

The



Chuubo's
Marvelous
Wish Granting
Engine

RPG Halloween Special

by

Jenna Moran





The Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG Halloween Special

An 80-XP Campaign

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This book uses fantastical and supernatural elements in its setting, for its characters, their abilities, and themes. All such elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only.

This book contains mature content and reader discretion is advised.

Dedication

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

Also for Cync Brantley, Rand Brittain, Cheryl & Joseph Couvillion, Anthony Damiani,
Chrysoula Tzavelas, Kevin Maginn, Raymond Wood, James Wallis,
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Special Thanks

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



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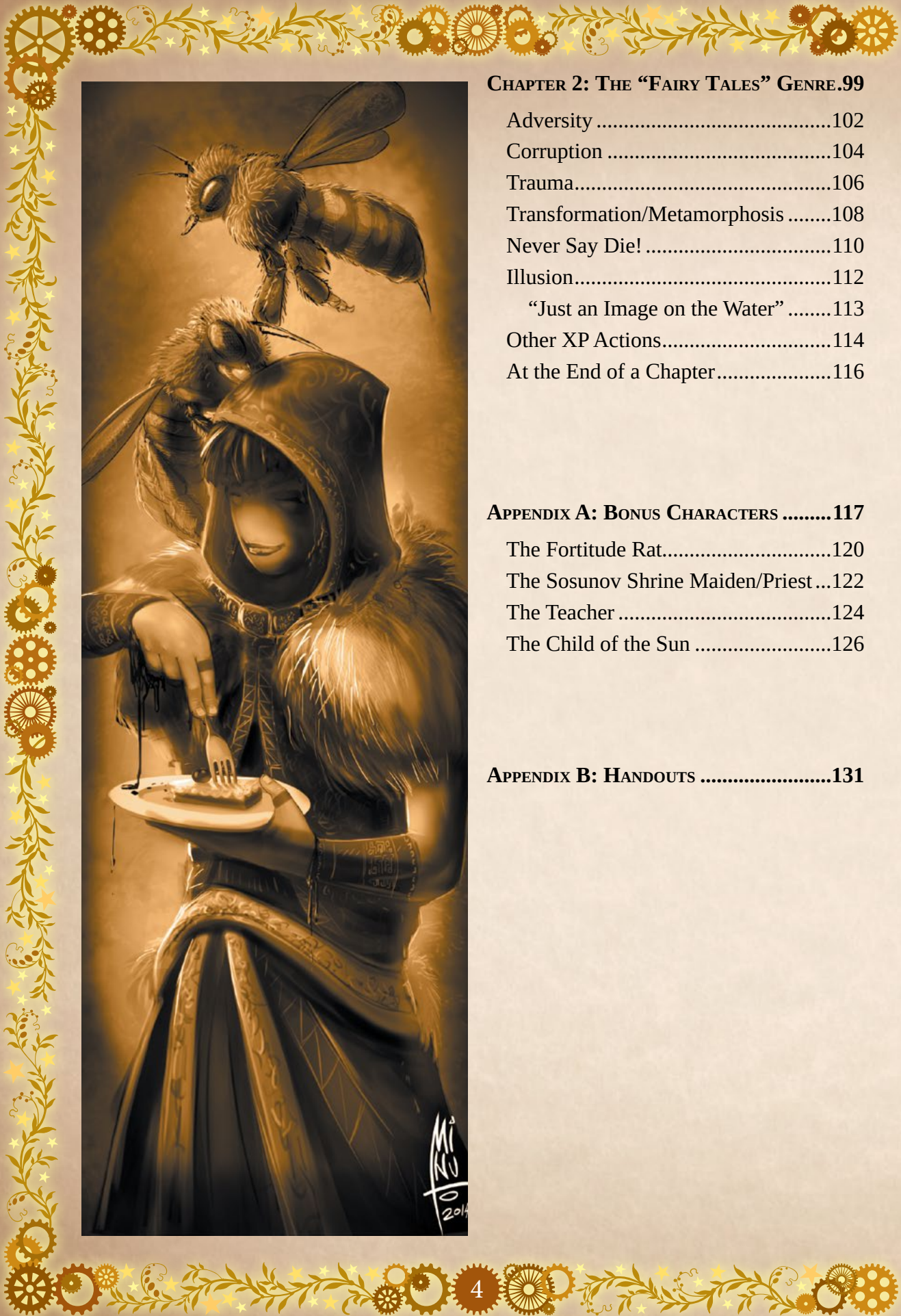




