to help the Kichi with their work) in a big ritual cleansing of Outside dust?
- …or something else?

The Cultural Festival



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

The Cultural Festival, normally in the eighth week of winter, offers another special opportunity—each PC can earn a bonus XP for the group with XP Actions relating to this festival, and it doesn't count against the normal limit of two per week.

Falling on or near St. Tatiana's Day, Town's cultural festival mostly celebrates the achievements and development of students. For Fortitude's teenagers and adults it's not as big a deal—the only high school worth the name is over in Horizon, so the high-school-level cultural festival is centered over there as well.

Put another way, you'll have to make a trip to Horizon if you want to see the anime-staple schoolhouse full of cafés and haunted houses; Fortitude doesn't really have *that*.

...but it *does* participate enthusiastically in the festival anyway.

On this day in Fortitude there are literary arts and learning arts exhibitions from its elementary and middle school students. Tutors and trade schools take this opportunity to show their value, often competitively, organizing their students into some sort of demonstration, exhibit, contest, or show. (The classic tradition is pranking rival tutors or even Horizon's School, but nobody actually does this—they just tell a lot of stories about epic pranks from back when people *did*.) Somehow the cultural festival winds up being almost everywhere—if you're out and about on St. Tatiana's Day, you won't have to wander very far or look very hard to find *something* interesting going on. If you're the right age or in the right situation, you might be drafted into a performance or exhibit yourself!

Around the time of the cultural festival, families begin setting out platforms of ornate dolls on their house porches. Sometimes these overlap with Christmas decorations; other families find that too visually "noisy" and take their Christmas decorations down a week or two in advance. Either way, these dolls help to ward away bad luck and bad spirits; honor an old tradition; represent hopes for the future of the girls of the household; and display the residents' taste, wealth, traditional nature, or art.

And what do you do during all this?
Do you...

- visit a young relative's exhibition or performance?
- visit your old tutor or school?
- help your tutor try to prove that *his or her* classical instruction far exceeds the classical instruction of another tutor,
  - by challenging them in a serious classical-off (e.g. a poetry battle or mock officials' exam competition)?
  - by pranking that other tutor?
  - by putting together some kind of exhibition, demonstration, or show?
- participate in some project that one of the trade schools is doing?
- wander off and talk with someone about how school is completely pointless?
- carefully unpack and set up the dolls before your house?
- create the dolls to set out before your house?
- admire the dolls that others have set out?



Horizon

This Region of Town is brooding and gothic. Built on three layers of dead civilizations, it has the highest per capita population of walking dead and monstrous residents of anywhere in Town. Most of them are functionally harmless but living residents are nevertheless advised to stay out of graveyards, catacombs and labyrinthine underworlds, turf marked as the possession of an unworldly tribe, and the steam tunnels underneath the School.

As a rough demographic sketch, Horizon's population is roughly 57% human, 34% ghost, 6% vampire, and 3% monster or "other." The ghosts rarely leave Principal Entropy's School, however, so the visible demographics on the street are closer to 85% human, 9% vampire, and 6% monstrous—or as much as 93% human during the day.

The centerpiece of Horizon is Principal Entropy's School—a massive structure filling more than a square mile—and the Region is built both in and out of character around School's needs. It's a boarding school and a ladder school: a kindergarten, elementary school, and middle school, as well as being Town's only high school worth the name. If your game focuses on older characters and a high school doesn't really have any point of connection to their lives, you could conceivably replace Horizon's School with a University, Research Center, Military Training Facility, or Office Building (for "Big Employer"), moving Town's core high school itself to some other Region of Town.

Horizon Properties

- People must accept what is happening around them as normal.
- People must have some reason to worry.
- Each person in the School must experience exactly three events between classes.
- You can never experience the "middle" of a class unless extremely bored.
- Teachers must be obsessive, delusional, or wicked.
- People must have school spirit unless recently hurt or bullied.
- There must be delinquents, bullies, and cliques.

For the purpose of the cultural festival, visiting a classroom's café, haunted house, maze, play, or other performance or exhibit counts as a "class," while wandering and visiting sales booths does not.

Visiting Horizon



Obsessive Action

The cultural festival is a really good day to take the bus over to Horizon, visit the giant cultural festival at the equally giant School, and consider whether it might be worth attending. Maybe you're high school age or a bit younger and you want to see whether it's worth it. Maybe you've got a younger relative who might want to go there someday. Maybe you're visiting it for nostalgia's sake, to see how it's changed since the last time you were there. Maybe you're thinking about taking some night classes or something to sharpen your edge.

The thing about this is that while you *can* and probably *should* take advantage of this for an XP-earning Slice of Life, Shared Action, or Shared Reactions, visiting Horizon is *also* likely to go a little weird.

It's likely to wind up turning into an Obsessive Action instead.

Listen.

Horizon, particularly for Fortitude residents, is full of worrisome and scary stuff. In fact, the only reason anyone from Fortitude would ever even *think* about attending School there is that the idea of *not* going to School, not going to high school or whatever, *also* feels pretty worrisome and scary while you're there.

The School is full of cafés and grills and exhibits and plays and concerts and athletic exhibitions and matches and performances and haunted houses during the Cultural Festival, sure, but it's also full of... actual ghosts. And it's built to such a vast scale! It's like it was designed for giants to study in! And if you're young enough there's also this terrifying sense that the students there are *better* than you, somehow, that you couldn't possibly be good enough for the School there. That you might gain from it, that it might be the best thing ever, except that you'd hardly *survive!*

...wouldn't you?

It's a creepy gothic empty place, and maybe you even passed some tribe of unworldly punk monsters on the street on your way in. Maybe the fog rolled in to conceal them but you still saw a glint of gleaming eyes. Maybe you're just freaked by the fact that like a third of Horizon's population is dead—is some sort of ghost, I mean—and that almost all of them are students or teachers or administrators at the School. Maybe you even attended the talk for prospective students that the Principal gave and realized that there was blood steadily dripping from his hands.

It's easy to get worked up about this stuff, in between admiring the music and arts and cheap delicious food and contests. It's easy to have the time of your life one minute and then find yourself utterly paralyzed with fear the next. That's the nature of Horizon's School.

Valentine's Day



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

Valentine's Day is noted but not commercialized in Fortitude—the traditional gift is a poem or paper card, and not chocolate; remembering the holiday and doing something special is a sign of devotion, like remembering a birthday, but forgetting the holiday or not doing anything in particular isn't really that big a thing. It's definitely the best and most popular day for romantic gestures, principally but not uniquely from men to women, and shops often run specials of various sorts.

There's some cultural awareness of "White Day"—the followup holiday a month later where Valentine's Day gifts are returned/repaid, in comparable quantity or three times over—but it hasn't really become a *thing*. That said, youth culture in Fortitude has a saying "I'll return it on White Day" or "I'll return it three times over" to indicate a melodramatic reaction to a gift or the lack thereof.

What do you think? Is there anyone you're thinking of?

What would you like to do for them, or with them, on this day?

PCs Who are Romantically Involved

Is your PC in a romantic relationship? Or will they use this day to win somebody's heart?

Then you've got another special opportunity here—

On Valentine's Day, normally in the twelfth week of winter, a PC can earn a bonus XP for the group with an XP Action that either wins them a romantic partner or displays and deepens a romantic partnership that they already enjoy. This doesn't count against the normal limit of two per week!

Odd Little Valentines

As a special rule, atypical Valentine's Day moments that manage to be sweet or bittersweet and on topic can earn the group up to one bonus XP per year. (Not per player, just in general.) I'm mostly thinking of fundamentally alien characters here, whose Valentine's Day scenes can't really fit the Pastoral or romantic mold, but you can also grab this XP with a parent and child exchanging Valentines, a sweet and touching refusal of romance, or friends being unusually supportive of someone who just isn't all that interested in finding love!

Pancake Week



Shared Action, Shared Reactions, or Slice of Life

The year roars to an end with one of my favorite Town holidays: Pancake Week. It's just so... rich and buttery with tradition!

I'm not even kidding. Hyperbolic? Yes. Kidding? ...no.

OK, so this holiday starts with pancakes. It then goes *straight* to the mat, which I think is a wrestling metaphor or something, and which in this case means something deep and awesome, because the first pancakes are for the dead. The first pancakes are set aside for ghosts and the departed, and that's awesome; the rest, of course, are to eat.

They make a straw doll of "Kostroma."

This is a fertility goddess, a grain goddess, and they do her and people dressed as her a lot of honor during this. (But be careful before you make the investment in a Kostroma outfit—you'd have to burn it at the festival's end!) Kostroma's got some conceptual ties to Jade Irinka but I'm *pretty* sure that she's a Russian goddess and not an actual part of the living mythology of Town—I mean, she probably exists, most things seem to *exist*, but I don't think she's *here*.

I could be wrong.

Kostroma is the embodiment of the health of the earth, anyway, and so a lot of the course of the festival is about building up her strength and honoring her before burning her representation and using the ashes to ensure a fertile spring.

On the second day of pancake week, "game day," people play a lot of games. If there's snow, which there



probably isn't, there are snowball fights. If there's not, then there's still stalls and fairs and wrestling and fist fights and throwing hoops at pegs and chasing pigs and throwing javelins and the like.

On the third day, there is a *lot* of eating. I mean, pancakes have been happening this whole time, it is *Pancake Week* after all, but this is the specific day of feast. The original Russian custom has men visiting their mother-in-law and demanding pancakes; this isn't really a big part of the celebration in Town but it is sometimes done in a kind of ironic-but-serious way by people who like their mother-in-law or her pancakes.

The fourth day is heavily focused on fighting—particularly grappling. This appears to be mostly a boy's game, in that all boys of a certain age are assumed to be interested in wrestling other random boys by default, but girls *can* participate if they wear the red tassel of a fair target and boys... probably... have a way to opt out? I hope so. Anyway, it's not really very organized, although there are organized competitions—it's mostly just that one-on-one wrestling fights (to the point of one person hitting the ground, basically) are encouraged on this day.

The fifth and sixth days offer further opportunities for pancake eating. The original custom, again, has specific in-law roles at heart: on the fifth day, a mother-in-law should be invited to the son-in-law's house for pancakes, and on the sixth day, a wife should invite all her husband's relatives over for a meal. Again, the mother-in-law/son-in-law thing is mostly ignored or treated ironically, while a wife making pancakes for her husband's relatives is...

Kind of actually? expected, I think, like taking your husband's name in America or something. Like, if you don't do it, people won't think you're a bad person, but they'll assume you're being all feminist rather than thinking that you just don't want to cook a bunch of pancakes or have those people over; and similarly, if you can't manage to do it, you won't feel like a life failure, but you might, with a normal upbringing, wind up feeling at least a little bit bad.

Sometime during this week—often but not always the sixth day—Town also has its equivalent to the Japanese Girls' Day or Doll Festival. People add special rice cakes and *sake* to the pancake feasting and eat a soup symbolizing unity and togetherness. They admire the Cultural Festival dolls a last time before putting them away, have conversations with them if the dolls have come to life[55], and they pray for the health of their daughters.

On the last day of the pancake holiday the straw doll is burned; costumes of the fertility goddess are burned; and people forgive one another, or try to forgive one another, for the things they've done that year.

I really like that last bit. I know it's done in other cultures, too, in Ramadan and all, but I've never lived anywhere that did it until now; and there's something really nice about sitting around a fire in winter, at the end of winter, and letting all that stuff go. A time of making amends and laying quarrels to rest, so you can face the spring all fresh—it's so awesome!

Just how much of this do you get involved with?

And what's your favorite part?

The Accelerated Year

It's common to run a "prologue" for your game where the PCs are younger and the years go by at a faster clip. In this context it doesn't make sense to talk about "weeks" and "seasons" as the foundation of the system—

Instead, I want the flexibility to talk about "chapters" and "books" of the PCs' lives.

Chapters fill in for weeks, in terms of bonus XP, Will, and general progress; books fill in for seasons, when that's relevant at all.

For instance, you might want to run a handful of early years as if they were single weeks—put another way, as year-long chapters—and in each such chapter the PCs either celebrate Shichi-Go-San if appropriate or a different, suitable holiday to earn their bonus XP.

55 *This is pretty rare but it happens.*

Childhood, in Fast-Forward

5th Year:	6th Year:	7th Year:	8th Year:
(for the default PC)	(for the default PC)	(for the default PC)	(for the default PC)
XP Bonus: Shichi-Go-San or the Star Festival	XP Bonus: Shichi-Go-San or Christmas (or Cleaning Day)	XP Bonus: Shichi-Go-San or the Cultural Festival	XP Bonus: Shichi-Go-San or Spirit Honoring Day

The Next Few Years

9th Year:	10th Year:	11th Year:	12th Year:	13th Year:
(for the default PC) XP Bonus: Children's Day, Shichi-Go-San, or the Harvest Festival	(for the default PC) XP Bonus: Children's Day, Shichi-Go-San, or Easter	(for the default PC) XP Bonus: Children's Day or Celdinar Day	(for the default PC) XP Bonus: Children's Day or the Cultural Festival	(for the default PC) XP Bonus: Children's Day or Pancake Week

This makes the calendar look more like the calendar to the bottom left and top right…

Although you could, and probably even should, slow down again after year 8.

At this pace, I'd tend to treat 4-5 years as a "book." For instance, if a character has certain powers available every season, here, they'd be available once in each row of years.

A Little Slower

Before going all the way back to a weekly calendar you might try to run a few years on a calendar like the one below—it starts in the third week of spring, and I'm playing it fast and loose with just how many weeks each chapter has.

Each chapter of the PCs' lives is about four weeks, and each year forms a "book."

Later on—when you're older, maybe, or when the HG wants to move quickly through a handful of years—you might skip past other years in a similar fashion, treating a year as either four seasonal chapters or "A Year Goes By"

Again, I'd tend to aim for books of either 1-year or 4-year length.

In the Longer Chapters

I don't want to cripple anyone just by changing the timescale. So on an accelerated calendar, where you're presumably taking many fewer actions, each individual action tends to be more effective. For instance, when you're playing with year-long chapters, it's reasonable to have "tend my business (for a year)" or "raise this child" as actions, and each success covers a year of work.

A Year Goes By

XP Bonus: Respect the Elderly Day, or Holiday of the HG's Choice

Going Towards a Weekly Calendar

Spring Vacation:	School Begins:	Late Spring:	Early Summer:
Holiday: "Sorrows' Week" XP Bonus: Flower viewing festival	Holiday: Easter XP Bonus (Kids Only): Children's Day	Holiday: Celdinar Day	XP Bonus: Star Festival
Mid-Summer:	**Summer Vacation:**	**School Begins:**	**Autumn:**
Holiday: Landing Day	Holiday: Spirit-Honoring Day XP Bonus: Harvest/ Apple Festival	XP Bonus (Elders Only): Respect the Elderly Day	Holiday: Halloween
Late Autumn:	**Christmastime:**	**Mid-Winter:**	**End of the Year:**
XP Bonus (Very Limited): Shichi-Go-San	Holiday: Christmas XP Bonus: Cleaning Day Festival	XP Bonus: Cultural Festival	Holiday: Pancake Week XP Bonus (Lovers Only): Valentine's Day

Each Season

Spring:
Holidays: "Sorrows' Week," Easter, Celdinar Day
XP Bonus: Flower viewing festival
XP Bonus (Kids/Caretakers Only): Children's Day

Summer:
Holidays: Landing Day, Spirit-Honoring Day
XP Bonus: Player's Choice of either the Star Festival or Harvest/Apple Festival

Autumn:
Holiday: Halloween
XP Bonus (Elders Only): Respect the Elderly Day
XP Bonus (Very Limited): Shichi-Go-San

Winter:
XP Bonus: Player's Choice of the Cultural Festival, Christmas, or Pancake Week
XP Bonus (Lovers Only): Valentines' Day

3 Traditional Stories



Foreshadowing/Slice of Life

I'd like to take a moment to talk about the stories of Fortitude. There's a reasonably rich fairy-tale tradition in Fortitude, but fairy tales are difficult—they're long and complicated and hard to come up with on the fly. Since I can't write a bunch of them down for you here and annotate them with game-related notes—I may do that eventually but it's not on the top of my queue—I'm going to focus for right now on the kinds of stories that can come up in, and be invented from whole-cloth easily by players or the HG in, play.

Those are Fortitude's tall tales, place stories, origin stories, and historical events.

So, one classic style of Fortitude story explains some physical feature, weather phenomenon, street layout, animal or plant behavior, or possibly even a moral or practice, by talking about a person who lacked either some basic capability or common sense. The story has the following four narrative beats:

- we introduce a person with an unexpected goal or lack;
- we explain how they worked around it;
- we talk about what happened in consequence;
- if that didn't end their story, we wrap up the loose ends.

For instance:

...There was a girl who didn't know how to clean her spoons. So she had to carve a new one out of wood every time she wanted to eat her cereal or soup. Eventually the discarded spoons fossilized into the limestone structures of the northern beach. As for the girl herself, she became desolate and bone-weary from the effort of this and swam out into the lake, where she became a perch.

...There was a boy who wanted to catch the sun. He made a fishing pole out of birch bark and a fishing line out of a spider's thread. He cut the hook out of the bones of his hand and fixed it to the line, and he tossed it out to hook over the sun. But the sun was too big to pull down onto the pier. He wound up hanging from it instead. Sometimes when you look out over the lake you'll see his line glittering in the sunlight, or the little blotch of the withered boy hanging out to dry.

...There was a heron who couldn't remember how to fly. He fell to the ground and rolled over and over until he molted off all his feathers. He became a human boy! But he didn't like that. He missed flying. He spent most of his life gathering up feathers from various birds and making an amazing feathered coat. He died before he could finish it, though, so we'll never know if it would have let him fly.

Another kind of story often told in Fortitude is a "time before" story. This is a pretty goofy and implausible genre that focuses on the time "before" some invention or change, and the immediate aftermath thereof. The narrative beats for these stories are pretty simple:

- an exaggerated, implausible description of the world before;
- a very casual, explanation-free description of how change came about;
- optionally, some goofy reaction shots to the world after.

For instance,

...Now, back in the old days, people didn't know to pepper their food, what with pepper never having been invented; their linguine was bland, their pepper-crusted salmon was indistinguishable from their glazed or air-crusted, and their pepper shakers were lonely, inexplicable, and full, more often than not, of slug. Oh, people hardly ever sneezed back then, and so nobody ever talked about anyone else behind their back, so there was *that* advantage; but it was a poorer day, then, in the time before, than in the peppery modern day.

And the world toiled on in its pepperlessness; until Rinley began rolling whole boulders of the stuff, *one after another,* right down the switchback onto Town.

This way, they went; that way, they went; and back and forth they all! They bounced and they rolled and they ground themselves to powder along the rough-edged cliffs and the road to Town. They skidded and they shredded; they flew up high; and finally they descended on the world below as a cloud of sharp black spice.

"Rinley!" wailed a young pasta-maker. His linguine was covered in Rinley's rock!

"This ____-crusted salmon," sniffled a disappointed and sniffling salmon-cruster. "It's peppered! With Rinley's stone!"

And if the slug that was in my great-great-grandmother's pepper shaker, at the time, had anything to say—

Well, it is not recorded, even in the annals of the slugs; but I imagine that it sneezed or thrashed or wailed or wept, with the passage of its cellared day.

Now, as you'll notice, the whole middle part—what Rinley was doing up there, why there were boulders of pepper, etcetera—is more or less completely unexplained. There's a children's challenge and response game in Fortitude which consists of expanding on that part of this and other stories *without* actually explaining anything (although the really young kids will tend to actually do so)—e.g.

"Well, why was Rinley rolling pepper boulders down onto Town from above?"

"Oh, they weren't going *straight* down onto Town! He knew that the switchback would make them pretty small by the time they hit."

"But why didn't they just shoot off the edge?"

"Well, for that, I'd blame the cats...."

The last kind of story that might reasonably come up in play is the narration of a historical event or a place's real, known history. I can't give the narrative beats to these stories because they're actual *events*, but I assume that if you're making it up in play then you can pretty much just go with whatever feels right. I *can* give you some subjects, though, or rather, some inspiration; I think stories like this will come up most often after the PCs encounter some remnant or plaque or memorial or something that prompts the recollection of that history. So you might stumble on:

- places of struggle against the strange, often masked, witches that occasionally emerge from Big Lake to make trouble of various sorts:
  - battle sites
  - places where their victims or enemies lived
  - places where they lived after being redeemed
  - their final resting places
- shrines commemorating some sacred individual of the past
- remnants of a flood or fire
- the house of someone who died in an unpleasant fashion
- the house of someone who's been missing for a long time
- the old Jotun mansions leftover from the time before humans came to Town
- memorials to astronomical or other interesting events
- the site of some equivocal magical incident, such as "the berries that gave beast-speech to all who ate them, that one summer"
- other historical relics—
  - preserved houses from the early human habitation
  - the Suzuki Museum with its lifestyle memorabilia and art from those days
  - the site of the crashed "last ship in from London," after the end of the Celdinar Mayoralty

In practice, storytelling is almost always about **Foreshadowing.** Because this is an RPG and not a book, stories don't have to foreshadow anything in *particular*—you haven't failed as a gamer if you tell a story about a mysterious heron prince and then the prince never shows up or matters in the game at all. But...

Ideally there should still be a general sense that maybe the story *will* come up again. That maybe it'll become emotionally or literally relevant later on.

On the other hand—

This is a pastoral game. People matter. Random ideas matter. Relationships matter. So it's also OK if all you want to achieve by telling a story in play is... having your character tell a random little story. If your characters are hanging around, kicking back, and telling stories about nothing in particular—just *having fun*—that's fine too! It's better than fine; you can even get a **Slice of Life** action out of it, if you want, including the potential for weekly XP.

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The Troublemaker

So in the stories "Rinley Yatskaya" is the name of an epic fool, the kind of guy you'd expect to see stealing the wind from the Devil's sails, inventing forks, and catching the moon in the palm of his hand. He was a lovable troublemaker who wandered through Town's early days getting into all kinds of mischief.

There's someone a little like that in the modern day.

By default, **the Troublemaker** is actually *named* Rinley Yatskaya; apparently Shiori Yatskaya decided to tempt fate. This Main Character is usually a girl about PC age, though she could be a boy of course—the name'd work for either—and she's just beginning to show the signs of being a folk hero, a trickster figure, the kind of girl who sails around on a thimble and finds her spending money under rocks.

See, she's figuring out what you'll all figure out in time—

That she *can* do this sort of thing, and that there's a reason why:

That the wishing heart has a power in it to change what's possible and what isn't!

This character *could* also be the youngest child of a different family—Rinley "Valentine" Kichi, snoop and matchmaker extraordinaire; Rinley Sosunov, with more of a Buddha stories and less of a tall tale vibe; Rinley Titov or Titova, summoned from the Earth to help contain what they keep hidden at the Titov shrine (pg. 50), possibly prematurely, if it's still asleep or bound; or Rinley (Nicholas or Nicoletta) Vasili, with a superior connection to the hearth or to the power of steam!

The Far Roofs

If you hang out with the rats of Fortitude you'll notice that they're heroic adventurers; or, well, that they think of themselves like that. And you may wonder about this, and think it's pretty silly, because everything else aside, where do you even *find* adventures to be heroic in, in a rustic place like Fortitude?

And maybe if you're a little wiser, you think, oh, they sail out on Big Lake, and confront things in the Outside, and since the Outside's equally scary no matter what size you are, I'd guess, that gives some credence to their claim.

And they *do* do that. I mean, that kind of adventuring is real.

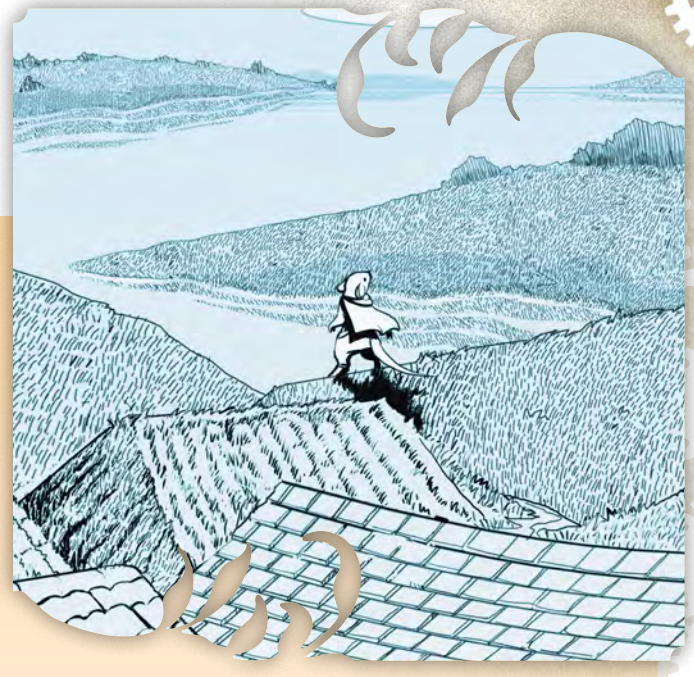
The weirdest thing, though? That *isn't* the core of it. That isn't where they do most of their adventures.

They go out on the roofs of Fortitude and they take their secret ways, and at some point the roofs *stop* being Fortitude roofs. They start being the Far Roofs instead.

They become a place of heroes.

On the Witchway, the last of the day's sunlight gathers on the roofs like... trickles of water in the gutter, and flows along the roofs, and turns great black stones set among the rooftops into golden crystal lights. That's pretty cool. Then there's the Metal Flowers' Maze, where the weathervanes start to cluster thicker and thicker and become like flowers and then a maze. There are places that aren't so good. There is a dead grey sun that rises over Grayvale and... it is not a good thing. It is a bad thing. You should not have to see that sun. It is the substance of despair.

The Far Roofs are a weird and magical place. There's big mosaics and roofs like mountain ranges there. There's gutter-lakes and the gutter-sea. There's Octo-roofs. Everybody loves Octo-roofs. There are weird mine-car-like things you can sometimes ride.



There, above the world, where the world laws are—as far as I can tell—the laws of Soma Village, they face, duel with, and study the god-monsters called the Mysteries. They quest against creatures like the poisonous serpent Typhon; against Goblin, terrible and cruel; against Harpy, though they've slain her; or against the mind-killing Hedge the Fang.

They're no match for them, you understand. Not really.

They are scarcely in the weight class of the Hoop Snake, much less Malambruno or Amoeba or Hedge the Fang. But that doesn't matter to them. They find ways to conduct their struggle. They learn. They study. They maze the paths between Goblin and Fortitude. They seal Amoeba and Werewolf away. They placate the Mysteries; they use sacred barriers against them—anything that works, really.

The world, the rats say, is in danger; a hero must do what they can.

Far Roofs Properties

- Truth arises from mystery, but the mystery remains.
- This moment is like no other moment. It is *Now*.
- Go and look, and you will see the vastness of the world.
- Go and look, and you will see events and landscapes staged for you.
- The world is showing you the pieces of your heart.
- Enchantments and spiritual forces haunt you.
- You may find peace with your misfortunes.
- You are at risk of becoming a legend, or a god.

Rare Experiences

These are iconic actions that aren't really on topic for Fortitude, but could still come up in play.

(Suffer) Corruption, Trauma, or Metamorphosis



Something outside of your control is changing you. Best if things get a little weird and surreal.

Wicked Action



You know you shouldn't be doing this, but you are. Also best if things get a little weird and surreal. Even better if the HG gives you one last chance to change your mind, and then, you don't!

(Be in) Trouble



Oh no! This is bad! This Action gets better each time there's a "lull" when it seems like everything is safe—and then suddenly it isn't!

Never Say Die!



You're overwhelmed and outmatched—but you won't give up! This Action gets better each time you think you have things under control only to have the HG scale up the enemy's resources. (It's *so* unfair.)

Sympathetic Action



You see someone who's frozen up or shut down—paralyzed by something that's happened. You offer them comfort, reassurance, or physical help. Best if they then explode in emotion—e.g., collapsing in tears, getting angry at you, running away, melting in adoration, or starting to vent loudly about the underlying events.

If the person offering sympathy/help offers, and the frozen-up person accepts, this can be the frozen-up person's XP Action instead. In that case, instead of "Sympathetic Action," the Action's called **Shock.**

Science, Faith, and Sorcery Actions



You interrupt your explanation or contemplation of how something works with a theory, an *idea*—and then you test it out. Best if you can spice things up with a little risk!

Corruption, Metamorphosis, and Trauma



CORRUPTION, METAMORPHOSIS, AND TRAUMA

This bit's about what it's like to *be changed by something* in Fortitude.

It's almost always... *alien*.

Sickness. Poison. Horror. Malevolent forces of the spirit world shaking and shaping your world—there's something *un-Fortitude-like* about it.

It's a pretty rare phenomenon, but more than that, it's always accompanied by a loosening of the boundaries of the world. It never just emerges naturally from the rough earth and long-grained wood of Fortitude; it's never a trauma born of the good clean air and the simple, honest living of the place. There's always something from *outside* the world pushing in, or something you do to *go* outside the world, before a real trauma or change can come.

That's why the traditional Fortitude folk enemy is the witch who comes from Big Lake and mostly meddles in people's dreams—a creature from beyond, intruding, and even when they intrude, intruding principally through an already disordered secondary world. It's why when the rats talk about danger, they talk about the dangers of the far roofs—of things that dwell higher up and further out, beyond and outside the ordinary houses and streets below. It's why the places that are the most dangerous in Fortitude are the places that touch on Big Lake, the Outside, or Bluebell Park: the places where you can just look around you, or smell the air, to realize you *aren't* completely in Fortitude any longer.

And so ergo there is a strong tendency for people who are traumatized and triggered; people who are poisoned, and falling into delirium; people who are turning into something else because of something that happened elsewhere, to stumble into one of those places or those secondary realms—to find themselves by the Lake, or dreaming, or wandering through strange routes into the Outside, or in one of those places where Bluebell Park intrudes—when that poison or trauma or problem manifests.

There is a tendency for people who are infected by... I don't know, let's say a werewolf or zombie virus or whatever... to find themselves reflexively heading for



Corruption

Condition: You've just failed to completely defend against a poison, possession, or other corrupting influence; or, something's just triggered/awakened an ongoing corruption.

Action:

- **Experience surreal effects; then, the corruption/sickness gets stronger.**

Special Consequence:

If you don't already have one, you'll pick up a "trigger"—

Something that can happen to reawaken the corruption, even if you get away from whatever is causing it right now. For instance, a werewolf's trigger is the sight of the full moon.



Trauma

Condition: You've just failed to completely defend against something really traumatic. This could be anything from "seeing something horrifying" to "the psychic attack of Malambruno, which is named Hatred."

Or, something's just triggered/reminded you of an ongoing trauma.

Action:

- **Experience surreal effects; then, your psychological wounds deepen.**

Special Consequence:

If you don't already have one, you'll pick up a "trigger"—

Something that can happen to reawaken the trauma, even if you get away from whatever is causing it right now. For instance, if you're traumatized by seeing bugs eating a dead animal, then seeing similar bugs or food with a similar consistency might trigger a new Trauma, later on.

strange places before the transformation plays out; or to have it play out mostly in their daydreams and their actual dreams. If they can't do that—if they can't sleep, but they can't get out of bed either—then there's a real chance that their transformation will be contaminated by Fortitude, instead. That the trauma and the corruption is what will break, rather than the ordinariness—that they'll find themselves falling into a simple, honest pattern when dealing with what's gone wrong. Being a werewolf or zombie doesn't manifest as a horrible corruption, now, but as just something you have to deal with and work through your feelings about—and even then there's a good chance that "werewolf" or "zombie" is a huge exaggeration of a label for what is actually going on.

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Transformation/Metamorphosis

Condition: You've just failed to completely defend against a transformational influence; or, something's just triggered/awakened an ongoing metamorphosis.

Action:

- **Experience surreal effects; then, the corruption/transformation gets stronger.**

Special Consequence:

If you don't already have one, you'll pick up a "trigger"—

Something that can happen to encourage or reignite the metamorphosis, even if you get away from whatever is causing it right now. For instance, some characters will have their transformation advance further every time they sleep. Other characters will just be triggered randomly and helplessly by the actions of some distant god-monster NPC.

Wickedness, Degeneracy, and Vice

Wicked Action

So, this bit is about what it's like to indulge your wickedness in Fortitude.

...It's wicked hard, is what it is.

See, maybe you'll go down by the docks with your barrel of absinthe planning to drink yourself dead, and the next thing you know you're sitting there in the rich scents of the trees watching the little red and yellow feathers of this bird across the way, and looking out at the sun upon the water, and nibbling a bit on the head of the tequila worm as the long slow day drifts by.

Maybe you'll plan on sleeping through the day; only the gentle rhythms of people going about their lives will leave you feeling like you should really get up and do something, and a little nap will bring you rest.

You'll plan on getting your gamble on, but if you can find someone willing to bet more than a few small coins on something faster than a chess game, you'll have your work cut out for you—and besides, isn't a coin or two on a chess game just as good?

Even if your vice is something absurd like murder, you'll have trouble digging yourself in deeper properly at the docks. You might start your spree thinking you're going to be the Jack the Ripper of the Docks, and next thing you know you're one of those old men or old women who sit around on the pier talking about murdering and your glorious murders of the past and maybe even assessing people who pass by as potential victims, but never actually, you know, *killing* anyone. Because isn't being with your friends and enjoying the scenery what being a serial killer's *really* all about? I mean, in the end?

So we're not going to talk too much about what it's like to *really* be wicked here, except to say: *grindingly difficult.* The peace of Fortitude will fight your corrupt desire and the rhythm of it will fight your dissipation every last step of the way.

Wicked Action

Condition: You're doing something that you know IC that you shouldn't.

It's just not healthy!

Or, it's wrong!

Action:

- **Fall into a delirious abyss of self-indulgence.**

The HG has the option to go double or nothing on a Wicked Action, laying out what you're bringing down on your head by following this course of action, telling you the consequences—and putting in another group XP if you do it anyway.

If you don't, of course, the XP Action doesn't happen at all!

"Experience Surreal Effects"

The Lurid Actions marked with the green icon work best when the world goes weird—

When your delirious descent into vice is accompanied by the surreal and bizarre.

Maybe it comes from the HG. Maybe it comes from the player. Maybe it happens in the "real" world. Maybe it's just in the character's head.

But it should happen.

As an optional rule, if the HG thinks enough of that happened to matter, they can add another group XP to the action's rewards!

Trouble



Trouble

This bit's about what it's like to have terrifying encounters and get into trouble in Fortitude.

I won't say it can't happen. Disasters do. And there's this whole collection of miraculous Arcs that *thrive* on trouble, that let you take the (be in) Trouble action even in a sweet, laid-back Pastoral sort of game, and they'll *make* it happen.

So, it can happen. It's absolute that it can happen, and it's really scary when it does.

But it's basically going to work like adversity does.

Bad things happen, but your neighbors and family will step forward to help you out. Bad things happen, but you'll have a *community*. I think.

In your time of trouble I think that you will not be alone.

So.

The default mode for getting into trouble in a Fortitude game—in any **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** game, really—is *your accepting that you're in trouble*. That's the heart of the experience. If you're confident, then you're not in trouble. If you're safe, if you *know* you're safe, then you're not in trouble. Maybe if you're completely out of your character's head, all OOC, if you're playing like you're the audience in a horror film, knowing something just awful is going to happen while your character is oblivious—

Maybe that works. Maybe.

But either way the key is that you in your headspace, as player or as character, whichever one you're in—*you* think that you're in trouble.

It's not about whether you're being attacked by a hill-top-high nautilus squid with its wriggly mouth tentacles or whether you're being attacked by old Mr. Wilkins in a mask. It's not about whether you're on the border of being erased from existence by a callous wave of the Headmaster of the Bleak Academy's hand or whether you're facing off boldly against a thug whom the HG assumed you'd just shove easily out of the way.

If you think you're in trouble, if you *play at* being in trouble, then you're in a (Be in) Trouble bit. If you don't think it, then you're not.

The heart of a Trouble action is, thus, fear.

The next element after fear is—that it's always getting closer. Trouble is something that looms. I don't mean that it can't get to you, that's just lame, but I do mean that it doesn't get to you fast. That's part of how you perceive it, anyway.

The key to making trouble fun, I think, is to really play it up. It can be fun to curbstomp your enemies or to heroically oppose them, but that's Slice of Life or Never Say Die! (below), not being in Trouble. The Trouble Action, at its heart, is about *accepting that you're doomed* and playing out a holding action—or, for a less heroic character, playing out being paralyzed with fear or driven to run away. Being in trouble is about watching helplessly, or failing to get away, or fighting as hard as you can but from an inherent *premise* that you're going to lose, while trouble looms ever closer, and then—before you can possibly defeat it, before that option is even on the table—there's this moment, this terrifying awful moment, when it all gets *worse*.

That's your cue to... lose, maybe, fade to black; or to fight back with a sudden surge of strength; or for someone to show up to help you, maybe, or something else.

Trouble is pretty rare in Fortitude. So, look, it doesn't really matter if you do it "right," or how I think is right, when it happens.

Just bear in mind that when I am talking about Trouble, I'm not talking about stuff that the HG thinks is Trouble. I'm not talking about stuff that *sounds* like you're in Trouble, or stuff that has a certain game-mechanical edge to outclass you and put your life or accomplishments at risk.

I'm talking about stuff you fear. I'm talking about stuff you don't know how to deal with. I'm talking about the stuff you cower from, or run from, or struggle futilely against.

In Horizon scary stuff is more common. Still not as common as you'd think, but *more* common.

In Fortitude, though—

That moment of purest fear, that moment when everything has just got worse—

That's often the moment right before some neighbor shows up to help or some data about the situation gets revealed and everything is suddenly OK.

Bad things happen. Terrible things happen. There are witches and there are monsters. There are *cosmic horrors* out there on the roofs, somewhere, and Death himself has some kind of vendetta against Town.

Bad things happen.

But you will not be alone.

Crime and Punishment

Crime in Fortitude is mostly sorted out extra-legally. The constables and community are going to start by kind of stepping in *in loco parentis*—the first four levels of response boil down to heavy sighing, wondering if they can ignore the problem, experimenting with arbitration, and helping the criminal sort out their thoughts or their life. The next level of response is generally shaming or intrusive monitoring of daily life—a criminal will either get gossiped about or paroled into some family that's meant to keep tabs on them and organize their life.

Sociopaths presumably exist. Murderers, would-be crime bosses, sexual predators—they aren't part of Fortitude's story of itself but they must exist, mustn't they? And so I think that there are only two things that Town can do with them in the end: either their crimes must get papered over, or something has to *happen* to them. They have to be forgiven, even though they shouldn't be forgiven; or they have to be locked up in somebody's basement, even though there isn't really a legal authority to lock someone up in your basement; or they have to be lynched, I guess, taken down to the lake, and drowned. I mean, I'd *guess*. Maybe that's even what the stories of witches are: a way of dehumanizing the people they've had to kill. (Except, in a town with vampires and talking rats, I'd tend to assume that the stories about masked fairy-tale witches harassing ordinary people are actually about, you know, masked fairy-tale witches harassing ordinary people. I mean, I used to be skeptical, but... there are rats! With swords!)

Trouble

Condition: A threat approaches!

Action:

- **Be overwhelmed and overmatched.**

As an optional but highly recommended rule, each time there's a "lull"—

Each time you seem safe for a moment, and then it turns out you weren't—

The HG should add another group XP to the action's rewards. This lasts from the time you first get into trouble to the time you take your next XP Action, for this and all similar threats. This is technically optional and in the HG's hands, but I *do* encourage it to happen, either "every time," "every time the trouble is related," or "every time the trouble gets bigger."

Never Say Die!

Condition: You're completely overwhelmed and overmatched.

Or, you're willing to frame this conflict as if you are—you're awesome, maybe, but *doomed*.

Action:

- **Fight to the last drop of strength in your body!**

As an optional but highly recommended rule, each time you seem to *finally* have a shot, or even a sure victory, and then it's overturned by a sudden, unfair bump in the encounter's difficulty—

The HG should add another group XP to the action's rewards. This lasts from the time you throw yourself into the struggle to the time it ends with your victory or defeat. This is technically optional and in the HG's hands, but I encourage it to happen every time.

Never Say Die!



Never Say Die!

This bit's about throwing yourself all-out into fighting something that you can't beat. This bit's about refusing to give in, at least until your body gives out on you. This bit's about the passion that leads shonen heroes to victory and tragic heroes to defeat.

Normally you don't really know which one you are until the end.

You probably have a suspicion—I mean, normally you're planning to go down fighting or you're planning to do the impossible through sheer refusal to give in—but you won't *know*. Not until it's over. And maybe not even then.

This Action isn't very common in Fortitude.

There's only one bit of fatalistic magic in the whole place, one kind of... thing... that can make a struggle seem impossible. If you're not wrestling with Titov magic—see pg. 273—then the only way I can see you getting here is literally biting off more than you should chew.

And you shouldn't do that!

If you're weak, don't pick fights with giants. If you're bad with money, don't run a business! If the only way to rescue some princess is to defeat an impossible-to-defeat bad guy, consider the possibility that you are experiencing delusions, because seriously, how often does that even come to pass?

I'm sorry. I just can't endorse it in Fortitude. It's core to being heroic. I love seeing it in fiction, if it's done well. But "I won't back down even if I die!" or "I'll do this because I have to do this"—why are you *saying* such things? Seriously! Get help! Calm down! Find a different path!

You're in *Fortitude!*

But if you must, well. If you must? Then I am proud of you, for being willing to try that hard. Bear in mind that part of what it *means* to go this far is that you're going beyond your means. You're potentially able to win this, but it's going to take more out of you than you have in you to actually give.

Everyone who wins with a *Never Say Die!* action winds up falling down afterwards, usually literally although sometimes metaphorically; it leaves you depleted and possibly dead. Heck, you don't even have to win for that to happen. Once you've committed to this, once you've gone all in like this, you're ending up depleted, on the mat, probably unconscious, and possibly dead.

No matter what.

That's what deciding that you won't back down even if it breaks you *means*.

Sympathetic Actions



Sympathetic Actions

This bit's about what it's like to offer solace to someone frozen up in shock and fear. This is about making connection to someone who's just been *broken*.

So listen.

The reason this is rare in Fortitude—the *only* reason that this is rare—is that it's hard to find people who are broken like that. I mean, if you do see someone whose life is shattered, or even someone who's just stuck like a deer in the headlights, even if it's to something good:

Of *course* you offer solace.

Suddenly all eyes are on someone. Suddenly their life is upside down. Suddenly they have to cope with something they never expected to have to cope with right now: of *course* you reach out.

It's rare that it'll be obvious that it was necessary. I mean, afterwards.

A lot of the time, they'll hear your sympathy, and they'll step forward, and they'll be awesome. And it won't be clear that that's *because* of the sympathy. It's just what they did.

And sometimes they'll react badly. They'll hate you for it. They'll shout at you for offering them a comforting hand.

Or they'll break further.

That's scarily common. You try to comfort someone who's broken, you try to reach out to someone who's in shock, and they just explode with emotion, anger, fear, whatever. They pull away.

You reach out anyway, though, because people need people.

Because sometimes they grab hold of you like you're the only lifeline they have left.