Contents

INTRODUCTION.....7	The Idol47
Conventions.....7	Fact Sheet49
Soma Village8	White River (Connection)50
	“Mysterious Bishounen”51
	“Heart-Reader”51
	You’re Up!.....53
	Variation: Soun Shoujo.....54
	Quests56
	Variation: White River.....58
	The Game Plan59
CHAPTER 1: CHARACTERS9	
The Headmaster.....11	The Exchange Student.....65
Fact Sheet13	Fact Sheet67
(Superior) Magister14	(Superior) Cloak of Night.....68
(Superior) Land-Rule15	“Inhuman”69
“Toxic”16	Night-Craft70
“The Fallen King”16	Changeling.....71
Face-Palming.....17	Aww!72
Variation: Attaris II.....18	“On the Case”73
Quests20	Variation: Chuubo.....74
The Game Plan25	Quests76
	The Game Plan82
The Ideologue.....27	The HG83
Fact Sheet29	Backstory.....84
Heart Magic.....30	Rules Tweaks.....84
Askew31	How to Run this One-Shot85
“Starry Eyes”32	Timeline.....86
“Technobabble”33	Antagonists.....87
Variation: Jareth Apocynum34	Chuubo88
Heartless35	Chapter Intros90
Speechlessness.....36	
Quests38	
Drinking Poison.....40	
Sleeplessness43	
The Game Plan45	





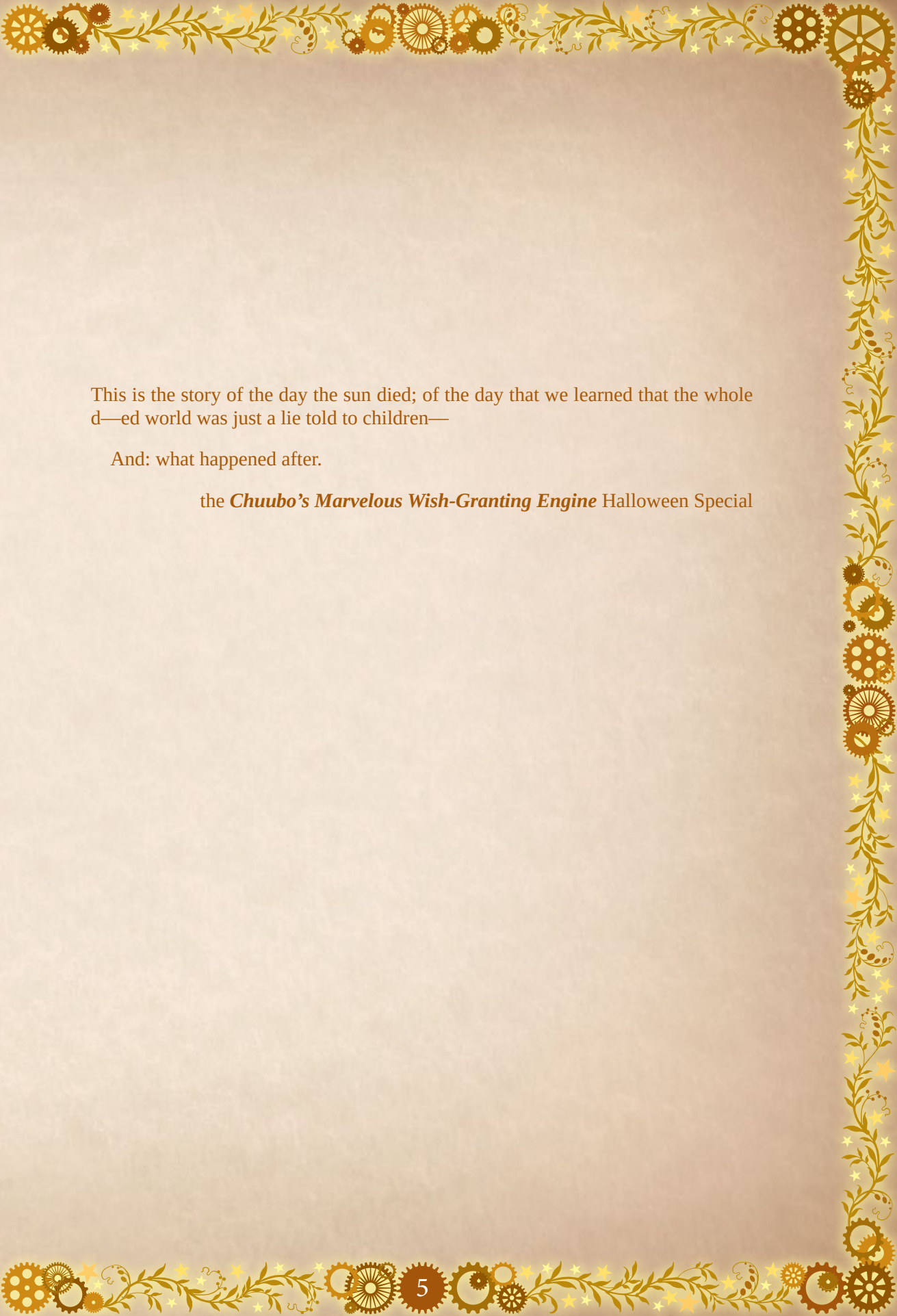
CHAPTER 2: THE “FAIRY TALES” GENRE.99

Adversity102
Corruption104
Trauma.....106
Transformation/Metamorphosis108
Never Say Die!110
Illusion.....112
 “Just an Image on the Water”113
Other XP Actions.....114
At the End of a Chapter.....116

APPENDIX A: BONUS CHARACTERS117

The Fortitude Rat.....120
The Sosunov Shrine Maiden/Priest...122
The Teacher124
The Child of the Sun126

APPENDIX B: HANDOUTS131

A decorative border in a golden-brown color runs along the top, bottom, and right edges of the page. It features a repeating pattern of gears of various sizes, some with intricate designs, and leafy branches with small yellow stars interspersed among them.

This is the story of the day the sun died; of the day that we learned that the whole
d—ed world was just a lie told to children—

And: what happened after.

the *Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* Halloween Special



Introduction

It is the privilege of gods to forgive their siblings—to say, regardless of how dangerous their errant kinfolk are to the world: *we must have grace, we must forgive, it's not so bad*. One law for the greatest gods, sitting on their thrones; one law for their family; and a third for ordinary humans, who are not so easily forgiven.

The greatest torments are generally reserved for the gods that push this leniency too far—

But it takes a truly astonishing *amount* of fallibility, treason, and malevolence before a god will turn on the highly-privileged and condemn them to the outer dark. Sooner will they punish the mortals who suffered at their cousins' hands, or the other gods who showed them too much sympathy; sooner will they torture their peers as *a jape* or *a prank* than as justice for their wickedest deeds.

This profound mercy that they show their peers brings stability to the pantheons of gods—ensures that their order will endure, keeps the sagas of the gods from degenerating into an endless free-for-all of strife—but it also sharpens the fangs of treason and ensures that over and over again the chiefs of gods fall, not to mortal heroes, not to divine enemies, but to the treachery of their closest peers.

...if the Fairy Tales may be believed.

This is the story of one such god, who showed such mercy, and was thus betrayed:

Long Live the Halloween King.

Conventions

This campaign is a Fairy Tales game featuring four *Conventions*, manifesting as level 2 Afflictions:

- ☼ Spooky stuff just keeps happening.
- ☼ It's easy to put costumes together.
- ☼ There's candy and Halloween set dressing everywhere.

And

- ☼ The more terrifying something appears, the more of its power and awfulness must be based on an illusion, misunderstanding, or trick.

Enjoy!



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.

This game is set in **Soma Village**, a pretty little place—host to about 20,000 souls.

Most specifically, it's set at a School/Academy a little ways up the mountain overlooking the town. It's a boarding school, and it's meant for troubled youth—witches, delinquents, the traumatized and the troublesome. It has high walls around it, and spacious architecture within; about 200 students attend.

There are dark rumors about this School—

Stories of first-year students being alchemically shackled, or kept in the basement—

But we're going to assume for now that that is not so; that this is nothing more than a kindly prison to shuffle children off to, as well as a place to teach the stranger children how to use the talents they possess.

It's a nice village. There's good soup, and good hostels, and a simple life; there's clock towers and there's hints of magic, here and there, and I've even heard that there's an ancient labyrinth—maybe a *haunted* labyrinth—somewhere in its wards.