There's not much Fortitude-specific about how this works.

I guess we can say that their reaction will probably be a little muted, compared to what might happen in another place. That's a Fortitude feature. I mean, Horizon? Horizon's the kind of place where you touch someone's shoulder when they're freaking out and they might practically or even literally leap out of their skin.

Sympathetic Action

Condition: You notice that someone's frozen up from, e.g., overpowering emotion, a sudden change of context, a sudden spotlighting, or shock.

Action:

- **Try to comfort/reassure them, offer them sympathy, or physically help.**

As an optional rule, you can get a second group XP for this if the person you're comforting explodes into emotion when you've comforted them—if they shift gears from "frozen up" to "demonstrative" after you act.

When you comforted them, they were all deer-in-the-headlights; but once you're sympathetic—

- they collapse in tears;
- get angry at you;
- run away;
- melt in adoration;
- vent loudly; *or*
- step up to the plate and do something completely awesome. Yay!

If you like, once you've fulfilled the Condition and Action, you can offer your frozen-up target the chance to take this XP Action instead of taking one yourself. (For instance, if you think that's more appropriate, or if you're out of XP Actions, or if you're the HG.) If they accept and take you up on it, then the action is charged to their weekly account and renamed as **Shock.** If they don't, then you can still claim the Sympathetic Action if you'd like, or, if you'd rather not claim it, not.

Fortitude isn't that way. Much of it's wordless. Much of it's emotes.

Sympathy is often tied to water, in Fortitude. There's that, too. Not to Big Lake, not necessarily—

Just to water.

To the Kichi Sacred Pools, up in the western hills. To, yes, Big Lake. Or to the rain.



Science, Faith, and Sorcery Actions

This bit is about what it's like to risk yourself on someone or something in Fortitude.

So look.

I think that Fortitude is a great place for trust.

It's a great place for the trust that science needs—the willingness to make yourself open to the world of Things; the trembling willingness to *be wrong*, to cast up a hypothesis with the risk and maybe even the hope that it will *be disproven.*

It's a great place for the trust that is at the heart of faith, too—that somehow the world, and the things in the world, will be OK.

And while I haven't really explained, and I *won't* explain right now, what I mean by "sorcery"—

Well, Fortitude is also a great place to trust in people, and fate, and things.

But it's not a terribly dramatic place.

Most of the time faith, and trust, and science, and sorcery, and all these things—most of the time, all your vulnerability to the world will fall under the rubric of **Shared Action** or **Slice of Life.** It'll be the kind of science that's about just taking measurements, and writing things down, and maybe doing some sketches and some data analysis.

Faith'll be the kind of faith that's about just... living, and living well.

Sometimes, though, it'll go a bit further than that. Sometimes the world will get into a state of disorder. Sometimes chaos will intrude—maybe literally, in the form of the Outside, but also maybe figuratively, in the form of disaster or unexpected want. Maybe it'll even appear as if it's always been there: you'll suddenly realize that something you've been doing, something you've *always been* doing, and thought was OK, isn't OK.

Like all those moments when you've thought that other people, some of the other people, around you—that they weren't like you, that they weren't worth what you were, that they don't care and sweat and want and dream and love and hunger like you do, and then you suddenly realize that that's wrong.

Like all those moments when you are suddenly *pierced* by that, cut through by that, nailed to the cross of that: of their humanity, their personhood, their own real truths, and suddenly your whole world is in disorder because you hadn't understood.

Or, like I said, disasters. Fire. Flood. Drought. Famine. Disease. Storm. Wounds. Trouble of all sorts.

Chaos—

When chaos intrudes, and casts the structures of your life into disorder, suddenly trust is a pressing, fierce, and wild thing. Suddenly to do science, or to have faith, or to offer yourself in vulnerability to the world—to try to make it better by *trusting* that it will be better—suddenly that is a fraught choice; a real, deep risk, a gamble; and it fills you with fear, and yet it unburdens you. It gives you hope.

People are always at their best in disasters—I've heard. Chaos makes it simpler to be good.

That's the best part of everything being wrong and broken, when it happens. When it happens, the scales fall from your eyes. You're freed to take risks, real risks; and so you're free also to love, and to have faith, and to see clearly, and to give the world and the people around you your vulnerable trust.

How could you not?

The water beats against the edge of the lake—Big Lake, I mean, by Fortitude. Beyond it are all the piled oceans of the world.

Science, Faith, and Sorcery Actions

Condition: You're explaining or wondering how something works.

Action:

- **Propose an idea—an implication? loophole? a desperate hope?—& then test it.**

As an optional rule, you'll get a second group XP from this if there was an audience for your explanation—someone *listening* to it and at some point making an emote or response.

The HG also has the option to go double or nothing on actions like this, warning you of some terrible consequence to befall if you go forward and putting in another group XP if you do it anyway. If you don't, of course, the XP Action doesn't happen at all!

Quests

In the ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** RPG, the XP that you earn goes towards *quests*—you'll spend it over time to finish out tasks and situations of various sorts, progressing you along your Advancement Arc.

Before I get into the sections with quest and setting integration, I thought I'd remind you a bit about how these work with a few of the generic quests of Fortitude—things practically anybody might be doing at any time. Then I'm going to talk a little bit about Connections and give you some quests that fit them. After that, it's time to cover the rest of Fortitude—all the stuff that needed quests as well as experiences to describe.

Generic Project (Fortitude Style)

4

1: 

3: 

4: 

You've been working on a big project. You know. Something! Some big use of the time and the Skills that you have.

Maybe you've been—

- building something in your backyard or a public park?
  - a model of something?
  - playground equipment (ideally to be enjoyed by a kid you know?)
  - a rocket or robot?
  - a sizable garden?
- developing a shared universe with a local APA?
- making a really large mural?
- establishing a new clam bed?
- starting a tiny business?
- building a crab farm?
- raising chickens?
- building an extension to your house?
- building an A/V system for your home?
- sorting through boxes and boxes of an unexpected inheritance?
- helping out with one of the Regional Council's initiatives—
  - tree planting and garbage can/storage facility construction?
  - restoration of one of the run-down shrines?
  - surveys for places that might have problems?
  - surveys for environmental stuff and observations?
  - helping to rebuild and get things moving again at an old live theater?



- helping to build an elementary school and teacher housing?

- apprenticing at one of the fire stations in the hills?
- constructing a doll-based re-enactment of the *Journey to the West*?
- building a smokehouse?
- doing research on local cultivation?
- sorting through the dead-letter box at a local post office to see if there's anything that's actually deliverable, and helping to bundle or file away the rest?

That kind of thing.

What You'll Do

Somebody working on a generic project *shows it off*. You'll always want to show your friends, or tell them, about the latest progress. Ultimately you want to be known for it! This isn't true for every project but it's true for almost all of them that will one day complete.

Somebody working on a generic project *travels to and fro*.

Even if you're actually doing something at home, it involves going out to stores or the wilds to pick things up that you need. Conversely, if you're not doing it at home, your lifestyle and the need to be accessible to the other PCs in play means that you're not usually living on site full-time. There's plenty of time for someone to bump into you on your way there or back.

Somebody working on a generic project *gets dirty and probably sweaty*.

Maybe it's good clean dirt, maybe it's oil, maybe it's something gross, but the point is, you don't stay clean while you're doing this. Even if you're doing something that isn't *naturally* dirty like... building a universe for a

Generic Project
(3+ person projects; Fortitude Style)

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- the project demonstrates its value;
- you deal with someone terrifying, someone monstrous, but they turn out to be just a misunderstood person or spirit that wants to be left alone;
- someone gets lost and you help to find them.

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

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- you go out into the hills looking for something
- you find yourself missing somebody who is far away
- having a friendly conversation at work with someone you used to dislike
- eating with a co-worker in an unusually high or low place
- you're caught between two problems, e.g. a problem with the project and an incoming storm
- a dangerous animal causes trouble for the project
- something gross happens

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

XP

Generic Project
(1–2 person projects; Fortitude Style)

4

You're thinking of the project. You're working on the project. You're doing things so you can work on the project. What do you say? What's the thing that you say that expresses that?

I'm thinking about things like:

- "It's *rough* building a rocket!"
- "I want to make something beautiful."
- "I have too many chickens."
- "I wonder if the salinity's right?"
- "It's for the initiative."
- "I watch for fires."

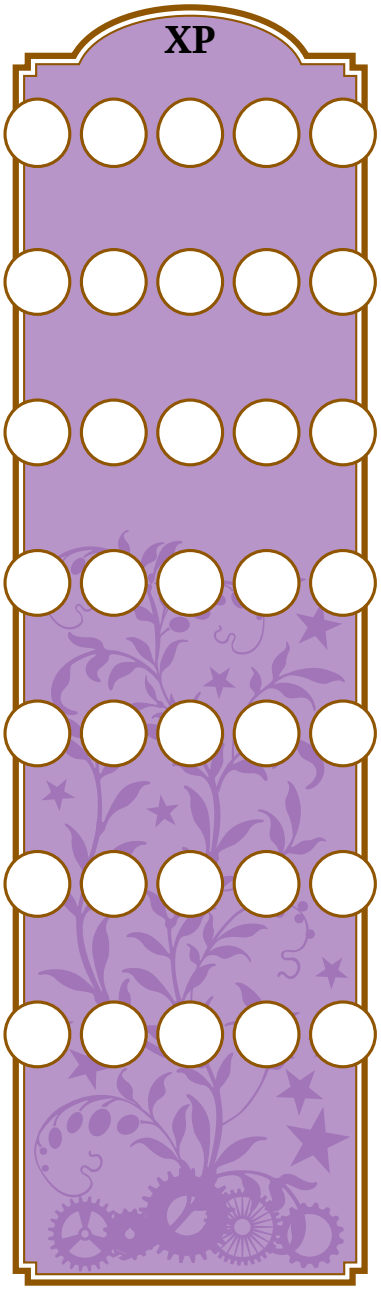
I don't know. The point is, you say it, and suddenly it brings it all into focus: yes, you are working on that project. Yes, it's relevant to what's going on.

This'll make the most sense when you're working on the project but that isn't otherwise obvious. Like, you're out shopping for wire, and you're thinking about the clam bed you're trying to set up, but that isn't necessarily obvious just from your shopping for wire. But if you muse, "I wonder if the salinity's right?" it shows where your mind is and thus what the shopping's about.

Using the catchphrase will make *some* sense when you're working on the project and it *is* obvious. You'll pause in painting a mural, or whatever, and wipe your brow, and say, "I want to make something beautiful."

It won't make much sense at all when you're completely off the project, like, if you sit stark upright in your tent while camping with friends and suddenly declare, "I watch for fires!" But I trust that if you do that it'll at least be funny and maybe actually relevant in one or another respect!

You can earn a bonus XP (up to once per scene/15 minutes) for this quest by using your catchphrase. What's yours?



local APA... you'll find ways to make a project-relevant mess. That's just what you do!

(In that *particular* case, may I suggest getting too into the idea of a fancy pen or quill? Ink does a writer proud!)

You'll probably *use a lot of jargon*.

Maybe you actually know the lingo in real life, maybe you can fake it with technobabble. Maybe you'll have to go "I emote incomprehensible explanations" or "So, I was building blah blah *blah* blah blah blah-blah *blah*" instead. But the point is, the project probably comes with a set of esoteric concepts and specialized vocabulary, and you'll eventually forget that other people don't understand it, and you'll start throwing it around.

More generally, someone working on a generic project *talks about it quite a lot*.

If you *can* be working on the project in game, then obviously you'll do so, and that'll be a big thing that

you are doing; but if the project is mostly just mind-numbing background labor that doesn't feature directly in the game, you can use the above tells to show how much it features in your life.

What You'll Know

Someone working on a generic project *knows why previous, similar projects failed.*

This isn't necessarily applicable! But if you're making a new clam bed, you'll know why other people haven't done so. If you're building a moon rocket in your back yard—not that I *expect* you to blast into space using homemade equipment on a mundane Arc, or, for that matter, at all, but it's still a way to express your dream—then you'll know why earlier generations of Fortitude rocketry enthusiasts failed.

More generally, you'll know the history of such projects hereabouts, and possibly throughout the world.

Variations

There are two versions of this quest—one for something you're doing on your own, or with another person, and the other for leading or contributing to a big group thing.

Exploration of a Wish (Fortitude Style)

35 XP Quest

2: 

3: 

4: 

5: 

A wish or miracle has just changed the whole world. You already have enough troubles being yourself—

Now you have to work out what this *new* world means for you!

What You'll Know

Sometimes in Town—

Sometimes everything changes.

Mostly you don't notice. Mostly that's a *part* of it, you see, that you don't notice. If somebody uses the wishing power of their heart to turn back time, how would anybody ever even know that happened? If somebody wishes there were more Belgians around, well, maybe a ship gets in and there's some Belgians on it. Or maybe there've *always* been more Belgians around. Heck, wasn't your *mother* from Belgium?

Whatever!

And if you're aware of these things at all, then you'll also have an inkling that maybe you don't see a lot of these wishes because later on they just plain *un-happen*. I mean, if *you* had the power to make wishes come true, you've got to figure that at least a third of the time you'd just be wishing you hadn't made those earlier wishes—

That's why hardly anybody has that power![56]

But sometimes, when something that'll stay has just swept through Town and put your whole destiny in a new light, you'll be changed enough, and enough aware of it, to treat reconciling yourself with the new way of things as a sort of quest.

What Happens

The first and most important step is to identify the moral thesis at the heart of the wish.

A person's heart is good. A person's wishing heart, that contains the power of miracles—it's fundamentally *good*. Even if corrupted, even if twisted—somewhere in there there's a heart that wants something beautiful and right made true.

Every wish is a wish that the endless burden of suffering in the world be lightened;

That people be freer to be themselves, and to love.

This isn't always obvious, particularly if the wish is something like "I wish everybody rode horses all the time" or "I wish that Mr. Pib would drown in rot." And maybe the last kind of thing is really only expressing the despairing power of the Bleak Academy.

But still—

The first step of this quest, the *core* of it, is to find *sympathy for the wish*. Find a way to say: this is what the wish wants, at its heart. This is the good thing that

56 *(This is probably not the actual reason why hardly anybody has that power.)*

it's looking for. This is *why* it is good to have this, and to want this.

"I wish everybody rode horses all the time **because people should be free to travel, and should share their lives with great and lovable powers**."

"I wish that Mr. Pib would drown in rot **because people that Mr. Pib has hurt shouldn't be hurt like that; they're more valuable than that, they deserved better!**"

There is a hidden moral heart to every wish—like that!

The next step is to identify how the wish outpaces itself; how it refutes itself. To *understand how the wish unmakes its own core thesis*.

This part is hardest for "nice" wishes. If someone wishes that everybody rides horses all the time, it's pretty easy to spot how the underlying wish for freedom and togetherness is undermined by trapping people on horses and possibly breeding disharmony and discontent. If somebody wishes that things would just be OK for a while, or that they had an ice cream, though, the point of contradiction, the auto-unraveling of the moral of the wish, can be a little bit harder to find.

Still... if you *start* by assuming that the wish unmakes itself, if you assume that it will stand in the way of its own purpose, then you can probably still find the flaw pretty quickly. Wishing that things would be OK? The problem is usually that they are not actually OK. Making them "OK" isn't going to fix that. Wishing for an ice cream? The problem is probably that if one *has* an ice cream, one cannot then eat it as well.

The last step is to *find a reconciliation*. Find some way of pushing forward the wish's moral heart without contradiction, or of overcoming the contradiction without refuting the wish's moral heart.

These three steps don't have that much to do with your life directly, but they're still what you need to focus on, I think, to understand what the wish is going to mean for you. If you work through these three steps properly then the part that's about figuring out *your* life and destiny—that should take care of itself!

4

Exploration of a Wish
(Fortitude Style)

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest for...

- a compelling statement of the moral heart of the wish, or a compelling illustration of it if the moral heart itself was easily found;
- a compelling statement of its refutation or self-contradiction;
- a cool demonstration of how to get past that.

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

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through:

- trying to understand the changed world and the wish
- experiencing the changes in the world
- discussing these changes with your friends
- wish-related things getting completely over the top

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

XP

Shrine Duties

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

- Someone tries to set you up (romantically) with a relative or friend of theirs;
- Someone seeks you out and asks you to perform an exorcism or cleansing;
- You participate in some costumed event or dance at a festival.

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

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through:

having tea with a friend at your shrine

selling fortunes and good luck charms

performing a sacred dance or shrine-related ceremony at a wedding

advising visitors to the shrine and/or making offerings on their behalf

purifying the dust of the Outside

helping to prepare the grounds of a shrine for a festival

performing a special seasonal ritual (e.g., something done in spring to help bless the crops)

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

XP

...no Mystic Arc?

This is a fairly grounded and prosaic quest—the quest of somebody for whom shrine duties are mostly a part of everyday life. You'll want to look to quests like **Changes** or **Fascination**, in the main book, if you want to tell the story of shrine duties that bridge sideways into possession, exaltation, and transformation.

Shrine Duties

35 XP Quest

1:

5:

You fulfill the ritual functions associated with your shrine. That means that you aren't just involved in studying the magic, tending the building, and hanging out with your family (if you're from a shrine family)—you also play a part in:

- sacred dances and festivals,
- tending any shrine-related gods,[57]
- doing blessings and exorcisms, *and*
- making or selling fortunes and good luck charms.

What You'll Do

Someone performing shrine duties *winds up in costume a lot*.

The more you involve yourself in the formal duties of the shrine the more often you'll do other things while in shrine clothes or costume instead of street clothes. It's obviously pretty rare to wear a complete ceremonial costume when just out and about in Fortitude, but the longer you're on this quest, the more your civilian wardrobe will drift towards sharing pieces and design ideas with your formal costume. Plus, while you're

57 *This isn't a huge part of Fortitude spirituality, so I don't think there are any. But if there are, you tend them!*

on this quest, scenes where you're already dressed for shrine duties later that day or haven't had a chance to change out of costume from duties you performed earlier will be more frequent.

Someone performing shrine duties is *spiritually open*.

It's possible to be a skeptical person, a relentlessly mundane person, or a spiritually insensitive person and do shrine duties throughout a year—but it's really hard. The duties themselves put you into a meditative and open frame of mind a lot of the time; if you seal yourself off from the numinous, you will not do them well.

Someone performing shrine duties is *pliant*.

If you're taking up the formal duties associated with a shrine, it's a lot harder to politely disentangle yourself from random people who want to drag you into this or that. You'll never know when someone who's demanding you come visit them or talk to them or attend some event is building up to something where it's actually *important* that you attend. I mean, you still *can* disentangle yourself from people demanding your attention, it's still *allowed*, but you have to do so more gracefully and less frequently than you otherwise might.

What You'll Know

You'll have a sense for the harmony of the cosmos. You'll have a sense for the progression of the seasons. You'll know the habits of the people and of any spirits that are associated with your shrine.

Most importantly, you'll *know how the various rituals of your tradition are performed*.

If you're asked to do an exorcism, or to bless a house, or something, and your family magic doesn't really cover that, then you'll at least know the proper words and the proper conduct to get it, non-magically, done.

Crisis of Confidence

35 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

3: 

You've reached a big step in your life, you've found your role or purpose, but... what if you're not actually any good at it?

Do you even know what you're *doing*?

The quest cards below give you a couple of generic approaches to handling uncertainty like that.

Crisis of Confidence Signs

I Have To Do This

I don't know how to do this.

This is My Destiny!

What am I DOING?

Crisis of Confidence
(Tragic Version)

You have a destiny, a *purpose*, or at least a new kind of forward motion in your life, but it's come with a psychological or social burden—a private cross to bear. Pick one of the "crisis of confidence" signs on these pages 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?

XP



I Have To Do This

I can't do this.

I Have To Try This

I don't know how to do this.

Crisis of Confidence
(Pastoral Version)

4

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by facing your fears and uncertainty about the newest elements in your life.

Pick a standard phrase to indicate this, and then just say that phrase or some close variant when you want to claim the bonus. For instance, after doing something that's related to the recent changes or recently-assumed responsibilities in your life, you'd say something like:

- "What am I *doing*?"
- "I'm supposed to be doing this, right?" *or*
- emote something like *"head in my hands and trying to figure this out."*

The idea is that by saying that, you tie this otherwise-normal event, particularly if it went swimmingly, into your uncertainty and your crisis of confidence.

What's your catchphrase?

XP



Trying to Fix Some Social Problem (Fortitude Style)

45 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

3: 

There's something that bothers you about life here in Fortitude. There's some problem that you think isn't getting enough attention—something you think people should fix.

Are you concerned about...

- inadequate services for the disabled?
- the sad disrepair of the local Church?
- the poor treatment (at least historically) of witches?
- inadequate criminal justice procedures in general?
- inadequate recycling procedures?
- inadequate environmental protections in general?
- the general refusal to update to modern ideas and technologies?
- the existence of an evil orphanage in Horizon?
- prejudice against the Jotun and *youkai*?
- the level of feline euthanasia that Fortitude's 1000-cat limit (pg. 285 and pg. 303) requires?
- friends who've had to give up their dreams because
  - it's time to marry?
  - *someone* has to run their family business?
  - they're in debt?
  - the education or medical facilities in Fortitude are inadequate?

Then this quest lets you work to fix that.

What You'll Know

For the most part Fortitude is pretty backwards.

It's an idyllic place but it manages to be an idyllic place by papering over its flaws with... well, with sheer human virtue. And rat virtue, and Jotun virtue, and... everything else virtue. I suppose! But it's not progressive so much as it is *nice*.

For instance, if a building isn't handicapped-accessible, you can rely on the people inside to come outside cheerfully to deal with anyone in a wheelchair, or to help lever it up into the building—but that's not the same as being able to wheel in properly on your own.

So on the one hand, it doesn't *suck* to be wheelchair-bound if you're living in Fortitude—

But accessibility would really be best.

Similarly, I think there may be a meaningful overall wealth discrepancy between the sexes here, particularly at the higher end. It's not the same level of issue here as it is on Earth because life in general is so much more *feasible*—it's so much more possible to find people to turn to; to build support networks; and to put an independent roof over your head. It doesn't matter as much, here, that some people, particularly some higher-social-status and generally male people, are richer, because there isn't the implicit, explicit, or threatened *peonage* attached to it that there is in, say, the States.

...but the issue is still *real*.

Hm.

I don't *think* that there's any full-blown racism here, but I may be misreading that. I'm not completely up on that kind of thing. There's definitely some othering of foreigners, shop foxes, Riders, Jotuns, and the Yatskaya family, say, along with a few peculiar attitudes towards vampires, the unworldly tribes, and rats—

I don't know if I've gotten everything there. Maybe?

—and it seems *plausible* to me that a Rider or Jotun might face some actual bigotry. Most people won't mind a bit of the old blood or the Rider eyes but I could see Riders not getting jobs or being pushed out of romantic entanglements with family; I could see Jotuns getting a lot more nasty-edged teasing than they ought.

Maybe even the shop foxes and the vamps?

It's conversely possible that I'm misjudging Fortitude here! Maybe there *isn't* any kind of problem, or it's much worse than I imagine. I've never been a Rider or a Jotun, just a foreigner. I wouldn't know!

The Regional Council is actually pretty solid on environmental issues. I've been impressed.

Trying to Fix Some Social Problem
(Fortitude Style)

4

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

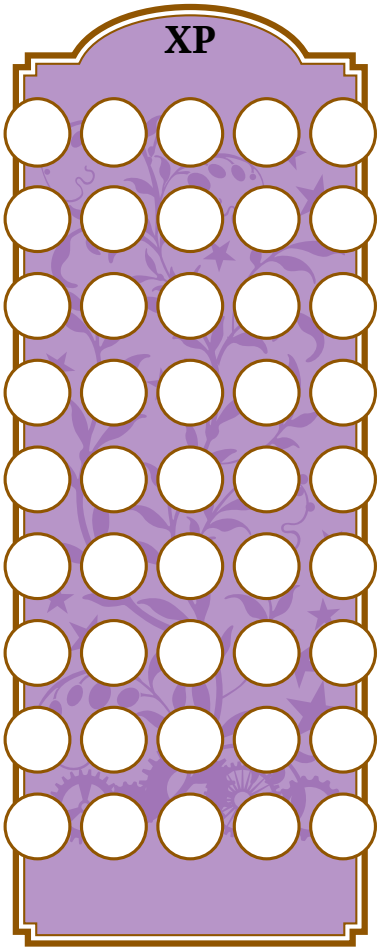
- some supernatural enemy becomes involved or entangled with the quest;
- you find an important ally (natural, political, or supernatural) in your quest;
- you use a Celdinar Day, Landing Day, or Cleaning Day celebration as a platform for pushing your cause.

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

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- participating in a local project to address the problem directly (if only locally)
- taking a petition around
- writing letters about the cause
- preparing and reviewing a proposal for submission to the Regional Council
- meeting with a club or group that's pushing for the cause
- arguing the importance of the cause

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



It's not that there *can't* be better care for the environment, there always can, but seriously, it's an order of magnitude nicer than the nicest parts of California I've ever lived in, and those were pretty nice.

What You'll Do

People who are campaigning to fix the local social problems are *earnest and clean-cut*.

I am all for the hypothetical power of unruly, dirty mobs to bring social change, but that is not a trend I have locally seen.

Other than the stuff that's on the quest card, I think that is basically all.

Connections over Time

These are some quests to show how your life and capabilities evolve as you gain in Connection to someone, something, or some place and context. They're obviously quests best taken at the appropriate Connection level—

I'm not saying you *can't* take them at a different level, but it will feel kind of wrong.

They look like this:

Gaming Terminology

Chibi-quest—a short quest, typically 15 XP, without any specific Advancement Arc associations. Often it'll give you a Recharge Token, temporary bonus, or a bonus specific to the quest.

Lost and Confused

15 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest for Connection 0-1

You don't know this place well. You don't understand this situation. Or maybe this is about a person, and they keep showing up in your life but you don't understand their *deal*. It's confusing to you and it stresses you a little!

Basically, you're out there dealing with this stuff but you *don't know what you're doing*.

This quest is about the goofy, over-the-top trouble and drama associated with strangeness and being out of your element. Things that should go simply and smoothly escalate instead into hectic, dramatic events.

Rewards

Completing this quest earns you one or both of the following:

- you meet an old friend. You haven't spoken with them in a while, probably, and you didn't realize they'd be involved in this—but they *are*, and they have something to offer you in this context, whether it's useful Skills, prestige, know-how, or just a valuable and probably much-appreciated willingness to help.
- you earn some bit of knowledge useful in dealing with a mystery or problem that you've been confronted with. While you must *find* that information in the process of being Lost and Confused, the problem doesn't have to relate to your being confused or lost—it can be from a completely different aspect of your life!

The HG chooses which reward you get, though you can obviously express a preference.

If the HG wants to offer something but isn't sure whether it'll actually be useful, they can make that friend or that data a +1 or +2 Tool to appropriate actions by fiat until it's had some use.



4

Lost and Confused
(Connection 0–1)

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

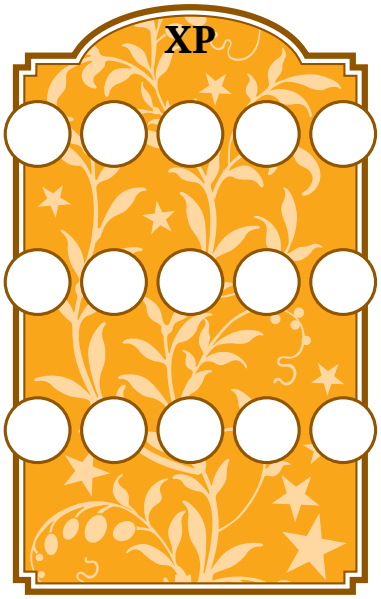
This quest is built on your (lack of) Connection to a specific circumstance, situation, place, or person. You're lost and confused there, or in dealing with them. You don't know what's going on!

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) when the situation itself, the person's interactions with you, or the consequences of your not knowing what's going on get a little bit over the top.

Or, for that matter, when you *decide* to make them a little over the top.

When that happens, 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 be willing to hold up a sign. It's even OK if sometimes you're being ironic or making a suggestion instead of an observation, as long as an observation is more typical.



Exploring
(Connection 1+)

You're poking around trying to figure out what's going on here. You're having a good time. This is interesting.

This place, person, whatever—

Is *neat*.

So... you can earn a bonus XP for this quest with an emote or statement that says, basically: *oo, cool!*

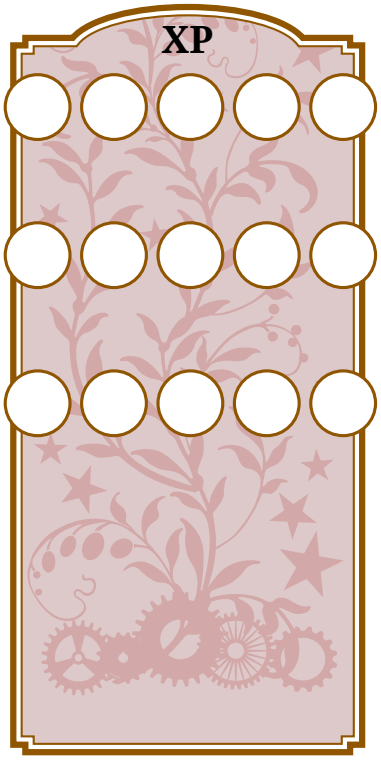
Pick a catchphrase for this. You don't have to use the exact same catchphrase every time, but it's the core of your experience here. It's something like:

"Wow, look at this." or

"I *love* this place!"

Ideally it's something even more thing-specific, like, if you're exploring the House of Crystal you might sigh, "So *pretty*," while if you were exploring the stories and corners of an adventuresome ship like ***the Tikhvin*** it might be more like "Wow, this ship's been *everywhere*."

Anyway, for you, it's...



Exploring

15 XP Quest

 Chibi-Quest for Connection 1+

You're interested in this place or situation. You're alert. You're having fun figuring it out.

Or maybe you're dealing with a person, and you're kind of interested in knowing more about them, you're starting to figure them out and you want to *get* what's going on. This doesn't even mean you *like* them so much as that they *interest* you; you want their *story*.

This quest is about your poking around and finding neat corners of the place or bits of the person's story.

Rewards

Completing this quest earns you one or both of the following:

- you find something *neat*—something that makes your life better. For a person, this is usually an easy way to keep them happy paired with a way they can help you out. For a place, it's something cool that'll help you out.
- you find something secret, something that shows you a person's true face or gives you a clue as to the deeper mysteries of a place.

If you're actively looking for a secret, you should usually get that—a glimpse of your target's true face. Otherwise, it's up to the HG which you get.

Sometimes the target can resist. This is always an option for PC targets and the HG can in theory resist as an NPC. Sometimes, I mean, you're investigating someone who doesn't *want* you to find "an easy way to keep them happy" or "a glimpse of their true face"

In such a case you can treat this as a "quest miracle" with a rating based on the most appropriate Arc. If the target can't resist any other way, they can block it with a Serious Wound—basically the false face or mask that they wear that protects them from such investigations and which potentially provides them an Affliction that protects them from a follow-up attack.

I'd *rather* that it always just work, you understand!

I just wanted to make sure that PCs had an option to not reveal a glimpse of their true face if for some reason having someone see that with a simple quest would really break their concept of who they are.

Gaming Terminology

Quest miracle—a miracle created with a quest instead of MP. Once you get enough XP to activate it, you can keep it running until the book or season ends or until you need that quest slot for something else.

A Good Life

15 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest for Connection 2+

25 XP Quest

1:

2:

4

You've gotten to know this person or situation. You're kind of at home here. You know how to get along.

This quest is about the simple, honest interactions at the core of an established life.

Rewards

The 15 XP version is usually for Connections to a place or situation, and it usually rewards a Recharge Token. You might also discover some new cool feature of the place, or you might be recognized for belonging or contributing with a mildly cool scene or award that isn't big enough or permanent enough to be the reward from a full-length quest.

The 25 XP version is usually for connecting to a person, and it's usually a Shepherd 1-2 quest. On its own it's most likely to be a Shepherd 1 quest; but, it fits in well at level 2 if you met the person in question in step 1!

A Good Life (Connection 2+)

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 "for" the target of this Connection or "about" this Connection.

Pick a standard phrase to indicate this, and then just say that phrase or some close variant when you want to claim the bonus. For instance, after a heroic standoff against a witch or a walk up the beach, you'll say:

"Well, I'm a Fortitude kid, after all." *or*

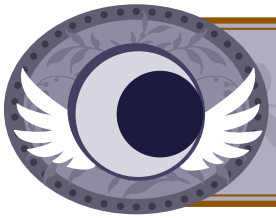
"I had to, I'm your friend."

Or whatever! The catchphrase is going to depend on what the thing you're connecting to is, after all.

This catchphrase is explicitly here to replace judgment calls on whether something you did related to the Connection or not. If you're willing to say something appropriate and catch-phrase-like IC, I'm willing to assume it's about your Connection. If you're not, then, well, maybe it's not!

What's your catchphrase?

XP



A Comfortable Life

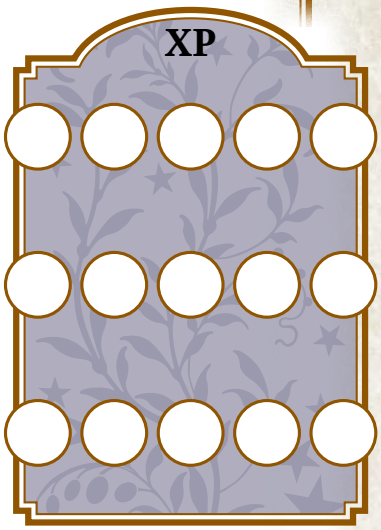
There's something you do or say that orients you in this space. There's a catchphrase for your love or your friendship; there's something you always say in a place or situation.

I'm struck by the memory of a friend of mine, looking at the back of her departing SO, saying, almost involuntarily, "So beautiful." I'm thinking of that; but also of in-jokes and mock-insults between friends—

- "You know what?" (preferentially said to a particular person) "...chicken-butt."
- "Dork."
- (gasp) "It's you!!"

— and things you say that make you *that* guy or *that* girl at a particular place, like,

- "This place has the best chairs."
- "Gimme the usual!"
- "My PEOPLE!"
- "Can I help?"
- (OOC/emoted) "I'm cleaning up a little, I guess."
- "Thank you. Sorry. Thank you."
- "Hey, let's focus."
- "Ganbatte!"
- (OOC/emoted) "I'm staring off at nothing again."
- (OOC/emoted) "I'm peering over your shoulder."
- (OOC/emoted) "Poke. Poke."



You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by directing attention to this experience and saying some variant on your phrase.

What catch phrase do you use?

A Comfortable Life

15 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest for Connection 3+

You've gotten to a comfortable, untroubled place in your dealings with this place, situation, or person. You know how to live with them.

So this quest is just...

An observation of that comfort. It's about living your life, day to day, knowing that you can handle this stuff. Like, it doesn't mean that you never fight with a friend, just that you know how to resolve those fights, or how to make up afterwards. It doesn't mean that you never have anything bad happen in that place or situation, just that you know what to do when bad things do.

In sum there's a kind of calm serenity that descends upon a relationship when it reaches a certain level.

That's the substance at the heart of this quest.

Rewards

Completing this quest gives you one or both of the following rewards—it'll be the HG's choice, although if your target is a PC they'll probably have a say:

- a reputation in a new place or community—basically, your relationship with the target gets you involved in something cool somewhere else.
- the opportunity to mentor someone, to show them around a place, situation, or life and help them understand it. It isn't necessarily the person

you're connected to, if this quest is about a person—for instance, the last time I did this quest in connection with a friend, I wound up having an extended interaction with her toddler, whom I got to teach the tiniest bit of reading and Internet exploration to.

The point of both of these rewards boils down to "this will make you feel cool and expand your social circle."

Concentrated Awesome

20 XP Quest for Connection 4+

4

2: 

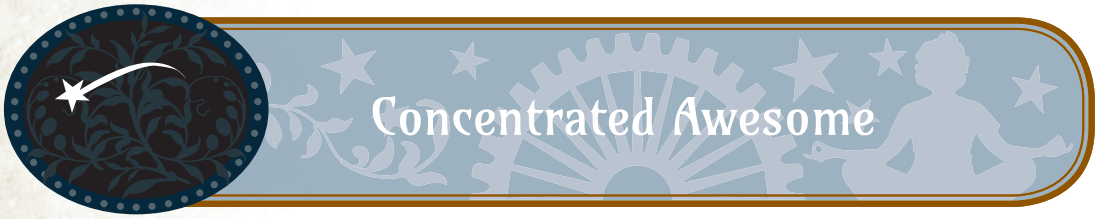
3: 

4: 

5: 

This quest appears in the ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** RPG, but I thought you might like to see it in its proper place in the middle of this list. So here it is, the quest for Connection 4+:

In which you are a total master of some environment or are totally in synch with a partner, lover, rival, or friend!



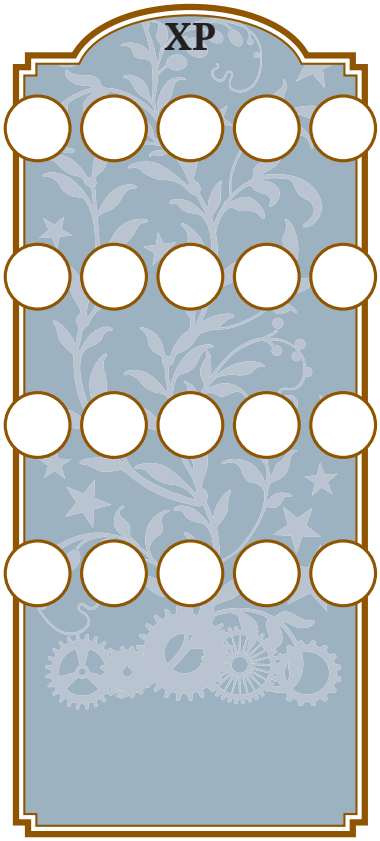
The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest if there's a scene where you've been cut off somehow from your normal power sources, memories, or sense of self, but use your deep connection to this environment to still be pretty awesome.

You can earn this bonus once, for a total of 5 XP.

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

- having a montage of incidents showing off your situation mastery
- hanging out admiring the thing or situation
- exaggerated tongue-in-cheek drama about the thing in question
- having a casual conversation while doing what "should" be exciting or difficult things in the situation or with the person in question—e.g., arguing over laundry or talking about stuff you've been reading with your Connection 4+ SO while fighting to stabilize a storm-tossed ship

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



Transcendence

25 XP Quest

 Chibi-Quest for Connection 5

40 XP Quest

1: 

4: 

5: 

You've become kind of an avatar or expression of a place or situation—its public or its spiritual face. Or, if this is a Connection to a person, you've let them subsume you: you're a part of them, you walk in their shadow, and maybe they're a part of you as well.

This quest lets you build on that.

It lets you save them. It lets you redeem them. It lets you make things better. It's a quest to bring about a reconciliation between flesh and spirit, life and death, or any two things, really, that have been riven apart.

It lets you sacrifice yourself for the other, for the thing that you're connected to, in a way that will *mean* something by rules fiat.

Rewards

The 25 XP chibi-quest version, in particular, gives you the opportunity to sacrifice yourself—either literally or symbolically—for that which you are connected to. You die, at least notionally; the absolute minimum cost is losing your name or part of your soul, the maximum cost is being erased from all existence past present and future, but it's also feasible to lose something or everything for a comparatively short period—three days, a season, or whatnot. To die, or forget yourself, and then come back.

The benefit for this is effectively an Imperial miracle—

You may work a reconciliation between the thing you're connected to and something else. Specifically,

- You may redeem it from some wrong;
- You may bring back something it has lost;
- You may create an opportunity to end some conflict it is having;
- You may restore a home and family it has lost;
- You may use it as a medium to restore something home- or family-connected to someone or something else that lost those things to death, conflict, or wrong.

Basically, at the end of this quest, you can sacrifice yourself to make things better, to build a family and unity where those things had been lost.

For rules purposes, both these effects and the sacrifice itself are treated as a wish—something like,

"I wish I could sacrifice myself [[in relevant fashion X]] to [[e.g., bring back the life this place I care about has lost.]]"

In the 40 XP version, you don't necessarily get this benefit—what actually happens conditions on your Arc. Finishing a Storyteller 5 quest earns you the right to move on with your life, for instance, so you'll definitely have achieved something meaningful but the sacrifice itself can't possibly take; finishing an Emptiness 5 quest might earn you a sense of completion, in which case you'll definitely succeed at *something* but you could also very well be dead.

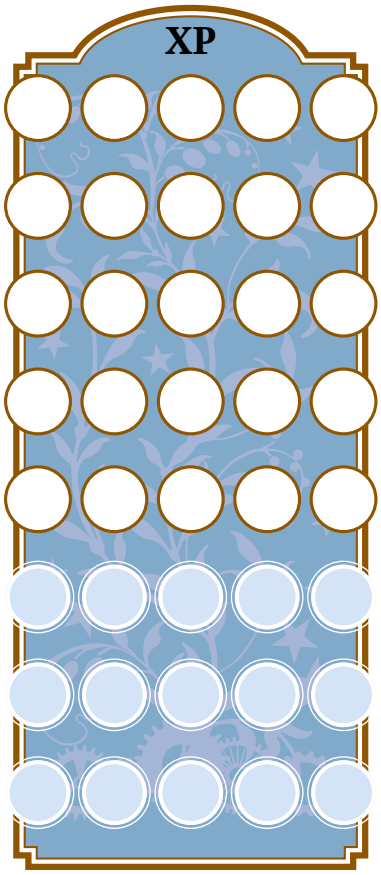
Transcendence

4

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by *proposing a theory about the purpose, destiny, or needs of the thing you're connected to*.

Basically, you'll constantly be thinking about what it means that the thing or person you're connected to is a certain way and how to navigate that in the waters of the world. If it's a place or situation, you'll basically be setting forth policy: *we have to do this* or, e.g., *Fortitude needs us to do that*. If it's a person, obviously, it's a bit more intrusive to speculate on their purpose or set their policy, but you can still do a lot of thinking about what they need and make suggestions to *them* about their destiny.

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.




NEW
IN STORES
BLOODFANG
OPEN
NEW
IN STORES
BLOODFANG

Growing Into Fortitude

Good Homes
a preamble

5

Here's a few corners and elements of Fortitude to contend with, along with the quests that let you grow to become a part or ally or element thereof.

It is hard to humble myself to the service of these pathetic minds and souls. Every time I scrub the mildew from the bathroom walls, I find myself thinking:

"Laugh while you can, mind-numbing labor—repetitive frustrations! But know that should I unleash the terrifying power of my invention upon you, you would be automated in mere seconds—these soap scum stains scream and this mildew wilt away as my Abominable Bathroom-Purifying Construction remakes such dismal walls a brilliant, unworldly white!

"Why, why do I allow myself these struggles with the petty, banal drudgeries of ordinary men?"

Yet I persist, of course. I shall be strong. I shall not be broken by mere cleansing.

I will affect concern for their trivial lives. I will do things as they believe they "ought" be done.

How could I do otherwise?

These people have seen me, they have looked into my heart, and they have somehow foolishly chosen not to be afraid.