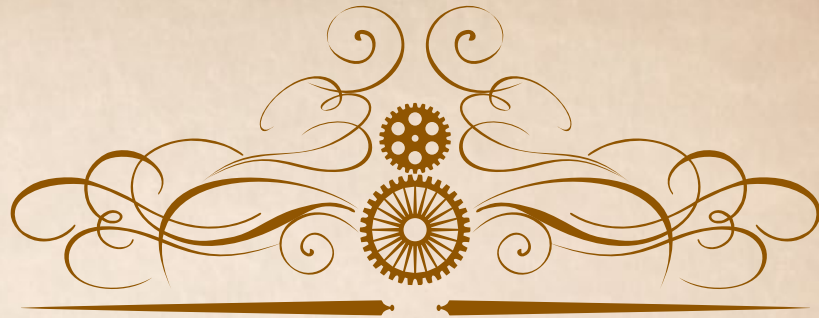
It's a nice place—

But this is going to be a dark time for it.

This isn't the story of Soma Village as it usually is, but of Soma Village at the ending of the world; when mist seeps in to seal off its boundaries, and monsters haunt the ordinary people of Soma, and the sun... goes out.

A Fairy Tales-genre game.

Area: 54 sq. miles
Population: 19,400



Characters





Characters

Come with me to a haunted town; to the fall of the sun; to the dying world. Come with me; choose your costume; be...

- ✿ **The Headmaster**, Entropy II, if you want
 - ★ to be in love with Halloween
 - ★ to be an awful person
 - ★ to discover that you were once the King of the Halloween World.(or are you the girl variant, **Attaris II**, instead?)

- ✿ **The Ideologue**, Jasmine Apocynum, if you want
 - ★ to use a lot of nonsense/circular logic
 - ★ to be technically responsible for most of what happens
 - ★ to practice terrifying magic
 - ★ to search through a mysterious labyrinth for the power to save the world.(or are you the boy variant **Jareth Apocynum**, instead?)

- ✿ **The Idol**, Soun Shounen, if you want
 - ★ to sparkle and be awesome
 - ★ ...and heroic
 - ★ ...and silly
 - ★ ...but with a story that might not end very well...(or are you the girl variant **Soun Shoujo**, instead?)

- ✿ **The Exchange Student**, Edony Marguerite, if you want
 - ★ to have a magical friend whom you talk to through mirrors
 - ★ to be not-quite-human (an elf, snake-person, or goblin)
 - ★ to choose sides between Soma and the Halloween World.(or are you the mirror-world boy, **Chuubo**, instead?)

Or come and be . . .

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

Once you know who you’ll be, you can read more about your character or job in the sections below!

The Headmaster



Campaign:
The Chuubo's Halloween Special

Academics Skill: Scholarly
Sports Skill: Hit-and-Miss
Favorite Foods: Whiskey
Blood Type: AB
Animal: Rabbit
Age: 32

An Interesting Fact About You: Your hands are bleeding. Like, all the time.

Character Description

☀️ You're the Headmaster. You live in your office at School. You sleep in your suit or your robes. You drink at the bar down the way. This village is awful. These kids are awful. You hate it here. But you secretly kind of *like* hating it here. The fact that hardly any of it matters to you—

That literally *all* you care about in this whole bloody town is that the kids make it into adulthood OK, and that *you* survive the long dry weekdays to get to end-of-day or end-of-week—

Is incredibly freeing.

☀️ You have a checkered past. Like, a *really* checkered past. Like, you're constantly dropping allusions to everything from KGB operations to necromancy, and people sometimes even think it's *symbolic* that your hands are always dripping with blood. (Though, you just laugh that off, because blood-hands, y'know, is just, just, your medical condition.

Stigmata, you know, like JFC his-F——self.)

Only...

☀️ That's not who you are at all.

Behind the mirrors—mostly in the parts that the mirrors don't show—there is another world. A world of monsters. A world of Halloween. Bending lampposts with eyes and mouths. Hundred-handed giants. Spheres of grasping stone hands, eyes, wings, and radially symmetric feet, rolling and stomping blindly across plains of greyish dust. Ghost wolves. Mummies. People that are just costumes, full of bees.

And ruling it all there is the Halloween King.

There's something false going on. There's a trick there. I think it's probably theological: like, the Halloween King seized the power to create the world, stole the holy flame, but the world that he created was incomplete, not all the way real, just *surfaces*, and the angels that followed him into the mirror-world all went blind.

Or something else—I don't know!

Under the Halloween King served six *jarls*, but they betrayed him. 17 years ago, they cast him down, took his power and his nature from him; stole it, prisoned the holy flame in the heart of a jack o'lantern, and used that power to build a cage for him. For... *you*.

That's what Soma Village is.

Shake it Up!

For an atypical **Headmaster** experience, pick 0-3 of the following:

- ☀️ you are **Attaris II, the Headmistress**.
- ☀️ who the hell can afford whiskey? Your favorite food is *rubbing alcohol*.
- ☀️ it's not *mystical* that your hands are always bleeding: you're just not very good at putting razorblades into candy without getting hurt...
 - ★ but you have to, because it's in the bylaws.
 - ★ but you can't *stand* the taste of razor-less candy. *or*
 - ★ and, OK, you kind of like cutting yourself anyway.

That's where you've been for 17 years—serving as the Headmaster of a local School, living your life as an ordinary person, and hating it, hating every minute of it.

It isn't you at all.

☀️ That's probably why you love Halloween so much—why you *cling* to the holiday, why you celebrate it when you don't celebrate much else, why you'll still be stuck on it in November, early December, sometimes even to *New Years*'.

That's probably why you have nightmares of great devouring giants; of a creature with the head of a boar, the head of an eagle, the head of a snake, and the head of a man; of being tortured, most cruelly and horribly—and why you wake up *homesick* from those dreams: melancholy, wistful, and with no way of explaining that feeling to anybody else.

Sometimes you even almost remember how you first lay your hands on the holy fire—

...what were you even thinking about? Where the h— are you? ...the memory's gone.

☀️ **You don't know any of this.**

...but you can decide, as a player, when and how to remember it. Try to save the *big* memories for the end of your second or third major quest!

Fact Sheet

Summary

You are Entropy II. **Headmaster** Entropy II. You run the local School.

...only, that's a lie. Your whole *life* is a lie. Your mind and body and life and records were *built* for you—a cage to hold the deposed, cast-out Halloween King.

Starting Quests

“**The ‘Halloween King’**” (12 XP):
It's time to decorate for Halloween!

👁️ “**The Headmaster**” (24 XP):
Be a bitter, cynical wreck who can barely even make yourself *care* that the sun's gone out.

... until you complete this quest, make a change in your thinking or life habits, and start a big project to help this situation or School.

(continued in “the Project,” pg. 22).

Bonus XP When...

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

- 🌸 your comic unsuitability to be running the School;
- 🌸 the unintended consequences of your weirder actions/abilities.

Abilities

⚙️ You have 8 Will and the following mundane abilities —

✿ **A Map in Your Head 2.**

You have an eerie sense for how places are laid out.

✿ **Tinker 2.**

You're pretty good at tinkering with stuff.

✿ **Vehicular Travel 1.**

You're familiar with getting around.

✿ **I Know Somebody 0.**

You *might* be familiar with somebody who can help.

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

⚙️ You have 1 Tough and 2 Normal Health Levels.

⚙️ You also have four abilities with special rules, described below. Two are Superior Skills, which function much like the abilities above (but a little bit better):

✿ **Superior Magister 1.**

You're not quite human.

✿ **Superior Land-Rule 2.**

You have an edge against mirror-world creatures.

⚙️ And two are unique:

✿ **"Toxic,"** a level 2 Bond denoting your toxic personality, and

✿ **"The Fallen King,"** granting you the power to physically reshape the mirror-world and its creatures by touch.

(Superior) Magister

Type: Superior Skill

Cost: —

You are something beyond human. You are a creature of the *causa causans*, the uncaused cause, the divine spirit that kindled itself into being and makes all other things to move. You command a teaching authority, a *magisterium*, with respect to the ordinary beings of the world; before you were a Headmaster, you were **the Halloween King**.

This is a level 1 Superior Skill.

It functions as a Skill in seeing the big picture; resisting social power plays and manipulation; and in getting under people's skin (metaphorically), cutting past their defenses to terrify, impress, or appeal to them. It's also

got some environmental hazard resistance and general endurance bundled into it, too—not only can you drip blood all day without dying, but you're pretty hardy as a general rule!

All that stuff works like a normal Skill, and it's only a level 1 Skill to boot —


But this is a *Superior* Skill, so it can do things humans can't, and it gives you a point of Edge (in an otherwise fair conflict) when it comes into play.

Genre Actions

In each chapter of play, you will take two XP Actions—


Things that'll earn XP for the group.


Here's some options that are readily available.


 **(Suffer) Adversity:** you're overwhelmed by:


- * how awful life here is?
- * the overall corruption of the world?
- * the sense that you're stuck here?
- * something that happens in play?