— Leonardo de Montreal,
Nightmares' Angel,
as played by Beatrice Smith

Fortitude assigns a certain mystic, mythic quality to the "good home" or "good place." It's a home or more rarely a business that has earned the community's trust. It's a place where you can expect children to grow up healthy, wise, and strong. It's a place where you can hope (if you've earned and have a need for it) for things like charity, justice, fellow-feeling, and even love. It's a place that is magically blessed, in some generic and inexplicable fashion: you wouldn't expect witches or evil fairies to want anything to do with the place. Even shadowy demons might turn away.

Keeping a good place isn't any one person's job, although a PC can catalyze the transformation from an ordinary place to a good one or[58] help strengthen and maintain some good place that they've found. It's not any one person's job because it *can't* be: a good place needs everyone in it to do their part.

That doesn't mean that every last person who lives there has to be perfect all the time—in fact, it's common for one or two egotists, misanthropes, and slug-a-beds to hang out on the fringes of a good place without destroying its magic—but someone like that *does* have to recognize their flaws and find a way to fit into the rhythm of the good place despite them.

I've said that you can't manage a good place on your own, but individuals do sometimes do something *like* that. The notional personal equivalent is being a *dependable person*—someone that the people of Fortitude can rely on. The blessed quality of a good place also finds individual expression in a *sacred child*—a ritual role that requires great self-deprivation but rewards its practitioners with power against fear, bitterness, and evil magic.

Some of Fortitude's good places include—

- **The Suzuki Family Home** (pg. 367)
- **The Meyer Family Home** (pg. 367)
- **The Archive of Professor Hideo Hayashi** (pg. 249)
- **The Celdinar Family Home** (pg. 367)
- **Saito Skate Park** (pg. 367)

58 technically "and/or," but doing both is rare

- **The Cat-Face Shrine** (pg. 367)
- **The Gold Sky Tea House** (pg. 367)
- **The Third Star Shrine** (pg. 367) and
- **Ogline Walking Park** (pg. 367)

Current sacred children include—

- **Ayumi** (pg. 363)
- Stefan (pg. 364)
- **Liesl Yamaguchi** (pg. 364); and the candidate
- **Juro Lindell** (pg. 364).

If you're looking for a dependable person, instead, consider hunting down—

- **Dominic Waystreet** (pg. 355) or
- **Kimiko Dinsbury** (pg. 355), both on the Regional Council.

The sign of a good place in the iconography of Fortitude is a gold tassel, braid, or cord.

In most cases this signals an aspiration and not a fact: little gold braids are luck charms for domestic tranquility and larger on hang near shrines and parks intended as a place of peace. Young children can hang little golden paper-chains near their house's wind chimes to flatter their parents. There is notably no reliable iconic mark for the *actual* good places or their keepers—the matron of a good place is likely to snort and tear any such thing down if someone tries to put one up. Similarly, there's no real way to spot a dependable person save by their attitude and others' words. Sacred children and candidates for sacred children *do* often wear gold tassels or braids, however; for them, it's much more of a commitment than a claim and humility does not apply.

The converse indicator in Fortitude's iconography is white paint on the door. Marking a door with white paint is saying that it's a bad place and most likely haunted. White war paint on the face is included in a typical depiction of an evil witch, demon, or fairy. Note that actually seeing white paint on a door is not a reliable indicator that the place *is* bad: the nature of Fortitude discourages misjudgment and vandalism but it by no means *prohibits* them.



Keeping a Good Place

25 XP Quest

1: 

You work to build a good place—a peaceful, happy environment.

What You'll Do

5

A good place has *things to give*. It has extras of things, or things the people in it can live without. Someone can find you clothing if your only outfit is ruined. Someone can find you some leftovers or snacks if you're hungry. There's always spare bedding and spare towels and the like for unexpected guests.

For a good home this is vital. There's some flexibility on this when it comes to good places that aren't good homes. A bookstore might not necessarily have bedding. Good places in other Regions, like a club room in Horizon's School, might not have the *option* of having food or an exhaustive supply of random things around.

Even then it's inherent in the nature of a good place that it has a surprising amount to offer.

A good place *doesn't fear you*. This is particularly important when it comes to people who don't deserve fear: if everybody misunderstands and hates you, but you haven't actually been caught doing something *wrong*, a good place will take you in. The people in it might watch you like a hawk, if there's every reason to think you're a monster, but they won't close their doors just based on your rep. Not being afraid, however, also applies to people who have earned or otherwise deserve their fear. A good place is a place that can stand up to evil or wickedness. You can blackmail or legitimately threaten the people of a good place into supporting an evil cause, but you can't *frighten* them into it.

A good place *doesn't mind a bit of trouble*. The people in a good place accept one another and most visitors even when it costs them, pretty much right up to the amount of trouble they're willing to bear. Their favors and help aren't on a sliding scale. If they're willing to do something for you, they're willing to do it, and you don't have to feel guilty for the trouble or pay back something you can't afford. That doesn't prevent a good place from drawing a line: a bookstore can be a good place even if you're not allowed to break in at midnight and spend the night browsing the shelves. It just means that if you *are* allowed to break in at midnight and spend the night browsing the shelves, nobody's going to come back later and say that you're an awful person for doing so.

Finally, the people of a good place *know how to get along with one another, and how to make each other happy*, at least to a degree and at least while there.

A good place usually has something nice-smelling cooking. It usually has little touches like fresh flowers here and there. It usually has a lot of regulars, if it's a business, or residents, if it's a home, and some of them are usually children. A garden is common, as is having one or more pets. A good place is pretty well kept-up, hovering in a well-loved zone just short of clean. However, everything in this paragraph is optional: a one-person fire lookout tower with nothing cooking, no fresh flowers, and no pets can still be a good place if it's well-maintained, well-loved, and meets the other criteria of being a good place.

What You'll Know

There's always somebody in a good place who knows where everything is. There's always somebody who knows where to find anything necessary to resolve any reasonably predictable disaster. This is considered ambient knowledge: you can play out not having it, if all the competent and organized people in a good place have temporarily stepped out, but even then it's pretty rare—people in a good place have a tendency to make sure that everybody else who spends much time there knows what to do when they're not around.

That means that if you've spent much time in a good place, you probably know where to find ladders, fire extinguishers, cleaning supplies, towels, buckets, soda, clean water, linens, the fuse box, and the like. That *doesn't* mean that you have *adequate* access to those things: you'll definitely know where to find the closest ladder or rope but it's perfectly possible for that to be "a mile and a half down the road."

Actually living in a good place means knowing a selection of recipes for making good food with the ingredients most common in Fortitude, or how to make Fortitude-style food in whatever Region the good place is in. This means in practice that you can do an awful

lot with fish. It also means that you're good at smoking, salting, pickling, and drying food, since many houses and most ships in Fortitude don't have refrigeration. You'll also know a bit about Fortitude-style home maintenance, including the use of calcium chloride to maintain a dryer home, the use of dreamcatchers to collect Outside dust that blows in off Big Lake, and how to carefully monitor household machinery for rust.

Most importantly, becoming part of a good place means knowing how to live with the other people who live in that good place. If they're weird enough or secretive enough you might not necessarily know how to make them happy *in general*, but you'll know how to make their lives a little better and get along with them when you're both a part of the good place. You can ask the HG or the relevant player how to make someone who shares a good place with you more comfortable. Unless it's actively a secret, or they really want you to ask them in-character instead of out-of-character, they should say.

Warning!

Anybody can help to strengthen a good place, or any number of good places, and that's fine and cool. However, taking primary or secondary responsibility for more than one good place can easily overwork you and lead you, eventually, to collapse.



The Archive

The archive of **Professor Hayashi Hideo** has turned into something of a halfway house for eccentric and talented individuals.

The Professor himself has a kind of David Tennant-like geek hotness, which would make him a potential romantic interest, except that he's 37 and the expected PC age is 15. So... maybe if you're in a game where the PCs are adults? If you're close enough to old enough he really is kind of hot.

He was interested in Town's history and the stories of explorers of distant lands, so he took over Town's archive—

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 platce 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.

— and after a while, he started taking in promising youths with no better place to go. I'm under the impression that this was sort of by accident, like, **the Dream-Witch** (pg. 160) started staying at the Archive without really formally being adopted by him or maybe without even really clearing it with him first, and then another girl showed up, and then a boy, and then the next thing you know he was starting to have to budget for a collection of hungry teenagers and offer shelter to people who might fit in. But maybe some of it was planned? I don't know.

The Archive offers a +1 Tool bonus to taking shelter from your past.

Keeping a Good Place
(Dramatic Version)

5

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest:

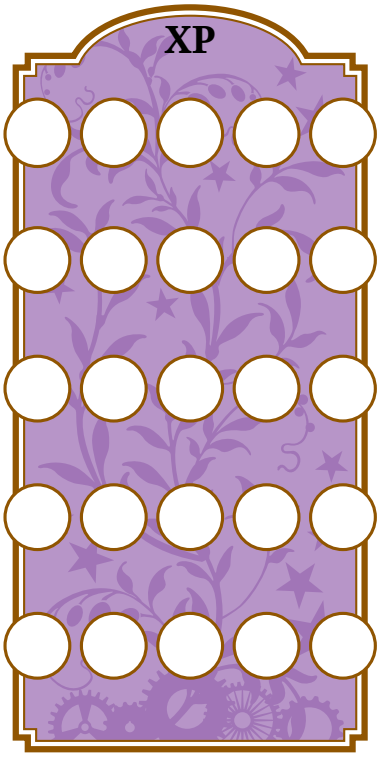
- if you bring someone who wronged you, or someone who needs it desperately, into the good place—if you forgive and/or accept them, even though people would understand you *not* doing so—and make them welcome.
- if you attend a Christmas, Easter, or Pancake Week feast at the good place, or spend part of that day mourning that you can't.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- working on relevant chores
- having a meaningful conversation with a PC or important NPC there
- playing out part of your daily routine in the good place
- savoring your presence there

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

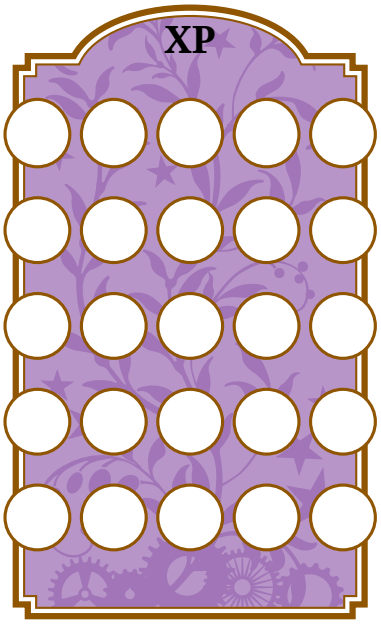


Keeping a Good Place
(Casual Version)

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by declaring that what you've been doing in the current scene is "for" the good place. Pick a standard phrase to indicate this, and then just say that phrase or some close variant when you want to claim the bonus. For instance, after picking up groceries or fighting off an invading armada, you'd say something like:

- "(well,) It's for the House." *or*
- "Anything for Tank Pastry!"

The idea is that by saying that, you confirm that something is about your struggle to keep a good place; or, if not, at least, you make yourself sound a little goofy and perhaps overly earnest in a place-connected fashion.



Exile

35 XP Quest (Storyline)

4: 

5: 

25 XP Quest (Casual)

2: 

3: 

You've had to leave a good place. Maybe the trouble was inside your heart. Maybe you did something terrible and you couldn't stay. Maybe you didn't realize what you had until you left. Anyway, this quest represents where you'll go from there.

What You'll Do

You'll feel hollow. Your life will be a shadow of what it's supposed to be. The big constellating factor at its core has gone away—it's like being a planet suddenly forsaken of its sun. It'll be hard for you to really grasp even if you *chose* to leave. This experience is a passive hollowness rather than an active one: you're more likely to mope, sleep, and miss opportunities than to drink, watch television, or do stupid things.

You'll remain attached. There are plenty of places where exiles just go out and live their own life, but if you've had to leave a *good* place, you'll usually remain at the fringes of its social circle. If you're a noble type, this probably takes the form "I'll protect and help them even if I can't be with them." If you're not, you'll still probably set up your life somewhere where you still have to interact. You may even have a firm intention to get as far away as possible, but you won't, or you'll fail and it won't last.

You'll have trouble managing your life. If you're a highly competent person, then you'll elide your sense of self—you'll have a hard time remembering to eat and sleep, to not push yourself too hard, to care about what happens to you, and the like. If you're not naturally competent, you'll probably forget how things like cleaning, cooking, and organizing worked even if you were a completely able person in your former home.

You'll re-invent yourself. At some point you'll find a new responsibility of some sort and start fulfilling it. This can be something to do with the place you left, *if* you left by your own choice. If you were thrown out, that's not really an option—it should be something completely unrelated and new. It's only when you remake yourself in this fashion, centered around something that you're doing reliably (for yourself or someone else) that it becomes possible to return home, find a new home, or make a new home for yourself.

Variations

The casual version of this quest is designed for short stories of exile—it's for playing out, "Oh, hey, my home life just blew up, what happens now?"

The dramatic version of the quest is a bit more rewarding but will take a fair bit longer to play out. You should pick that version if your exile is actually kind of a big deal, and can wait a quest or two before really processing it if it fits better into your Arc thereby.

Exile
(Dramatic Version)

5

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest—

- at the end of your first season/book while on this quest
- at the end of your second season/book while on this quest
- when you find love or family and you realize (and the HG suggests or agrees) that at some point while you weren't looking you re-invented yourself.

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

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- experiencing your hollowness and loneliness
- losing control over your own life
- talking things through with a friend
- interacting with your former good home
- consciously trying to rebuild your life
- quietly helping someone out with something

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

XP

Exile
(Casual Version)

You have something—some experience—that marks out the time of your exile. There is something that draws your attention while you're trying to heal.

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by directing attention to this experience. This usually relies on a specific catch phrase—e.g., your attention drifts to the birds flying out over Big Lake, and you say, "Listen to those birds."

...or whatever.

What catch phrase do you use?

XP

Dependable Person (Fortitude Style[59])

40 XP Quest

1: 

4: 

You're trying to be somebody that anybody can call on, or depend upon, at need.

What You'll Do

A dependable person *does what they can*. Basically, you'll give what you can spare, and do what you can, and you'll only worry about the cost to the extent that you have to worry about the cost. I intend this condition to be notionally comparable to the way that a good place has "things to give"—it doesn't require you to be a portable luggage or supply shack, but what you have you mustn't stint on, and you mustn't particularly mind giving what you can spare away.

A dependable person *doesn't fear (you)*. In general this extends all the way to unhesitating acceptance, although they'll make judgment calls on that if their responsibilities so require. They'll certainly never bend to or give in to ordinary fear.

What You'll Know

A dependable person *knows how to survive on their own*.

Learning to make your way around Fortitude is a key part of this, as is putting together an organized, functional, and balanced life with whatever resources you have. You'll be better able, over the course of this quest, to use your Skills to "read" the people of Fortitude—to pick up an intuitive understanding of the things in their lives.

59 I'm specifying that this is a Fortitude style quest not because it's terribly Region-specific but because being the kind of person that Outside horrors or evil ghosts can count upon might work a little differently.



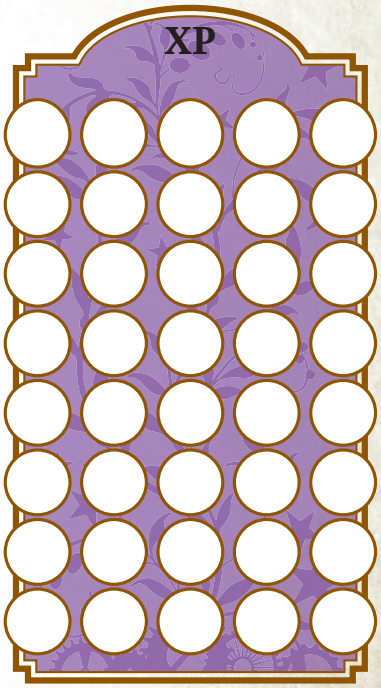
The catchphrase for someone who's working on this is "People need people."

It's the explanation for anything in the dependability oeuvre that you'd do. Why do you help out? Why do you do what you can? Why aren't you afraid of the scary people, the damaged people, the weird people?

Because "people need people."

So you can earn a bonus XP for this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by recontextualizing or explaining what you've been doing or what's been going on with that catchphrase or a personalized variant.

What's yours?



Up-to-Date

25 XP Quest

1: 

3: 

5

You try to keep up with the lives of the ordinary people of Fortitude—in particular, the people who live in or near the good places.

What You'll Do

For the NPCs you care about, you'll keep track of their health, their career, their kids, and any hobbies or projects they're involved in. Depending on how the HG runs things, that could mean inventing and keeping track of these details yourself—making a bunch of random NPCs into your props instead of the HG's—or it could mean regularly asking the NPCs and PCs who would know.

You'll send people presents on their birthdays—every birthday or special occasion, if they're the kind of person who cares about that, or just on the important ones, if they're the kind who usually doesn't. You'll visit people when they're in ill health. In general, you'll be there in all the small ways, just as dependable people are in large ones.

You'll spend a fair bit of time thinking or talking through what people *should* do about their problems. If the problem is private, or if the person is prickly, you'll probably do less of that talking—but you'll still worry about it and think about it and talk about it in such contexts as doing so doesn't make you a jerk. You'll probably worry too *much!*

You'll also pick up a certain tendency to match-make and to meddle.

What You'll Know

You'll know what people are trying to do with their lives. You'll know who's sick and who isn't. You'll know people's birthdays and you'll hear about it when people start dating. You'll know when to expect store openings, family gatherings, weddings, anniversaries, and babies. You'll know who needs help, who's fine, and who's in trouble. You'll have a good sense of who likes whom and who *would* like whom: if someone's coming to Fortitude for the first time, or taking tentative steps into a new social circle, you'll know just the right person for them to meet up with first.

If you're up to date—heck, even if you're the kind of person who would *try* to be up to date—you'll know how people in Fortitude act when something's wrong and how they act when things are great. Even before you complete this quest, you'll have insight into when someone from the Fortitude community is burdened, healthy, excited, behaving out of character, romantically interested in someone, or worried about someone. You just get good at reading that kind of thing from their face, from their schedules, and from the look of things in their home.

In Tune With Fortitude

Type: Miraculous Action
Cost: —

You know what's going on with the people in Fortitude. Invoke **In Tune** while anywhere in Fortitude and you can know what's going on in the life of anyone you know and, in general, with the place itself.

This is a functionally supernatural ability—it feels like analysis + knowledge, but basically, you just have to step off the bus, take a good sniff of the air, and you can know that your friend Vasilisa's birthday is coming up; that Mrs. Bing has finally completed the new room of your house; and that there's been a good supply of red snapper coming in.

You have to actually be in Fortitude to use this power, but it's OK to invoke it in a flashback—to say, *oh, I was in Fortitude recently, and I noticed [something]*. Just make sure that that makes sense!

This is a plausible reward for the quest **Up-to-Date** as part of a miraculous Shepherd Arc: it's a little weak for a "relatively strong insight-related miracle," but then again 25 XP isn't all that much!

With the HG's permission, if you've just completed a mundane Arc with a heavy focus on social interaction in Fortitude, you may take this power instead of the typical Skill/Bond reward.

Up-to-Date

You love hearing news and gossip and the like. 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, this data I'm about to get is going to be good!*

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 something like:

"Tell me more." *or* "Ooh, dish!"

More specifically, it's...

XP

Shrine or Park Guardian

25 XP Quest

1:

You work to protect and maintain a publicly-owned or publicly-accessible good place, such as a park or shrine.

What You'll Do

A good park or shrine is *clean and well-cared for*. It is clear on entering the place that someone gives it their regular dedication and love.

A good park or shrine is *comforting*. It is designed and maintained with an eye for the people who use it, rather than the people who built it. A place becomes comforting through a combination of thoughtfulness and sacredness: for a park, thoughtfulness is usually more important and involves a focus on things like:

- *Where are the kids when the parents are sitting over here?*
- *Where do you change a baby?*
- *What's it like to walk along this path?*
- *What happens if someone gets hurt?*
- *What happens if someone wants to climb this?*

For a shrine, sacredness is more important, and requires a focus on things like:

- *What does it* feel *like here?*
- *How well does this place support a sense of purity?*
  - *of cleanliness?*
  - *of stepping away from the normal world and into the world of sacred things?*

So this quest is about the labor and effort you give to the place, paired with a specific focus on giving a good or a sacred experience.

Traditional chores at a park or shrine involve sweeping, washing, gardening, picking up garbage, tending local animals and trees, making rounds to check for potential issues, repairing damaged walls and furniture, thinking up ways to improve the experience of the place, and tending to the visitors' needs.

What You'll Know

Someone who tends a park or shrine usually knows its history and any associated legends. If you don't pick these up as you go, then you can probably just declare yourself knowledgeable at any time during the quest.

You'll also know the layout of the place, any surprising secrets it may contain, how to maintain it, and where anything you might need to use while maintaining it would be.

Shrine or Park Guardian

5

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest if:

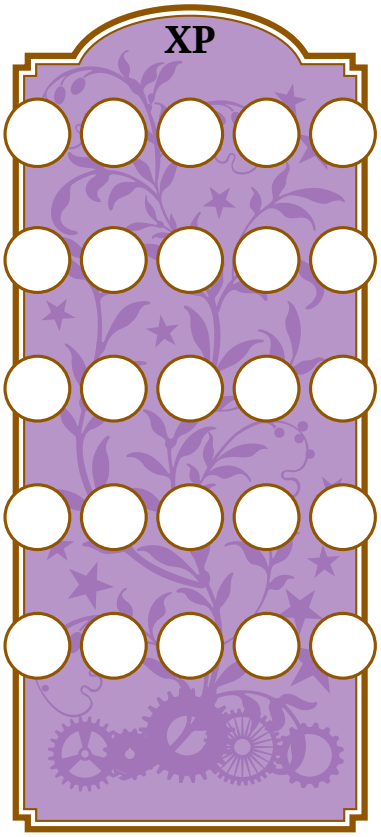
- you have an emotional, meaningful parting with someone important to you in the shrine or park. It has to be a real separation, but it doesn't have to be permanent or complete: a change in the state of a friendship, a breakup among two people who are staying friends, or a few-months'-long parting suffices.
- you attend a flower-viewing festival, star festival, or spirit-honoring day celebration at the shrine or park.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- doing shrine/park-related chores
- having a meaningful conversation with a PC or important NPC there
- engaging in some meditative action there
- playing out part of your daily routine in the park or shrine
- having a spiritual experience there

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



Sacred Child

Type: Affliction
Cost: —

This Affliction is a common reward for someone on a miraculous Sacred Child Arc as well as a viable starting or Arc 3 bonus Affliction for a mundane Main Character on this Arc. It:

- protects you and that which is near you from the power of the Outside
- drives away fear
- helps people to let go of bitterness and pain by talking to you about them.

It may also sometimes generate minor special effects—bleaching Stefan's hair, producing a soft glow, or whatnot.

This Affliction does not force you to behave correctly (in part because, like some historical Buddhist sages, some sacred children have a very unexpected or apparently backwards take on what "correctness" is) but if you spend about a year substantively failing to live up to the HG's standards for a sacred child, your failure might "break" the Affliction and inflict a spiritual wound.

Suffering that breakage, too, could conceivably be "correct!"

Sacred Child

45 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

3: 

5: 

Fortitude has recognized you as a sacred child. More specifically, a Fortitude citizen with responsibility for either the community or yourself—e.g., a teacher, a priest, someone in your family, a community leader, or someone speaking on behalf of a gathered crowd—has recognized you as a sacred child, and you've agreed (eventually?) that they might have a point.

So you've begun to train in and study the responsibilities of a sacred child.

If you don't fail out—under most circumstances, you're the one who'll decide when and if you have—then you'll take on a sacred role in Fortitude society.

What Happens

Becoming a sacred child is not terribly advantageous. If anything, the role is a burden that keeps people of potential from making too many waves.

There *are* benefits: you'll receive alms and donations from the people of Fortitude—to the point where you can safely assume that you'll never go hungry or without basic necessities if you're in Fortitude or have Fortitude neighbors near you; to the point where Stefan seems to get away with walking off with whatever he likes and sleeping wherever he chooses (although there's probably subtle social boundaries here that I haven't explored.) Plus, a sacred child has the power to banish fear and bitterness through their presence alone.

So far, so good—but the disadvantages are numerous.

Fortitude society no longer recognizes a sacred child as part of humanity. Instead, they are something numinous and set apart. Society expects them to maintain perfect self-discipline and ignore their own interests. A proper sacred child seals most of their emotions: not necessarily humor, joy, and sympathy, but certainly the more intense and troublesome emotions like anger, jealousy, and spite. A sacred child must keep themselves rigorously pure, with a meager vegetarian diet and frequent ritual cleansing and bathing, and strictly regulate the degree to which family and romantic ties can influence their heart. Society expects sacred children to lead ceremonies, attend auspicious occasions, and give advice to others and make predictions as necessary. For the most part, a sacred child judges their own performance, right down to deciding whether they really are a sacred child or not—it's really not for any ordinary person to say "You're doing it wrong," even if a sacred child is covered in dirt, walking backwards through Sideways, and munching down on a steak—but, that said, a child who fails to live up to this role may at some point attract reprisal or call their basic credibility into question.

Sometime between the age of 16 and 20, usually on a birthday, a sacred child gives up their name and identity and leaves Fortitude. If they later return they are no longer a sacred child, nor are they the person who used to be a sacred child; they adopt a new name and identity instead. They're technically *supposed* to stay away long enough to make them hard to recognize when they return, but of course, having stopped being a sacred child, they are no longer under any huge obligation to abide by such a rule.

What is this for?

This quest isn't the whole of the process of becoming a sacred child—it's really just one part of it—but it's a common feature on the Arcs of a sacred child. You'll use it to examine your failings, your struggle, or your apotheosis. It's a pretty long quest; you can shorten it if that's inappropriate or just accept its length, bear with it for a while, and focus on the higher-tier rewards.

Sacred Child

5

This quest comes with a psychological or social burden—a private cross to bear. Pick one of the "sacred child" signs below 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?

XP

I Know What I'm Doing	**You don't know what you're doing.**
It'll be OK	**You don't know what you're doing.**
Calm	**!!!!asdfasdfaegoihaergF*CK**

The World of the Shrines

a preamble

Love with such a temporary, fragile creature is tragic, of course.

Each time my bloody hands touch his paled face, I remember that. I remember that when I blink my eyes, they will all be gone; the temple, ruins; the world, seared down to ash. It has been only moments since the world surged into being from the tumult of the chaos; it shall be only moments before it tumbles back.

He says something. I file it away somewhere. I will listen to it later.

He haunts my dreams, you know.

I do not know why I am doing this. He is saying something else. He is making a promise. *It is so laughable.*

He haunts my dreams. He will give me the name Sosunov. He will kiss me. An hour from now, and seventy-two minutes ago, and again in three days. Why am I letting him?

Love with a mortal can never end well.

— Attaris II, Magister,
the Angel of Fortitude,
as played by Beatrice Smith

Interactions with the Kichi



Immersive Fantasy/Pastoral

This bit's about what it's like to interact with the Kichi and their Sacred Pools.

It's mostly going to be pretty ordinary!

Listen.

You'd think, since they spend all their time with scrying pools, looking into the future and at the trouble their loved ones get into far away and whatnot, that they'd be all melodramatic. But they're not.

They *can* be. It's a natural mode of things. Sometimes you stare into the Kichi Pools or have one of them do so for you and you see shapes and shadows of the future, and it draws you in and fills you with foreboding or with hope. Sometimes there's this big cathartic moment where something they've spoken of—something from the future—is suddenly relevant, suddenly very personal, suddenly all about *you*.

Sometimes, in short, they are a vehicle for the thundering voice of magic and the spiritual world—they make your world shudder with the implications of the things they see.

But—

That's not the heart of it.

The heart of the Kichi Pools isn't the magic. It's not the visions of the future. It's the love and the respect and the devotion that makes you walk out there and make an offering for the safety of your loved ones far away. (Or maybe for the future safety of the loved ones who aren't so very far.) It's the mother making an offering for her child, and the child making an offering for their mother. It's the husband leaving a few coins in the Kichi Pool to pray for the success and health of his wife, studying somewhere far away. It's the girl leaving a lock of hair for the safety of her sailor love. It's about the connection between a person and their own desire to have their loved ones safe and well, mediated by the



world, mediated by the sacred water and the long walk that takes you there. It's about conscious purity, conscious simplicity, consciously becoming something like the pure clean water of those pools.

It's about living in a world where there is something bigger than ourselves.

The more time you spend with them the less mysterious and dramatic it tends to be. At first it's all omens and implications, because, well, because on your first encounter everything is more uncertain, everything is more unpredictable, you're looking harder for omens and portents in the trip. But the longer you know them, the more basic and simple their life seems. Their work isn't complicated, for instance. It's hard work, they spend a lot of *time* refining the dust to give to their pools—but it's not complicated. If they are unworldly, it's because they put in the time to be unworldly—I mean, their "pure" and natural diet takes a lot more time and work than pouring hot water over instant ramen does. Having clean white garments to change into after a trip up to the pools isn't a magical gift of the spirits: they do a lot of laundry, they make a lot of clothing, and they work hard to keep it clean. The deep secrets of their magic don't come from learning sophisticated Gnostic philosophy: it's all just practice and a slow deepening in one's understanding.

So the early encounters may be melodramatic; and if there's a lot going on, then maybe a mid-game encounter will be too, but mostly it's going to be a shared actions, shared reactions, simple, honest pastoral kind of thing.

Leaving Offerings

15 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest

You travel regularly to the Kichi pools, leaving offerings for the health and safety of a loved one.

Rewards

This quest can help you heal faster from a social, spiritual, or psychological wound or earn you a Recharge Token from thoughts of your loved one far away.

You'll also get the HG's choice of:

- a scene where you can sense the loved one and their state from far away;
- a warning of the trouble that they might be in and a hint as to something to do about it;

or, if both of those aren't really meaningful

- a scene or cut-scene where something kind of neat and sweet happens in connection to this person or as a result of your travels to the pools.

Leaving Offerings

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest if you meet someone interesting, or have something interesting happen, while you're at the Kichi pools leaving an offering for a loved one.

You can earn this bonus once.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- talking to someone on the walk to the Kichi pools
- talking to someone about the loved one you leave the offerings for
- making an offering at the Kichi pools
- staring after a heron or other water-bird taking flight
- having a spiritual experience or vision relating to your loved one

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

XP

Troubled Divination

15 XP Quest

 Chibi-Quest

35 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

4: 

5: 

5

You've received a sense that someone you care about is threatened—that there's some looming threat in their future—while staring into the Kichi Sacred Pools. Or maybe you were worried about them anyway, and you just didn't get reassured!

What You'll Do

Over the course of this quest *you'll try to understand what you've seen.*

You'll hunt through reference books for things you might have seen in flashes of imagery. You'll spend a lot of time with your eyes closed reliving the vision, trying to dredge details and specifics out of memory.

You'll *spend time in nature*.

You'll feel drawn to stare at the sky; to be out in the world; to be in or near birds and water. Town—even Fortitude—is too *noisy* with human life, it's too easy to get distracted and lose your sense of what is to come. If the person you care about is near you, accessible, then you may stick to your own backyard, garden, and porch; if they're far away, you may wander the northern beach and the western hills.

You'll *purify yourself.*

The Kichi traditions are a part of this. When you're worrying about a divination like this, you'll have a harder time eating meat, a harder time coping with mess and grime, and a greater impulse to wash yourself. You'll be drawn to simple, low-intensity, repetitive labor that frees your mind and organizes your body and your efforts.

Rewards

If you take this on as a chibi-quest, you'll break through to a new understanding of your loved one's fate and you'll have the chance to protect them, at least a little, even if you don't have the Kichi Family Magic.

Specifically,

- when the danger comes for them—
  - you'll be aware of it, ranging from an instinct to a full-on vision;
  - you can use a non-magical Skill as if it were Kichi Family Magic, sheltering them from afar with your spirit at Obstacle 3. You do have to actually describe actions of some sort—for instance, use Cooking to bake something that expresses your will to shelter them, or Historical Trivia to know random things about their situation that might save them.
  - if all this fails and they die or are otherwise long-term lost, your spirit can have a last conversation with them.

Or, if this fits well into your Advancement Arc, you can *and should* take it as a regular quest, instead, receiving instead the appropriate rewards.

Troubled Divination

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when—

- the HG gives you a nightmare about (your fears about) what's going to happen.
- you get sick from worry (e.g., your nightmares overflow your dream-catcher and produce Outside-dust psychosis, or you wind up vomiting from fear)
- you follow a false lead, only to realize that it *can't* be the coming threat.

You can earn exactly one of these bonuses on the chibi-quest; on the full quest you can earn all three, once each, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- investigating elements of your vision
- meditating and trying to understand
- consciously purifying yourself
- staring at/listening to something that you think relates somehow
- spending time out in nature
- spending time talking to/writing to the person you're worrying about
- getting worked up about what might happen

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

XP

Joining the Kichi

35 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

3: 

5: 

5

You become entangled with the Kichi—you study their magic, or find a home and family and a peace among them, or you fall in love with one of them; or, you start by doing one of those things and wind up eventually at the others.

What Happens

To build a Connection to the Kichi is a string of moments like droplets of water.

They are a people of long silences and long journeys, of long slow intervals of *time*. The classic flirtation of Kichi is laughing with someone, splashing water on someone, and then vanishing underneath the surface of the pools for... a while. Talking to someone, then taking a long silent walk, together or apart, between the settlement and the Kichi pools. Hours of work preparing Outside dust for the pools, punctuated by little bits of conversation.

You'll see a bird taking flight. You'll watch that with them.

You'll look over while walking beside them on a path and you'll be sweaty and there'll be sweaty and there'll be a bit of dirt, because they haven't washed yet, on their nose.

They're more inclined to deep listening than to deep thinking; by which I mean, even when they are smart, and they can be very smart, they don't tend to turn that thought into complex words and theories so much as moments of clear insight.

There's no particular moment when you *get* closer to them, I think. There's just the moments when you understand that you already are. Often when there's something that you've been dealing with, some emotion (whether it's love or fear or something else) that you don't think of yourself as strong enough to face, but share with one of them by the pools anyway.

Joining the Kichi

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest if you:

- push yourself to face emotions that you aren't ready to deal with while interacting with the Kichi—if you show more vulnerability than you feel safe doing.
- have an unexpected moment of connection with a water-bird or bird-spirit;
- declare love, swear loyalty, are adopted, or otherwise become a genuine or tentative part of the Kichi family during the course of this quest.

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

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- meeting a new member of the Kichi for the first time
- teasing Thomas Kichi (it is a "cottage industry")
- other shared moments with the Kichi
- helping prepare Outside dust
- doing other "work" with them—even if it's just the long trek to the pools
- talking with someone else about your connection to the/a Kichi
- staring into the Kichi pools

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

XP



Interactions with the Sosunov



Slice of Life

Most of your interactions with the Sosunov—whether you are a Sosunov or just know them—will be Slice of Life.

Oh look! You'll say. This ship has a Sosunov sailor!

Oh, hey, that's a Sosunov mansion.

Oh, neat, that monk is pacifying that incoming storm!

You watch. It stirs an emotion. You emote. Ideally, someone else does, too! There are a lot of the Sosunov around, so interacting with them isn't always terribly special, although they can certainly be pretty cool.

Dream Incursions



Wicked Action/Corruption/Trauma

This is about the Sosunov mission—about why they guard the dreams of Fortitude. It's about the things they guard the dreams of Fortitude *against*.

The normal form of an Outside incursion into dreams isn't all that bad. It isn't necessarily one of those terrible witches out of fable. It's just...a bit of self-willed nightmare. Nothing big. Nothing all that scary.

It might not even be a *nightmare*, really.

It could just be a bit of dream.

Normally it'll kind of colonize the inside of your head. It'll try to set up a solid position in your dreamscape and maybe even slip into the waking mind—talk to you, or give you mild hallucinations, or whatever. Once it's established, it'll want to eat its way through the walls between your dreams and others'. This takes a long time—you can think of the barrier between your dreams and the dreams of the people important to you as being about Obstacle 4, the barrier between your dreams and the dreams of people sleeping *near* you as being about Obstacle 4, and the barrier between your dreams and the general Fortitude dreamscape or the dreams of strangers as being Obstacle 5. Basically, building up the strength to burst through those walls and set up shop in other dreams is really hard. For a human, it's like flying to Mars!

But eventually if nothing goes wrong for it—if you don't manage to crush it, if the Sosunovs don't get involved, whatever—your colonist will break past that barrier anyway, and then it'll begin expanding in its characteristic fashion, and that'll either be the end of it (if its nature is to head off into the dream-unknown, as it were, like a cuckoo flying out of the stolen nest back to Outside) or it'll become a larger-scale threat.

So there are basically three situations you can be in here:

- something annoying has gotten into your head;
- something harmless/interesting has gotten into your head;
- something really *scary* has gotten in—
  - a "witch" or horror of some sort;
  - an emissary of some sort of the Bleak Academy;
  - a manifestation of some other power.

They'll all play out in basically the same way, though; the only real difference is how much you care about it and how much other people have a right and reason to get involved.

The way these incursions play out is as a series of breaks from reality: Corruption. Trauma. Opportunities for Wicked Actions. Occasionally, Vice or Sickness.

Repeatedly—

Something weird happens. Something, you know, disorienting and strange. And the world gets weird in turn. Maybe because you're not getting enough rest. Maybe because you're dreaming and your dreams are under an influence. Maybe it's messing with your waking mind. Things get weird.

And sometimes at the end of this you'll understand that it's a temptation—that it's trying to get your buy-in, and if you give in, that's probably a Wicked Action. And other times it never stops to ask. It just damages your mind or soul, and that's Corruption or Trauma.

Eventually you'll fight it off, or resolve the Vice or Sickness that it's encouraging in you, and then it goes away.

If that stuff doesn't fit your game very well, though—if you're not in a genre where those actions are common actions and those Issues are common Issues and your group doesn't really want to change that just to have a dream-invader in your head—there is, instead, a quest.

Trouble in Dreams

35 XP Quest

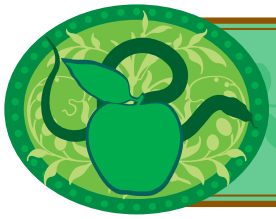
1: 

2: 

3: 

Something gets into your dreams from the Outside. It troubles you. It haunts you. It tempts, corrupts, or traumatizes you.

Things become very weird.



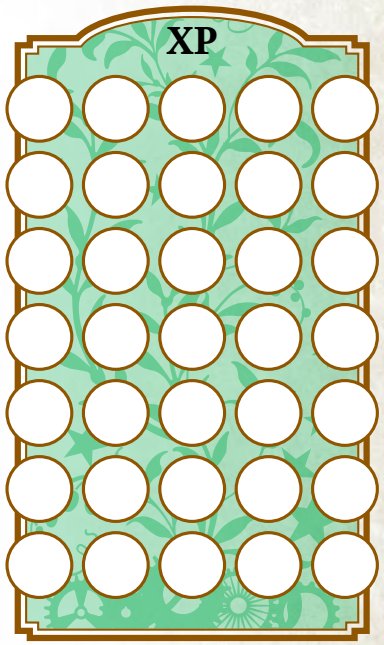
Trouble in Dreams

This quest comes with a division of states—there's the you who's haunted/tempted and the you who's focused on the waking world.

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 the influence of whatever's troubling your dreams is being felt, or that it's receding. 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 can come into play while you're awake—either you suffer hypnagogic effects, dissociation, and the trembling of the world as it intrudes into your mindset; you suffer the accumulated effects of rest deprivation and night trauma; or the HG brings real-world special effects into play in the world around you.

XP







Helping Arkady Sosunov

20 or 25 XP Quest

2: 

4: 

5

You meet Arkady Sosunov on one of his attempts to run away and establish an independent life. You step in to help him find a new place and life for himself, or reconcile him with his life with the Sosunovs.

What Happens

Arkady Sosunov runs away from the Sosunov and tries to establish a life for himself, but he just isn't *good* at it.

Maybe you meet him in a professional capacity—he offers to work for you, if you have a business or ship or something, or he starts working somewhere you care about, like your favorite restaurant or the local post office or something.

Maybe he lives near you and keeps stumbling into your dreams and being embarrassed; or having nightmares that invoke small Outside effects; or you see him flailing around with a chimney-sweep broom trying to get the wish spirits to leave him alone and they hide behind you while all covered in soot.

Anyway, you decide to help him out. Possibly that's a Decisive Action, if it's in genre or you're decisive enough; possibly it's merely Shared Action or Slice of Life. Either way: you decide to help him. You declare you *will* help him. And you try to figure out *how* to help him with what he needs. This leads eventually to seeing him reconciled with his destiny and willing to face the moments of no-self he gets in his meditation, or with him finally establishing himself somehow outside of the Sosunov family home.

Which is it?

Well, that's up to you!

Helping Arkady Sosunov (Casual Version)

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 to help Arkady or what he should do with his life.

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.

XP

Helping Arkady Sosunov
(Dramatic Version)

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when—

- it becomes really obvious that Arkady needs your help.
- you find an answer or really solid situation for him.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- you try to guide him
- you talk about the emptiness/self-loss that he's afraid of
- you discuss his life and why he's running away
- you help him materially in establishing himself somewhere
- his trying to establish himself outside the family makes goofy trouble for you
- you risk yourself a little to help him
- he wanders into your dreams
- you rely on him to save you from something (an Outside storm, a dream-witch)
- you have a meaningful scene of asserting friendship, romantic interest, parental support, or other forms of closeness to/with him.

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

XP

Joining the Sosunov

20 or 25 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

3: 

4: 

5

You start integrating your life with the Sosunovs—you apprentice to them, or they adopt you, or you fall in love with a cute Sosunov boy or girl and start thinking about them bringing you into their family.

You spend more and more time at the main family house, in particular. It's a pleasant place. It has to be—you get strength there during the day for the stresses of the night.

What Happens

At first the Sosunovs you meet will be vulnerable to you. They'll want to please. Won't they?

They'll run from or avoid people they *don't* want to please. So if they *don't* want to please you, then this quest is only going to work if there's something that gets them kind of stuck having to deal with you—

But I doubt it's like that.

They'll want to please. They're really *very much* about trying to see the people around them comfortable and happy. So this quest will start with a sense that everything is being submitted for your approval. Like you're precious to them.

Like I've said there's iron in some of them. Rakkashima isn't a pushover, and he's quite willing to point out that messing with the head of a wealthy, blessed family that's protecting your ability to sleep at night might not be the smartest idea. And then there are a few, like "aunt" Anmi, who have flourished in this environment of people desperate to please and have gotten quite good at being the *kind* of person who makes you... really want to please *them*.

But mostly they'll be tentative before you.

As you get opportunities to participate in their life, you'll get to visit their homes with the wooden slat walls and the smells of rich stews for supper; and the fleur-de-lis wallpaper in the branch family houses and peeling from the walls of the main house's dormitories' private rooms; and you'll get a tour of the main temple, see the scroll of Miruna Sosunov's secrets behind its glass, and they'll introduce you to the various buildings, people, and paths. You'll hear the explanations—vague, technical, and meandering, but explanations—of how the Sosunov magic actually works.