...leading up to a furious, nonsensical rant or to slumping over on a table at the bar.

 **(Suffer) Adversity:** you get into a confrontation with the townsfolk, and they throw stones at you or whatever. It's miserable.

 **(Suffer) Corruption:** you wander in the mist outside of town.... It gets to you.

 **(Suffer) Corruption:** you go into increasingly intense sugar highs from candy.

 **(Suffer) Corruption:** there's *something* in your desk drawer. It whispers to you sometimes.

These can play out very differently on different occasions, but even so, this probably won't be enough to get you through the whole game—you'll need to supplement these by finding other sources of adversity and corruption, things to challenge with a **Never Say Die!**, or opportunities to take gentler actions like **Decisive Action**, **Shared Reactions**, and **Slice of Life**.

(Superior) Land-Rule

Type: Superior Skill

Cost: —

You can get away with a lot when you're dealing with the monsters of the mirror-world (and with the board of administrators at the School). Functionally, this is a Skill for keeping tabs on them, protecting yourself from them, and keeping them from getting into too much trouble. Stylistically, it means that whatever you're doing in that context is less stupid than it seems—you don't mangle yourself when you brush the fur of a razor-dog. You don't fall to your death when you're riding a nightmare and its dreamer awakes: you might still *fall*, but you knew to stay close to the trees. You don't preside over an awful, stomach-turning massacre when you unleash a flock of flesh-burrowing demon-bats at an official function;

it's just a hilarious prank, because, because, well, you know, they just weren't any threat to anybody, this isn't the season they feast.

Your safety here isn't 100% or anything—but the HG can assume that you're smarter than you seem, when it comes to dealing with mirror-world monsters and School administrators, as a general rule.

This too is a Superior Skill—it's not just a level 2 Skill: it potentially gives 2 Edge on *top* of that towards winning any conflict predicating on your ability or inability to control Halloween creatures, or to keep your job.

In rules terms, this Skill is easiest to use when you're in control of the situation—when you're dealing with monsters in a self-directed way, as opposed to stumbling upon them in the wild or being attacked. You can still use the Skill to protect yourself and others when you're not in control of the situation, but you don't get the 2 Edge.

“Toxic”

Type: Bond, level 2

Cost: —

You’re not really a good influence. People who hang out with you—it *changes* them.

They get... well... a little less normal. A little weirder. A little scarier.

A little less socially normative.

- ☼ Invoke **Toxic** when you’re trying to lure someone into your way of thinking and there’s an Obstacle or conflict in the way and you can add the Bond’s rating (2) to your Intention level. You’ll face Obstacles when there’s something in the way of making your pitch, or when it’s made at a really weird or inappropriate time. Conflict can include active resistance by the target or someone else arguing against you.
- ☼ If you get into trouble because people come around to your way of thinking, you can earn up to the Bond’s rating (2) in Will.
- ☼ It is notionally possible for you to replace food, water, sleep, and even *air* with the act of being a bad influence and an inappropriate choice of Headmaster. For instance, your ability to live off of candy, alcohol, coffee, and the trace minerals you get from licking up your own blood is really rather remarkable compared to more typical Headmasters, although it’ll still get pretty difficult to do by the seventeenth day.

Other Actions

In addition to the standard Adversity/Corruption stuff, here’s some things you might find yourself doing in play—bearing in mind that you probably won’t earn XP for out-of-genre actions unless you can make them entertaining enough to lure in the HG or compelling enough to lure in the whole group:

continued, to right...

“The Fallen King”

Type: Affliction, level 0


Cost: —

The stuff of the mirror-world is like putty in your hands—you can *literally* reshape the creatures of Halloween, stretching them, squishing them, or adding features like coal-eyes, sculpted ears, carrot noses, or hand-made wings. In practice, this relies on your Tinker Skill and at least a little blood (not that that’s hard—your hands are practically *always* bleeding), so things can resist if they’re wicked enough or if you don’t spend enough Will.


Technically it’s up to the HG when and whether this happens, but “when you use Tinker Skill on something of the mirror-world, or when it’d be funny/cool/awful by accident” is a pretty good guide.

Gothic stuff

Wandering around being the Headmaster *can be*

 **Slice of Life**

Giving life advice to your students *can be*

 **Shared Reactions**

Monologuing *could be*  **Obsessive Action**

You're mostly just this normal guy who happens to be the Headmaster. You wander around doing, you know, what you think a Headmaster should do:

Poke your head into classes. Talk to students who need things. Decorate the halls. Throw spitballs at your employees. You know. *Stuff*.