They'll talk about reality with you. They'll sit beside you on a wooden bench and watch the clouds.

There'll be a symbol—or there ought to be one, anyway. It'll be useful. There ought to be a symbol, an idea, that boils down their whole spiritual practice. Something at the heart of everything they tell you. An idea—a symbol; a catchphrase; a story—that everything else, all their ideas about their magic, their philosophy, and their inner life circle all around.

A core bit of emptiness, practice, and spiritual stuff.

Even if it's stupid:

- "be like a butterfly taking flight."
- "Be like a cloud passing over nothingness."
- "Open the mind like a hand, releasing thoughts."
- "The dreaming soul is like the rain."
- "It's all light wrapped in nothingness. That's all there is."
- "When you're troubled, look at the grain of the wood."

Set this up as something they talk about. Something they try to explain to you. Something important.

This is good to set up in the beginning because it usually really matters at the end.

At some point you'll probably get a chance to look at the account books, or a big map of ship travel, and get a real sense of how the Sosunov gift ties in to the trade in Town—the mix of sensible mercantile action and dream magic that their communication-through-dreams power makes possible. At some point it'll be brought home to you that this is what keeps the family going, even as their work with Outside dust and protecting dreams gives it purpose.

You'll probably get to see wonders, where someone meditates near dust to cleanse it, banishes an Outside

storm, or works through their meditation minor miracles of holiness.

Eventually there'll be trouble.

That's not how you *get* to know them, but it's always the crux point of actually getting close to them. There'll be trouble: you'll be sick, or your dreams will be haunted, or a Sosunov you care about will be menaced, threatened, or hurt. There'll be a dynamic tension that builds into a conflict before resolving, or there'll be a failing, a fading, a weakness, a sickness. Or someone will get lost, hurt, endangered.

You know.

Something to give the result of greater closeness, afterwards.

And it's normal that sometime—usually after that last thing, but sometimes before it—there's some tension between you and the Sosunov(s) that you care about. Maybe it's between them and someone else in the family, their parents or an older brother or something who disapprove(s) of them or you, but usually it's right smack between you and them. And it's usually self-hatred on one part or another that's driving it, not a real conflict between you. Self-hatred, or self-loathing—one side or the other that just can't accept...

That there *is* family-ness there. That there is love.

There's a scene in the rain where one of you says something unforgivable, maybe.

That's pretty normal for these things.

And that doesn't resolve, not exactly, not until you see something—

Something to make sense of all the weird philosophy and the dream-ideas and the talk about empty-mind meditation and enlightenment and Miruna Sosunov and all the rest. It doesn't resolve until you *understand* something that lets you just... let go of all of it. Or helps them to do so. Not a solution. Not really. Just something to... defer it.

It's a Sosunov thing, I guess.

That maybe you don't trust the world, or other people; maybe don't trust in love itself; maybe you don't think that you're worthy, maybe think that there's something fundamentally broken and wrong—

But that you can dig into that whole sacred meditation thing then, that whole empty-mind thing, and make that brokenness *empty*.

Push that fear into the symbol that I mentioned earlier.

Tell them, tell the Sosunovs to do that, or tell yourself. Let that fear be like a butterfly taking flight. Like a cloud passing over nothingness. Open the mind, like a hand, releasing thoughts.

Give the pain to a white and empty fire, instead of facing it or denying it.

And afterwards you'll understand a little more about the world, and you'll have found a deeper connection to the Sosunov. That's how it goes.

A Bittersweet Saga

Joining the Sosunov can be a single quest, but it's more likely to be a "Bittersweet Saga," as described in the ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** RPG.

This saga can be an Aspect, Emptiness, Shepherd, or Storyteller Arc.

As a Storyteller Arc, it will start with your fascination with and introduction to the Sosunovs; the "Setting" for the Arc will be the Sosunov main house and the "Secret Place" somewhere within. An Aspect, Shepherd, or Emptiness Arc will need to start with something invading your dreams, or with your retreating into dreams and dissociative withdrawal from the world, instead—your mind becomes the Setting for the quest **Beautiful and Far Away** and your fascination with the Sosunovs becomes the second quest, **Fascination**.

You'll still want to use the provided quest—

On an Emptiness, Shepherd, or Storyteller Arc, you can slot it in as an alternative to **This is So Surreal/ Such a Bad Idea**. On an Aspect Arc, it must instead substitute for **Something Heals**.

Joining the Sosunov

5

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest if:

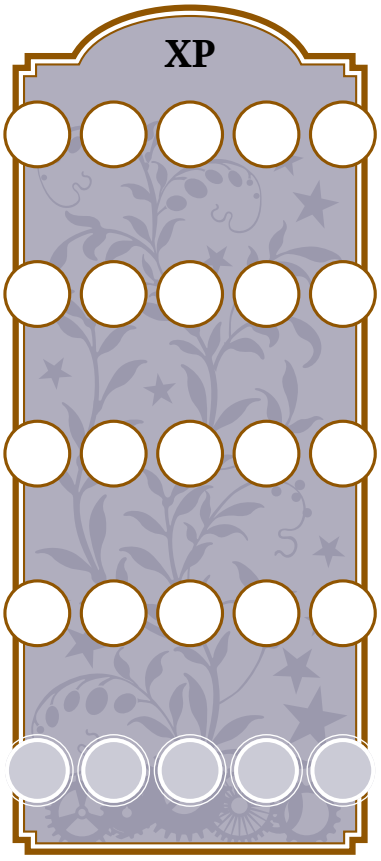
- you establish some symbol or catchphrase to represent the heart of Sosunov sacred meditation;
- you help a Sosunov through trouble, or vice versa;
- you use the symbol or catchphrase to resolve an interpersonal conflict with a Sosunov or let go of some psychological issue that was spurring it.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- you have dinner with a Sosunov family
- Rakkashima and other family authorities teach you things about the Sosunov
- someone explains elements of the Sosunov magic to you
- you walk the cobbled paths of the main temple
- you interact with Miruna Sosunov (her statue, or see her in a dream)

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



Involvement with the Titovs



Wicked Action/Obsessive Action/Never Say Die!

This bit is about what it is like more generally to get involved with the Titovs.

My claim is that is not healthy. It is sometimes a Wicked Action, not because it is morally wrong, but because you *shouldn't do it*.

It's not good for you.

It's not like mugging somebody, but it is like eating egg salad that somebody left sitting out for a few days. Don't do that! It's not like hitting somebody you're angry at but it is like sticking your foot in the mouth of a tiger because seriously what's the worst that could happen?

It is a bad idea!

The worst that could happen is a very bad thing!

I think that getting involved with the Titovs is probably not a Wicked Action *all* the time, though. I think it's more likely to play out as an Obsession or as Never Say Die!

They worry you.

They stress you out. You get worked up over it. You want to save them, or you want to escape them, or you want to free or help contain whatever lies below. And at the end, if you don't just give up and shut down in despair, you do something over the top.

That's an Obsessive Action!

Or, you get tangled into their affairs. Maybe it's because you were what they needed, and they used magic, and you came? I don't know. You try to get out again, or you try to do whatever they want you to do. You narrate your struggle as awesome and doomed, and the HG keeps piling on trouble and raising the stakes. In the end, maybe you satisfy the HG and win and maybe you suffer like the Titovs are suffering but

you're probably a little broken afterwards, either way. That's Never Say Die!

If you don't really have a choice about it—

If you get drawn in despite yourself, because of their magic or an unavoidable commitment—

There's also a quest.

Drawn into the Titovs

45 XP Quest

1: 

3: 

4: 

5: 

You're pulled into the story of the Titovs. Usually that means that they need you for something, so they used magic to summon you and to figure out what they could offer you that would make you agree to work with them, maybe even what they could offer to make you unwilling to betray them under any reasonable duress.

...Implicitly they *have* access to something like that, or they would have summoned someone else.

What Happens

This sucks.

I mean, it's probably worth it. It's *presumptively* worth it. I don't know what they give you, whether it's a home and a family, or an object infused with emotion, or a way out of a troublesome debt, or access to the gate or creature under their shrine, or forgiveness for some crime against them, or they'll teach you the magic you need to create someone from the Earth to suit your needs—

It's got to be worth it, because the magic doesn't really *force* you, it just tells them your price.

But they don't really see you as a person.

That's definitely true if they've brought you in as a servant, an ally, a helper—but if they've brought you in to marry one of them, or to be adopted into the family, or something like that, it's just kind of gross. And if they've brought you in to help stabilize the family bonds, to help keep one of the other family members from getting away, to be a leash, as it were—

That's even grosser, because it makes you ever so much more complicit.

The grossest possibility is stuff like "I've called you here to bear a child for Soramir, and here's what we're offering you: if you don't do this, the family's likely to die out and the thing under the shrine will get free and devour the world."

I mean—that's the kind of thing that would feel a lot better if they at least respected you for it.

I guess in my head this story is a tragedy. You'll do your best to make something good of this, to be strong and good and yourself. You'll try to help them, probably, to stabilize things for them, to do it well. But they'll just break you, and keep on breaking themselves; if you seem to get any leverage, practical or emotional, it's just a cruel lie on the part of a Titov or the world. When it's finally done and you can stop it doesn't leave you feeling happy. It leaves you feeling dirty.

I'm sorry.

I do like to think that there's something to be gained from this, but if so, it's in the much longer picture. At best, at least, when it's done, you can sort of leave; I hope you can leave; and then find solace in Fortitude and with your friends.

A Scientific Adventure

Rather than rushing through the entire experience in a single quest, you may wish to play this out as a scientific adventure or heroic journey (as described in the ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** RPG).

It may also work well as **An Odyssey** (pg. 327).

If you do this, you can either ignore the provided quest or slot it in whenever it seems a good fit.

Drawn into the Titovs
(Understated)

5

This quest comes with a psychological or social burden—a private cross to bear. Pick one of the "Titov" signs on these two pages 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?

XP

I Don't Have a Choice	**You could stop. You really could. Please stop.**
I'm Fine	**I'm not important.**
I Can Reach Them	**I have to be able to reach them.**

Drawn into the Titovs
(Baroque)

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when—

- you get badly hurt because of your connections to the Titovs, but still can't or won't leave;
- you try to call things off with the Titovs and fail, or *did* call things off but got drawn back in;
- you try to rescue one of the Titovs from themselves but they betray you or fail you in some knife-twisting manner;
- you have a terrifying encounter with the thing underneath the shrine.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP; however, you can't earn the first two bonuses in quick succession. There has to be a bit of drama in between or it only counts as one.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest with:

- labor in or for the Titovs
- your first in-depth scene with a given Titov
- exploration of the Titov family and shrine
- a fierce struggle to overcome the situation
- bending your morality because of your association with the Titovs
- losing some of yourself to this situation, or to the thing under the shrine
- studying a bit of the Titov magic
- suffering at Titov hands or on the Titov lands

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

XP

Happy

It'll be OK.

Calm

Why can't they just leave me alone?

Getting to Know the Vasili

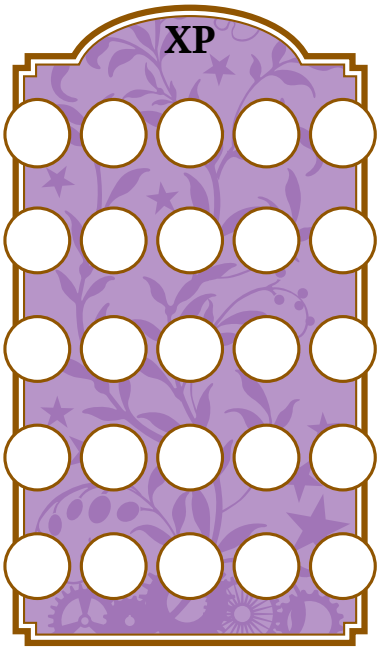
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The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest:
- you have a dramatic encounter with Vasili magic;
- you get invited by their home.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:
- meeting Mayu Vasili in a high, windy place
- exploring the strangeness of Herakleides' garden
- watching Asuka and Gorou practice for the seasonal dances
- hanging out with 1+ Vasili for dinner or a walk
- helping them with some sort of chore (e.g. bringing them groceries)

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



The Vasili

It turns out that I don't have that much to say here, so rather than giving you three pages on this, I'm going to stick to the following.

Common interactions with the Vasili include:
- normal social interaction
- exploring Herakleides' garden
- watching their rituals and dances.

And they work like so:

Normal Social Interactions with the Vasili



Shared Action/Reactions

This is usually pretty straightforward. You do simple, honest things. They do simple, honest things. You connect!

Visiting Herakleides' Garden



Discovery

This too can be pretty simple. I don't think there's anything dangerous here, but there might be some neat, scary, or mysterious stuff. So you poke around and eventually you find something like that—

That's how visiting his garden probably goes!

The Vasili Rituals



Foreshadowing

I don't expect there to be any huge drama for these. I think the dances Asuka and Gorou do are cool and important and thematic but it's not going to be any kind of incredible scene or quest; nor are any of their other rituals, really.

They're just interesting, and could be foreshadowing, and they'll become more important if you pay a lot of attention to them at the time!

Getting to Know the Vasili



25 XP Quest

1:

2:

4:

You become close to the Vasili—you become friends with them, or fans of theirs, or whatever; they become important people to you.

What Happens

You meet Mayu Vasili, sitting in a high place, or help her find her hat. You watch Gorou and Asuka do their dances. You visit Herakleides' garden. You do something nice for one of them and get an invitation to their family home for dinner or, at the appropriate age, a sleepover. It's an enjoyable time. I think after that it's really just—occasional visits for company or whatever, helping them with chores, whatever.

It's really a pretty simple, honest thing.

The Yatskaya

This bit's a quick guide to scenes with the Yatskaya.

A typical interaction is either:

an ominous bit of foreshadowing or

a pastoral bit of shared action.

As with the Vasili, it turns out that I don't have that much to say here, so I'll limit my comments to the following:

A Bit of Foreshadowing



Foreshadowing

The Yatskaya are strange and perplexing creatures.

Often your first encounters with them will be attention catches—their presence will draw you in, fill the world with a sense of mystery, that isn't quite ever resolved. Maybe it's in the temple, and you see strange things because of the incense there. Maybe you're watching

Rinley and the Prince

5

You find this an interesting story. You want to uncover more. And random things you learn or stumble across—like the movements of the rats, or details about the Yatskaya temple—play into that.

So... you can earn a bonus XP for this quest with an emoted statement or reaction to events that boils down, basically, to *aha! this is relevant to my growing understanding of the story of Rinley and that rat.*

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 something like:

(thoughtful tone) "Rats," or

"Seems like... trouble." or even just

"Hmmmmm."

But be careful with that last one, though, because you do have to make it clear that you're reacting to something as connected to this storyline rather than just hmmming at the generic mysterious wonders of life.

What's your phrase?

XP

on a lonely street as Caroline or Rinley or someone else calls and speaks to a cat. Maybe you meet a Yatskaya, and they turn to you and their eyes are vast and they catch your shoulder and they speak a prophecy.[60]

Maybe you get a glimpse of one of them in the distance carrying a large, colorful stone egg.

Anyway, something catches your attention. You watch for a while as it plays out. Maybe it'll matter, later on?

An Ordinary Interaction



Shared Action

A lot of the time interacting with the Yatskaya is extremely normal. I mean, they're weird and all, but so are most people. And they're a shrine family! That means they have an established place and purpose in the social fabric of Fortitude.

They're mysterious and subtle and they smile at things beyond your shoulder but they're also helpful, diligent, and kind.

60 Like I've said before, they oughtn't have actual powers of prophesy, and I'm not even sure there's such a thing, but they do it anyway.

Rinley and the Prince

 Chibi-Quest

You discover that Rinley Yatskaya has been socializing with the rat Prince Eduard Fujimoto. Do you help her conceal it? Do you warn the rats or the Yatskaya?

Do you become friends to the pair?

What You'll Find Out

The story here is that **Prince Eduard Fujimoto** (or, in some variations, **Princess Aelfthryth Fujimoto**) had an... incident leading to exile from rat culture and the Rat King's court. Some memory loss due to alcohol or trauma may or may not be involved.[61]

In order to restore his position, Eduard needed to face down and kill "the golden snake of the rooftops," a poisonous creature named Typhon.

Only, he failed.

He was fighting it, wielding a sacred spear and defending himself with a turtle-shell shield, but he failed. It bit him, and Rinley rescued him, hitting it repeatedly with a stick, and at the end of everything he was poisoned, and she took him home in a shoebox, and the snake Typhon got away.[62]

Rinley had been a quieter kid back then; keeping Eduard a secret then and hanging out with him now is metaphorically stirring her out of her shell.

Anyway, now and then he'll swing back by and drag her out on an adventure; or she'll climb up on the roofs and go looking for him.

And now...

You've learned their secret!

Rewards

The core reward here is that your choice—once you've learned their secret—will have a large impact on the game. You *get* to say:

- "The Yatskaya need to know about this. The rats stalk Caroline sometimes, and they have that whole cat quota thing that's pretty awful."
- "The rats need to know about this. If my keeping silent here somehow leads into Caroline or Kuroma destroying the rat population here, I'll feel really guilty."
- "It's none of my business. Be friends with whomever you like, you two." *or*
- "Of course I'll keep your secret. We're friends!"

And whatever you say, the HG has to take it as a good decision. Maybe a wrong decision, but it has *weight*; it's not a goofy or a meaningless one. Does that make sense?

61 This character's past is a mystery box and they don't want to talk about the details of rat culture. This isn't because I have deep plans. I just want them to be easier for the HG to pick up and play.

*62 It should stay "gotten away" no matter how you search for it if your gaming group plans on using **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon** or a rat-based campaign but hasn't actually read them yet to know what will come.*

The Great Dread Witch Hunt

35 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

3: 

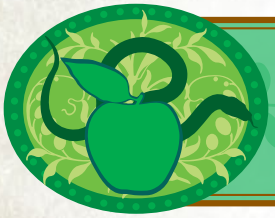
5: 

5

You get involved with some of the rats who are hoping to count coup on, or kill, Caroline Yatskaya.

What Happens

You spot a group of traveling rats, or they ask you for some favor, and when you find out what they're doing—that they're planning on proving themselves against the Witch of the Far Roofs (pg. 67 and pg. 296)—you find yourself drawn to intervene. To join them in facing this Mystery.



The Great Dread Witch Hunt

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest for:

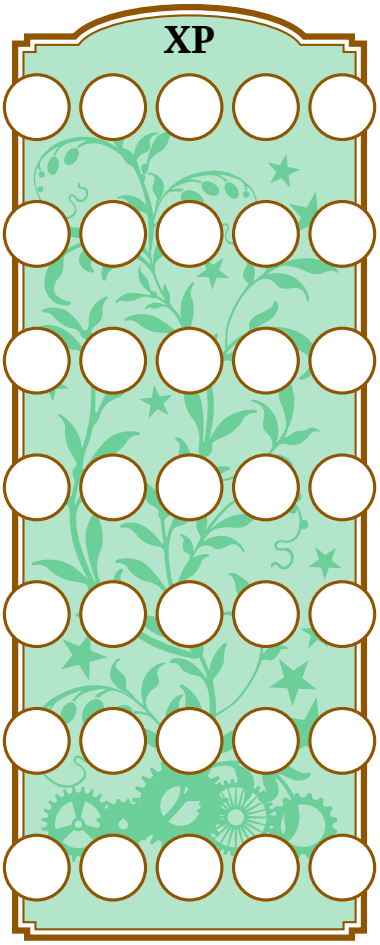
- freezing up in fear or awe the first time you encounter the Witch of the Far Roofs in the flesh;
- suffering a curse or enchantment from her (probably as a wound);
- taking advantage of rat-lore (that you've previously heard/read) on the Witch.

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

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

-  you spy on Caroline Yatskaya from the roofs
-  you listen to the rats' stories of the Witch
-  you talk with the rats about their plans for Caroline and the Witch
-  you talk with the rats about other things—their lives, the Mysteries, &c.
-  you learn how to travel the roofs like a rat does
-  you win some small victory against the Witch
-  there's trouble instead—something's gone wrong!
-  you make an important choice in regards to this story.

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



Maybe to help them. Maybe to stop them from going too far. Maybe just to figure out what's actually going on.

Something, anyway.

When they said "the Witch of the Far Roofs," or when they said "the Dread Witch," or maybe just when you saw Caroline dressed up as a witch on Halloween—you felt this... calling, in you. It made you feel like you were *meant* to participate in this.

And when you've told the rats that, they'll *let* you.

You'll spend a while hanging out with the rats as they make their plans. You'll spy on Caroline Yatskaya from the roofs (Fortitude roofs will take your weight, though you may attract attention from the people below if you walk heavily, travel in groups, or are visibly older than 16.) You'll maybe have other interesting encounters while you're up there—there are mildly supernatural things in Fortitude that you'll only encounter if you're up on the roofs rather than on the streets below, plus, the rats will stop now and again to tell interesting stories of the Witch.

Eventually the rats'll get serious.

Whether they're planning to kill her or just steal a pie from her, whether you're planning on going along with them or stepping in, they'll get quiet. They'll get serious. That's the sign that the magic is beginning: that the Dread Witch is with Caroline, rather than just being present *in potential*, and now a mis-step means actual danger.

When the Witch actually shows up—

When you *see* the Witch embodied in Caroline for the first time—

It's a fearsome thing. Maybe you thought that it wasn't going to be. Maybe you've met other witches, witches that weren't the Witch of the Far Roofs, and you expected something different. Something scary but clearly physical, or clearly intangible. Something Wiccan and not scary at all. Something goofy and kind of Halloween. Something that could threaten your soul, but only if you didn't hold firm; or something that could eat your flesh but was just a physical monster; or something that wasn't even an *enemy*, just a person like yourself.

The Witch of the Far Roofs, summoned down into Caroline Yatskaya's flesh, isn't like that.

She's a miraculous entity. She's a thing beyond words. You encounter her and you'll be filled with fear; your attention will fixate; your brain and heart will tell you, "This is something for which you are not prepared."

Maybe she does something magical and terrible.

Maybe she hasn't noticed you yet, and she's just *there*.

Typically you'll break the spell and resume forward motion by turning to some bit of advice from your parents or culture or friends; or by taking inspiration from something you love or care about. That shakes you from the trance of horror and awe and lets you move again.

Whatever happens after that, whether it's a fast-paced battle scene or sneaking around or just a conversation—

It typically ends with a decision.

You face the circumstances and consequences that have accumulated head-on and you make a choice. After that, either something good happens, or something bad happens; I mean, *which* happens, whether it's good or bad what happens, is up to the decision you've made and how well the HG thinks it works, but it all unrolls and transpires from there.



Joining the Yatskaya

40 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

5

You find yourself spending more and more time in the Yatskaya temple.

Are you...

- learning their magic?
- swooning over an age- and interest-appropriate Yatskaya?
- returning some sort of favor by living with them and helping them out for a while?
- consulting with them on matters relating to the cats?
- ...or something else?

What Happens

You'll usually know of them before you know them. You'll hear them mentioned. If you live in the area you'll know them as important people. "The Yatskaya."

If you don't live in their area then you'll still hear of them, but more as examples of weirdness. People liking cats too much, people being weird, whatever. "Like a Yatskaya." And you'll hear stories of Rinley Yatskaya as a kid, or Finley the seal, or Shiori who was carried away by a bird, and you'll one day find out that they're still real, that there's an actual family there, lean and alien and strange.

Then you'll meet them.

They won't seem human. They're not, not really, not after growing up in the temple. They'll be like spirits. Their eyes will be large and reflective. Their way of moving will be unnatural and graced. They'll dress more formally than most people, but it won't look



You're getting involved with the Yatskaya.

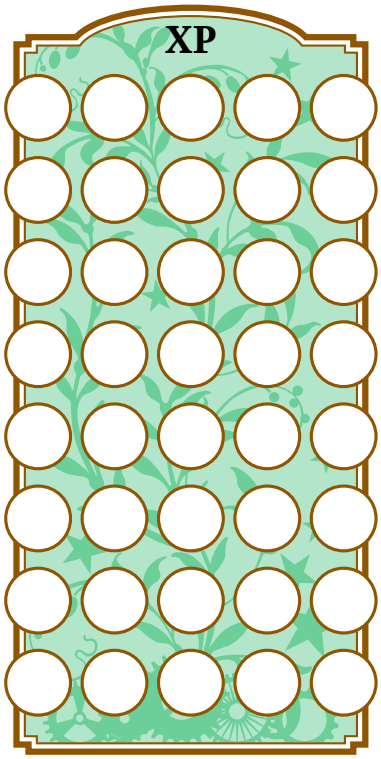
This quest comes with a division of states. There's the you who knows what's going on, who has a very clear sense of what you're doing and what's going to happen and what you're getting into.

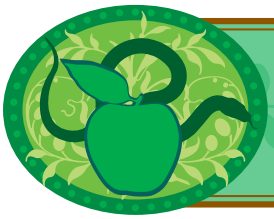
And then there's the... mind-blown you. The you that has totally lost track of it. The you that is confused by your encounters with the Yatskaya, or by the daydream/reality blurring in the temple, or where you stand.

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—calm and certain about what's going on, and completely lost.

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're allowed to flip the card for reasons that have nothing to do with interacting with the Yatskaya, although please don't finish the quest without actually interacting with them!





Joining the Yatskaya
(Dramatic Version)

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest for being unexpectedly taken with the Yatskaya—for feeding the sense that they're impressive, mysterious, and alien by being awed when a more down-to-earth reaction would have been equally or more believable.

You can earn this bonus up to once per book, potentially up to all 40 XP.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- watching the Yatskaya
- having a mysterious interaction with the Yatskaya
- moving to the temple
- helping out at the temple
- having a bizarre experience at the temple
- doing Yatskaya-related chores
- interacting with a cat
- sharing stories of the Yatskaya

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

XP

I Know What's Going On.

WTF

difficult. Their limbs and neck and sometimes their bodies will be long.

Maybe you'll run across Caroline talking to a cat in an alley.

Maybe you'll see Kuroma slouching somewhere against a wall.

They're good people, you understand. I mean, they're usually good people. If you're not a rat, then they're good people, and Rinley's even got a rat she likes. If you get into trouble on their lands, and it's not trouble you caused yourself, they'll help you. Even if it's your fault, even if you got mixed up in a rat raid on Caroline Yatskaya and she lets the Witch of the Far Roofs use her flesh so that you wake up tied up in her cooking pot—

Well, she'll probably be nice and let you out once the threat is past.

And sometimes they're just goofy. I mean, Idril and Kuroma get into full-on iaijutsu duels with folding chairs sometimes. Rinley is just a little goofy all the time. Goro is the kind of guy who forgets where his glasses are when he's wearing them.

But mostly—they'll seem as aliens. As gods.

They'll tend to pull away after you first meet them. They'll be skittish, like cats. They might let you talk to them for a bit, if they want information, but they won't open up much, or stick around very long, at first. They'll fade away.

The first step in really getting to know them is usually getting an invitation to the temple; or, rather, a reason to be there. They don't so much invite people as just... indicate that you're to follow them, when they're going there, and never actually tell you to leave thereafter.

If you have a reason to hang out there then you'll start to understand them.

I mean, it'll be weird. It'll be freakish. Their temple incense makes it really hard to distinguish clearly between daydreams and reality, and there are always cats everywhere, and it's disorienting.

5

But if you have a reason to stay—whether it's a crush on one of them or work to do there or whatever—then eventually they'll point you to a room, and later on they'll drag you to a family dinner, or whatever.

You'll never really know 100% where you stand with them. They're alienated from cultural norms, and you can't even do an ethnographic analysis of their norms—the sample set's just too small! You're probably friends if they hang out with you when you're sad or they are. You're probably romantically attached if they initiate kisses. You're probably part of the family if they tell you when it's dinner-time.

...That's the best I can do.



The Rats on the Roofs

a preamble

"You'll be fine," said the rats, "even on the tech-roofs, as long as you are loyal, brave, and true."
"But I'm evil," I protested.
Dragomir stared at me a long moment, and then he shrugged. "Mind the lasers, then," he said.
We moved on.

— Entropy II, Magister,
the Angel of Fortitude,
as played by Edward Jordan

The rats of Fortitude are talking rats. They're a bit under twice the size of a common rat. They're human-smart. They often wear pants, a cloak, and a sword belt. They are valiant and adventurous. They are great friends to the humans. They spend a lot of time on heroic journeys, testing themselves against the great supernatural forces they call Mysteries.

Maybe you'd like to join them!

Or maybe you'd just like to have a rat or two as friends.

The Story of the Rats

The rats of Fortitude were ordinary rats, once, or so the stories say.

They were brave, as rats are brave. They were smart, as rats are smart. They understood the words of women and of men, but only because the language used in Town is a primeval language, and understood by all the things that understand at all. If they ever traveled to the outside world, the rats grew deaf and mute to the humans' tongue.

The rats were clever, as rats are clever.

They lived off the refuse and the unguarded things of humankind.

It is an open question just how much *peopleness* they already had, back in those days. The rats will say, *all of it*, and ignore the vast body of their own literature on the matter of the rats of Earth. Humans will typically disagree, and assume that the rats of Fortitude dwelt within what I have elsewhere called the *sleep of rats*, which is to say, an awareness in potentiality that is not in practice manifest.

People or not, or, rather, however much of people that they were, they were ordinary rats.

Then they ventured out upon the waters of Big Lake, and there they met King Death, and that meeting with King Death changed them. Then they walked the far rooftops and they met the Mysteries, and among them Hedge the Fang, and that meeting changed them too.

They went Deep Under, last of all, and found the throne of the King of Rats.

And after these meetings and these discoveries they loved themselves and one another as people, and not as rats. They lost their easy confidence in who and what they were and defined themselves consciously as explorers, heroes, and travelers instead. They became both more and less glorious to themselves, in so doing, and they were ordinary rats no longer.

They looked at the humans of Fortitude, and they thought *we must reach out.*

We must make peace with these.

We must change the troubled relationship between these gigantic peons and ourselves.

So they learned to wear pants and cloaks (at least in autumn, spring, and winter), because people won't respect a naked rat. They learned to talk down into the human range. They learned to wield the sword, preferring it to their teeth, and how to make their own ships, and their own doorways, and their own books.

They came to the humans of Fortitude and they made an offer.

"We shall be your allies in this world, and tax you somewhat less —"

This was probably when humans first discovered that when a rat steals your food or goods, it qualifies as taxation—

"But you shall keep a thousand cats; no more."

So the humans of Fortitude have rat-doors, now, clean and white and tiny near the ground, for the rats to come and go. The humans keep their roofs clean, now, for the rats of Fortitude to run on. The humans offer down about one in thirty of their children, now, for a year of service or seven years of training in the burrows of the rats; and they emerge again, these ratboys and

these ratgirls, much the better for it, agile, confident, skilled and competent, and kind.

You can meet them, if you like, at the hotel that is called *the Rat King's Recourse*—the ratboys, the ratgirls, and the rats. That's where you go to hammer out the details of the treaty, to discuss legal, practical, or political matters with the rats.

I've heard the Rat King's throne is straight beneath it, but I couldn't say for sure.

The humans of Fortitude have found that the rats are brave heroes, which is always handy when there's a need for heroes; that they're great navigators, record-keepers, and weather-predictors; and, most of all, that the rats of Fortitude are pretty awesome friends.

There are forty thousand people in Fortitude. Almost a sixth of them are rats.

There are thousands of dogs in Fortitude, and uncountable birds.

There are less than a thousand cats.

Physiology

Young Fortitude rats look like ordinary rats. They're a little bigger than your foot, probably, if you don't count the tail; if you *do* count the tail they're practically twice as long.

You can pick one up.

I mean, you *could* pick one up. If they let you. They weigh about as much as a coffee mug.

Sometime around their first birthday a Fortitude rat undergoes a several-month growth spurt, taking them to adult size. You'll know you're looking at an adult if you see a rat that's between a foot and a foot and a half long—laptop-screen size, basically, or the length of a chainsaw blade, a tall book, or a tire rim. They're roughly hammer-weight or paperweight-weight, one to three pounds, although they'll feel a little lighter than that until you've carried them a while.

Adult Fortitude rats have more flexible spines than common rats.[63] They're *good* at twisting about and you'll sometimes see them walking or standing on two feet for hours at a time. They also have stronger and more flexible hands—no thumbs, which they will sometimes loudly regret, but I've seen Fortitude rats juggling, dragging things heavier than themselves, sewing, using swords and crossbows, and even one playing a pipe organ that was so tiny and squeaky I couldn't hear half the notes she played.

If you're into scientific analysis of freaky things, I know that the brain of a Fortitude rat develops additional structure and complexity as they reach adulthood. The kits are already people—well, at first, they're as speechless and confused as any other babies, but by the time they're a month or two old, they've got enough of a sense of themselves, the world, and other people that they can start in on reading, writing, arithmetic, history, and the theology of the rats. So the additional brain evolution that happens as they become adults isn't what makes them people. It *may*, however, be what lets them stay people if they spend much time on Earth—a young rat who goes to Earth may conceivably forget themselves and lose themselves among the common rat population, while an adult Fortitude rat will not.

Anyway, if you do a serious study of this kind of thing, here's what the truth *looks like*.

Most of the changes are psychosomatic, with a mediating supernatural influence of some sort. That is, the rat wakes to itself as a person, and *because it is a person*, its brain, spine, hands, and to a lesser extent its body begin to change. The majority of the physical changes are explicable—they're a testament to the amazing power living organisms have to reshape themselves, but they're not the craziest thing out there in the natural world. It's only the fact that they wake up at all that's at an inexplicable level of weird.

Spine geeks tell me that the spinal dynamics are really cool. They don't seem able to explain this further in language that I understand. So, if you're a spine geek, or even just a general rat or bone biology geek, the transforming rat spines will be pretty cool. Hand geeks don't seem to be as excited about the hand changes, but, really, that may just be that I've never met a hand geek that's as loud as the spine geeks that I know.

The brain changes—now, those are just freaky. There's a general connectivity increase in the cerebral cortex, which doesn't surprise anybody because there kind of had to be, but the weird thing is that the parts of the brain that change most are focused not on abstract cognition but on language and on dreaming. A new structure comparable to Broca's language center develops. The temporal lobe, in particular, becomes immeasurably more complex. The pons, a fairly

63 *For clarity, "common rats" refers to rattus norvegicus: the brown rat, wharf rat, Norway rat, or, well, common rat. The Fortitude rats call them "Yahoos." These guys are the dominant rat type on Earth, but in Fortitude they're actually pretty uncommon, since even if they manage to migrate into Town, and even if they don't wake up and turn into Fortitude rats themselves, any children they might have will.*

low-level brain structure responsible for REM sleep, undergoes a radical thickening and substantial internal structural changes.

This is not well understood. There is room for original research here, if you're the kind of person willing to move to Fortitude just to study brain-damaged talking rats or the corpses of rats who give their bodies to science. However, please bear in mind, if you do, that the rat physiology here isn't the whole story. The metaphysical continuum of Fortitude, Town, and the Mysteries plays a large part in making Fortitude rats what they are, and you probably won't manage a naturalistic non-dualistic explanation for the Fortitude rat brain unless you first manage a naturalistic non-dualistic explanation for that continuum.[64]

Social Behavior

The rats of Fortitude are totally showing off for you.

Everything you see and hear, if you can't hear into the ultrasonic or read past an alien species' deliberately-worn persona—that is for *you*. They are totally trying to convince you that they are awesome, and rat culture is awesome, and you should socially affirm and support the sense they have of themselves.

It is all a kind of peacock-like display.

See me as a hero! they're saying, with everything they do. *See me as I see myself!*

This is natural. This is how people behave, when they suddenly realize that a different order of being is people too. The next step after rats figuring out that humans were people was *wanting humans to affirm their values and culture*—and in fact, you are probably doing it *right back*.

I don't know.

Maybe that's just *me*. I know that me, I keep thinking of Boromir and "They have a *cave troll*"[65] every time I see myself through the rats' eyes. I mean, you go up there, you have an adventure on the rooftops or in the Deep Under or whatever, and there's these two-pound heroes... and you. Even if you're a 4' tall kid, you're still three heroes tall and thirty heroes' weight. If you're a tall and healthy adult—it hardly bears thinking about!

So I know that I tend to show off for the rats right back. I know I tend to act like us Big Folk walk the walk we talk, which in fact we do not really, and I know I tend to act like I'm exactly what I want to be.

I try to show the rats the side of us that we'd want the talking rats to see. Bet *you* will, too!

Here's what it's probably like for you, among the rats.

You'll feel pretty safe, first off. They spend a lot of time emoting that you're safe with them. They'll give you the strong impression that everything is in good hands. So you'll probably feel safe, most of the time. You'll feel like things are totally under control, most of the time.[66] You'll feel like you've fallen in with larger-than-life little heroes, whenever you're among the rats.

They'll act however they think they need to act to make you feel that way, to give you that kind of impression of your life and the rats you're with. They'll treat you basically like a child on a precious coming of age journey, maybe a little more respectfully, but basically like that. They'll make sure you know that *it will be OK*. That bit's symmetric, too, I think. It's hard not to feel incredibly overprotective and adoring and nurturing towards the rats, at least when they're not showing off just how heroic they can be. It's hard not to want to convince the rats that they are totally safe and in good hands with you. You won't want anything to happen to them, I bet, even if you're in their domain of competence and not in yours.

The rats will give things an air of glory. They'll make you feel like what you're doing, when you're with them, is important. It's serious business. It's for real.

Usually, that's because it is. But they'd make you feel that way even if it weren't. They're all about the grand journey, and even if they're just heading over to the store and not engaging in an epic quest against some terrifying Mystery at *all*, they'll probably still walk and talk like there is epicness involved.[67]

You'll feel loved, probably. At least, they'll have room in their hearts to love you, if you've known them for very long. They're not parsimonious with that. Ordinary people can be hesitant to love, sometimes, because you can get hurt or betrayed so very easily, but the rats are heroes. Because they're heroes, they're willing to bear the cost of knowing and loving people in payment for its joys.

64 *Which I won't say is impossible! Though I think it is likely hubris.*

65 *If you are reading this in the year 2257 and nobody remembers the Lord of the Rings movies, go watch them! Or the 2182 remake with Mecha-Bogey as Boromir. They're pretty cool!*

66 *This is only most of the time because sometimes you might be falling or drowning or getting eaten or something, and you will probably not feel totally safe and that things are totally under control at such a time.*

67 *Warning! Sometimes trips to the store* do *involve terror and combat, so don't let this get you into too casual a frame of mind.*



The Deep Under

This is the altar of the rats—their deep warrens, their home. It is a spacious and vast expanse: humans could fit there, though finding an entrance suitable to an adult is hard and the navigable roads are often sized for rats—

But fundamentally the caverns beneath Fortitude are a great spacious vastness. Water drips from somewhere far above. Crystal formations spread. There are skywalks barely wide enough for two rats abreast, but tunnels down which you could march the ogres.

The city of the rats is built into the cavern walls. Here and there it looks out from the limestone cliffs onto the vistas of Big Lake. In other places there are glass-walled or crystal-walled openings onto Big Lake's depths; you can see the fish swim by. Mostly, though, it opens only to the inside.

Mostly its lights are torches; the windless fires of the caverns of the rats.

At its monasteries string-bridges stretch across the cavern—reconfigurable, though rarely reconfigured, and allowing the dormitories of the rats to stretch seven to twelve stories high and still allow the rats to leave as easily through their windows as their doors.

There are things to find here. There are treasure-troves and caves of strange fungus. There are piles of loose things, salvage-yards for gold and silver and machinery, and there may even be monsters, shadowy monsters, deep within. But it is hard to control your search for such a thing, hard to take advantage of the place, because of its nature as the Deep Inside, the Deep Under, the Deep Known.

Like all things that are too solidly real, it is hard to pick out anything in particular from your time or your experience there. It is hard to have an adventure there, so much as simply a flashback to a given memory. The story of your time there is like a "Previously, on Your Life's Story" or "Once upon a time..."

It is not life exactly. It is a place you've been.

I don't know how much of this is colorful description on my part and how much is the actual metaphysics; as with the sunset on Little Island or the fourth event between classes in Horizon, having difficulty sorting something out of your experience may or may not mean that it doesn't happen.

In my head, though, your time Deep Under is told in a flashback box, most of the time. It is rare to be so thoroughly imprisoned, or to create something so solid of your own devising, as to have a forum for actual action down below.

That said, these are things that I know you can experience Deep Under:

You can immerse in the river of culture and knowledge, down there; you can experience the long course of study and growing up. I think this may even be a little timeless; I think that there may be rats who are only a year or two old who were born many years ago, because they spent their time in deep studies, under the world.

I know you can emerge blinking from the caverns.

I know you can look down and have this moment when you realize you're wearing your fine new clothes. Maybe a cloak, maybe a uniform, maybe something else.

I know you can experience writing stuff, down below. You can catch yourself in the moment of recording some truth about the Mysteries or some interpretation of those ideas.

I know you can be a prisoner in a tower, looking out upon the world.

I know you can experience justice, while you're down there, often at the hands of the King of Rats. I don't know if you can experience the things that you need justice for.

It is a strange place, and I don't know how much I am giving you an approximation of how it feels and how you could play it out and how much it's literally like that, where most events elude the mental eye.

The Deep Under Properties

- You must take responsibility for your fate.
- You must exist.
- You must be imprisoned by your conceptions.
- Nor may you be bound by any other force; or time.
- You must build your world with your own two hands.
- You cannot experience the world, but only your prisons and your creations.
- You must flee from the shadow of your mind.

Experiences and Quests

A lot of the time, interactions with the rats are pretty simple. You smile at them. They salute you! Then they go about their business.

Or you talk about stuff. Or you do stuff together.

Standard **Slice of Life**, **Shared Action**, and **Shared Reaction** stuff. It's just like with anyone else!

But there are a few other options, so I want to take a moment to talk about what it's like knowing the rats from outside.

Dramatic Rat Posing



Foreshadowing

I want to highlight this a bit, because—even though I don't have *that* much to say about it—it's one of the most common ways you'll encounter rats in the game.

They're... dramatic.

They'll stand dramatically on a roof. They'll turn dramatically away. You'll see them and it's like, wow, interesting!

They hang laundry...

Dramatically!

They say hello—like a *boss*.

I don't know why it should be that they'd be interesting enough that everything they do is a potential Foreshadowing action trigger. And maybe it isn't—I mean, maybe in your game, they'll show up, and you'll be all, "Yawn. OK? Next?"

But I think normally it's like, you see them, and they do stuff. Ominous stuff. Stuff that seems like it could... *mean* something. You know. Later on.

That's Foreshadowing!

The Whispering of a Mystery



Dramatic Action/Foreshadowing

Out there, somewhere, on the Far Rooftops; whispered of, Deep Under; here and there upon Big Lake—there are the Mysteries. They are the gods, the monsters, the totems, and the antagonists to the rats. They are the central element of the spiritual experience of the rats, and the rats spend much of their time and energy opposing them. That's a little strange if you're used to gods you serve or pray to, so here's the best way I've figured out to put it: the Mysteries are *sacred tests* to the rats, and their religion is about questing against them. It is in opposing the Mysteries that the rats earn the blessings that the Mysteries have to give.