You have a strong tendency towards monologues that build up towards bizarre or furious ravings instead of coming to a point.

Flaws

Things that are... just plain bad ideas *can be*

 **Wicked Actions**


Refusing to change or give in or bend *can be*



 **Decisive Action**


You do a lot of things that are bad ideas. That's **Wicked Action**.







You have a lot of trouble with change, including changing bad habits. You have a lot of trouble with "defeat." You've preemptively given up on just about everything, mind, but if something tries to take you on in one of the few things you *have* hung on to, or tries to make you care about something else? Your usual reaction is to dig in so hard you take a **Decisive Action** in the other direction!

Face-palming


 Your bonus XP emotion is amused *exasperation or incredulity*. You specifically want to elicit this reaction over:

-  your comic unsuitability to be running the School; *or*
-  the unintended consequences of your weird actions/abilities.


 Players express this emotion when they:

-  face-palm
-  say "face-palm";
-  spit-take;
-  put their head in their hands;
-  beat their head against the table or a wall;
-  say, "No. No. No no no. Don't. Don't. Oh no. You wouldn't."

or some equivalent, but it only counts if they're still having fun.

 Each such face-palm earns you one XP. This is your personal XP—you can spend it, at any time, on any quest that you like!

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

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

Are You Attaris II?

Being the Queen of Halloween isn't much different from being its King. Your hands don't drip with blood all the time; instead, you wear a blindfold and have a shadow that moves on its own—

A hundred shadow hands hold a hundred shadow swords.

Why do you wear a blindfold? Your answers vary.

- ☼ “Your face,” for instance.
- ☼ Or, “the things I’ve seen.”
- ☼ “A head start on getting blind drunk.”

The truth is that you have no eyes and you have no nose and people who see that just plain freak out.

As for the shadow—that's just a trick. A *prop*. You don't remember how you did it, but you think it has something to do with a small trained mouse living in the back of your robes constantly operating a small magic lantern. Or something!

Attaris II, aka
The Headmistress



Bonus Conditions Give... 4 XP?

I've accelerated this one-shot a bit by chopping 1/5 off the normal costs for the quests—but I also took a bit off the top of the bonus XP. Sorry!

Quests

You start the game with two *quests*.

“**The ‘Halloween King’**” is a repeatable quest. Once per fun scene, though at most once per fifteen minutes of play, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest by explaining away something that you're doing as “for Halloween” or “because Halloween's on its way.”

Even after things get weird, the idea that Halloween parties might be off or that Halloween might be “over” doesn't seem to register very well in your mind.

When you finish filling out **the Halloween King**, you get a reward and can start over.

“**The Headmaster**” is a storyline quest. You'll work your way through it and then move on to the next. This is probably what you spend your group and emotion XP on, but you can also earn a bonus XP specific to this quest once per chapter by picking a scene from the quest card and playing it out.

In general you'll have a free hand to do just that—you might need to consult with the HG or the other players on some of the *details*, but if you want to play out a certain option, it happens, and it'll usually happen roughly the way you envision it.

There are also bonus conditions on the card that give you 4 XP towards that quest whenever the HG feels that they happened—you don't have to make them happen, and you don't have the power to *declare* that they happened, but you can play with an eye *towards* them happening and get XP if they do.

When you finish **the Headmaster**, you “make a change in your life”—usually that's some part of your lifestyle or personality, although I guess painting yourself green or turning into an ogre would count;—choose an appropriate Perk; and move on to **the Project**, below.





Quest 1: “The Headmaster”

24 XP Quest

1: 

So let’s start with you as... just this bitter drunk of a Headmaster, stuck in a dead-end life, in a dead-end town. The upcoming Halloween kind of excites you, and you do genuinely want to guide your kids to success, but other than that, your life is pretty bleak.

You’re not going to let the freaky things that happen during the course of this story change that.

The very thought!

W.T.F.!

You’ll actually be kind of morally offended when things get weird because it’s like, what right does the cosmos even *have* to mess with your wallowing?

Your first “quest” is just that life stage—the period of time when you’re like that, and completing it comes with two rewards.

First, you’ll “make a change in your life,” e.g. giving up drinking or opening your heart to your friends or abandoning your title as Headmaster and becoming *Citizen Entropy*, instead. ...or whatever.