I don't know if this is the nature of the Mysteries or if it's just the nature of the rats.

The Mysteries are horrible things. They have ties to the Abhorrent Weapons of the Excrucians. I don't know the *nature* of those ties, but it's obvious that they exist. There are hints throughout the rats' experience that the Mysteries might be neutral entities rather than malevolent ones, that even the worst of them isn't really in it to *hurt* the rats. At the same time, though, I have trouble accepting that creatures like Typhon intend to give any sort of blessing or life lessons to the rats. It's more, I think, that *questing against the Mysteries*, almost by necessity, makes the rats wiser and more blessed creatures.

Richard Bach wrote, "There is no such thing as a problem without a gift for you in its hands. You seek problems because you need their gifts."[68] I think he's on to something, and that's what the struggle against the Mysteries is for.

The Quests

The rats are no match for the Mysteries. Not usually.

They don't go out and fight them.

They're two pound heroes up against things that might as well be gods. They fight when they must but fighting isn't the point.

The quest of the rats is to study the Mysteries. They investigate them. They learn what they can. They record what they learn in their **Books of Names**, the lore-books of the rats, and over time they consolidate, distill, and disseminate what they have learned about the Mysteries that shape their lives.

They fight to keep the Mysteries at bay. They bloody the Mysteries' noses. They push back the intrusions of the Mysteries on Fortitude. They close the doors that lead the Mysteries to their burrows and to the Big Folks' homes. They learn sacred rituals and chores to placate the Mysteries, to confuse them, to eliminate or decontaminate their influence. They practice a game of

68 *In **Illusions: The Adventures of a Reluctant Messiah**, available both in Fortitude and on Earth.*

Friend to the Rats
(Serious)

5

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest if:

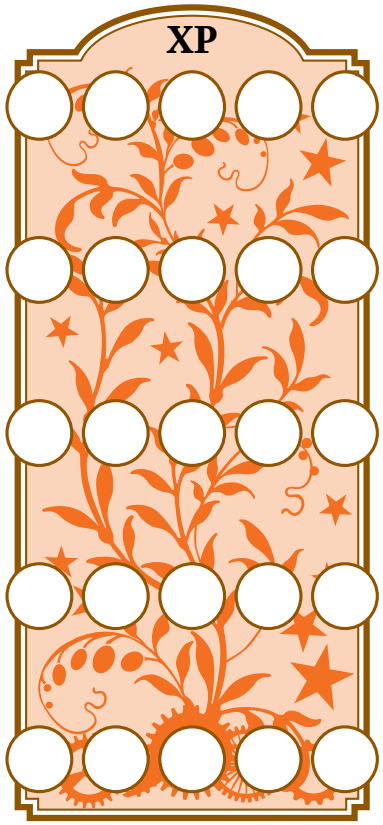
- you get drawn into a reasonably long adventure. You can get this whenever the HG realizes that some rat-related adventure has gone on reasonably long.
- you prove more useful on such an adventure than the rats had any right to expect.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- getting in trouble to defend or protect a rat
- getting in trouble doing a favor for a rat
- doing something charming and thoughtful for a rat
- doing something helpful and supportive for a rat
- listening to the stories of the rats
- exchanging stories with them
- traveling along the Fortitude roofs

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



survival where victory isn't *destroying* the Mysteries—since most of them would just come back again later anyway—but learning a little more about how to live in their Mystery-haunted world.

If the Mysteries were ordinary monsters, then this might make the rats look a little meek. But they are not. Once you'll see a Mystery you'll know how incredibly brave the rats have been, to spend their lives resisting them, deflecting them, and studying the Mysteries at all.

Sometimes the Mysteries seem scarcely greater than ordinary rats and Big Folk, but other times—

Other times it is barely possible to endure their presence, much less oppose them. Other times they are threats, not to your life, but to all of Fortitude, all of Town, even all existence. They can take on an aspect to them that is immeasurable, that a person can barely endure the presence of, much less oppose.

So it will vary from Mystery to Mystery, in your game, and even from story to story, how deadly these threats are to face. Sometimes an adventure against them is the work of an afternoon, and you'll be back for dinner. Other times you can strive against them for a lifetime and barely even hope to save a single thing you love. They are hydras, all of them,[69] and each encounter shows a different face.

The Calling

And for you, the central feature of a Mystery is—

You will know when you've been called.

Sometimes the Big folk *are* called to face them. Sometimes you actually must. And that's usually either the weight of accumulated Foreshadowing—of *too much time* spent paying attention to the Mystery's tracks—or a Decisive Action.

You think over, or talk over, what's been happening. Then you make a decision: *you've been called*.

If you're called upon to join the rats in their dealings with the Mysteries; if you honestly believe that you are called upon to join them—then they will let you work with them. The Mysteries are their gods, like I've said; the rats will happily fight the Mysteries, sometimes even kill them, but keeping them from having a spiritual connection with somebody? Keeping someone, even Big someones, from being called out to fight them?

That would be fundamentally wrong.

69 and not just Hydra, which is named Unbounded

Friend to the Rats
(Comedic)

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

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) when your interaction with the rats gets, or your adventures with the rats get, a little over the top.

Or, for that matter, when you *decide* to make them a little over the top.

When that happens, 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 be willing to hold up a sign. It's even OK if sometimes you're being ironic or making a suggestion instead of an observation, as long as an observation is more typical.

XP



Friend to the Rats

25 XP Quest

2: 

3: 

4: 

5

You fight loyally to help, support, and defend your friends among the rats.

What You'll Do

There's at least one rat who *matters* to you, and to at least *some* extent the other way around. You'll have them over fairly regularly at your home. You'll make a rat-door for them to use even if you don't live in Fortitude. If it's possible—if they live on a boat, an apartment, or a surface mound, or if you're small enough to fit conveniently Deep Under—you'll visit them when you can as well. Certainly it's great fun to have tea or drinks with them, to take in a movie or read the latest comics with them, and it brings you joy, if they have them, to babysit their kits.

If they really need you, you don't even have to think about it. You're going to help. If they're just poking around on the Far Roofs, exploring and gathering information on the Mysteries, then, sure, you might have better things to do than help out. But if they're *called* to face a Mystery, or if they're in some other kind of trouble, and they need you, you're there. They don't even have to ask, they just have to say they need you, and you're there.

Friends of the rats are comfortable on the roofs. Most people in Fortitude will go up on their roofs to give them a good cleaning and check for damage, but you'll go up there just to hang out. You'll giggle at balcony railings because seriously. The *idea!*

If you're a friend to the rats, not much will surprise you any more. You'll tend to dress in brighter colors and move with a certain piratical ease. The world is a big place and full of surprises, but if you're friend to the rats, you know how—or at least you've seen people who know how—to cope.

What You'll Know

So, being a "friend to the rats" is really learning to be a support character in their quests. It teaches you how to be their backup, someone they can lean on. Here's the kind of stuff you learn to do.

You'll know when rats are hurting. You'll know when they need you—even when they're not saying as much. This is an acute sense for the relevant body language paired with cultural familiarity. Conversely, you'll have a decent sense for when they're not really hurting, when they don't need you, so you don't have to worry about staying behind or laughing off something apparently tragic when that's the case.

You'll know what kinds of things the rats you're familiar with are bad at. You'll know their foibles and their failings. You'll know that if you're traveling with Karolina, you can't expect her to remember what she promised you two hours ago, although she'll happily turn her attention to it if reminded. You'll know that Petra Naomi will forget to eat. You'll know that Leonidas' leg hurts after a half-day's walking, even if he won't tell you that, and that he'll feel better riding on your shoulder. What that means in play is that you can ask the HG to emote that kind of thing if it comes up, without relying on you the player figuring it out.

Similarly, you tend to pick up knowledge on the rats' dreams and dooms—enough to know what's looming in their future, and to understand it as well. If Madoka Ketterley is going to have to face the Witch of the Far Roofs one day, you'll know that; if a couple of rats of your acquaintance dream of kits they haven't yet been able to have, you'll probably know that too. You're in on things, not just from stuff told you explicitly in play, but stuff picked up through general interactions between sessions and during scenes you don't in detail play out.

The Rituals of the Roofs



Example Rituals

This isn't the place and this isn't the time to tell you everything you'd need to know to adventure with the rats—

That's a book all its own.

But I didn't want to leave you at a loss, either. So, herein find the secrets of an adventure with the rats: of setting off across Roofs Near and Far to face their Mysteries, their predators, their gods.

The Ritual of the Near Roofs

So, the Near Roofs are just... roofs. They'll support your weight, assuming you're basically human weight—I would be hesitant if I were in the shape of a bear or a dragon—and things look *different* from the aerial perspective, but they're basically just roofs.

So the step from the world below to the world of the roofs—

It's more a social, contextual thing than anything else.

It's not a magical transition but a... personal one. It takes some bravery the first time or two, but after that, it's as easy as riding a bike.

There's probably also a ritual phrase that starts a *proper* adventure up there—I like "Hup! Hup! Up!" or "Atop the sleepy sprawl of Fortitude, there is a land of drama and adventure..."—but it's usually up to the HG exactly what that is, and the HG's usually the first one to say it after the clambering's started.

(Once you're experienced up there you'll be able to invoke this without the HG's active intercession; though, unless your group is really *laissez-faire*, you'll still need them to participate and agree.)

Assuming the ritual has properly started—as noted, you need the HG's permission, plus, all the players have to have noticed that you've started a ritual—you and the other players start in on a series of *ritual actions*:

- talking about why you feel you have to face the Mystery or travel to the Far Roofs;
- talking about the numinous experiences you've had before this, with that Mystery;
- talking about the rat life you pass on the "Near" Roofs—
  - the rat households you see, and what they're like;
  - the flying banners you pass;
  - the kinds of roofs you travel over.
- emoting your reactions to the rats themselves.
- describing the things you do while trying to learn how to navigate the roofs.
- talking about what you think this kind of adventure is about, and what you expect to happen;
- invoking some unrelated symbol of power to merge the two ritual invocations together;
- encountering something weird, and triggering the Ritual for the Far Roofs; or
- encountering a Mystery, and triggering the Ritual of the Mystery.

This ends when you give up and return to the ground below; or when you move on to t**he Ritual of the Far Roofs** or **the Ritual of the Mystery**, below. Giving up is probably triggered by any appropriate statement—e.g., "This is—*I can't do this*"—but the ritual doesn't end immediately; first, the others must have a chance to persuade you to continue on, and only if they fail, or don't try, does the ritual come to an end.



The Invocation

Condition: You have the OOC attention of all of the players, and there is an applicable ritual.

Action:

- **Invoke a Ritual!**

The full rules for Rituals appear in the ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** RPG.

The Ritual of the Far Roofs

This ritual begins when you encounter something weird on the Near Roofs—something that disturbs you. Something that shouldn't be. You describe it, or the HG does,

And then you start the ritual with something like: "And on we go."

This usually also ends the Ritual of the Near Roofs.

See, there is a land beyond the roofs of Fortitude, a land where you stop being able to get down to the ground. Maybe the roofs just start to run together more and more until you realize that it's been forever since you've seen the ground. Or maybe you take some weird and mystical path. *Something.*

And then you're in the Far Roofs, which aren't the roofs of Fortitude any longer. They're something a little different.

And on we go.

Assuming the ritual has properly started—as above, you need the HG's permission, and all the players have to have noticed that you've started a ritual—you and the other players start in on a series of *ritual actions*:

- talking about why you feel you have to face the Mystery or travel to the Far Roofs;
- talking about the numinous experiences you've had before this, with that Mystery;
- speculating about what's in the houses "under" the roofs;
- settling down in what the rats call a "runners' nest" and—
  - telling or listening to a rat-story of the Mysteries;
  - telling or listening to a rat-story of the strange places in the Far Roofs;
  - resting or eating something;
  - emoting your pleasure in the rats' companionship;
  - knitting;
  - something else that shows what you do during breaks;
  - getting up again when it's time to move on;
- summarizing strange encounters or weird things that you see or find, and what (if anything) you do about them—
  - bizarre paths and sights;
  - strange areas that are weirdly emotionally evocative;
  - spiritual climes;
  - interesting weather or strange sundown/sunrise effects;
  - walled-in, windowless gardens to descend to;
  - lakes formed where the gutters don't work;
  - strange sights in the distance that you can't get to;
  - spoor of the Mystery;
  - uncomfortable experiences;
  - tall tales;
  - daring adventures; *and*
  - brushes with death
- talking about what you think this kind of adventure is about, and what you expect to happen;
- invoking some unrelated symbol of power (for instance, crossing the "gutter-sea" by declaring, "Sail away!" and invoking **the Ritual of the Lake** from pg. 326) to merge the two ritual invocations together; *or*
- encountering the Mystery, and triggering **the Ritual of the Mystery**.

The point of all this is to have you, as the players, brainstorm what the place is like.

Once you've reached the Far Roofs there isn't really any way back save to confront the Mystery. I mean, technically? Maybe? Maybe you could try the "I give up" thing here too? But usually that just can't happen.



Ritual Actions

Condition: You're in a ritual. The spotlight's on you, or on someone in physical contact with you.

Action:

- **Add a group XP to the pot and declare that your impending action is meaningful**

The full rules for Rituals appear in the ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** RPG.

The Ritual of the Mystery

This ritual usually begins when you come face-to-face with the Mystery. You describe it, or the HG does.

And then you start the ritual.

The usual invocations for this ritual are:

- "I am in fear." *Or*
- "I am in awe."

For the first sight of a Mystery is always one of those things—it fills you with the *mysterium tremendum* and the *mysterium fascinans*.

Assuming the ritual has properly started—as above, you need the HG's permission, and all the players have to have noticed that you've started a (new) ritual—you and the other players start in on a series of *ritual actions*:

- emoting your fear, your awe, your frozen-ness;
- describing a flashback to someone you love, and how that love gives you the strength to face the Mystery;
- describing some bit of cultural wisdom, or flashing back to being told it, and explaining how that gives you the strength to face the Mystery;
- trying to do something metaphysical, based on the lore of the rats or your reasoning based on the situation at hand;
- remembering something that's been established about why you're opposing the Mystery, and doing something on that basis;
- physically opposing it—using your cool powers or strengths to
  - strike at it for a limited, tactical goal or
  - defend yourself; *or*
- invoking some unrelated symbol of power (perhaps you have a Ritual Power which could be used to vitiate the normal process of Mystery resolution?) to merge the two ritual invocations together.

All that said—

The ritual doesn't end, and the Mystery isn't defeated, until someone makes a key decision, act of trust, or sacrifice—a Decisive or Science, Faith, and Sorcery kind of thing —**that the HG rules is sufficient to end the ritual and temporarily vanquish the Mystery**, or at least bring the combat into the field of an ordinary, non-Ritual encounter.

If all has gone well, the situation that drove you to face the Mystery is resolved and you may return home victorious; if things have gone less well, well, perhaps you can still get home.



Rat-Lore of the Witch

(An Example Mystery)

The Witch of the Far Roofs, who is named Embodiment, lives on Willow Road, past the Grayvale and Windowpane Way. Her house has four legs on every side, so that it can turn about to face in any direction and run along the roofs; one side at a time has windows and doors, one side unfolds its legs, and the rest fold their legs around eerie-looking faces.

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

The heralds of the Witch of the Far Roofs are
waking up; wanting to find her; opening a door; turning around; daydreaming; longing for an ideal

The weapons of the Witch of the Far Roofs are
curses; transformations; infirmities; diseases; enchantments; minions; her long sharp fingernails.

These things protect you from the Witch
meditation; propriety; honesty. showing her respect.

The Witch of the Far Roofs kills you by
rotting you; choking you; ripping out your heart; with hunger; with disease; with age; with all the frailties to which the mortal flesh is prone.

The Witch is drawn to
wickedness; want; those who can benefit from a moral lesson; the exploited, reviled, and oppressed; the brave and virtuous, in desperation; fools.

The Witch hungers for
fair payment for services rendered; the punishment of the iniquitous; the flesh of Big Folk and rats

You may kill The Witch by
breaking an object which contains her life (the object varies from adventure to adventure, for reasons currently unknown.)

The Witch is reborn
from a seed growing in the forest; from scraps of magic left behind; as a baby duck; on a flower floating in the wind; from water accumulating in the gutters during a heavy snow or rain

You may escape the attention of the Witch by showing wisdom, honor, or self-sacrifice in the process of giving her what she is due

A Brush with a Mystery

35 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

3: 

4: 

5: 

There's no fixed format for handling it when a Mystery touches your life—

It can be the resolution of an Issue, a Ritual, a single quest, or the meat of an entire Arc[70].

If you want to play it out as a single quest, though, it might look a little like this—

Though note that, as a generic quest, this can't really get to the *heart* of what a *particular* Mystery is about. This is a brush with "a Mystery," not Typhon, Unicorn, Goblin, Hydra, or the Witch, and the whole, in this, is much the tamer than the parts.

What You'll Know

Over the course of this quest you'll tend to pick up most of what the rats know about the Mystery you're struggling with, albeit in bits and pieces. If a human's doing this kind of quest, they'll often run into rats that'll volunteer stories; if a rat's doing it, they'll *still* tend to start with incomplete information and run into rats who'll pass on useful or "useful" advice.

So by the time the quest ends you'll probably have picked up at least a few ideas about stuff like—

- what the Mystery uses to attack with;
- how to turn it aside;
- how it kills, when it kills you;
- what kinds of things draw it near;
- what it hungers for;
- how it returns to life, if someone kills it;
- how to drive it away for a while;
- what must be done to keep it from troubling Fortitude.

What Happens

The details of what you'll do are going to vary a lot based on the Mystery, but here's the *basic* idea.

Normally your attention is drawn to a Mystery through hints and nuance.

I'm mostly saying that so you can start the game with this quest, or start on this quest without having a big Mystery influence in the world below. It's OK to start this quest when the Mystery has been up in everyone's business or conducting hideous slaughters on the streets of Fortitude Below. But *usually* it's not like that.

Usually it all starts with an intimation, either before or after the quest begins. You've got a sense of trouble coming. And then the first signs and shadows of the Mystery itself appear in play.

You know something's wrong, so you haunt the roofs of Fortitude.

You poke around on them.

You're looking for *signs*—indications that the Mystery's been there, that you aren't wrong about it or how it's acting.

You're looking for *clues* about what to do next.

In general, I'm going to assume that there's *something that must be done*. There is a thing that has to happen. Maybe it's just a pitched battle with or standard Ritual against the Mystery. Maybe you have to fight it in a specific place. Maybe you have to light a bunch of special candles, or help it talk to its half-human daughter, or trap it in a cage of lightning—

I don't know.

You find out what must be done, and you start moving towards *doing* it, and as you do these things, the Mystery engages you now and then as a mysterious or outright terrifying threat.

You'll have a series of scary encounters with the Mystery.

It'll usually get away and you'll usually get away but sometimes it'll be close.

Near the end, and sometimes earlier, you'll have to make a choice—an encounter with the Mysteries almost never resolves until someone's done a Decisive or Science, Faith, and Sorcery thing.

*70 See the quest sets like "A Scientific Adventure" or "A Heroic Journey" in the **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** RPG to understand how to pull this off!*

A Brush With a Mystery

5

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

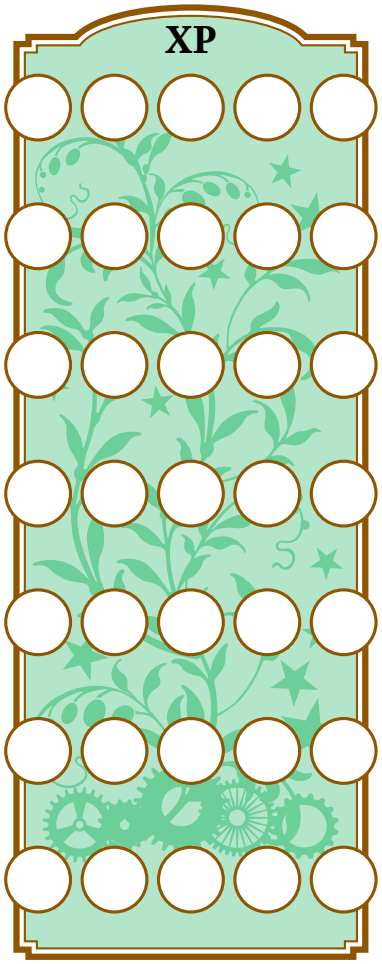
- you lose a battle against the Mystery;
- you discover "what must be done;"
- you find signs that the Mystery is troubling Fortitude Below, or some other campaign-relevant location.

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

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you:

- encounter an ominous sign of the Mystery's presence or interest
- have a terrifying encounter with the Mystery, before it departs/slips away
- have an inexplicable encounter with the Mystery, before it departs/slips away
- encounter a Main Character while you're traveling the roofs of Fortitude
- talk about personal traumas thematically relevant to the Mystery
- search for signs of the Mystery
- listen to or tell people stories of the Mystery

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



The Natural World

a preamble

I don't think you can keep happiness in a cage. If you tried to put it into words, if you had to say: it's this, it's that, it's this other thing, maybe it would die. If you want to be happy you have to have great open windows for that happiness, you have to let it flutter in and out, flying on the wind.

Every morning I climb up to the "sky tower" on top of my house and check on the health of the birds that live there. It's hard to keep everything clean and neat. I have to spend way too much money keeping them fed. It's worth it because it means I can wear the blue tassel with pride.

I used to worry that that was a bad motivation. I used to think, "Maybe I just want to be part of something." So I asked Blue Ratboy. He said, "When you're up there, in the sky where the birds live, and they're all around you, don't you feel happy?"

I couldn't say something like that. I didn't want to put it into words. He laughed at me, but he didn't think that I was wrong.

— Natalia Koutolika,
The Prodigy,
as played by Teresa Rowling

To the people of Fortitude, a blue braid—usually in the form of a woven tassel, lanyard, or bracelet—symbolizes *connection to the natural world*. If you see someone wearing a woven blue bracelet, or a blue tassel on their sleeve or hat, they're indicating by that clothing choice that they've attuned themselves to the rhythms of the local non-human non-rat life.

You're supposed to get your first braid from someone else who is already qualified to wear one. This isn't an absolute metaphysical or social prohibition, though, so much as a barrier to entry and an excuse for an affirming ritual. Metaphysically, you qualify for one by completing one or two appropriate Knight or Shepherd Arcs; socially, you'll qualify when the people who care about such things believe your braid is legitimate.

Since it doesn't tie to human or rat life directly, the blue braid isn't that big of a deal to most people who aren't particularly close to nature themselves. Even the most notable figures wearing the blue braid—

- **Blue Ratboy** (pg. 362), a vagrant;
- **Dr. Kiyomizu** (pg. 363), a local veterinarian; *and*
- **Elaine Fry** (pg. 362), a visiting American

— are minor luminaries or freaks in the eyes of society at large.

In theory, you can earn the blue braid through a gardener's mastery of the soil; by taking care of parkland and trees; by learning the ways of insects, small animals, or fish; or by living in tune with nature up among the hills. In practice, none of these things are terribly important in Fortitude: you can *do* that, and hope that someone like Blue Ratboy will acknowledge you, but there isn't a standard lifestyle for people getting in touch with nature in this way. Gardeners are more likely to build good homes; fishwise folks will work the boats; and people who learn the ways of insects or live wild in the hills *might* do so in a blue-braid kind of way, or they might just be kind of weird.

Friend to the Birds

15 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest

25 XP Quest

1:

2:

4:

5

You live your life as a friend to the birds of the Docks.

What You'll Do

Those who become friends to the birds are prone to keeping lofts or cotes for pigeons and other birds; spending time with the birds on rooftops and high places; keeping parrots or tropical birds either free or caged within their home; and tending to wounded birds. Birds are self-involved and noisy creatures, unlikely to bend their habits too much to accommodate the humans around them, so most of a bird-lover's interaction with them involves work, active care, and intruding into the bird's world.

Friends to the birds are associated with the sky and to a certain degree with mystery. Birds are heavily associated with **Foreshadowing** and **Discovery** and more generally with the Immersive Fantasy genre[71]—you see the birds behaving strangely, and you check it out, or even start behaving a little strangely yourself!

What You'll Know

Here's what you're dealing with, bird-wise:

- **Gulls.** Seagulls, terns, and other gulls are the most common birds in Fortitude, and they're basically ubiquitous—like guns at an NRA convention or sequins on a figure skater's dress, they're everywhere you'd expect them to be and a number of places you wouldn't.
- **Wading Birds.** The shore near the brackish portions of the lake is home to a population of miscellaneous wading birds, most notably the vividly patterned crimson and white docks egret. Sandpipers are common in shallower water.
- **City and Hill Birds.** Fortitude is also home to sleek black pigeons, a modest number of songbirds (including thrushes, swallows, titmice, shocking blue magpies, and wrens), and scattered owls and raptors.
- **Oddities.** Tropical birds occasionally fly in off of Big Lake. They're not really suited to Fortitude life, but they settle by the docks anyway for lack of anywhere better in Town. There's also a small population of feral chickens.

Characters who study the birds of Fortitude become aware of things like variations in their birth rate, population, and mortality; changes in the distribution of the avian population; diseases and predators that are affecting them; and the occasional influx of foreign birds by the paths across Big Lake.

Rewards

The 15 XP version usually earns a Recharge Token. It can also make a good basis for a project or quest miracle involving omens or the local birds.

71 (as this game defines it, anyway)

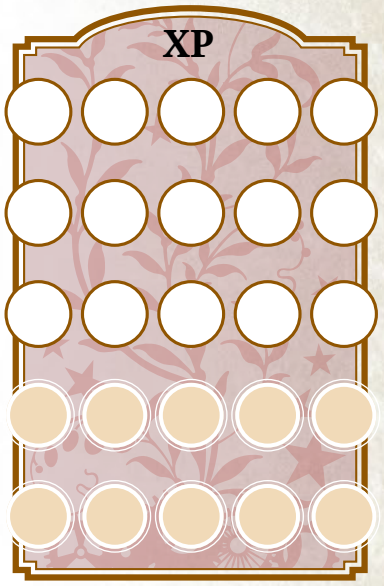
Friend to the Birds
(Casual/Comedic)

You'll get distracted a lot. You'll spend a lot of time thoughtfully staring at the sky.

Pick a catchphrase that indicates that you were paying attention to the birds and not to the world around you—either because you're being distractable and not very grounded, or because the birds are doing something really interesting. The classic example is "Sorry, I was sky-watching." (Optionally followed by "What?" or "What were you saying?")

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per 15 minutes/scene) by invoking that catch phrase or some reasonably close variant.

What's yours?



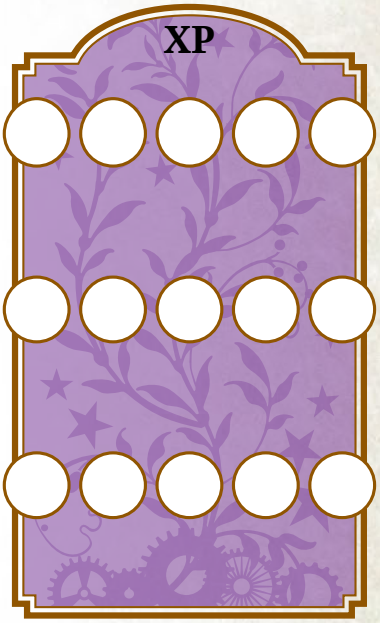
Friend to the Birds
(Serious/Procedural)

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest if you make a major personal sacrifice or take a major risk to protect a bird or the birds of Fortitude. You can get this whenever the HG feels like honoring that sacrifice, so even slow sacrifices like long hours and tight budgets might get rewarded eventually.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- taking care of the local birds
- investigating an issue pertaining to the local birds
- bird-watching as a casual activity
- ominous bird-watching

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



Friend to the Street Cats and Dogs

15 XP Quest

 Chibi-Quest

25 XP Quest

1: 

5

You make yourself a friend to the cats and dogs that wander Fortitude, both proper strays and animals that theoretically have a home. You'll generally be good with small mammals of other sorts as well.

What You'll Do

You'll make yourself responsible for the problems of a dozen or so random animals who visit you now and then. Sometimes, when you need a sympathetic ear and none of the human or quasi-human characters around are a reasonable choice, you'll talk things out with them. You'll probably learn that one or two of them make good arbiters of others' characters and capable judges of whom you can trust and whom you can't[72]—if you feel like your character's mistrust or dislike for someone isn't fun, but just changing their mind feels wrong too, having an animal you trust accept that person might be a good way to move past those feelings.

What You'll Know

Some of the threats to dogs and cats in the Region include:

- **Heartworm.** Mosquito-borne diseases are rare in Docks Region because of a prevalence of dragonflies, and both dogs and cats like to chew on *fisher's grass*, which tends to keep parasites at bay. That said, in the summer months animals not receiving preventative treatment are at risk of heartworm.
- **Parvo and Distemper.** Both of these diseases have feline and canine variations which are extremely infectious, hardy, and typically fatal without treatment. Vaccines exist to protect dogs and cats against both of these diseases, so most human-raised animals are comparatively safe; however, an outbreak among the feral population is a matter for serious concern.
- **Ear Mites.** Ear mites are extremely contagious, spreading easily to and between both dogs and cats. There's a rat superstition that says that ear mites can spread to rats—even though the ear mites that rats get are species-specific and *can't* come from cats or dogs. For this reason the rats will often quarantine and treat cats or dogs with ear mites that they find, sometimes with more consideration and sometimes with less consideration than a human owner would provide.
- **Injury.** It's pretty easy for even a minor injury to develop into a life-threatening infection. Cats are particularly prone to this, since they're more likely to live by hunting than by begging and they're at greater risk of encountering a rat bravo and being "discouraged" from an attack.
- **Wishes.** Cats and dogs are domesticated creatures onto which people project a kind of humanity and as such they are frequently subject to "spillover" effects from magic, miracles, and granted wishes. This isn't always bad, of course, but it can be; getting drawn into the magical events that follow is an occupational hazard for the friends of the street dogs and cats.

Fortitude doesn't have much in the way of predators or industries that would discourage free-roaming pets. For that reason, most of the cats and dogs in the region do wander freely. Conversely, it's natural for any free-roaming animal to have a family, an owner, or at least a friendly home they can wander by when times are hard; and if they don't, it's because Fortitude itself constitutes their home and they can live companionably with and off the people of Fortitude as a whole. This all makes it very difficult to draw a clean line between feral animals and pets, much less to distinguish them on sight. This in turn makes it hard to control contagious diseases or investigate the movements of the local canine or feline population—if a popular water source starts making the animals sick, for instance, it can take days or weeks to track it down.

72 Though you'll also probably know one or two animals that are unfairly picky in who they'll accept, and a few utter traitors who'll give their affections to anyone who pets, feeds, or plays with them....

The rats insist on limiting the feline population in the Region but that's mostly for religious reasons and hereditary distrust: the truth is, they're more than capable of handling cats and dogs alike. They even keep some dogs as pets, heavy labor, or riding animals, and the reckless rat **Prince Ithar** is known for his alliance with a vicious, half-blind Persian cat. Typically a Fortitude rat only has to fear a cat if the rat is weak or wounded and alone; even then, most of the rats use a scented soap that confuses the hunting instinct of cats and dogs and in fact gives rise to a scent that most of the local cats have learned to fear.

Characters who study the dogs and cats of Fortitude become aware of their habits, health, and conditions. They generally learn how to treat[73] most of the minor and major conditions that affect the local canine and feline population.

Rewards

As a chibi-quest, this can earn one of the following rewards:

- a Recharge Token relating to the local cats and dogs;
- people are talking; you're starting to get a good reputation from this; *or*
- a project or quest miracle relating to or involving the local cats and dogs.

If what you're looking for is a Connection to the street cats and dogs, or to Fortitude, or to nature, or to a particular animal, you'll want the 25-XP quest instead.

Veterinary Care

Veterinary

Clinics	~15
Independent veterinarians	~10-20

Looking for a veterinarian in Fortitude? They're a spot rarer than human doctors but there probably is one within a couple of miles.

The 1000-Cat Quota

In general the humans living in the Docks don't have the freedom to let even feral cats live and breed on their own. If the cat population grows past a certain point, the rats will notice even if the humans do not. They'll insist that the humans cull the numbers of the cats, and that'll be exactly what must be done. Humans are generally responsible for neutering or spaying any stray cat that comes to trust them enough for a veterinary trip. If a cat's health or quality of life is to even the smallest extent in doubt then a friend to the cats must be prepared to sacrifice them if and when the rats demand—unless it's reasonable to take the cat permanently out of Fortitude or a civil war between humans and rats is somehow more desirable. A handful of cats are capable of accepting desensitization training instead of execution, becoming harmless and even pliable around the rats. These may receive a tag exempting them from the rats' census and the risk of execution.

A Wicked Partner?

Note that while I've listed this as a Bindings 1 quest, the typical street cats and dogs are not "Taboo or ill-favored;" that option is for someone who is not only focused on cats specifically but is focused on them in a kind of defiant "Like heck the rats can impose a 1000-cat quota" or a "I will tend the cats, and eventually become possessed by cat-spirits" kind of way. If you're not like that, this is a Knight, Shepherd, or maybe an Emptiness quest.

73 *Or, for things needing veterinary care, what to do about.*

5

Friend to the Street Cats and Dogs
(Casual/Comic)

So a lot of what goes on between people and cats and dogs is wordless. I'd like to recommend a prop for this quest—a stuffed animal or possibly, if there's a cat or dog who wanders around the gaming area, a real animal—so that you can indicate that you're paying attention to an animal by, well, picking up or calling over and *paying attention to an animal*. You can do this at any time (up to once per scene/15 minutes) to pick up a bonus XP.

If you don't have a stuffed or real animal available, or you're playing online and people can't see you pick it up, you can earn the XP by saying or emoting whatever seems appropriate to show that your attention is fixated on one of the cats or dogs in the scene instead. Some standard ways of doing this include a delighted "Look at them" while watching a dog run and play, or "C'mere," when interacting with and grabbing a nearby dog or cat.

If the environment is appropriate and the HG is OK with it, you can use picking up the prop or saying or emoting one of your standard cat/dog phrases as a way of implicitly indicating that such a cat or dog has come into the scene.

XP

Friend to the Street Cats and Dogs
(Serious/Procedural)

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest if you lose one of the cats or dogs you care about—if they die, or disappear, or are taken away by their family to some other Region or to Earth.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- having a conversation with one of the street cats or dogs, as if with family
- investigating an issue that pertains to them

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

XP

The River-Wolf

You've met a dog and the dog has a river-wolf spirit—sleek and white-furred, vast of bone and jaw, and able to flow along or under the roofs and the water.

That's what you think this dog really is, inside. Not just some furry ol' mutt. This dog is the strength of a wave. This dog is wind and water. This dog is a river-wolf.

So you bring it out.

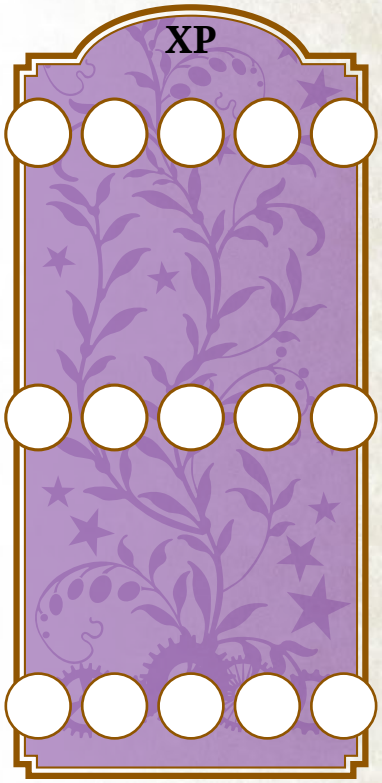
You earn a bonus XP for this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by re-contextualizing some interaction or work you've been doing with something like "That dog's a river."

The dog's been running around and knocking things over? You've been fishing absurd amounts of mud out of its fur? You've taken it down to the lake and let it swim and splash? You can't get it to come in for the rain? You've been drawing diagrams of water flow all over its fur? You're trying to hold on to hope by working with the dog while both of you are imprisoned in some unbreakable cell somewhere?

"I swear," you might say, "That dog's a river."

Or "It'll be OK. This dog's a river."

Something, anyway, like that!



Shepherd's Gift
(an example Quest Miracle)

Type: Miraculous Action, Quest Miracle
Cost: —

You may bring out the hidden power in an animal that you're close to, grooming it into a magical or mythical creature. Each use of this power requires a 15-XP quest such as **The River-Wolf**, above, and requires:

- the animal must qualify as one of your Treasures for this Shepherd Arc;
- your willingness to claim with a straight face that a given power fits the animal in question.

If the Connection or Bond is generic (e.g. to all dogs or all animals) then the power must be a power you believe fits all such animals.

Once you've awakened the power in a given animal you can keep the quest going to leave it awakened—this power can last at least until the end of the story or season, whichever comes first, and if the HG doesn't mind it, you can keep it active as long as you don't mind using one of your quest slots.

This is a miraculous ability suited to characters with a suitable Shepherd Arc at 1+.

Friend of the Beaches

15 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest

25 XP Quest

1: 

5: 

5

You're a good conservator of the beaches. You know how to take care of the clam beds, snail farms, and salterns along Big Lake's shores.

What You'll Do

Being a friend to the beach is hard work! You'll have to put in a lot of hard work maintaining the shore of Big Lake, harvesting its wealth, and learning the science and traditions necessary to keep Big Lake healthy and bountiful. It's not worth even *trying* unless you're able to put in, at least, regular weekends working on the shore.

You'll probably also move a lot of your socialization to the shore: many of your conversations with your friends and family will take place out by the water. This in turn makes it harder to be dishonest: scenes by the water will usually make more thematic and emotional sense when the soul and heart are open and a person's words are honest. So the friends of the beach are also expected to wind up, ultimately, as more open and honest sorts (at least when out on the shore) than they otherwise would be.

What You'll Know

Fortitude cultivates clams and snails on the shores of Big Lake. There's also a minor industry in gathering crab and shrimp along the beach.

- **Clams.** Fortitude clams, or "Docks Clams," are a local "euryhaline" species, able to adapt to a wide range of salinities. That said, they're healthiest and most flavorful when raised in the mangal and in other brackish regions where seawater intrudes upon Big Lake. Maintaining the clam beds is an ongoing effort: the community as a whole, and the owners of private beds, must keep track of the temperature and salinity of the water near the clam beds, weed out diseased clams, and help buy and distribute seed ("baby") clams from the inland hatcheries. In emergencies, such as a major influx of influence from Outside, entire beds may need to be relocated or abandoned. Harvesting from the clam beds is restricted by permit, although major contributors may have near-unlimited access and anyone can take in 10-20 per day without issue.
- **Rock and Lake Snails.** The people of the Docks raise both rock and water snails. The rock snails are mostly self-sustaining but on occasion it may be necessary to bring in feed or moisten or shelter the habitat, and in general, it's worth cleaning and maintaining the soil near where they live. Again there are both communal and private farms, and permits prevent excess consumption. Lake snails are essentially wild and their scattered population makes it intrinsically difficult to collect them in bulk; however, it's still important to monitor the species' health.
- **Tunnel Crabs.** These tiny insectivorous crabs burrow into the beach. If you dig them up they can be eaten raw—children like to grab them when they see one near the surface, bite off their heads, and then chew up the rest bit by bit. That said, they're best when fried. They're not terribly healthy or flavorful so they remain something of a niche food.
- **Sandhoppers.** These tiny jumping shrimp are attracted to light. They're only harvested for a few months during the summer, when they become a viable base for soup.
- **Rock Spiders.** Despite their name, their long legs, and their smallish size, the vibrantly colored rock spiders are much closer to crabs than spiders. The meat is extremely tasty but the shell is a little bitter; that said, it's extremely hard to get the meat out of a rock spider, much less from sufficient rock spiders to make a meal, so most of the time people just grind up a bunch of them, shells and all, and make them into cakes.

- **Dollar Fish.** These are flat hand-sized fish in roughly the shape of a sand dollar. They live at the bottom of Big Lake, near the shore. Most of the time they sleep on rocks or under a thin layer of sand. They're like a rockfish, in that they'll stab you if you step on them, but they aren't poisonous. In fact, to the contrary, they're delicious: Fortitude considers finding one in any way *other* than by getting your foot stabbed a lucky event.
- **Octopi.** Octopi deal poorly with freshwater and even brackish environments, but that hasn't stopped a sizable population from growing in the rocks and caves near the northern mangal. Octopus fishing is tightly controlled to prevent the octopus spirits from becoming angry, but the meat is considered a delicacy and the ink is an important and necessary component in "pillow-teeth tea." This tea prevents cavities and strengthens teeth but also reversibly softens the tooth enamel into something nearly as squishy as a sponge. Pillow-teeth tea is a regular part of dental treatment in Fortitude, but its main use is as an export: the vampires of Town find that it helps them maintain a non-threatening demeanor and the bat-folk of Eris consume it for reasons presently unknown.
- **Salt.** Big Lake is generally fresh, but there are brackish regions and currents. Town doesn't have access to salt mines, so evaporating this water to produce salt is a major source. People will haul saltwater to flat rocks or collections of pans (more generally, to "salterns" or salt processing areas) to dry. Salt in Town is a labor-intensive proposition; some years, when importing Earth salt is relatively easy, the salterns practically shut down.
- **Crystal.** Crystallized Outside dust regularly washes up from the lake as sparkling bits of sand. This crystal is a mildly psychoactive toxin; it is important to keep it from building up on the beach in any concentration, and when it does, it's generally sifted out in a crystallern and refined for use in treating eye infections, making candy, and controlling pests (particularly fire ants.)

Rewards

The 15 XP version usually earns:

- a Recharge Token relating to the local beaches and their cultivation;
- people are talking; you're starting to get a good reputation from this; or
- a project or quest miracle relating to or involving the local beach.

The Rat and the Octopus

Once upon a time, but not so very long ago, Town didn't have any rats. Nobody bothered to keep their roofs clean and so the dirt piled halfway into the sky. Nobody ever had anything mysteriously vanish from their food stores so people could hardly walk into their pantries without getting drowned in the jamalanches and grainslides of the time. And, of course, the Mysteries walked among us all, as casual as you or me, because how could someone even know to recognize them without the wisdom of the rats?

Luckily just then an octopus swum up with the wise rats of Fortitude on its head.

"There you go," said the octopus kindly. It bobbed in a curtsy. It let the rats down. They swarmed out onto the land and made everything better. At least, for the people of the land! But not for the octopus. As soon as the octopus turned around to swim back outwards, it realized that the rats had left droppings all over its octopus-head!

"Eternal vengeance!" wailed the octopus. "Murder! Mayhem!"

It sprouted nine arms and flailed them in every direction. Then, embarrassedly, it scraped the droppings off with its extra arm and left it behind to be the limestone cliffs. That is why people will sometimes call limestone "the secret arm."

I feel bad for the octopus but I feel worse for the rats about it. Even now an octopus will attack a rat on sight!

— a traditional story

Friend to the Beaches

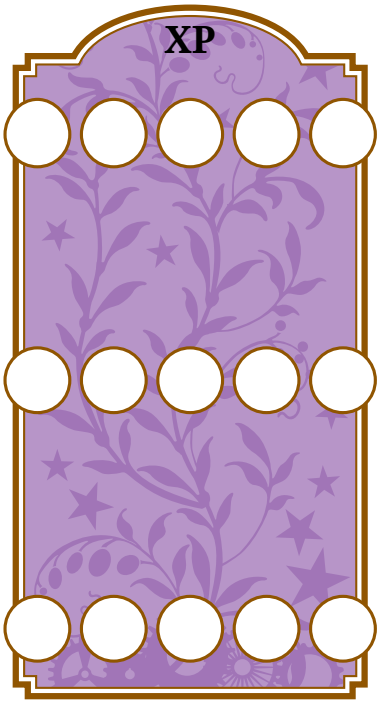
The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest if a conversation that you have with someone while out walking along the beach turns into a pivotal moment for you or them. Details like “was this moment pivotal enough?” or “just which NPCs are important enough that their having a pivotal moment should count?” are up to the HG, but at the very least, anything that makes a major difference to the game should qualify.

You can earn this bonus once.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- having an honest conversation with friends or family while out along the shore
- doing beach-related chores
- figuring out something about life while talking to someone on the beach

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

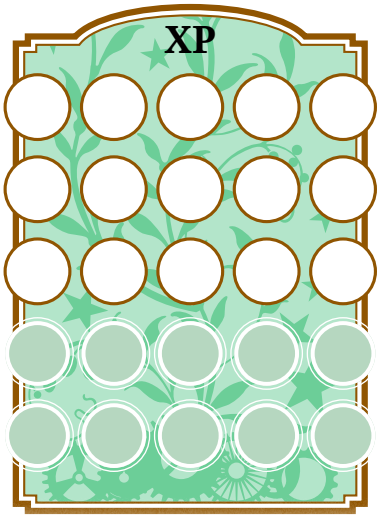


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Friend to the Beaches

This quest comes with a division of states—there’s the you who’s caught up in the day-to-day ordinary life of people and then there’s the you stripped clean, made pure and honest, by the atmosphere of the beach.

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 slipping back into the trivialities of ordinary life, or relaxing into the openness of the shore. 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.



Locked inside Myself

Open to the World

The Northern Beach

35 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

4: 

5: 

There's something about the northern stretches of the beach that can take a person away from themselves—can make you silent and strange. If you balance it properly with Fortitude living it'll just make you honest and strong, but if you spend *too* much time out by the water, particularly climbing the limestone cliffs or going all the way to the Easter mangal in the north, you'll risk becoming a "salt delinquent"—one of the kids weathered almost language-less by the impact of your experience of nature there.

Maybe it's a good thing.

For some it seems to be. For some it's a way of finding peace and quieting what's in them. For some it's a way of getting in touch with a higher power of a sort—there's always been a tie between Fortitude's egrets and the sun and the cliffs have an echo in them of the spiritual mountain Kailas Mantra.

That said, if you spend too much time out there, rummaging around the rocks, walking or boating in the mangal, and watching the egrets as they fly—you'll start to dream of going outside of yourself, of flying as they fly, of being part of something vaster and more feathered than your skin.

Stay on this quest long enough and that dream might become a reality.



The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

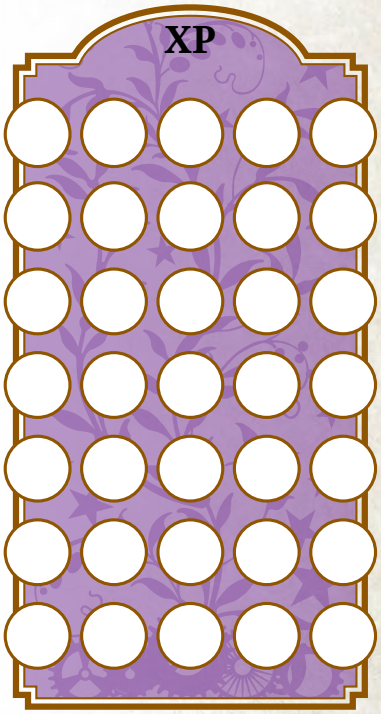
- you're injured by a fall;
- you make a peculiar discovery on the northern beach;
- you have a spiritual experience there.

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

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- showing someone something you found/sketched up on the northern beach
- guiding someone through the mangal or by the cliffs
- talking to people about birds and the sky
- talking about some tragedy in your past
- suffering somehow or other in Fortitude
- loving someone from afar

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



What You'll Do

You'll find little things of strangeness—black-shelled snails crawling in hidden places, bits of red cloth from a missing person's backpack, flutes (all but playable) formed naturally from stone, and plants with eyes. You'll bring them back.

You'll stretch your limbs and your spirit in climbing on the limestone cliffs. Sometimes you'll lose yourself in that, like time is skipping, and suddenly you're done—on a higher trail than you were on, or coming home again, and with the interval between then and now unclear.

You'll spend hours watching the birds.

You'll wander the mangal looking for interesting sights. You'll listen to rare birds. You'll pluck and chew on herbs. You'll pick up local crabs and let them crawl on your shoulder because that's kind of fun.

What You'll Know

You'll know the feeling of the cliffs: textured, cool to the touch, how they make your hands feel dry.

You'll know the look and touch of the formations closer to the water, honeycombed and damp, with the snails and crabs among them.

You'll be familiar with the sounds of the mangal—with the endless little flow of water and wind, with the vibrant ring-tone vibrato of the egret calls and the occasional haunting, clearer call of the local koel. The summer adds cicadas to the audio environment.

You'll be used to the sights of herons wading and flying. You'll be used to the crawling of the crabs along the beach. You'll be used to the taste of salt in the water and the wind.

Celestia

At one time there was a kingdom in the sky—a deep, a true, and a paradisiacal land.

It has drifted apart from Fortitude, with the death of Jade Irinka. At the time of this story, even her successor, the Child of the Sun, does not know how to reach the kingdom of the sky.

But its touch lingers; sometimes I think that with the right route you could climb the limestone cliffs of the northern beach forever, and maybe one day reach the sky.

The Sky Kingdom

- You must reconcile the divided and the antithetical.
- You must keep things in good order.
- Your emotions must have a tangible impact on the world.
- The lake must be tranquil.
- You must see far, and see clearly.
- You must have a talent for expression.
- A terrible beauty must reside in everything, though it may hide beneath the surfaces of things.



Transition

Condition: You've just finished a transition.

Action:

- **Become Thoughtful and Distant.**

Transitions are cut-scenes, play-breaks, or readings outside the normal process of play. They're explained in more detail in the ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** RPG.

You'll occasionally get a Transition while climbing the northern cliffs—

One moment, the experience is expressible in ordinary terms, with the touch and feel of the world under your fingertips and the air around your body and on your face, and the next moment, there's just...

Strangeness, and the scene draws to an end.





Sailing on Big Lake

Appendix A

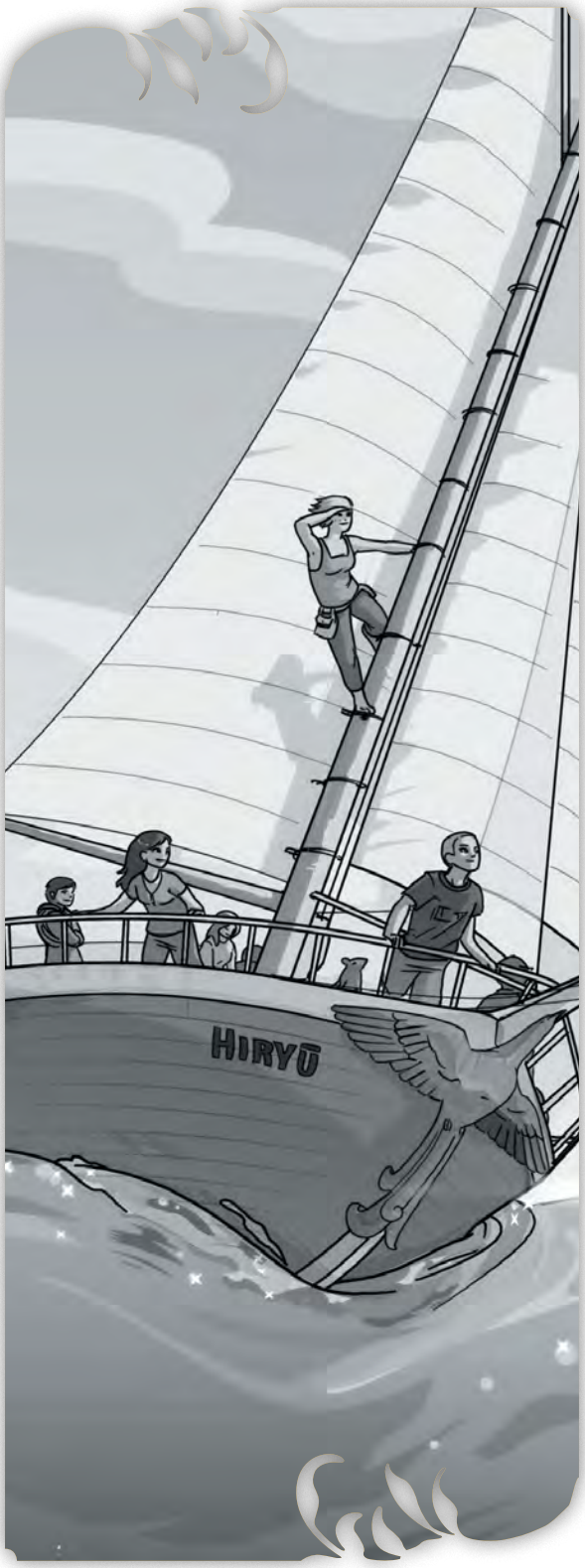
Sailing on Big Lake

being a guide to the quests and experiences found upon Big Lake

Big Lake is best when it's sunny and warm and the wind blows cold across the waters. It's not as nice when it's raining or sleeting and you can barely see the ropes. It's probably at its worst when it's typhoon weather and the waves are five times as tall as the boat. It's important to go out on the Lake anyway, in those days, because that's when the kaiju come in.

One kaiju day the wind blew so hard Daddy's fishing boat inverted; we had to feed the whole thing back through the woggle of my necker just to get ourselves right-side out again. Another time so much of the Outside blew in we sailed right out onto the mares of the moon. You probably think I'm kidding but I have the scars to prove it—right here on my tongue, you know, where my saliva boiled—and if we hadn't gotten hit by mortal water on the very next wave we would have given the next manned mission a gruesomely dry surprise.

— Antony Yuryevich, **The Prodigy**,
as played by Pandareos Panagiotis



The life of Fortitude is its boats. They bring in trade from lands Outside and their catch of fish brings in about one fifth of the protein consumed in Town.

Going out on the Lake to fish is isolating, so I want you to be careful here—make sure if you're getting really involved with sailing or fishing that either

- the focus of your character's life stays on land; *or*
- that everyone is more or less literally on board.

You can wind up spending days or weeks at a time out there, and I'd rather that PCs only go the latter route intermittently or when everyone's along. That said, I don't want to *completely* discourage the occasional Big Lake sabbatical even in a land-bound game—the water is important. Going out there matters. Just don't make it a reason to split the party unless you know how to keep the game fun for everyone in play.

Fortitude's Ships

The "six Kings" among the human ships of Fortitude are—

- **Kirillo**, foremost among fishing ships (pg. 320);
- **Tikhvin**, the far-traveling merchant (pg. 327);
- **Hiryū** (pg. 318) and
- **Egretă** (pg. 343), two venerable ancients;
- **The Wittenberg**, famed, lucky, and adventurous (pg. 322); and
- **The Kranmaru**, aka "the Young King" (pg. 332).

These are the ships you'd dream of, if you dreamt of sailing *with* somebody: the ships that you talk about when you say things like, "Someday, I'd want to sign on with *them*." They're not the only options, though, particularly if you have family connections in fishing, sailing, or trade—

There are hundreds of other ships of good or acceptable repute, ranging from small family ships that only fish in the summer to reasonably-sized fishing fleets. Most of the human ships are named after shrines, holy places, religious icons, or birds in a European or Asiatic language. For instance, if you're me, and you're making up ship's names without any language dictionaries available, you might think up **Jerusalem**, **St. Peter's Cross**, **the Vatican**, **the Red Crane**, **the Sandpiper**, and **the Basilica**. With access to the Internet, you might look up German shrines in one window and birds in another, giving you stuff like **the Elizabeth**, **the Boniface**, **the пеликан**, **the Kingfisher**, and **the Miracle of the Thorns**. A few other ships currently in port include **Can't Anchor Us**, **the Great Lord Gadigan**, **the Storm at Summer**, and **the Neall Raemonn Price**.

Sea-Horse and Sky-Horse Thread

Here's what makes the six Kings the six Kings—here's what marks the best ships *as* the best ships, whether they're human ships or rats'.

It's luck, of course—

Sailors are fond of luck.

Some of it's esteem, but it's mostly luck. And the surest sign of a ship or a sailor's luck is "the shining thread:" the hair of the horses of the sun and the sea.

Having that—

That's the sign that you're *somebody*. That's the sign that the world, and your ship—its captain or its crew—have said, "Here's someone who knows their way around Big Lake."

It means that your ship found a few strands of that hair drifting in the water. You found the red and orange hair of the horses of the sun; or the blue and green hair of a seahorse's mane; or, and this is almost but not quite as good, the stretchy glutinous fiber of a dead rainbow's corpse. You found that, well, somebody on board your vessel found that, and that was lucky in itself. That was the sign that Big Lake loved you well.

Most of the time you'd mark the ship with it. You'd tie the strands to the figurehead, or to the mast. Sometimes, though, the captain or crew would choose one or two people on board, instead, and let them adorn their wrists, neckerchief, or cap with the shimmering magical thread. It's gorgeous stuff, and it isn't usually sold to anybody who doesn't sail the Big Lake. There's a superstition that a ship that sells stuff like that to others won't return—and it's the kind of superstition that lingers, even after two or three safe journeys, so that when something finally *does* happen to that ship, it's considered a revenge made by the horse. The only way somebody who doesn't sail and doesn't steal will get any is if a sailor gives a strand to a loved one as part of a promise that they'll return safely home.

That's OK.

That's acceptable, and they can do whatever they want with it—but it won't ever spiritually "belong" to the recipient unless their beloved sailor dies at lake or sea. If someone gives you a sunhorse or seahorse thread, and then they die on land, you have to take it to Big Lake and give it back.

The Rat-Ships

It's harder to single out the Kings of the rat-ships: you'll never hear a rat calling *any* of their ships ordinary and even a little family rat-ship might wear a name like **Alexander of Macedonia** or the **Terrifying Marshal of the Lake**. And the Lake seems to stand by them in this as well; it's a rare human ship that has a single thread of the sky-horse's mane, but it's a rarer rat-ship with none!

Going by sheer *quantity* of luck, I'd have to say the best of the rat-ships must be

- **Glory of Tomorrow** (pg. 319);
- **the Sunset's Beloved** (pg. 326); *and*
- **Rule the Sea** (pg. 318)—

All three are practically bedecked in the shining thread, with small banners of red, orange, and lake-green flowing from their masts.

I've also heard much of

- **Dragonslayer** (pg. 323);
- **God of Big Lake** (pg. 320);
- **the Perfected Captain** (pg. 327);
- **The Pinnacle of Accomplishment** (pg. 324); *and*
- **Kaiju of the Heart** (pg. 325).

Fortitude's Sailors

While I'm overviewing stuff anyway—

Some of the individuals of note in the sailing community include:

- **Lindsey "Magellan" Norvegicus**, top navigator, and rat (pg. 366);
- **Horio "the Seagull" Mitsue**, her only human competition (pg. 366);
- **Dominik Tesla**, a legend for his weather sense (pg. 365); *and*
- **Ash Kalashnikova**, the Kirillo's first mate (pg. 365).

Ships and Properties

A handful of ships—particularly among the six Kings and the famous rat-ships, but potentially even your family's fishing boat—have a local Property or two. These work like the Properties of Fortitude (pg. 11) or any other Region when you're on the ship:

If you're on the Hiryū (pg. 318), then its Property **"Hiryū is indomitable."** functions as a level 2 Bond that anyone has access to. If you want to do something that makes Hiryū more indomitable, or if the ship's indomitability gets you into trouble, then you can take advantage of that Bond!

Ships aren't completely self-contained, so these Properties don't *replace* the Properties of the world beneath them. If you're on a docked Hiryū in Fortitude, the Region Properties are:

- Things must have simplicity.
- Things can't move quickly.
- Work must be fruitful.
- People must remember where they come from.
- You have a home in Fortitude. *and*
- Hiryū is indomitable.

Out on Big Lake, it shares Big Lake's Properties instead. If it's docked for the flower-viewing festival, then it might have Arcadia's!

I don't like places to have more than seven Properties, although I'm OK with it if it happens. Both Fortitude and Big Lake are five-Property places, so I'd like you to stick to 1-2 Properties per ship. That said, if you sail into somewhere that already had seven Properties, or if your HG is OK with your adding a third, fourth, fifth, seventh, one hundred and thirteenth, or even thousandth Property to a given ship, well, there's no actual rule that says that's wrong.



Big Lake

Big Lake is an inland lake. It's a place of mysteries and secrets—not least of which the secret paths, shortcuts, and tricks that the ferry and the fishermen use to reach the Outside and thence the sea.

For all that it's a sizable part of Town, not much actually *happens* on Big Lake.

There is reputed to be a secret kingdom under or on the waters which only manifests on specific occasions. Perhaps it is a kingdom of ghosts; or lake elves; or terrors from Outside; or ordinary people who just happen to live underwater. Perhaps it is an appearing and disappearing island, or perhaps it is a fairytale underlake land. I don't know. I'm not going to go into it today. There could even be more than *one* down there.

The water must keep its secrets, after all.

Big Lake Properties

- The water must keep secrets.
- The water must breed dreams, stories, and myths.
- The water must swallow the wicked.
- The water cannot distinguish truth from lies.
- The water must yield its bounty to those who know it well.



The Ferry

When Jade Irinka died her chariot tangled in the sky and its horses died screaming, save for one; and that one plunged, burning and unraveling, into the endless waters of Big Lake. There it writhed in its torment and its grief, a shapeless incandescent form, until some cold and quiet balm slipped in. Its shape congealed into a ferryboat, with the figurehead of a horse. Its body became wood. It roamed the lake a while, wild and free. Then the ferryman caught it, tamed it, and taught it of the needs of Town.

Now the ferry runs between Fortitude and Little Island, leaving every three hours and slipping across the Lake. It sleeps in Fortitude after dark: the last run to Little Island is at 4:30 in the wintertime and 7:30 in the summer. Between its final dock and sleep, the ferryman sits with it, singing to it, cleaning it, or combing its wooden hair; then he takes his dinner at a dormitory that's been set up for Little Island students, itinerants unable to catch the last boat home, and he.

Though mostly settled and placid now, the ferry remains a creature of magic. On solstices, equinoxes, and certain holidays, it abandons its usual routine and travels to Points Outside instead. The Christmas run is a merry affair traversing landscapes of frozen wonder; for the Halloween run, this may not be said, but it is safe enough, at least, if one does not disembark. It will come to the call of Jasper Irinka, **the Child of the Sun**, though I don't think that she knows that. On the solstices, the ferry also responds to such personages as Persephone, who sometimes rides it back and forth to the Underworld, or Santa, who on one occasion had to substitute it for his sleigh. For the most part, however, it chooses its own destinations when traveling abroad, with results that range from banal to exhilarating for those who choose to accompany it on the ride.

The Ferry Properties

- The ferry goes where it's needed.
- The ferry must remember the sun.

Traveling on the ferry is usually **Slice of Life**.

Experience the world and the water!

On the holidays, it's more like sailing the Outside—

Trouble when things get scary;

Adversity when they get hard;

Slice of Life at their best;

Discovery when you're encountering strange possibilities; *and a*

Ritual, if you want to compress a long, epic journey into a single furious scene.

Big Lake Experiences

Here's a quick guide to the kinds of things you'd expect to be doing out on the waters of Big Lake.

Some common things to be doing include:

- conversing about hopes and dreams.
- celebrating a birthday or other epochal event.
- talking about life.
- fishing or boating work.
- talking about nothing in particular.
- doing nothing in particular.
- exploring the Lake.

Some rarer things to be doing include:

- disposing of the body of an evildoer.
- getting into trouble.
- waiting for something interesting to happen.
- encountering hints of something peculiar, such as a kingdom under Big Lake.
- taking passage to distant lands.

Hiryū

This ship is a famous, century-old sailing ship with a distinguished history. It is one of the "six Kings" of Fortitude.

It has a single local Property:

- **"Hiryū is indomitable."**

Rule the Sea

One of the legendary ships of the rats, and one of the few to have conquered a full-size kaiju: how a clipper barely big enough for a ton of cargo managed to drag in a twenty-meter narwhal, much less subdue it, I do not know, but they did, and its tooth is longer than the whole bloody ship.

The ship has the Property,

- **"Know no fear."**

Conversations about Hopes and Dreams



Decisive Action

This bit is about what it's like to have a conversation about your hopes and dreams while you're out on the water.

Maybe it's night, and you're leaning over the edge of your boat, and looking out at the sky, and someone points. There's a shooting star!

What did you wish for? What do you want?

Or maybe it's midday, and the sky is the palest blue and the clouds are painted in their spots, and there isn't a breath of wind; and somewhere in there between mourning the doldrums and finding shapes in the clouds you start talking about where you want your life to go.

Why?

The thing is—The lake is endless. It draws you out of yourself. It tugs at your hopes and dreams; your true, deep self. It makes a space for them. It's vast and often it is quiet and it gives you room to breathe.

On land you can get wrapped up in all the reasons you can't move forward, but out on Big Lake, those reasons are absent. They don't appear.

Your hopes and dreams are colonizing an endless space here. You project them on the whole sweep of the Lake, the Outside, and the sky.

That's why I'm thinking of this as an occasion for **Decisive Action**—because the Lake isn't going to just let you say: "I want this" or "I hope to be this."

The vastness and the silence will *answer* with:

"OK, well? Then? What are you going to do about it?"

...or, at least, that's sort of how it feels!

And so by the end of a conversation like that, and so by the end of *talking* about that stuff, on the lake, you'll tend to make your first risky choice; take your first step; commit to something, anyway, so that you'll know if you *don't* do it you didn't really hope or dream for that at all.

Celebrating Out On the Water



Decisive Action

It's common to celebrate the epochal moments in one's life out on Big Lake—birthdays, engagements, new jobs, and the like.

This too is a forum for decisive action. Sure, it might be slice of life for a while, with age-appropriate drinking and partying; or a calmer shared reactions scene, around a meal; but ultimately it turns into a discussion of what you want for the coming year, and the Lake will draw that out into a decision; a gamble; a choice.

Talking About Life



Shared Reactions

This bit's about what it's like to talk about your life and the things that have been going on while you're out on Big Lake.

It... it's worth remembering, here, that the water will keep your secrets.

It's worth remembering that you *can* be open, while you're here. I mean, that's not to say that if you confess to murdering everyone's families or something that people won't judge you harshly. But...

If you want to be honest; if you want to be open—

If you're willing to make yourself vulnerable before the people with you, and the world, well, the Lake *will* keep your secrets. The sky will keep your secrets. And in the face of the vastness of the world maybe keeping all your feelings and truths locked up behind your eyes isn't worth it.

So...

You trail your hand in the water. You look up in the sky. The things that have been going on in your life pinwheel through your mind. And maybe it's time to risk vulnerability; openness; the truth.

The Lake will keep your secrets.

Maybe it's time to talk.

Glory of Tomorrow

This is one of the legendary ships of the rats—a ship any kit would be proud to sign on with, known for defying Death and spearing a sea serpent's eye (not to mention discovering Lady Gaga and briefly conquering Alberta, Canada, in a series of comic misadventures.)

It has a +1 Tool bonus to discovering strange wonders and to keeping your metaphorical and literal footing when far from home.

Fishing or Boating Work



Shared Action

This bit's about what it's like to actually work on one of Fortitude's boats—to be focused, not on the experience or the adventure of being out there, but rather on some chore.

It isn't a good experience. It isn't a bad one.

It is distinctly mixed.

Working on the fishing boats is great for camaraderie, and when the weather is nice it's more or less a joy. You'll have to wake up at oh god o'clock in the morning, most likely—whether you're on a casual family ship that doesn't even go out every day, or part of a small commercial fleet that spends most of the year not just on the lake but Outside or at sea, the tradition of getting the ship moving well before first light is firmly ingrained in the people of the docks. There are lulls in the work of it—when one haul is as sorted, gutted, and stored as it's going to be and the nets are still out for another; or when the ship is moving from site to site, depending on the weather and the boat. It's worth note that while there are definitely ships casual enough to relax and enjoy the day between bringing in a small catch, a more typical experience involves steady labor the whole day through regardless of the weather. You'll haul in nets in heavy winds full of rain or sleet, your hands raw from the ropes and the cold. You'll spend most of the time between catches dealing with the last batch of fish, and if you've got time to get the stink from your nostrils before there's more work of that sort, you can put it to use cleaning the deck and maintaining the equipment. The joy of being out on the water is

Kirillo

This ship, the leader of a small fishing fleet, is one of the "six Kings" of Fortitude.

It has a +1 Tool bonus to its handling and a local Property, **"Kirillo must conquer."** This Property makes it an excellent ship to be on if you're aiming for an elusive or out-of-season fish or trying to survive a storm!

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mostly a matter of background ambience rather than direct spiritual experience, because if things are going well and you're not taking a scheduled break for lunch or sleep, you're not going to get much time to spend staring out at the waves.

If you're just dabbling in the work of it—if you're adjusting the rigging of a ship in sail, or getting a few hours of fishing in on an otherwise pleasure cruise—then it's easier. There isn't time for weariness to set in, then, so the work itself is very distinctive, rough-edged but strengthening. Without the intensity and sustained pressure of the work, it's a lot easier to appreciate it as something inherently and intrinsically challenging, joyous, and healing. It's a way to connect with the other people on the boat, to share a cause and a course of action with them: it builds trust and connection between you, and opens you to the world.

Talking About Nothing



Slice of Life

This bit's about what it's like to talk about nothing in particular while you're out on the water.

That happens.

I mean, you're probably not even paying attention to what you're saying. It's likely that your attention is on the ropes of the boat; the mirror of the water; the birds in the skies. At least, sometimes, when I've been out there, *I'll* be interrupted or something and I'll have to think really carefully to figure out what I was talking about earlier, if I can remember it at all. It really isn't important.

But still, you talk. Someone else talks. And then—

Something in the lake stirs an emotion. Something in the words. Something in the sky. Suddenly it's rising up inside you, filling you, bursting in your chest, something maybe even too big for you to voice. The sun on the water; your friendship with someone; the peace, the freedom from whatever burdens you on land; the giantness of life and all existence; the way it feels to live, I don't know, something?

It drags an emote from you.

That usually matters even if you're alone. Usually it *means* something even if no one else sees it. But if you do connect with someone over it—if they see your feelings, if they respond to them—then that moment can really stick with you.

Doing Nothing in Particular



Slice of Life

Or maybe you're not even talking.

Sometimes you're puttering, or hanging out, or dozing or whatever—sometimes you can't even hardly *remember* what you were doing, you weren't doing *anything*—when that moment comes.

You'll see something. You'll feel something. It fills you.

It doesn't have to be profound or immortal, what you feel. It doesn't have to represent some deep insight. It can be enough to say, "God, look at those *waves*," as the wind picks up and the water gets choppy; or maybe you have to tell the person you're with that you love them, suddenly. Even something as stupid as "this is so nice"—

If you feel it, if that feeling is filling you—

Can be a thing worth taking note of, out on the water, before you, I don't know, get out the lunch basket or go back to whatever little chore you were doing or whatever else.

God of Big Lake

This is one of the more grandiose rat ships. It offers a +1 Tool bonus to dramatic entrances. Its crew may even receive this bonus on land, if they are dramatically entering *in their capacity* as crewmembers of **God of Big Lake**.

Strange Encounters and Explorations



Discovery

This bit's about what it's like to find strange things when out on Big Lake; or, conversely, to go looking for them.

The Lake is of course populated by any number of strange things.

You can find bits and pieces of a hundred worlds out there on Big Lake—not just fish; not just flotsam, jetsam, and weather patterns from just about anywhere; but even mysterious islands, ship-wrecked aliens and foreigners, ghost ships, crystallized dreams and memories of long-forgotten witches, misplaced colossi of black metal with glowing masked red eyes, stars dancing along the water (they have forgotten how to fall), sea monsters, rains of tinsel, and so on and so on forever.

Usually you won't find much more than... something a little odd. A little strange. A bit of floating rock, maybe; and you'll know that it's probably just ordinary floatstone from the Keep of Lady Mugain, but still, how did it get there? What if there's something interesting on top? Or a sea snake, seen from the distance, that reminds you of the Loch Ness monster. A place where blue lilies grow on the water, with crystalline insects fluttering between them. A stunningly green island that nobody's ever charted before, at least not to your personal knowledge, even if it doesn't have anything on it all *that* odd.

I mean—

You're on Big Lake and not in the Outside itself, ideally. You're not in the realm of raw chaos and strangeness, you're on the liminal waters *between* the world and the Outside. There is an order to things, a pattern, a reason; and to have a pattern, you must have *space* for it, there must be a vast openness, emptiness, and *between-ness* there in which the mysteries can live.

Still—

If you're out there long enough, there are mysteries to find; or mysteries will find you.

What do you meet, out on Big Lake?

I want to talk for a moment here about conscious exploration—about going *looking* for magic and wonder and useful things out in the vastness of Big Lake.

It's a pretty amazing experience—like the vast oceans of the ancient world, made small.

Small enough to explore in one person's lifetime and have a hope of finding something unprecedented; small enough to explore in a *season* and have a chance at it. There are wonders out there waiting for you. I shouldn't say small, I suppose; rather, let me say Big Lake is swollen with them, filled with wonder, bursting with unknown miracles, so that they are available to find. Only the smallness of Town itself—the limited size of its fishing and trading fleets—keeps that exploration from changing everything, keeps the discovered wonders of Big Lake from being the single dominant fact in human and parahuman existence.

Now in the oldest days, the first few eras of Town's existence, there was room to explore and find new wonders without risking the Outside at all—the sailors of Town were always finding new secret paths and islands of strange wonder even in the comparatively "ordinary" part of Big Lake. Now it is a little harder; now the easiest portion of the work has been done, and what remains is to explore what may be found without traversing *too much* or *too terrible* a stretch of the vast Outside. Big Lake on its own is mysterious and may have secrets left; but if you're willing to sail through a few seconds or minutes of the Outside, or down one of its tamer paths—then the Lake becomes a wild vastness. Then it is as if you are exploring not one Lake but thousands upon thousands; subtly different, stacked they one on one another, interconnected Lakes: thousands upon thousands, like I said, or, maybe, if I underestimated them, billions.

I imagine that every few days of exploration you might find something that *could* be new; every few weeks, something that you can be pretty sure nobody's seen before; and if you're dedicated, if you're conscientious and curious and just a little bit heroic, maybe just three or four years to find something amazing or practically useful and entirely new, whether that's a classic island of dinosaurs, a harvest of fruit nobody's tasted before, or a faster way to sail straight from Town into Lake Geneva's ports.

Heck, if you're a PC, even a season or two exploring might be enough!

The Wittenberg

The daring and lucky Wittenberg, with many kaiju catches and magical adventures to its name, is one of Fortitude's "six Kings."

The ship has two Properties:

- **"The Wittenberg doesn't mind a bit of trouble."**
- **"The Wittenberg has a little something for that."**

It has a +1 Tool bonus to getting along with others while you're on board the ship.

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Disposing of the Body of an Evildoer



Decisive Action

"The water must swallow the wicked."

Listen—

I don't think that killing people, or drowning them alive,[73] is a good thing. I don't think that's OK. But I accept that there is a certain supernatural force to this in Big Lake. There is something that impels a person who grows up near the Lake to consider that as a solution to something sufficiently... evil.

The only reason I don't like it is that wickedness and evil and the need to kill someone is really hard to define. This isn't one of those worlds where you're going to encounter and fight faceless, always chaotic evil monsters, any more than Beirut or Washington D.C. is. If anything, Fortitude is *nicer* than reality that way, because it offers a greater scope for redemption even to the most alien of minds and souls.

But...

This situation is OK. I mean, it's OK *dramatically*. Because sometimes maybe there is no other way a story can end. And just because I'm sitting here on my keyboard thinking that there has to be some other way than drowning something doesn't mean there actually *is*.

So...

These scenes have a monologue at their heart.

Even if it's right, even if you're doing the right thing, you'll find yourself worrying about it. You'll need to

73 *If you know what I mean.*



The Keep of Lady Mugain

The Lady Mugain lives alone on an island in the sky. The island shelters behind a wind-wall of brick and its underside is sharper than layered knives. It hosts green hills and secret gardens and a cobbled maze of city streets; pink flowers twine along the building walls and great ferns grow. There she reads her books and paints her paintings and she remembers a great secret that walked among those streets at one time in the past, and maybe now.

The sea rages beneath the island, its waters full of red-mawed eels. It is absurdly dangerous; and even if you could sail there, the port is the better part of a mile up. So naturally the rat ships showed up one day at the Keep of Lady Mugain, and asked to trade; and the humans not long after, because they couldn't hardly be outdone.

To the best of my knowledge, Town's entire supply of levirock and dryrock comes from trading books and food and other luxuries with the Keep of Lady Mugain. Even with holds groaning with fine goods the ships cannot buy more than the smallest quantity of the flying and the dessicating stone—apparently the Lady is concerned that exporting too much of these things would cause the Keep to tumble into the sea or molder, if not now then over centuries of trade.

There is an impression I have picked up that the Keep resembles the rats' Deep Under, not in its physical environment but in its "sense;" so I am giving it the same Properties; I will, of course, inform you if I discover otherwise at a later time.

The Keep of Lady Mugain Properties

- You must take responsibility for your fate.
- You must exist.
- You must be imprisoned by your conceptions.
- Nor may you be bound by any other force; or time.
- You must build your world with your own two hands.
- You cannot experience the world, but only your prisons and your creations.
- You must flee from the shadow of your mind.

talk about it. I mean, maybe you'll think that you can be callous about it, you're playing a hardened merc or you hate the thing you're disposing in Big Lake or whatever, but you can't be callous about it.

Killing is a big deal. Death is a big thing.

So if you're in a position to dispose of the body of something evil in Big Lake, you're going to find yourself justifying it.

You're going to explain to the world, to the vastness, to the openness, to the emptiness.

If you're soft then maybe there are tears pouring down your face. If you're soft then you'll be arguing with yourself, asking if there's another way, a better way. If you're hard then you'll be pleading with the universe, justifying yourself, telling the world that there was no other way. If you're hard then you'll be biting and mean and cruel to the thing you're killing or have killed. But either way you can't just pretend it's totally OK without an explanation. You'll have to answer for it, as you're out there on the boat, with something wicked. So you talk. You monologue. You build up to your choice.

Then you take action. Decisive action.

You give the body to the Lake.

Sometimes, if it's the only way not to be wicked; or sometimes if there isn't a way not to be wicked, you'll follow it in.

That's how a lot of Fortitude's native dramas end.

Dragonslayer

One of the rat ships; well-loved for the audacity of its name and customs, allowing the record-keepers and sight-seers of the docks to record such statements as, "Dragonslayer flew in with the easterly" or "another triumphant voyage for the Dragonslayer. 400kg figs, 200kg of jade, and five pallets of Pratchett to boot!"

It has two local Properties:

- **"Dragonslayer roars."**
- **"Dragonslayer cuts the waves."**

I want to nitpick that it should be dragons and not Dragonslayers that roar but it is hard when the captain and crew are so utterly confident in regards to that roaring.

Getting into Trouble



Trouble/Adversity

This bit's about what it's like to get into trouble when you're out on the water.

Trouble can happen, you see.

It's not Fortitude. Big Lake is tied to Fortitude but it is *different* from Fortitude. So, trouble can happen. It isn't even inherently surprising when trouble happens—I mean, it's about as surprising as getting into trouble anywhere else would be, or maybe even a little less.

Maybe a storm rolls in suddenly.

Maybe a giant Outside-bred sea serpent or kraken attacks your boat.

Bad stuff happens.

I think the core of this experience is the *recognition* that you're in trouble. That you're isolated out there—that nobody can come to help you, if they're not already there. You're not surrounded by your people, you're surrounded by miles and miles of water and the chaos of the Outside. You're at the mercy of the world. You are small.

It's that *feeling*—

That feeling of smallness, if you have time to appreciate what's coming; or the crisp, focused feeling of desperation that you'll get if your brain turns your standard consciousness off and defaults to its emergency response protocols—

That's at the heart of what trouble is like, when you're out there on the Lake.

Usually there's a cold wind blowing. Maybe it just feels cold. Usually there are dark clouds in the sky. I don't know if that's just... artistic or aesthetic, like, the brain is less likely to notice a clear sky in cases of trouble than it is to notice a storm. Or maybe it's a real and meaningful characteristic of such situations themselves.

Usually you can taste salt, even if you're in the freshwater portion of the lake.

Your footing won't feel steady. Even if you know boats, it won't *feel* steady. The world is splintering, even if the boards beneath you aren't. The world is shaking, even if you're used to the rocking of the boat.

You'll be really aware of tactile sensation. I don't know if that's just your brain getting you extra-ready to

feel the teeth of a sea serpent when it bites you in half or if there's a more useful reason for it. But you'll be really aware of it. You'll feel your body. You'll feel the surfaces under your feet. You'll feel the wind on your skin. You'll be very *present*.

A

The biggest characteristic of real trouble is that you stop fighting to "win." You stop trying to be awesome and have everything come out the way you want it to and you start fighting to survive; to win just a tiny victory, to just get the sails put away before the storm winds come or get the anchor up before the sea serpent gets to you; or maybe you don't even do that, you just freeze up or just shut down. If you're fighting to win, if you're fighting to win everything, then you know you're *not* in trouble yet. It's when you get desperate just to do... *something*... that you know death and trouble are walking beside you.

...and then, even then, it'll still get worse.

Eventually I guess it gets better again. I mean, it has to, doesn't it, if you don't die? Either you rise to the challenge and overcome the worst of it, or it exhausts its malice against you. It can't just keep escalating on and on! Either it ends and you realize, slowly, that you've ridden out the storm; or you find yourself drifting on a chunk of ship's-wood in the middle of Big Lake or something with only the vaguest idea of how you got there, and that's as bad as it's going to get.

Which still isn't *good*, you understand. If you're going to be out on Big Lake it's better to be on an actual ship with a bunch of friends and a cooler full of tasty food and drink than alone and on a chunk of shattered wood in the middle of nothingness! But apparently you don't always get the choice.

Let's talk about that kind of thing for a moment.

I don't have personal experience of shipwreck on Big Lake or in fact anywhere but my friend Beatrice does, so I've had a chance to ask.

I think most of the worst adversity you can encounter out there is going to be... well, the Outside. I mean, the Outside is always close, and it's got much more scary and awful in it per square kilometer, if you know what I mean?

But even without that—

Big Lake is big enough that you can be becalmed or shipwrecked there and have it be a real and genuine problem. It's small enough that someone *could* find you, if they know that you're missing, but it's by no means certain. There's almost no sharks or human-eating fish, at least—it's mostly a freshwater lake, and Outside-spawned creatures like the sea serpent I mentioned are aberrations—but the Lake touches the Outside often enough that unexpected predators *could* show up. (I mean, don't freak out! But don't assume you're safe.)

The Lake is pretty warm, compared to the sea—but I'm used to the sea being a pretty cold thing. If you spend too long treading water in the Lake it'll start to feel very cold indeed.

The Lake is *usually* drinkable—it's been generations since Town had anything like a pollution problem, and I think people have evolved to deal with the occasional spot of fish pee in their water—but sometimes the Lake is brackish or has a hint of Outside psychotoxin in it: you'll want to meter your consumption, trying not to drink too much or too little while you're out floating there.

There isn't much of a search and rescue organization in Fortitude: shipwrecks are pretty rare events, so they're mostly handled by volunteers with modest amounts of training. You'll want to swim for shore if you can; if you don't know which way that is, you'll still probably want to swim in *some* direction. The best part of being shipwrecked in Big Lake is that you're within 10-13 miles of *something*, even if you go in the worst possible direction from the worst possible place; the worst part is that thirteen miles is a *really long swim*, and the place you could get to might be the Outside or, I dunno, Wales or something, instead of Fortitude.

The Pinnacle of Accomplishment

This is a notorious rat ship known more for looking for trouble than for bringing in a good catch of fish or trade. This oddly makes it all the more appealing and romantic to the rats themselves; who *wouldn't* want to be out on a vagabond troublemaker of a ship, they'd say, getting into who knows what sort of scrapes and misadventures? The captain is purported to spend a lot of time hunting some sort of Mystery out on the waters of Big Lake—I'm not sure what or why, though, so I'd rather not speculate.

Being on this ship offers a +1 Tool bonus to triumphing by the skin of one's teeth.

(I have nothing against Wales, for clarity. It's just probably not where you'd want to go.)

In short, there's room for things to be really bad, out on Big Lake; and really trying; and really physically unpleasant—although that doesn't really happen very much.

The Passage to Distant Lands



Slice of Life/Trouble

I want to take a moment to talk about the moment of passage *between*—what it's like to pass between Big Lake and the world beyond.

It's a little scary now and then.

Sure, sometimes it's just sailing gently along the Lake and then the wind'll shift and the sky will shift and you'll smell the salt of the ocean in the air. That's what you hope for, and I think you even get that most of the time. But other times...

Other times, it's like skipping between the pages of a book, or lifting a veil and finding another world behind it—one moment, you're on calm waters, and the next, you're caught in the waves of a vicious ocean storm. That's still pretty lucky, though, compared to accidentally blundering into the Outside full-on, when the hammer in your heart shouts sudden *fear* and disorder catapults into the world and no longer where you look around is sense and sensible things but rather mists and confusion and the wrong and orange. Then you may find yourself veering unexpectedly into someplace you really shouldn't be.

Like, falling off a cliff, or on the moon.

Or, this one time?

People say this one ship, one time, back in the day, found itself in the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool. Smack dab in the middle of Washington, D.C.! A few of its crew made it back, eventually, but the ship itself was lost to Town.

I guess it's usually more just "difficult waters."

Usually if you're in the Outside, you're just in a scary and troublesome place. It becomes an epic voyage, a thing ripped from the pages of the Odyssey, and not an immediate stranding or death. But it's part of the scariness of the thing, part of the awfulness, that you *could* be hit by the Outside one moment and be in the heart of a star, upside down on a tree in the Congo, or crewing a model ship in a bottle on the shelves of some store in Atlanta—

Instead.

Kaiju of the Heart

This ship is the rat ship to turn to when you need to get somewhere on Big Lake, when you're called to face some Mystery or go somewhere you shouldn't out there in the Outside, the Earth, or the Lake, and you have nowhere else to turn. **Kaiju of the Heart** will face anything, risk anything, for the right price, and that price—so they say—is "surprisingly affordable."

A solid fifty-footer, which makes it a giant as a rat-ship goes, **Kaiju of the Heart** can handle a few adult humans if they'll accept "unusual arrangements." (The explanation given to me is "you can lay very still in cargo, float behind the ship in a harness, or, if you like, there's a 'dwindle,'" but since I wasn't actually doing it, that's all I know. I assume the 'dwindle' shrinks you? Rats can do that?!—I guess they must!)

The ship has the following Properties:

- **"The Kaiju of the Heart will face your troubles."**
- **"(You can) Journey far with the Kaiju of the Heart."**

A Gathering Presentiment



Foreshadowing

Sometimes it feels like something is going to happen. Sometimes you're out on Big Lake and it really seems like—

Magic is coming. Magic, or trouble, or miracle.

There is a gathering sense of the numinous; a spiritual presentiment. It builds like the weight of the air before the rain.

Sometimes it's worth playing out the watching and waiting, just to see what you're paying attention to. What you think is going to happen. What you're feeling as the sense of strangeness builds.

The down side is that it's possible that nothing is going to happen—

The Sunset's Beloved

This ship is one of the legendary ships of the rats. Its routine is mundane enough, with brisk mail and trade runs to Little Island and other easily-reachable settlements and a penchant for bringing in coffee and DVDs, but the title is supposed to be literal (it meets its lover, the horizon or the sunset, "every seven years") and it gets into more than its share of trouble along the way.

It has the Properties,

- **"The Sunset's Beloved outruns the wind."**
- **"The Sunset's Beloved is sailing off."**

The latter doesn't actually prevent it from taking port or staying there for an appropriate length of time, but the Sunset's Beloved won't linger.

Or that if it does, it is something passing; something moves past you like piled clouds, like a mute or mindless deity stalking past to your left, to your right, or behind you; there is a pillar of smoke in the distance, or the passing of some great shadow, but nothing that actually *touches* you. Sometimes all that the sense of impending doom adds up to is a sudden explosion of birds flying away from the little spit of land that you were sailing up to; and then nothing more. At least not then.

Hints as to the Deeper Secrets



Foreshadowing

In like fashion, many of the Lake's deepest mysteries are things you'll only encounter bits and pieces of—things you may see pass by you, or get tiny hints of, and nothing more than that on a voyage. If there really is an underLake kingdom, you might have a momentary glimpse of its spires deep below you; and then nothing, just the sediment of the Lake floor. You might find signs of not-quite-human visitors to an island too far out of the way for most ship traffic to visit. You might hear the sound of distant horns. There are stories of a sea serpent that's larger than mountains; larger than worlds, perhaps—but at most people have seen great waves and distant shadows in the deep.

I don't know. Maybe that's not how it'll work for you. But I think—

Sometimes, I think, it will make sense if that's all you get. Just the tiniest hint of a bigger world than you'd imagined, and nothing more; at least not yet.

The Ritual of the Lake

Here's how you might sail out across Big Lake, through lands of adventure, and then return.

You'll start with a ritual phrase like, "Weigh anchor!" or "Sail away!"

Then, assuming that you've met the criteria—basically, you need the HG's permission, and all the players have to have noticed that you've started a ritual—you and the other players start in on a series of *ritual actions*:

- describing things you do aboard the boat;
- "posing" or otherwise showing off how your character interfaces with nautical life;
- summarizing strange encounters or weird things that you see or find—
  - scary weather;
  - strange weather;
  - lashing waves;
  - weird, magical islands;
  - strange sea creatures;
  - uncomfortable experiences;
  - tall tales;
  - daring adventures; *and*
  - brushes with death
- talking about what you hope to find at the end of your journey; *or*
- invoking some unrelated symbol of power (e.g., unfurling a recently-acquired Marvelous Wish-Granting Spinnaker) to merge the two ritual invocations together.

You'll take these actions when the HG or informal group consensus prompts you to; if two PCs are in physical contact, they share a metaphorical spotlight, and can interrupt one another or act in the other's place.

The ritual usually ends when someone uses the phrase "Land ho!" and the HG confirms that that's acceptable at this time. The result and benefit is usually that the characters have safely traveled across large portions of the Outside and arrived, either where they wanted to go, or somewhere where the HG wanted to take them.

An Odyssey
a preamble

These quests form a generic structure to play through as someone who travels Big Lake by ship or, more generally, leaves their normal life and normal world behind to daringly attempt something new.

The quests look like this:

- **Stale Life**. You've fallen into an unsatisfying routine.
- **Learning the Ropes**. You explore a new way of living.
- **Starry-Eyed Adventure**. You explore new lands or ways of being.

And this can go on one or two quests past that:

- **Wrecked**. You wind up stuck in an unpleasant situation.
- **Home for a While**. You go back to your roots—land, family, your old way of doing things, or whatever—for a while.

At least, that's the pattern for a Knight or Otherworldly Arc; if you're on an Aspect, Mystic, or Shepherd Arc, you might shift a couple of the quests into a different order. You're more than welcome to play this Arc out more than once—the details aren't completely generic, but I think they're vague enough to cover at least 2-3 Odysseys before becoming bland.

In a Pastoral game some of the nautical elements here are likely to be metaphorical; for instance, I don't expect you to spend all of quest 4 shipwrecked if most of the game is back home. However, if the group does drift apart, with some PCs becalmed in the deep Outside and others running a shop and arguing over tic-tac-toe rules in Fortitude, you're allowed to play out the extended nautical adventure as a flashback, flash-forward, or abstract spiritual experience.

Local Properties

At the end of any mundane Arc heavily featuring a ship, you can sacrifice your normal reward (e.g., the Skill/Bond improvements) and instead add a new Local Property to your ship.

Tikhvin

This ship, a world-traveling merchant ship, is one of the "six Kings" of Fortitude.

It has two local Properties:

- **"Tikhvin finds a path."**
- **"Tikhvin travels far."**

It gives its crew a +1 Tool bonus to finding rare bargains, when in a distant land.

The Perfected Captain

One of the rat ships; according to legend, after riding out a tsunami—in some versions, surfing the wave itself on a curved bit of flotsam remaining from the wreckage of a human ship—the captain puffed his pipe, declared, "I have nothing left to teach you," and ascended bodily into Heaven. Others claim the ship never had a captain at all—that he was just a ghost or an imposter. The ship, in any case, has a +1 Tool bonus to its flashiness, and tends to be one of the more stylish ships out on the Lake.

Stale Life

25 or 40 XP Quest

1:

You're living the way you've been living—stuck in one particular role, one particular mode. You're not happy with it. You kind of want a change.

A

Stale Life

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- You're delighted by an interesting/exciting problem;
- You see a ship come in laden with glory;
- You're caught in a terrifying storm;
- You realize something's been stolen from you or that you've been led into a trap.

You can earn each bonus once, up to a total of 20 XP.

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- stacking crates
- talking about why your life is this way (whatever way it is)
- leaning against a dock railing
- standing in high places
- an animal or person annoys you while you're shopping.
- paying annoying bills
- feeling dismal
- dreaming of distant lands

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

XP

Learning the Ropes

25 or 40 XP Quest

2:

3:

You've made a change in your life, predictably resulting in your being completely lost, raw, and new at what you're doing now.

Let's get your feet back under you!

Stale Life
(Simplified)

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- Some spiritual presence visits you and meddles in your life;
- You see a shipwreck;
- Someone warns you that your life is going to change.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

being trapped or caged somewhere and watching things that are free

being life-threateningly ill

hallucinating

working with or opposing dangerous people

implementing a plan

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

XP

Learning the Ropes
(Simplified)

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- Someone acknowledges that you've been learning, or reacts to how harsh your experiences have been;
- You discover a treasure or crisis while half-asleep.

You can earn up each bonus once, for a total of 10 XP.

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

you risk yourself for the work

time blurs past, or you talk about how it seems to be doing that

pulling together with others in a crisis situation

watching a demonstration of some skill

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

XP

Learning the Ropes

A

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- you wear a truly ridiculous outfit or assemblage, with details suggested by the HG and the other players;
- you wear that outfit again at least 3 chapters later, only with a new player-suggested twist to take it even further over the top;
- you sight a shockingly green island or island-like thing in the distance, or, you're swarmed by birds;
- you suffer violence, betrayal, or other acts of grievous malice;
- you suffer a further, even more egregious act at least 3 chapters on.

You can earn up to four of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 20 XP.

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- witnessing someone suffering
- slacking off
- working with wood and metal
- training on the job, either at others' direction or your own
- eating with a rowdy group of co-workers
- you have to work while really sleepy
- you hurt your hands
- you're out in terrible weather

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

XP

Starry-Eyed Adventure

25 or 40 XP Quest

You're out in the world, on your big new adventure—Who knows what'll happen now?

2:

3:

4:

Starry-Eyed Adventure

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- You find a hidden creek, flow, or spring of pure, untainted water;
- The sun comes up at an unexpected hour or dramatic moment;
- You find yourself in the arms of a shadowy friend, enemy, or lover;*
- You meet a star in human form.†

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP.

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- you overflow with love for your friends and the world
- you sleep under a clear sky
- you witness a storm in the distance
- you ride, sail, run, or otherwise travel all-out at incredible speeds
- you're tempted by a strange fruit
- you're offered salvation by a shadowy enemy, friend, or lover;
- you betray a friend;
- you argue with a star

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

XP

* *I mean this literally, like, a ghost, spirit, or shadow creature in the shape of a shadow, but someone really suspicious or wicked who is standing in shadows works too!*

† *a glamorous enough celebrity is also OK.*

Starry-Eyed Adventure
(Simplified)

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- you pay a terrible price for your sins;
- you trust your fate to somebody else, e.g., letting them lead you somewhere blindfolded;
- you suffer unexpected clothing damage (at whatever level both your player and the group are comfortable with.)

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- you weather a terrible crisis
- you laugh and play on a beach
- you do something that disrespects the sacred
- you are given a chance at salvation

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

XP

The Kranmaru

This ship is called "the Young King"—it's the sixth and most-recently-famous of the "six Kings" of Fortitude.

Its captain is Nomura Yorihiko; in his youth, he was a "sacred child."

The ship was supposedly blessed by a spirit or goddess of Big Lake; she rose like a waterspout, some tell it, in the colors of the rainbow, taller than a mountain and twice as beautiful, and blessed the ship. Others say that it was just one of the many hallucinations of the Outside; but the Young King's a sweet ship for a young sailor to sign onto, regardless, with a +1 Tool bonus to navigation, a +1 Tool bonus to finding beauty, and the Property

- **"The Kranmaru loves the Lake."**

Its captain's Skills probably look something like

- "Let's do this!" 3—His catchphrase, spoken before adventure.
- Captain 2—He's good, but still a little rough.
- Superior Holiness 2—He's not a sacred child but he's still kind of holy.
- Raise Dogs 1—A remnant of another time.
- Drummer 0—He's not as good at this as he thinks he is.

He may have a few other connections, but most importantly, he has

- Connection: Kranmaru 3—It's his ship.
- Connection: Big Lake 2—He's got a decent connection to the Lake.
- Connection: the Outside 1—He's got more of a sense for it than most.

I don't know enough about him to stat his miraculous abilities; I guess, if I were ballparking him for a game, I'd try something like:

- Affliction 2: Chosen by the Lake
- Bond 2: "I have a hedgehog that lives in my hair."

I don't know whether he actually has a hedgehog that lives in his hair—I've only ever seen him with a hat on—so don't let this color your image of him or discourage you from choosing that option if you're looking for a Bond for your new PC. Heck, let it encourage you: just think, if there are two people like that in Fortitude, and you meet him, your hair-pigs could fall in love!

Wrecked

25 or 45 XP Quest

3:

4:

5:

You've been left stranded—not necessarily literally, but you've been caught or caught yourself without the resources you need to get through what is to come. This situation is impossible.

Wrecked

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- The full horror of your situation is established in play;
- An incredibly lucky coincidence helps you out, but on its own won't be enough to save you;
- You see a comet, meteor, fireball, or other arcing, descending, fiery thing. (Potentially a missile, crashing plane, or descending sun deity);
- Death or some other hungry power rips a bit out of you and eats it, probably in a dream sequence.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP.

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- you stand facing the base of a cliff with something behind you
- you're bleeding. It's unusually bad.
- you're temporarily blinded
- you rip your heart open, probably metaphorically, sharing a pain or trauma
- you start ranting
- you're thirsty
- you're delirious
- you reluctantly let others help you

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

XP

Wrecked
(Simplified)

A

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- You discover that you're trapped somewhere.
- You expel a parasite or unwanted symbiote from your body, mind, or soul.
- You do something desperate or grandiose.

You can earn up to two of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

you're convinced that you're dying.

you make a mess, with blood or ink or mud everywhere

you dream of drowning

possibly in a dream sequence, you set the sky or the world around you on fire

you vomit or magically expel toxins in some fashion.

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

XP

Home for a While

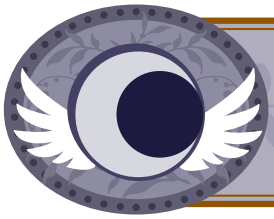
25 or 40 XP Quest

2: 

4: 

5: 

Your voyage ended, you're spending a while at home—in amongst the things that you dealt with before this Arc started. Good things? Bad things? A little of both?



Home for a While

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- You encounter something rotten while out walking on the beach;
- You learn that an old friend, lover, rival, or enemy is dead;
- You see a glider or kite dancing in the wind;
- You have a spooky encounter.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 20 XP.

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- you stare out at the water
- you fiddle with cut flowers in a vase
- you play with a child or dog
- you drink tea with a loved one
- you lift boxes and stack crates
- you balance an account book.
- you listen to the creaking of a ship or dock
- you find driftwood on the beach

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

XP

Home for a While
(Simplified)

A

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- You receive a gift package from an old enemy or old flame;
- You make up with someone you'd had a long conflict with;
- You see something beautiful and new.

You can earn up to two bonuses, once each, for a total of 10 XP.

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

- you talk about the experiences of this Arc
- you convalesce
- clouds pass over the sun
- you watch a child at play
- you talk about your dreams

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

XP

Other Quests

Here's a handful of other quests relevant to living by Big Lake.

Ship's Hand

15 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest

You're learning how to be a good sailor—how to work on a big ship or a small one and help to get things done. This is for people who're focused on trading journeys, recreational sailing, and crewing for the *big* fishing ships—if you're more into the fish-catching part than the sailing, there's a better quest for that below.



What You'll Do

Here's what it's like to be a skilled sailor.

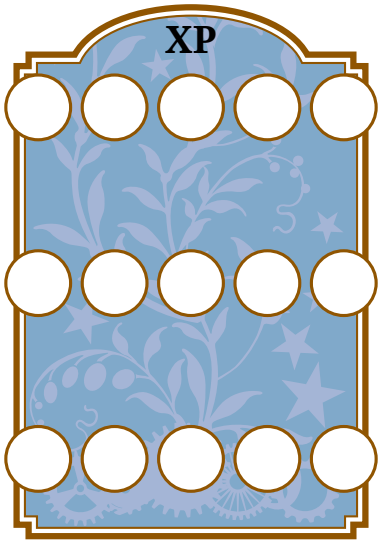
You'll be in good health. That's practically inevitable, when you work hard every day *while* based somewhere like Fortitude. You'll be in good health, with strong limbs and strong lungs, but your complexion will be weathered and you'll pick up a lot of rope bruises along the way. You'll have a distinctly nautical way of walking. You'll be self-assured, even when you're on land, although you'll feel most comfortable out on the lake or the seas. You'll favor the black neckerchief and red woggle that's characteristic of Fortitude sailors.

You'll work hard.

Most of the day on the water goes by in a stream of steady labor; it's swallowed in one bit of work or another, from before the dawn to your landing. It becomes scattered moments of memory that stick out from that: a sudden sight of a sea-bird, a taste of wind and spray that is somehow different enough from all the other tastes of wind and spray that you'll remember it still five or ten years later, a funny story about your friends, the bending of a wooden board. The day is constantly slipping by in interaction with the world.

You'll be really good at keeping your balance out on the water, even when it's raining or the deck is slick or you're dangling sideways from the rigging on a leaning boat. Eventually and almost too gradually to notice it all just becomes... ordinary, navigable space to you, with the only difference being what *happens* if you lose your balance and fall down.

Ship's Hand



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 relevant to a ship's voyage: the weather, luck, the moods of a lake, or a ship's trim**.

The classic version of this is stuff like "three seagulls on your roof? Bet it'll rain tomorrow." Or "that ship's riding a little low, I bet there's a crack in the mast."

You can extend this a little bit to cars, bicycles ("oh, this bike just needs someone to tighten up the rigging"), and land-related luck as long as the core experience here is a nautical sort of theme.

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.

A

What You'll Know

You'll know how to spot the wind and the Outside from the color of the water—how to tell that the darker water over *there* means the wind is blowing, but over *there* it means that there's a trickle of chaos coming in from the Outside, and over there it means there isn't any wind at all.

You'll know the ropes—in a literal sense. You'll know where a random line, on a ship, is supposed to be attached: what it does, where to tie it off, and how to use it to manipulate the sails (or to stand on, or run up a flag, or occasionally for other things.)

You'll know what's feasible on a given craft—how far it can turn into the wind, how fast it can go, how maneuverable it is: you can see a collision coming and try to avoid it, or know when a ship can handle a certain weather without qualm.

You'll know an enormous number of knots, songs, and stories. You'll know how to judge the weather from a while out—not necessarily to meteorological precision, which means I'm using faint praise indeed, but... still. Better than your typical Horizon kid, at least. The color of the sky at night tells you something about the weather in the morning.

You'll know where the fish are.

You'll know, better than that, where the *paths* are—at least for your ship, you'll know what routes to expect to open up in Big Lake over the next few months. You'll know that right now is about the season when it's easy to get to the Baltic Sea; or that pretty soon, it'll be a lot harder to get there but the trip by California'll open up. It's all erratic, it's all unpredictable, it's all sailing through the Outside-tainted bits of Lake to get to anywhere in vast and multiple worlds, but you'll still get pretty good at it: good enough to say things like, "Oh, a harvest moon, excellent, we'll be bringing in some pretty fine swordfish in the coming months!"

Rewards

The 15 XP version can be a project or quest miracle; otherwise, it earns a Recharge Token in the form of a memory or minor souvenir relating to the ship.

Playing Out Your Odyssey

Rather than covering the entire experience of quests like **Ship's Hand** or **Ship's Crew** in a single chi-bi-quest, you may wish to play this out as a complete Arc, most likely using either the quest set **An Odyssey** (on pg. 327) or one of the quest sets from the ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** RPG.

If you want a piece of the shining thread, that'd come at the end of most Arcs, as:

- **Accessory.** Along the way you picked up a really cool treasure—something hardly anybody else in Town possesses.

... but you could also pick it up as a "cool item" from a Storyteller Arc or even as "a neat thing [...] that you didn't want" from an Aspect Arc. By default, the only real benefit to the shining thread is cachet.

Good Catch

25 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

You're learning how to bring in a good haul of fish. You're a hard worker and one day you'll be a lucky charm for any fishing boat that'll have you.

What Happens

You'll grow stronger, more agile, and more seawise and lakewise over the course of this quest. You'll build a bond, or a stronger bond, with the other workers on your boat. You'll probably make friends among the community of sailors and those who work with them, most likely including the Fortitude rats. You'll realize at some point that your hard work is beginning to pay off: any financial pressure on you loosens, and you'll start feeling like you know where to go to bring in a good catch and that you're good at bringing that good catch in. The details beyond that will depend a lot on whether you're signing on as a practically anonymous hand on Kirillo's fleet or joining your parents on a tiny family fishing ship—but basically, it's some combination of a coming-of-age story where you grow to master your new career and a gentle settling into nature and the rhythms of Big Lake.

Ship's Crew

35 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

You learn the ways of a given ship.

What You'll Do

This quest'll bind you to a particular ship. You'll love her. You'll connect to her. You'll tell her stories to anyone who'll listen.

You'll spend time you could have been on shore out working on her.

What You'll Know

You'll know every inch of the ship and every trick of how she handles. You'll know where everything is stored and every little peccadillo and peculiarity of the rigging. You'll know the best places to sit when there's time for sitting, to listen to the water. You'll know the rhythm of the ship, when to move to get out of peoples' way, when they're already going to move around you; when they need you and when they don't. You'll know how the ship moves under your feet when there's a wind.

You'll know the little customs and the superstitions of a given ship.

You'll know when she got each piece of shining thread; you'll know her greatest adventures in far lands. You'll know who made her, probably, and the details of the ships of the time.

You'll know what food tastes like on her. (It's a little different on every ship, you know.) And the taste of the water.

You'll know the faces who show up when the ship comes home—every one of them, eventually, the kids who cluster around to help you sort out your goods and the families of the people on the ship. The admirers who like the lines of the thing and the ship's hands looking for a temporary job.

You'll know the moods of the Lake and the birds of the Lake and you'll sharpen any Skills that you might have in technical navigation, fishing, and/or sailing.

A Bittersweet Saga or just Looking for Trouble?

As previously noted, you may wish to play this out as a complete Arc instead of a single quest, e.g. using **An Odyssey** on pg. 327 or one of the quest sets from the ***Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine*** RPG and optionally slotting this quest itself in in any place that it fits.

Good Catch

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by pausing to reflect on how important fish and fishing are to the health of Fortitude and Town. For instance, while wandering the market, you stop and think—

- "Fish are the lifeblood of this place."

Normally you'll use just those words, but you can shake it up a bit, find a habitual phrasing of your own, and even adapt it on the fly to the circumstances of play.

It's pretty easy to get bonus XP, obviously, but that's fine: either this quest is slow and stays on your mind a long time; it makes you a fish-obsessed goofball who talks about fish at random times; or it drives you to do fishing-related stuff a lot so that you feel wise and folksy instead of silly working that line into play. All three options, I hope, will fit the quest and play out well.

XP

Ship's Crew

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by admiring and re-stating some quality of the ship.

"She's a fast ship," for instance. Or

"The Sparrow's a good ship for trade."

Pick a suitable catchphrase for this. You can shake it up in play with variations on the statement and you can change it mid-stream if you wind up changing your mind about the ship.

What's your phrase?

XP

Ship's Friend

15 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest

25 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

You invest socially or emotionally in the fate of a ship—you don't necessarily sail on it yourself but you have friends on board, family on board, investments in its success, work unloading it, or just an enthrallment with its particular glamour, something that makes its fate personally relevant to *you*. Each time it comes in safe it gladdens your heart and you could theoretically go out to help it if something happened or join it if it came time for a nautical adventure.

What You'll Do

A ship's friend *drops everything when the ship comes in*. You'll get word that your ship is coming into harbor and it'll be like a holiday; you'll put aside your books or your scrubbing, your gardening or your writing, your exercise or your carpentry, even, if you can't run with them, your attempt to balance more than one puppy in a single hand—

And you'll head down to greet them at the docks at the best pace you can manage.

A ship's friend *helps out*.

You're down there by the docks helping to unload it. Maybe it's your job—maybe sorting through the fish or cargo that comes in and taking it to the markets and the stores is what you *do* and the reason you're tied to the ship. But even if it's not, then you'll still be down there, pitching in, as much as you can.

Mind, if you're a sibling, parent, child, or spouse of whomever's coming in—

Well, maybe a hug or whatever comes first. But then it's on to helping out. There's always stuff to do to get everything stowed or transferred or tied down or tied up or anchored, balanced, or battened.

A ship's friend worries when there are storms, when there's been a long time without hearing from a ship, when there's a reason to think something might have happened—it's enough to make you jealous of the Kichi and Sosunov magic, honestly, when someone you care about is gone for more than a single fair-day's sailing out there on Big Lake. I mean, it's pretty safe and all, but they *do* have to go Outside if they're going anywhere but the Lake itself, and even there, you can stumble on it by mistake.

A ship's friend *keeps nautical memorabilia around*.

Maybe you'll wear a compass around your neck—a gift from your friend, spouse, parent, child, sibling, or whatever on the boat. Your house likely has a nautical-style clock. Maybe there's blueprints for a ship framed on your wall, or pictures of them. If you're very lucky, you'll have a bit of the shining thread—though it's not *yours*, of course, not if you're lucky, it's just a memento to hang on to, since it won't become *yours* unless your loved one dies out there on the Lake. It's likely you'll have a ship's hat and maybe a neckerchief and even a sailor's woggle of your own; at the least, you'll have a nautical scarf.

Most of all, though, a ship's friend *tells stories* of their ship.

You'll want to share anecdotes and adventures that the sailors have shared with you. You'll want to affirm your connection *with* those stories and also to capture the sense of belonging to its larger, far-traveling world. (Or, possibly, its smaller, provincial world, if you happen to travel farther than a given fishing ship yourself.)

It's in telling those stories that you make yourself a living part of the legacy of that ship, even when it is far away.

What You'll Know

As a ship's friend you'll be immersed in nautical culture—at least on its edges. You'll know how to talk about ships, you'll know the chores on ships, you'll hear "holystone" and think of scrubbing decks down with sandstone; "scuttlebutt," and a barrel of water. You'll be casual as a rat in slickers tossing off terms like windward, leeward, port, and starboard. You'll know two dozen shanties and a dozen knots.

Most importantly, you'll know *your ship's plans and travels*.

You'll know where it's going, where it's been, what it's hoping for, how it travels. You'll know its strengths, its weaknesses, its state. If it could use some new brass

Ship's Friend (25+ XP Perk)

Ship's Friend. For a short period of time after the ship comes in (e.g., that week, for seasonal ships; a few minutes, for ships that come home every day), you'll receive a +1 Tool bonus (max +1) to your choice of—

- shopping;
- being organized;
- being happy;
- being/asserting yourself;
- physical health;
- social interaction;
- problem-solving;
- games;
- cooking;
- making your feelings known;
- managing animals;[73]
- fashion;
- homework; or
- something else appropriate!

73 It's an empirical fact that large dogs behave better when the sailors they and/or their master love come home.

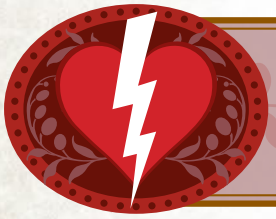
A

fittings or another skilled hand to trim its sails, you'll know that; if it's full up on crew and in good repair, you'll know that too. You'll know what kinds of fish it hopes to catch or where it plans to go to trade. You'll know enough about its ledgers of account to be happy with or to worry over the ship's financial state.

Rewards

As a chibi-quest, this is usually a way to pick up a Recharge Token, but it can also earn you one of the ship-focused rewards below:

- Your stories of the ship help it get a lucrative or useful contract.
- Your connection to the ship is an ongoing project—while you keep the quest going, the ship has +1 Auctoritas against the influence of the Outside (max 5).



Ship's Friend

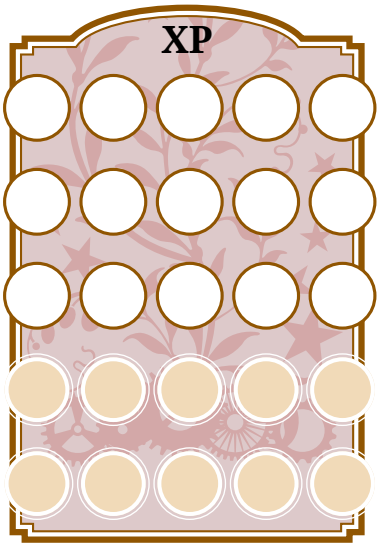
You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by admiring and re-stating some quality of the ship.

"She's a good ship," for instance. Or

"The Queen of Thorns always brings a great catch!"

Pick a suitable catchphrase for this—something that reflects the strong feelings you have for that ship. You can shake it up in play with variations on the statement and you can change it mid-stream if you wind up changing your mind about the ship.

What's your phrase?



Swift

25 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest

You're either a pilot, a skilled hand with the sails, or both. You love speed, or you just love saving time. Whatever. The point is, you know how to help a boat move swiftly through the paths around Big Lake. Any boat that you're piloting or working the sails for simply *moves faster*—there's diminishing returns, of course, if there's a whole boat full of mad adventurers like you at work, but even on the fastest ship you'll find a corner or two that you can teach them how to cut.

What You'll Do

Let's be honest. You're probably an NPC. You're going to get the PCs somewhere in time, and you're going to have to steer them through the straits of Hell, through wild storms and treacherous waters, probably past horrors of the deep and scary islands, to do it. But because the players know this quest exists, they'll believe you when you say: *I can get you there in time.*

That said, OK, so let's pretend you're a PC instead. And you're a specialist in fast transit across the Lake. That's not *too* surprising. You'll love speed, of course, or saving time. You'll be fit and healthy and you'll know your way around a ship. Most of all, though, I figure, as a PC on this quest, or who's done this quest, you'll boast. You'll talk about how quickly you can go, you'll brag about this one time you made the Manasarovar run in less than seven days—from Fortitude to the highest navigable lake in all the world! And in less than seven days!—and you'll talk about how *good* it feels when a ship really starts to move.

You'll probably want to be part of an elite crew, if you've got the opportunity to move the game from Town or Fortitude out onto Big Lake. Maybe you specialize in speed, and someone else in navigation, and the others, well, in whatever those other people do. If the game is mostly focused on Fortitude or Town, then you might want to develop skill with some sort of land-based transportation—just because you love to sail Big Lake doesn't mean you can't also get involved with drag racing, sprinting, horse riding, or whatnot. You may even get the opportunity to test yourself with an interesting sky-based challenge, like helping to drive the horses of the sun or the beast of the evil world.

Rewards

This quest is a quest miracle: a single use of **Beat the Clock**. However, unlike most quest miracles, it doesn't invoke immediately—instead, it'll trigger when you call upon it.

Often this power invokes simultaneous with some Ritual, e.g., the Ritual of the Lake (pg. 326).

Beat the Clock

Type: Imperial Miracle, Ritual Power
Uses: 1

Invoke **Beat the Clock** and you can travel swiftly to somewhere beyond Town and/or return to Fortitude before some key dramatic deadline.

For instance if you have to transport someone to a hospital on Earth because Town doesn't have a treatment for their illness—you can declare: "We get them there before the eight hours the doctor says they have run out."

Or if you're racing home to stop your boyfriend, who thinks you're dead, from marrying someone else? "I get there in time to stop the wedding."

This power functions as a wish.

Egretă

This ship, like the Hiryū, is a famous and distinguished ship over a century old. It is one of the "six Kings" of Fortitude.

It's a pleasant ship, with a +1 Tool bonus to its seaworthiness, to its ability to weather storms, and to your Connection to the ship itself—it's shockingly easy to get into the rhythm of the ship, and accordingly it's one of the best places for a young hand to learn how it's done. (For various values of "it.")

Swift

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by showing off your sheer enthusiasm for speed. Pick a suitable catchphrase for this, but the assumed default is:

- "Faster! Faster!" or *possibly*
- "Faster! Faster! AHAHAHAHAHA-HAHA!"

What's yours?

XP

Explorer

Explorer is a way of understanding the world. You're filtering everything through your spatial models and your adventurous history.

So you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (up to once per scene/15 minutes) by **proposing a theory about how something is laid out or how it relates to one of your adventures on Big Lake**.

The standard catchphrase here is "This is like..." or "This must be like..."

For instance, *This is like that time on the island of the dog-people!* Or *This place must be like a twelve-dimensional spindle, spinning on top of a flattened map—which means if we take* that *escalator, we're almost certain to find our noodle shop!*

XP

Explorer

15 XP Quest

Chibi-Quest

25 XP Quest

1:

3:

4:



You explore the paths through Big Lake.

The ways through Big Lake are always changing—even well-known paths are only accessible intermittently throughout the year. You can't just wander around and hope to stumble onto something good, or, at least, not if you want to get there and back reliably.

Exploring Big Lake is a lot like astronomy used to be: looking for cool things is an important start, but you also need to keep careful records, take careful measurements, and think a lot about how the things that you know and how the things that you're learning work.

That's what you do. That's what you love.

Not content with the standard paths, you hunt down routes that can reach new and otherwise inaccessible places.

What You'll Do

The big thing about explorers is that they're always thinking about their adventures. If they're not out actually exploring the world and getting into trouble, they're *talking* about the times they went out exploring the world and getting into trouble. They're full of stories. They're starry-eyed. They're always talking of distant lands.

And that means that if you've completed this quest, and certainly towards the end of it, that's the way that *you* will be.

You're not all talk, of course. If the game's nautical enough for you to go out and explore the paths of Big Lake in play, then you'll probably spend an awful lot of your time doing exactly that. And if you can't, or if it's something that only happens in the background, between stories, it's still pretty clear that you *want* to.

You can't be the kind of person who learns the ways of Big Lake without *wanting* to be out there every time you wake up and see the sun or stormy sky.

You'll keep a logbook. You'll probably make maps. You'll have a little chemistry lab at home for playing around with Outside crystal and Outside dust. You'll be able to handle yourself on a boat, under pretty much any sort of conditions, unless you've got some serious handicap or weakness that'd oppose you. You're likely to be a fair hand with making and using maps and charts.

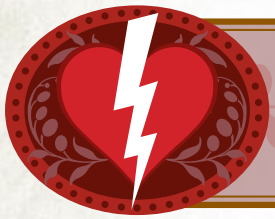
What You'll Know

Obviously you'll know the major paths through Big Lake. You'll know when during the year the various paths to common destinations on Earth and other worlds are most likely to open up. You'll pick up a reasonable amount of nautical knowledge, even if all you do is hang out with a crew and work on maps and routes—if you like the Lake and the sea enough to take on this quest, the crew'll make use of you and train you whether you're an able sailor, a paying passenger, or a kitten-weak child.

You'll want to have a solid grasp of cartography, astronomy, geography, and mathematics to take on this quest. The first three will help you keep a strong sense of where you are. The last is necessary because even the simplest models of how Outside and the Big Lake actually *work* stretch them over five-dimensional surfaces. A few proposals go as high as twenty-three dimensions, and there's an extremely probable model that pastes Big Lake onto the surface of a spinning twelve-dimensional spindle that meanders erratically atop a flattened map of the ordinary world. Nobody expects you to understand that—nobody'd even expect **the Prodigy** to hold a complete and useful model of that in their *head*, and it might not be humanly possible—but the better your mathematics and the more approximations to the truth you can understand, the less confused Big Lake will leave you and the better prepared you'll be if you hit a sudden swell of the Deep Outside.

Rewards

As a chibi-quest, this quest gives you the path to a new and interesting place; this also counts as a Recharge Token.



Little Ship
(Melodramatic Version)

It's hard to pay attention to the real world. You've got a sweet little boat!

Or, you know, you *will!*

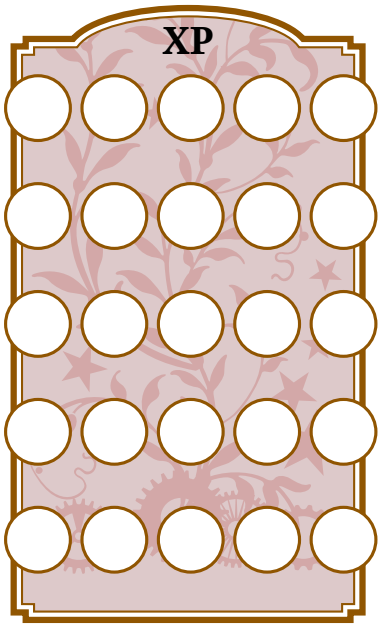
Just think how awesome it's going to be!

Pick a catchphrase that indicates that your mind has totally wandered off into ship-space. The classic examples are

- "We're going to be *sailing*." Or
- "I'm going to have a *ship*."

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per 15 minutes/scene) by invoking that catch phrase or some reasonably close variant.

What's yours?



Little Ship

25 XP Quest

1: 

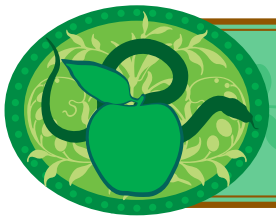
You're not really up for crewing somebody else's ship, but you're still pretty into the water and the Lake—so you work on fixing up this little ship that you or your family own.

What You'll Do

The fundamental action of this quest is to disappear to the marina or the drydock for hours at a time. There you walk around on or near the boat, hammering things, pulling or prying at things, washing things, scowling at things, fitting things, pulling ropes around, moving heavy things, and in general getting kind of dirty and loud in mysterious ways.

It'll start, I guess, with either tearing off a bunch of rotten wood, breaking down the parts of an old ship that aren't OK, or with the building of the basic skeleton for a boat that's new. Either way you'll go from nothing, just some rocks and a yard, or from an old boat, to this... unfinished, skeletal dream of what the boat could be.

Then there'll be a stage which is just lots of same-work, hammering, drilling, wiping sweat off your brow. Piece by piece the thing will come together. It'll grow like a homunculus growing its coat of flesh or a sketch developing into paints; grow, in ambiguous and analog stages, from a frame into a thing. When you have an actual boat you'll want to seal and waterproof



Little Ship
(Dramatic Version)

The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

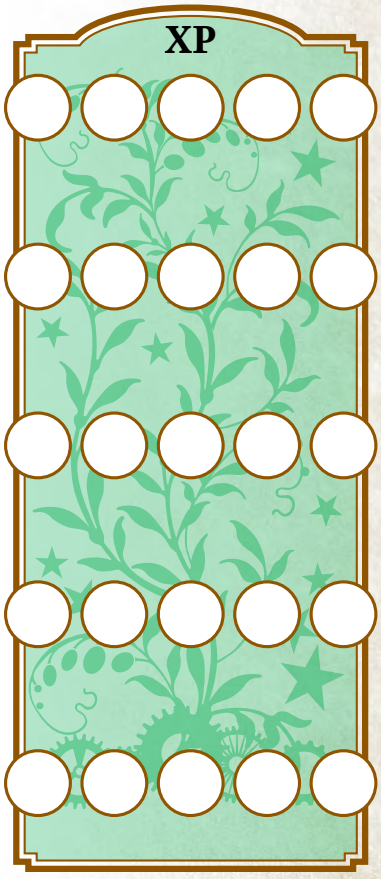
- you have a mysterious encounter while working on the ship;
- you do something a little dumb as part of showing off or building the ship that could get you into trouble later (invite a witch or demon over to show it off, borrow money from a jerk to finish it, spend time on the boat and miss a few days of your job, or something like that).

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Once per week, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

-  actively working on the boat
-  inviting people over to see the boat
-  messing around with the boat (cleaning, poking at it)
-  staring out at the Lake and daydreaming about sailing
-  making concrete plans for when the boat is finished

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



it; Town has access to modern resins and fiberglass so a typical boat will get sealed with that rather than tar and sheathing.

Then there's lots of rope work and detail work. You'll get in new cleats of various sorts and install them. You'll play around with the rigging, with different ways of hooking up the ropes to ship, to figure out what's best. You'll install and polish up bits of brass fitting and you'll check over, and often replace or make adjustments to, the pieces of the hull and mast. You may have ignored the metal cleats, cables, and chainplates at the earlier stages if they weren't outright rusted; here you'll want to make sure they're all sound and strong.

If you're adding mastwork to a rowboat or powerboat, you'll want to make sure that you've got a good leeboard, daggerboard, or centerboard—basically, a retractable keel to sink into the water to keep the wind from flipping you over. You'll also need to figure out your sails and how fancy they're going to be. You'll toss off casual phrases like "it's a single-master," "it's a basic two-sail rig," "it's a cat-boat, you know, with the sail to the front," or "naturally, it's a three-master. Age of sail, people. Age of sail!"

Near the end you'll want to start focusing on whether you can make the ship cooler in some way—fitting the mast for a spinnaker, adding more comfortable furniture or more modern instrumentation, putting in a motor if you're that kind of girl or boy, improving the rudder or anchor, or straightening out the rigging with a good set of plans and a good set of eyes (those little wooden blocks the ropes run through, I mean, and not just the ones in your head).

Then make sure everything's varnished and neatened and that you've got a good stock of everything you'd need (whether that's a fish-hold, an ice chest, a table umbrella, or a bunch of life vests and flares) and you're good to go!

At this point it is traditional to start agitating for people to sail with you at every opportunity.

Never Lost

Type: Miraculous Action
Cost: —

You are **Never Lost**.

You know where you are, how you got there, and everything that ought to tell you about how to get to where you want to go and what's around you. You do not need to actively invoke this power—it is a permanent character trait. (You may need to remind the HG that it exists, but that's different from an invocation.)

This power is bound by reason. It only lets you know things that you have some way of knowing. For instance, if you're abstracted through a warp-space manifold, you won't immediately know where you've landed; somebody will first have to explain to you what a warp-space manifold is! Once you get the basic principles, though, it'll be obvious where you must be.

You might pick up a power like this from a miraculous quest focused on navigation; **you can also take this power instead of the normal Skill/Bond reward when finishing a mundane Arc**.

Never Lost

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 to get somewhere or about where you are**.

XP

Never Lost

15 XP Quest


Chibi-Quest

You study and practice navigation, eventually becoming or demonstrating yourself the kind of person who is never lost even in the most freakish portions of Big Lake or the near Outside.

What You'll Do

A good navigator *shows off their direction sense*.

There isn't a *mystical injunction* against humility if you're on this quest, but honestly, you'll get pretty tired of being around people who couldn't navigate their way out of a paper bag if you gave them three compasses and some scissors. And the only recourse, sometimes, against thinking that everyone around you is completely and irredeemably oblivious is to think about how cool you yourself must be to know this stuff. So, yeah. You'll mention that it's pretty obvious to you which way South-Southeast is from here.[74] You'll admit that all you have to do to get somewhere is... (and then furiously sketch out directions on the air or in your palm.) Knowing where anything you might want to get to will be is awesome, and it makes you awesome as well.

A good navigator *helps people get around*.

You'll give directions. If you've got a scooter or a schooner at loose ends, you'll give people a ride. If not, maybe you'll walk with them where they're going. You'll sketch or draw maps for people—or make serious, practical, and salable maps as a hobby. You'll give people advice about any shipping or travel questions they might have.

A good navigator *knows where it's worth going*.

You've got a good sense not just of how to get places at any given moment, but what places'll be hard to get to right now—let's say, because of traffic on land or the season on the Lake—and which places it might be better to get to instead. If someone wants to get to a sandwich place and it's a three hour walk and there's an awesome, better place just three blocks down the road, you won't *automatically* know that it's there to tell them. But if you have any way to know, if you've ever seen it or heard about it, if you've got it in your memory of place, then you'll know that you can give them directions to someplace accessible and tasty, not just where they think they're going, if they don't have a specific reason to go where they had planned.

What You'll Know

You'll know or study *dead reckoning*—the nautical art of estimating one's position, in the absence of clear revealing landmarks, by updating a previously determined location based on your known course and speed. There's obviously nothing terribly hard about this in concept, so what you'll know is the tools and techniques for doing it well and scrupulously and the error modes that it has.

You'll know or study *celestial navigation*—the art of estimating one's position, in the absence of clear revealing landmarks, by looking at the stars. The stars are pretty close, in Town, so you can actually do some of this with the naked eye—a really good navigator can spot an issue with their course within a matter of blocks. You'll also master the trick of time estimation based on the position of the sun and moon, which works even on Earth and similar planets with their strangely distant skies. If you have a sextant, a computer or an almanac and tables, a chart of the region, and clear sight of a navigational body such as the moon, a planet, or a navigational star, you can use celestial navigation to locate yourself within a mile and a half anywhere on Earth and within a yard or so in Town. You're still pretty much out of luck when it comes to navigating the Outside: large sections of the Outside allow you to learn *something* by studying the sky, but doing so is not as simple or reliable as it is on Earth.

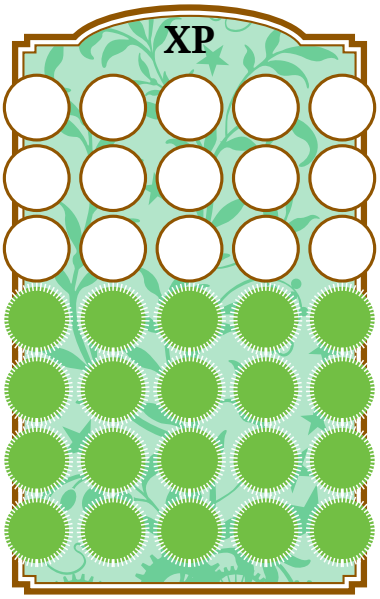
You'll know or study *radio navigation*. This is the art of figuring out where you are by listening to various radio signals and figuring out how long they must have taken to reach you. This is borderline useless in Town because nobody sells devices to determine your location from the local radio signals—it's *possible*, and a few hobbyists build that kind of thing, but you can't just go to the shop and buy one. On Earth, though, radio navigation is by far the most useful kind, because helpful, gregarious satellites in predictable locations are constantly spamming the world under them with

74 eyebrow wiggle

Love for the Water

This quest comes with a division of states—there's the you who is lost in the waves and the water, and the you who is trapped on the land. 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 refocusing on the troubles of your life, or your mind and heart are drifting off to lose themselves in the water and the wind. 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.

The normal version of this quest needs 15 XP; the extended version, with additional rewards, needs 35.



information about what time they think it is right then.[75] Also, even if a stray wish or something turns those satellites against you, there are a fair number of land-based radio stations sending out signals you can use to fix your location with as well.

You'll know *how to use a sextant*. This is pretty much implicit in celestial navigation, but I'm calling it out because I think sextants have a certain romantic cachet. Knowing how to use a sextant is probably pretty cool, and you can probably show people basic things like "see, you hold it like this and move the sun to the horizon like this" and they'll be impressed. However, be warned that this romantic cachet is in a limited supply; if you attempt to become "the sextant guy" or "the sextant girl" you will risk reducing your fifteen minutes of fame to five as the crowd that has gathered to gawk at your cachet dissipates to admire that girl over there who knows how to use a slide rule or to juggle frogs.

You'll know *which way is north*. It's *that* way! Pigeons can usually find north using magnetic receptors in their brains[76], so it's not surprising that someone like you can do it as well. Implicitly you will also have a general *direction sense*, knowing which way you're facing and where to find east, west, and south unless somebody messes with the left-right circuits in your brain.

You'll know *how to plan your course*, including knowing when paths are likely to be usable or difficult. Fortitude doesn't really have much in the way of heavy traffic or time-limited street access, so you'll mostly use this for traveling Big Lake and navigating the seas beyond. However, if you happen to be in a place where traffic and intermittent road or pass closure is a concern, you'll soon figure out efficient routes and times for travel there as well.

Rewards

This power is a project or quest miracle. As a project, it'll typically buy you a +1 Tool bonus to navigation from the time you finish the project until the time you discard it; as a quest miracle, you might have the option of something better.

75 I'm not sure if the satellites actually exist but their signals do. Seem to? Do. I think. Are signals things?

76 These are a real bird; see the Audubon Field Guide for more information.

Love for the Water

15 XP Quest

 Chibi-Quest

35 XP Quest

1: 

2: 

3: 

4: 

5: 

It comforts you, being out on the water. It brings you ease and respite. You go out on the water when you need to heal, to stabilize, to recover your balance, and to renew your faith in life and the world around you.

What Happens

Being out on Big Lake, or out at sea—it heals you. It makes your heart grow strong. One day you wake up and realize that you can let go of the pain and sorrow that you'd chained yourself to before.

Rewards

As a chibi-quest, this helps you heal from a wound.





The Fortitude Almanac

Appendix B

B



The Fortitude Regional Council

The Fortitude Regional Council…

- maintains a Jam Line for people in trouble, particularly in regards to jam (pg. 150)
- holds large supplies of foreign currency between ventures (pg. 162)
- is very interested in the state of the local buildings and streets (pg. 81, ***CMWGE***)
- oversees initiatives like...
  - tree planting and garbage can/storage facility construction
  - restoration of run-down shrines
  - surveys for places that might have problems
  - surveys for environmental stuff and observations
  - helping to build new elementary schools and teacher housing (pg. 224)
- is pretty solid on environmental issues (pg. 233)
- isn't the only game in Fortitude—there are a few elected or appointed bureaucrats around, as well as neighborhood association types (pg. 148)

The Regional Council is Fortitude's administrative body—the modern evolution of the town council of elders from the early days of human residency in Town. I haven't been around for a change of membership yet but I think it's done by acclamation: you join the Council when the Council, or the Region as a whole, or a retiring member, thinks you should.

Current membership includes Kimiko Dinsbury, Amelia Kozlov, and Dominic Waystreet.

Amelia Kozlov . . . . . pg. 150

"I see, so you're in a jam."

- Regional Councilmember
- Her "jam line" offers helpful advice for any sort of difficulty.

Dominic Waystreet

"I've got something for that around here somewhere."

This *dependable person* is known as a good person to have on your side more or less whatever happens. He has a pickup truck!

I mean, he's a really good person! ...with a pickup truck!

- **Transport 3.** This is his actual job—he gets stuff from one place to another.
- **Handyman 2.** He's pretty good at fixing stuff, too.
- **Wall 2.** He'll be a wall between someone he likes and trouble.
- **Good Smile 1.** *I* like it, anyway.

He's a member of the Fortitude Regional Council, which I'm going to implement as a low-level miraculous Arc: **Knight (Reality Syndrome) 1.**

- **Arc Truth: "He's someone you can count on."**
- **Shared Experience**—1/book, he can share his mental "maps" of Fortitude and other places. Basically, when he draws on the air or a table with his finger, or arranges salt shakers and silverware to look like a map, or whatever, it's very easy to follow along and annotate/participate.
- **Dreams Made Flesh**—1/book, when he finishes planning out a route on his mental map, he can manifest part of that in reality. For instance, there's a break in reality and he starts handing out copies of the map, or a sudden scene change and you're already there! (It's not hard to resist that last, though, if you don't want to be dragged along—a Surface Wound, at the most, leaving you blinking and realizing that he's gone.)
- **Childish Dreams**—Dominic can usually rummage around on his person, in his truck, or in a nearby person's garage, and find whatever it is he happens to need.

And he'll start with these five Perks:

- **Power:** Well-Liked in Fortitude
- **Connection:** Fortitude 2
- **Affliction:** I can't be blinded by any storm.
- **Accessory:** Pick-up Truck
- **Superior Skill:** Member of the Fortitude Regional Council 1

Including: a truck!

Kimiko Dinsbury

"I think I understand the situation."

This *dependable person* successfully organized the recovery after a slice of unexpected tsunami slipped in along the secret ways between the ocean and Big Lake.

- **Commanding Presence 3.** She's good at taking a situation over.
- **Project Management 3.** She's good at scheduling and organizing.
- **Clear Sight 2.** She's hard to fool.

She's also a member of the Fortitude Regional Council, which I'm going to implement as a partial miraculous Arc, **Knight (Become Somebody) 3:**

- **Wages of Sin ["Uncompromising."]**—she can recognize when there's no point in trying to persuade somebody. (She's got a tendency to go past the event horizon of stubbornness herself.)
- **Your Truth**—a level 3 Auctoritas protects these two statements from miracles/wishes:
  - Kimiko Dinsbury is on the Fortitude Regional Council
  - Kimiko Dinsbury can see right through you
- **Affliction:** My presence or glare intimidates water, water spirits, and Big Lake.

What I mean by "partial" is that you don't have to give her the other powers of that level, or a full suite of high-powered miraculous-character-level Perks—if you're in a high-powered game it's probably a good idea, but in a lower-powered game she's pretty impressive with just the above and a couple of Perks:

- **Connection:** Fortitude 2
- **Superior Skill:** Member of the Fortitude Regional Council 1

My favorite anecdote about Kimiko Dinsbury is the time I saw her drop a glass of water.

It was so afraid of her that not a drop spilled out!

Valeriya Alistratova (Former Member)

"A person who doesn't celebrate birthdays won't grow old!"

- former Regional Councilmember
- doctor, leader, swordswoman, and a student of the Tao
- vanished some time ago

Food and Drink

It's my observation that the kind of food in a scene is a strong indicator of the experience type—

- snacks favor **Shared Reactions**
- meals favor **Shared Action**
- drinks favor **Slice of Life**

This is hardly definitive! It's just an observation. Mealtime is for discussing your life, people like snacks while talking about recent events, and drinks are good for sipping while you reflect on the world.

B

What are you Cooking?

Some things to keep in mind about cooking at home—

- Your kitchen will not necessarily feature a refrigerator. Salted, pickled, and dried foods are a big part of Fortitude culture.
- You might have a kaiju-shell cookpot (pg. 166)
- You'll probably want a smokehouse, but unless you're rich or live outside the main settlement you can probably only afford an ordinary smoker.
- Your pantry probably has a lot of jam.
- Salt is expensive—not at full-on medieval levels, but it's labor-intensive to make it and takes an ocean voyage to import.

Staple crops are wheat, corn, soybeans, potatoes, barley, rye, and beets (pg. 198). Onions, green onions, and leeks are also popular. There is a rumor that "given sufficiently lax oversight a pile or field of potatoes will come to life."

Seasonal fruits include peaches, pears, plums, and apples (mostly from the Walking Fields) and berries, citrus, and tropical fruits such as dragonfruit, lychee, and pineapple from Fortitude itself. Seasonal vegetables include squash, cabbage, spinach, carrots, celery, and sweet peppers.

The cheapest seafood is local—clams, snails, pan fish, walleye, and trout—but anything that's just come in recently is probably pretty affordable. This is doubly true if you can get a kid you know to help unload and sort the haul as the ships come in.

Some Dishes

For a normal meal, consider...

- a slow-cooked fish stew with fresh-baked herb bread;
- a thick chowder and some sort of crispbread;
- a tomato or beet-based soup with crepes, buns, or crackers;
- salmon and potato soup or chowder with stuffed fish pies;
- fish pies, a light broth, and seasonal vegetables;
- baked or grilled fish with vegetables or potatoes on the side;
- fishball and noodle soup;
- skewers of seasoned cod, swordfish, haddock, or trout;
- sandwiches and chips;
- wheat- or barley-based porridge with a side of jam or milk;
- vegetable porridge with dried fish and curls of carrot; *or*
- potato, salmon, or cheese and onion dumplings or pierogies

Or do you find yourself with a yen for...

- some sort of stir fry (brown, red, or white);
- limestone-baked salmon with ginger;
- salmon with lemon juice and rice;
- pecan-crusted trout;
- salted grilled whole mackerel;
- a cold fish and jellied fruit salad, probably with pickled herring;
- a mixed-fish jambalaya, probably served with knotted bread;
- dumplings and shredded vegetables with dipping sauce;
- pickled herring with sour cream and chives; *or*
- a hot pie or casserole (like a potato, leek, and salmon pie, or a mako casserole)?

For a special treat, you might try...

- savory pancakes with sour cream, green onions, potatoes, and herring or eel;
- hominy bread or grits with jam;
- "eel's nests" (crispy woven fish-cake baskets holding eel, peppers, and aspic/meringue);
- an experimental "fry everything and see what happens" meal, possibly starting with bread, cheese cubes, fish, eel slices, potatoes, candy, and snails (shells and all);
- snails with garlic butter;
- spider-cake with potatoes and mixed vegetables;
- bacon-wrapped shrimp;
- oil-brushed flatbreads with walnuts and cheese; *or*
- boiled tongue.

Special-Purpose Dishes

If you're eating...

- **beef or pork,** you're either rich or splurging! (pg. 146)
- **dried cuttlefish,** people will tease you about being a melancholy bat-person (pg. 149)
- **pickled snails,** people will tease you about being old (pg. 141)
- **octopus,** it must be a special occasion (pg. 307)
- **a lamb-based ragout,** the catch of fish has probably been poor (pg. 152)
- **a *kaiju* dish,** someone must have caught a giant monster! (pg. 166)
- **sandhopper soup,** it must be summer! (pg. 168)
- **candy made with the dust of the Outside,** it's probably Watanabe! (pg. 80)
- **those pie-like things made from yam, onion, rice noodles, ginger, sour cream, and fish,** I don't understand what you are thinking. Don't eat that! That's not real food! That's just a practical joke that Fortitude plays on outsiders... isn't it? (pg. 142)

Dairy, Poultry, and Meat

Fortitude's level of lactose tolerance is relatively high—cheese is a staple. However, there really aren't all that many cows anywhere in Town, so most cheese is imported and both beef and milk are luxuries.

Poultry is a little better—people keep a lot of chickens in Fortitude, and there's even a small feral population. I think that there are also quail in the hills. The local farms aren't industrialized, though, and the really big ones are out in the Walking Fields rather than in Fortitude proper, so eggs and chickens here aren't *cheap.*

Sheep are a popular animal, particularly on Little Island, so lamb is a little cheaper than beef and sheep milk is an option. It's not actually that much cheaper than cow milk though, and I'm not sure why—maybe sheep are difficult to use for milking?

I haven't seen or heard of any local goats.

Food from the Northern Beach

Beach-harvested food is discussed on pg. 306, including—

- **Docks Clams,** a euryhaline species. Both private and communal clam beds exist.
- **Rock Snails,** which are typically red. There are both private and communal farms.
- **Lake Snails,** which are principally free-range.
- **Tunnel Crabs.** These tiny insectivorous crabs burrow in the beach. They're a niche food. Children like to eat them raw.
- **Sandhoppers,** tiny jumping shrimp. A viable base for soup in the summer.
- **Rock Spiders,** the brightly-colored base for "spider-cake." A kind of crab.
- **Dollar Fish.** Tasty, sand-dollar-shaped, non-poisonous (but stabby) rockfish.
- **Octopi,** a delicacy.
- **Salt.** Processed in salterns on Big Lake.

B

Drinks

Cold drinks you might find in Fortitude include—

- **Cream soda (pg. 140),** often served with rose petals in it for unknown reasons
- **Iced milk tea (pg. 140),** in the Hong Kong style, *and*
- **A sour bread-based soda (pg. 140),** which concerns me...
- as well as water, juice, ramune, and various other sodas

Hot drinks include—

- **Tea (pg. 140),** though Fortitude tea isn't that great
- **Tuna-flake flavored tea (pg. 140),** which also concerns me
- **Pillow-teeth tea (pg. 307),** which prevents cavities but makes your teeth squishy
- **Milk tea (pg. 140),** which is both popular and pretty good, *and*
- **Coffee (below),** usually served in the Turkish style

And alcoholic beverages include—

- **Sake (pg. 208),** particularly around the time of the pancake festival (pg. 207) *and*
- **Old Indescribable (pg. 84),** based on seaweed and Outside dust...
- but there's also the usual round of local and imported beer, wine, and brandy.

Coffee . . . . . pg. 140

Fortitude coffee is extremely good. There's only a small amount of local cultivation, but the local bean has a kind of hint of mint and chocolate or something in its taste, and maybe something that tastes a little... red? The trading ships of Town also have contracts with coffee growers in Ethiopia and Colombia, at the least, and possibly elsewhere in the world.

The standard preparation method is "Turkish," or boiled, coffee, and afterwards you may cover the cup with a saucer, turn it upside down, and read your fortune in the pattern of the grounds.



Nuisances

Damp . . . . . pg. 144

Fortitude is pretty humid, which means you have to work pretty hard to protect your home from rot, rust, and mold. If you don't have access to drystone (pg. 360), you'll use calcium chloride to maintain a dryer environment in your home. Just place a breathable and drainable container of the stuff in your closets, storage spaces, and so forth, and replace it maybe every 2-3 months. It's possible to work around this with a more home-made solution (e.g., charcoal in tied pantyhose) but with limestone abundant calcium chloride is pretty cheap.

Fire Ants . . . . . pg. 306

Fortitude is home to a small population of fire ants, principally by Twisting River and in portions of the mangal. Sometimes they'll spread into Fortitude's inhabited portions. The principal control on the ants appears to be the particulate dust of the Outside, which is both toxic and attractive to them; refined dust in a sugar water solution is one of Fortitude's favored approaches to controlling these pests.

Mosquitos . . . . . pg. 302

Mosquitos aren't a big problem in Fortitude, but that just means that if one or two do get into your bedroom sometime that you probably don't have a mesh net already set up to keep them away.

Not that I'm bitter!

Outside-Particle Corrosion . . . . . pg. 144

Fortitude is troubled by the dust that comes in from the Outside—it blows in off the lake in little, pretty crystal shards. They're neat and colorful but there's a problem, which is to say, the dust is a psychoactive toxin, so you don't want too much of it around. It's attracted to people's dreams, though, so people set up dream-catchers to catch it and then either beat out the dust from them on the street or take it to a temple for purification.

It's almost as hard to keep the dust of the Outside out of a house as it is to keep out dampness; the stuff is drawn in by dreams, blown in by the wind, and seeps most easily into anything not well looked-after. It's not just the toxicity that's the problem—if you let it accumulate it can do some pretty weird things, like get rust started on things that aren't even metal. Only raw stone and living things resist and even those aren't 100% safe.

There are three protections against this you can invoke:

First, if something's well-organized and looked through and at fairly regularly by a conscious mind, it won't get corroded by dust. If you know what's going on with something, it seals it against the Outside. This is the only *certain* answer: if you go over everything in your house every month, and soon after every disaster, you *won't* have a corrosion problem from the dust.

The second answer is love. Loving things, and working hard to make them "nice" and "right"—in general the process of keeping a good home—helps everything in a place resist the influence of the Outside. This won't save you if you only check the back of your closet for rust every five years or something, but it'll reduce the risks and damage substantially.

The third answer is a dust-catcher (or dream-catcher). Hang dust-catchers about the house and empty them regularly and they'll intercept most of the dust that comes in—you're unlikely to have a problem except in the parts of your house that don't have good air flow or air exchange with the dust-catcher locations.

Love and dust-catchers aren't enough—the only absolute answer is diligence—but either of them, or a combination, can pretty much ensure that Outside-dust corrosion is a rare nuisance rather than an outright disaster. Conversely, I should note that there's a natural cap on how fast things rust—just because something doesn't have conscious attention, love, invested work, or nearby dust-catchers doesn't mean it'll instantly collapse in rust, it just means that it's vulnerable. If a family dies or something, and it takes their relatives a few seasons to get around to cleaning out their house, it's *possible* that the entire place will be a rusted wreck, but it's not likely. Even after a decade there's a good chance that most of the place will be more or less OK.

Water Pollution . . . . . pg. 144

For the most part Fortitude's water is safe and clean, but every few years something happens to mess with that—the Outside gets into the aquifer or some witch or *kaiju* contaminates it. Usually it can be decontaminated by the shrine families, but sometimes you have to wait it out and every generation or two there's a need for a major community filtration and purification project.

It's important to keep a water purifier around even though you hardly ever need one.

Imports, Exports, and Trade

Some of Fortitude's unusual trade partners include...

- **136199 Eris (pg. 149),** a dwarf planet orbiting the sun. The melancholy bat-people who live there import dried fish (pg. 149), pillow-teeth tea (pg. 307) and probably many other things besides; they export music, liquor, and carved bone divination sticks. The latter may or may not be efficacious.
- **Lady Mugain (pg. 322),** who imports books, food, and other luxuries from Fortitude in exchange for levirock (pg. 361) and dryrock (below)—floating and dessicating stone.

Fortitude imports...

- coffee from Ethiopia and Colombia (pg. 358), and possibly elsewhere

B Oddities

Here's some things you can find in Fortitude that you might not otherwise expect.

Atypical Rust . . . . . pg. 144

Under certain conditions—particularly when things are not frequently thought of or dealt with by a conscious mind—the dust of the Outside can rust the most surprising entities, producing materials such as yoxi, or yarn oxidate (pg. 144), or even rusted trees.

Blue Demon Mask

There's a legend that back in the Celdinar Mayoralty, back when the smoke of Progress smothered the Town and the fish in the lake were dying—

Were they really dying? That seems extreme!

— and the birds were flying fewer and fewer over Town, a child put on a blue demon mask and went to harangue Mayor Celdinar about his carelessness towards the world that had given both they birth. But Celdinar only woke a dead fish as a terrible ghoul animated by an awful unliving life and let it flop about in its feral agonies until the boy's disposition cracked and he stomped off to live at the top of a tower.

Maybe he came down one day. Maybe he didn't, and one day the mask just came down by itself.

These days it's in the widow Renata's home.

It's just... staring, from her wall.

It offers a +1 Tool bonus to connecting to the natural world.

Dryrock . . . . . pg. 322

Imported from the Keep of Lady Mugain, Fortitude's dryrock is a supernaturally effective dessicant; a dryrock coaster can empty a glass of water in about an hour straight through the glass, and a chunk of dryrock in your crawlspace or attic prevents an awful lot of the difficulties that Fortitude's damp would otherwise give rise. Its best feature is its endurance: while it eventually runs out of oomph, when it *does*... run dry? ...you can rejuvenate it to its full strength again with a few hours of rolling it out in sand. It's awesome stuff, but unfortunately it costs like a gold-toothed bastard; a good chunk of it's going to run you the same as a wedding ring, and it's even easier to lose track of; which is to say, you'd really best hope that you've inherited your family set.

Dust Drops . . . . . pg. 306

These eyedrops, made from refined Outside dust, are a popular local treatment for eye infections. There's nothing all that unusual about it, I guess, except that you probably wouldn't think to check for Fortitude-specific eye drops if you hadn't heard that they exist!

Fisher's Grass. . . . . pg. 302

The local herb *fisher's grass* grows near Twisting River and scattered other places throughout the settlement and hills. It's well-known as a folk remedy for mosquito problems—chew on *fisher's grass*, and after a while mosquitos won't like your smell. The stuff's appalling but apparently a bit of an acquired taste, since there are people who chew it voluntarily even when they're *not* worried about mosquitos, and dogs and cats chew it all the time.

Kaiju . . . . . pg. 166
Occasionally Fortitude's fishing fleet catches a giant monster, normally fished up from the Outside. This is generally celebrated as a "*kaiju* day" and the monster is then eaten.

Levirock . . . . . pg. 322
Levirock, or floatstone, is a flying... stone. It comes from the Keep of Lady Mugain and it's very weird stuff—cooled, it weighs about as much as a normal chunk of granite or something, but once it's soaked up enough heat or sunlight, it starts floating gently up to a variable distance (ranging from 5 to maybe 3600 feet?) off the local ground and can support many times its own weight there.

Most of Town's supply goes into the Horizon Tactical Reserve, but since it all comes in through Fortitude there's a fair bit that lingers here too. Kids play with low-flying floatstone, almost everyone uses it to hang laundry, and there's a handful of hobbyists who ride "skysails" or "skycats"—catamarans and similar boats with an internal floatstone oven, distinguished from all other flying craft by their speed, grace, complete fubar of a manoeuvring system, and near-unique ability to flip over and dangle you over 5 to 3600 feet of space while retaining most of their normal functionality. (The double skycat improves on this, as far as I can tell, by assuming that you're going to get dumped out, and providing you an upside down alternative to fall into. Luckily most people just use hang-gliders unless they're really into skycatting.)

Pillow-Teeth Tea . . . . . pg. 307
This tea prevents cavities and strengthens teeth but reversibly softens the tooth enamel into something nearly as squishy as a sponge. It's exported to both Eris and to the vampires of Horizon, as well as used in dental treatment here.

The Shining Thread . . . . . pg. 315
Occasionally Fortitude's ships will find a few strands of the shining thread drifting in the water—

- the red and orange hair of the horses of the sun;
- the blue and green fiber of a sea-horse's mane;
- the stretchy glutinous fiber of a dead rainbow's corpse.

This is considered lucky, and usually used to decorate the ship, but sometimes a sailor will get a piece or two of their own. It hardly ever filters in to Fortitude itself, and it's deeply unlucky (or so the sailors believe) to sell it, but if a sailor gives a strand to a loved one as a promise that they'll return safely home, and then doesn't? Then it's legitimately theirs, and there's no luck-related issue with doing whatever they like.

(Which is usually "keep it as a memory," but can turn into "sell it or make pretty things with it" a generation or two on.)

People

Some of the known residents of Fortitude include...

- **Amelia Kozlov (pg. 150),** of the Regional Council
- **Annolyn Mojmir (pg. 144),** who found a rusted spiderweb

Well-known rats include...

- **Prince Ithar (pg. 303),** allied with a vicious, half-blind Persian cat
- **Prince Eduard Fujimoto (pg. 279),** who has befriended Rinley Yatskaya

Some of the Main Characters of Town mentioned in this book include...

- **Chuubo, the Wishing Boy (pg. 364),** or Shokyou, the Wishing Girl;
- **Natalia Koutolika, the Prodigy (pg. 299),** or Antony Yuryevich;
- **Leonardo de Montreal, Nightmares' Angel (pg. 149),** or Dulcinea de Montreal;
- **Rinley Yatskaya, the Troublemaker (pg. 212).**

Wearers of the Blue Tassel

Blue Ratboy

"Do you think you're happy?"

This teenager spent his childhood studying with the rats, but these days he wanders Docks Region as a nameless vagrant, doing odd jobs, begging, and living off the land; people talk of him as "someone who knows the hearts of animals."

His abilities look something like—

- **Roughing It 3.** He's good at getting by.
- **Weather-Sense 2.** He can sniff out the weather's changes.
- **Laughter 1.** He has a nice laugh.
- **Run the Roofs like a Rat 1.** He's familiar with the roofways.
- **Herbal Medicine 1.** And he knows a spot of this.

He has the following Connections:

- **Connection 2: Nature**
- **Connection 2: The Birds of Fortitude**
- **Connection 2: The Stray Cats and Dogs of Fortitude**
- **Connection 1: The Rats of Fortitude**

And the special abilities:

- **Bond 2:** "I must go where the wind takes me."
- **Bond 1:** "I'm driven to connect with the animals I meet."
- **Support Aura:** 1/chapter, can help animals and people connect/bond.
- **Ticket:** +1 Edge on getting to and traveling the Fortitude roofs.

Elaine Fry

"Let's ask the snails!"

Elaine Fry is an American aquaculturist and marine biologist who washed up in Town after investigating an "oceanic anomaly" and never got around to leaving. She's pretty hard-core: I've seen her "seed" a clam bed into flourishing by resting her hand on it and she carries two unloaded rifles crossed upon her back.

Her abilities look something like:

- **Glamorous Foreign Ways 2.** Show them how it's done—in *America!*
- **Investigate Anomalies 2.** She's good at this.
- **Action Hero 1.** A Skill for quipping, then laughing, in the face of doom.

…and two Skills with special rules: a personalized magical Skill, and the ability to find trouble by (apparently) asking snails where to look.

- **Magical Skill: Marine Sciences 2.** She's aces at aquaculture.
- **Superior Snail-Speech 1.** She appears to communicate with snails.

She has at least one Connection:

- **Connection 4: the Beaches of Fortitude**

And her special abilities include:

- **Bond 2:** "As an American, I must clean my guns daily."
- **Affliction 0-1:** "There's always kelp in my hair and sand in my shoes."

Dr. Kiyomizu

"How marvelous."

Looking for a *special* veterinarian? Got a chimera with a thorn in its paw or a hydra with too many heads?

You probably want Dr. Kiyomizu.

It's not that she's a superstar in the field or anything. She's good, but that's not the *thing*. The thing is, just, she's—used to it. *All* of it. All the absurd, peculiar things. Plus there aren't many houses in her neighborhood so it's OK if the animal you bring her gets to be a little loud!

Her abilities look something like:

- **Veterinary Medicine 3.** She is a competent professional.
- **Bird-Keeper 2.** She keeps a bird-cote.
- **Formal Rationality 2.** She's good at spotting her own biases.
- **Kindness 1.** She's a pretty nice person.
- **Folk Wisdom 0.** She has a lot of it, though it really doesn't help.

Her Connections include:

- **Connection 2: Fortitude**
- **Connection 2: The Birds of Fortitude**

And she has at least two special abilities:

- **Bond 1:** "I can't turn away a stranger."
- **Bond 1:** "People bring me the weirdest problems."

Sacred Children

Ayumi

"It's not a trouble."

This sacred child tends the flowers and acts as a priestess at her former family's shrine.

Her abilities look something like—

- **Subtle Disappearances 3.** She slips away while nobody's looking.
- **Traditional Ways 2.** She's good at formal, archaic, and ceremonial stuff.
- **Domestic Skill 1.** She knows how to keep things neat, calm, and home-like.
- **Archery 1.** She's familiar with the bow, mostly as a hobby.
- **Superior Holiness 1.** She has a sacred energy in her.

Her Arcs and special abilities include:

- **Bond 2:** "I won't let anything bad happen to the helpless."
- **Shepherd (Sacred Child) 0.** A mundane Arc.
  - **Affliction:** Sacred Child (pg. 256)
  - **Skill Perk:** Remember Names and Faces 1
  - **Superior Skill Perk:** Superior Eyesight 1
  - **Shine Perk:** Shine 1
  - **"It's a Living."** She has an important role in the world.

Juro Lindell

"Let's build something."

This nine-year-old high-functioning autistic savant is a candidate to become a sacred child.

His abilities look something like:

- **Mathematics 3.** A surprising competence.
- **Engineering 2.** This may develop into Science!
- **Explore 2.** For wandering, getting into trouble, investigating.
- **Eat Sandwich 1.** Profound, impressive technique.
- **Read People -1.** This is difficult.

His Arcs and special abilities include:

- **Knight (Sacred Child) 0.** A mundane Arc.
  - **Connection Perk:** Liesl Yamaguchi 1

"Sacred Child" is his current quest.

Liesl Yamaguchi

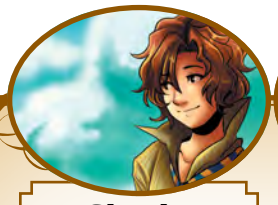
"That, I'm afraid to say, would be impossible."

This 18-19-year-old flautist, mathematician, and philosopher is approaching the end of her sacred child term.

- **Flute 3.** Liesl is an expert on the flute.
- **Scholar 2.** Liesl is an academic—she understands scholarship and teaching.
- **Current Projects 2.** Liesl is good at doing large, committed-time projects in any field.
- **Do Stuff 1.** Liesl is omnicompetent.
- **Sacred Child 0.** Liesl's duties stress her as she approaches the end of her term.

Her Arcs and special abilities include:

- **Bond 2:** "I'm driven to solve puzzles."
- **Knight (Sacred Child) 2.** A mundane Arc.
  - **Affliction:** Sacred Child (pg. XX)
  - **Bonus Perk:** Library use (+1 Tool for this, 1/chapter)
  - **Connection Perk:** Fortitude 2
  - **Connection Perk:** The Archive 1
  - **Connection Perk:** Juro Lindell 1
  - **Superior Skill Perk:** Eerie Music 1 (1 Edge if trying to spook somebody)
  - **Defensive Aura:** 1/chapter, can help people hide
  - **"I'll Explain Later":** 1/chapter, can provide random exposition she has no really adequate reason to know.



Chuubo



Seizhi

One day a perfectly ordinary child with no particular talent or ability broke into the empty house on that child's street, unrolled a sheaf of plans, picked up a hammer and nails, and built a Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine there.

What does it do? I'm glad you asked!

It grants wishes.

One wish, every week or so, sometime after Sunday's dawn.

As any child would, this child went a little mad with power, wishing for ice cream, a best friend, and a nice sweet sunny day without even *thinking* of the terrible consequences that could befall...

But, well.

Perhaps they were not so terrible?

It's at least a few years later, after all, and Town's surviving yet.

This ordinary child is usually the PC-aged **Chuubo, the Wishing Boy**, but could be **Shokyou, the Wishing Girl,** instead. The best friend they wished for is normally a PC-aged boy named **Seizhi Schwan,** but could be a girl named **Suzy Schwan** instead. They live over the hills in Horizon, but they visit Fortitude now and then.

Stefan

". . . it wasn't locked?"

This white-haired teen vagrant is a sacred child. He has a touch of trickster in him.

His Skills probably look like—

- **Traditional Ways 3.** He's good at formal, archaic, and ceremonial stuff.
- **Go Where I Like 2.** ...and surprisingly good at climbing, breaking and entering.
- **Sacred Child 2.** He thinks a lot about his role and its meaning.
- **Superior Holiness 1.** He has a palpable aura of the sacred.

His Arcs and special abilities include:

- **Bond 2:** "I'll help you find your own answers."
- **Knight (Sacred Child) 0.** A mundane Arc.
  - **Affliction:** Sacred Child (pg. 256)
  - **Connection Perk:** Fortitude 3 (he knows the area like the back of his hand)
  - **Support Aura:** 1/chapter, can help others with ceremonial conduct.

Sailors

Ash Kalashnikova

"Keep moving. Always."

Here's someone you'd want on any crew: Ash Kalashnikova. An outbreak of malaria crippled her ship while she was still learning the ropes but she managed to keep most of them alive, run the ship through a major Outside storm in the hopes the shock would hit the malaria virus harder than the dying crew, and limp back into port with nothing worse to show for it than three corpses, an alien left eye, and a crystallized left hand.

She's currently on the **Kirillo**, but you could move her to another ship for your game if there were something to be gained.

Her Connections include:

- **Connection: A Sailor's Life 4.** She's a legend.
- **Connection: Kirillo 3.** She's pretty settled on her ship.
- **Connection: Big Lake 1.** She knows the Lake.
- **Connection: the Outside 0.** She has no fear of the Outside, but doesn't love it.

And her Skills look something like:

- **Ship's Mate 4.** She's a bit of a legend.
- **(Superior) Eye 2**. I've heard that it gives her visions.
- **"Keep Moving. Always." 2.** Her catch phrase.
- **Rock-Paper-Scissors -1.** She has never won at this. Not once.

Dominik Tesla

***"Naw, I wouldn't say* that."**

Dominik's one of the better known freelancers—restless, he doesn't like sticking with any given ship that long, but he's got a good rep as a man who can feel the weather practically eight days' out. It'd be pretty impressive even for a weather spirit, and he's honestly just this guy.

His Connections look something like:

- **Connection: A Sailor's Life 3.** He's a good man to have on board.
- **Connection: Big Lake 2.** He knows the Lake pretty well.

And his Skills like:

- **Weather-Sense 4.** He's absurdly good at this.
- **Deck Hand 3.** He's a good hand to have.
- **Good Teeth 1.** He was once going to be a dentist.
- **Science! 0.** Despite the name, he doesn't do this.

If your group decides that this is the kind of game where destiny darn well *ought* to recapitulate eponymity, you can switch a point or two from his Skills "Teeth" and/or "Deck Hand" into Science!, which would also give you a chance to slip a bit of extra brass, steam, and Tesla power into the workings of a ship.



Horio "the Seagull" Mitsue

"Look at that sky."

Ms. Horio is a navigator on—well, on **Tikhvin**, formally, but you can move her to another ship if that'd better suit your game! She's one of the few human navigators in Fortitude comparable to the rats; while it's generally *assumed* that Lindsey Norvegicus is better, you "can't put a whisker" between their skill in either case.

Her nickname comes from using a hangglider or passenger kite to help navigate a rocky labyrinth in the Outside.

Her Skills look something like:

- **Navigation 4.** She's absurdly good at this.
- **Technical Illustration 2.** She's good at this.
- **Mysterious 1.** She's a somewhat mysterious figure.
- **"Always have a bit of string." 1.** She does.
- **Assertive -1.** This is not her strength.

Her Arcs and special abilities most likely include:

- **Knight (Become Somebody) 0-1** *and the*
  - **Power Perk:** Never Lost

Lindsey "Magellan" Norvegicus

"Of course I'm not charging. . . . you couldn't afford me."

Now some say that the Rat King and his bride are the best navigators in Fortitude, but they rarely sail the Lake themselves; so let's leave them out, for the moment, and say instead:

This rat is the finest navigator that Fortitude possesses.

It's not surprising that the best's a rat. They're tiny, weak, and their sense of scale I think is skew but there's nobody who can navigate Big Lake and the world outside like a rat.

Her Skills probably look like:

- **Navigation 4.** She's absurdly good at this.
- **Sailor 2.** She's pretty good at this.

and

- **Superior Fortitude Rat 2.** She's a daring adventurer. And a rat!
- **Technical Illustration -1.** Precise lines, but she thinks her shorthand is "obvious."

Her Arcs and special abilities most likely include:

- **Aspect (the Ace) 0-1** *and the*
  - **Power Perk:** Never Lost

Environment

Fortitude is a warm lakeside environment with moderate winters and occasional pollution from Outside the world. It gets hot. Like, a lot of the time? It gets really hot.

It's known for dragonflies, particularly in the summer.

Places

The general layout of Fortitude is as follows. The Lake is generally north, save for a strand of cliff-lined beach that circles around the lake's west side and an eastern spur of Fortitude surrounded by water on three sides. The land rises to the south and west in what are generally considered three separate hills. The settlement extends much of the way up these hills. Past the western hill is Horizon; traveling southwards is a difficult path into the Outside.

Big Lake's geography is atypical; there's an extremely probable model that pastes Big Lake onto the surface of a spinning twelve-dimensional spindle that meanders erratically atop a flattened map of the ordinary world.

Some of Fortitude's places include...

The Cat-Face Shrine

This shrine feels very crisp and magical, although it is a bit of a walk. There are maneki-neko hiding in the scrub by the temple gate. How rare!

The cat-face shrine is sheltered by a level 2 Auctoritas.

It has a +1 Tool bonus to connecting to the spiritual world.

By tradition this temple's cat does not count towards Fortitude's 1000-cat quota.

The Celdinar Family Home

This is a good home. That is in some respects a tragedy—the beneficial aura of the place makes it uncomfortable for the vampire **Casolaus Celdinar** to visit his children here.

A level 2 Auctoritas protects the house from the Outside's influence.

Hostile and unwholesome magic suffers +1 to its Obstacle here (max 5). This, apparently, includes a vampire's basic motive force.

The Gold Sky Tea House

This is a typical good place.

It is sheltered against the Outside's influence by a level 1 Auctoritas.

It offers a +1 Tool bonus to feeling happy.

The Meyer Family Home

Fifty years ago, a sea-witch who'd been killing their neighbors lost a duel with the then-young Vladislav Meyer and was driven away from Town.

Hostile and unwholesome magic suffers +3 to its Obstacle here (max 5).

The house offers a +1 Tool bonus to sleeping well.

Ogline Walking Park

I do not like the name but this is a beautiful little park and it is hiring. Perhaps you'd like to sign on and help to keep it clean?

The Saito Skate Park

This skate park is a good place and a popular hangout for local middle-schoolers. Younger children are welcome on Sundays, and it's safer than you might expect—

It offers a +1 Tool bonus on last-minute saves.

You can use a Connection to this place as a skate-boarding skill.

The Suzuki Family Home

This is a typical good home. The family land contains a small orchard as well as their house but they share its fruit too freely to see much profit from it.

The land is sheltered against the Outside's influence by a level 2 Auctoritas.

It offers a +1 Tool bonus to feeling happy and to finding what you need.

You may use a Connection Skill to the Suzuki Family Home when you are dreaming to find fruit-bearing plants in the chaos of dreams.

The Third Star Shrine

This shrine is run-down and has only a part-time visitor to maintain it, but I think that you could help out. Its fundamental architecture is very sound.

Years of love before its modern decay have left a level 1 Auctoritas that lingers still.

Other Places Include . . .

- **Ceiba Quay (pg. 156, pg. 158)**
- **Kokoryov Harbor (pg. 164)**

Other Regions in Town include...

- **Arcadia (pg. 186),** the shopping district
- **Bluebell Park (pg. 163),** a place of spectacle, wonder, and horror
- **Deep Under (pg. 288),** where the rats go
- **The Ghost World (pg. 196),** which you might stumble into on Spirit-Honoring Day
- **Horizon (pg. 205),** the settlement over the hills
- **Old Molder,** in Horizon
- **The Starry Fields (pg. 192),** which impinge on Fortitude during the Star Festival
- **The Walking Fields (pg. 197),** out beyond Horizon
- **Little Island (pg. 180),** the jewel in the endless Lake

Culture

The fundamental culture of Fortitude is a Russian-Japanese blend—Russian, because the first human settlers came over the Lake from Russia; and Japanese, because a lot of Japanese people came over as well and the climate and lifestyle favors Japanese culture. People come over the lake from, frankly, all over, but those two cultures are the biggest influence on the place.

It's a walking community. People don't really think anything of a 2-3 hour walk to do some errand or another, as long as it's not raining hard, and maybe not even then. So the walks are broad, smooth, and well-appointed with trash cans, and people'll smile or wave to you as you go walking by, and there's always cool places to stop in or things to see.

It's worth note that...

- Correspondence is popular, including pen pals in the outer world (pg. 148)

Clothing

Clothing in Fortitude tends to be locally made and simply cut. Work and daily clothes are generally linen, light cotton, or denim without much pattern to them—shorts, trousers, slacks, jeans, skirts, polo shirts, t-shirts, dress shirts, blouses, and dresses. Fancier clothing has a similar cut and design but comes in embroidered, multicolored, and occasionally layered silk. Light jackets are popular when the weather allows; belts, caps, and straw hats are popular in all seasons. Sandals, boat shoes, and going barefoot are popular; boots are a more common alternative than dress shoes or running shoes. Heels for women are comparatively low.

Sailors favor a black neckerchief strung through a red woggle (knotted cord).

Iconography

Some elements of Fortitude iconography include...

- the blue braid, representing a tie to nature (pg. 299);
- the gold tassel or braid, representing a good place (pg. 247);
- white paint on a door or face, indicating a bad place or evil spirit (pg. 247);
- the red tassel of someone interested in fighting (pg. 207)

Sayings

Some of Fortitude's sayings include...

- "too poor for a smokehouse" (pg. 152)
- "rich enough for a smokehouse" (pg. 152)

Houses

Most Fortitude roofs are low-pitched or A-shaped gable roofs with a relatively simple design. Roofs often extend to cover porches or walkways. Shingles of limestone, slate, or terracotta are the most common roofing material but reed thatching is not rare.

Customs

Some miscellaneous customs include...

- Kids often go down to the docks on weekends to help sort the stuff that comes in off the ships (pg. 169)

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Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake is the first major supplement for the *Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* RPG. It's designed to immerse you in the pastoral lakeside settlement of Fortitude—to create a deep sense of place with both rules and setting material. Along the way it serves as a guide to pastoral gaming, a guide to the Fortitude Region and its festival calendar, a new context for understanding most of the game's rules, and a collection of quests and other game content.
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