This is a genuine change—it should be something that makes sense given the buildup, but the point is, you’ve had an actual insight into something you don’t want to be any more or do any more, and you have the actual power to change it.

Second, you’ll earn one of the following Perks:

- ✿ **Not Quite Human.** You’re not quite human, although you don’t necessarily know what that means. 1/chapter, when using a level 2+ Skill, you can channel that inherent weirdness as a +1 Tool.
- ✿ **Hunger.** Something in you hungers—for, specifically, (choose) 1/chapter, this Perk is a +1 Tool for sensing when there’s something that can feed or soothe that hunger.
- ✿ **Connection.** Gain a level 1 Connection Perk to someone who you’ve been talking to about your life. This is a Skill that you can use to see into their heart, work well with them, trust them, enjoy their company, act appropriately in their company, remind them who they are, or help them fight off temptation or the power of mirror-world monsters.

Side Quest: The “Halloween King”

12 XP Quest

 Chibi-Quest



Quest 1: “The Headmaster”

Major Goals

The HG can award you 4 XP towards this quest when:

- you find yourself abandoned in the dark.
- you discover a glimmer of hope.
- you’re in a vehicular accident.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 12 XP.

Quest Flavor

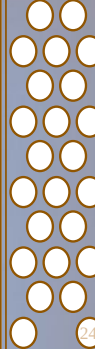
1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest by:

- explaining how nothing means anything
- realizing that you have no idea why you are where you are
- referencing a completely new dark incident in your past
- being kind of bitterly pleased that corruption, decay, and evil have already won
- tidying up
- managing the defense, improvement, or organization of the school.

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

The “dark incidents” can be just stuff Entropy makes up, and in fact generally *are*, so don’t feel like it needs to be in some canonical history before you can, e.g., glumly reference that time your ex-partner sent a nuclear reactor critical while drunk or your parents exposed you to die on a hill.

XP



24



The “Halloween King”

Bonus XP

Christmas—bah. Easter—blah!

But Halloween—*that’s* a holiday you can get behind. Pumpkins. Candy. Popcorn. Blood! And there’s something just plain *satisfying* about that one day every year when people *acknowledge* that evil spirits, fear, and wrack are the true masters of the world.

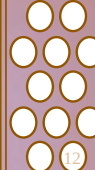
So, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per scene/15 minutes) by explaining away something you’re doing as a Halloween decoration, or activity, or behavior. Like:

- “Halloween’s coming.”
- “It’s for Halloween.”
- “It’s Halloween!”

This’ll make the most sense when prepping-for-Halloween is actually the thing that you’re doing, but there’s nothing wrong with slipping this in as an excuse of last resort when you’re, e.g., discovered trapped in some poor kid’s locker. (Surprise!)

Completing this quest earns you a **Recharge Token**, which you can spend at any time to have a plot-relevant flashback or insight—and either restore your Will, shake off a Surface Wound, or replace a Serious Wound with a Surface Wound.

XP



12



Quest 2: "The Project"

24 XP Quest

2: 

The change in your life usually brings a new goal with it—you start in with new energy on something cool, or productive, or that you should have been doing before. In your case, this is usually focused on a new building for the School—

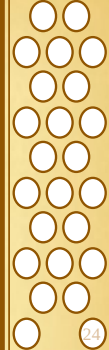
A wooden-walled building to be used as a granary, or a guardhouse, or a distillery, or the site of a lab that studies the creatures of nightmare, or a building constructed around a gate to Halloween (for studying *that*), or a ritual space for something magical:

Something like that.



Quest 2: "The Project"

XP



Major Goals












The HG can award you 4 XP towards this quest when:

- The earth shakes and a gate of some sort opens.
- You infuriate a friend and ally because of something to do with the project, and they tear into you verbally.
- There's a creepy incident involving a pumpkin.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 12 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

-   you have a nightmare about the project
-   something weird happens with your project
-   you wake up somewhere unexpected, unwell
-   you rant about someone else's wrongness or failings
-   you stare out at your project for a while before starting a conversation
-  you hang out with students because none of the adults have a good relationship with you right now (and/or they're all dead.)

You can combine this with an XP Action, but you're not required to. You're always free to declare that something weird happens to the project, but the HG can override you on the specific weirdness.

Over the course of this quest you'll become obsessed with the project; at the end of it, though, that obsession might stay or it might go. It's *not* what resolves. Instead, the quest's end marks something changing for the *rest* of your life, the *rest* of your life stops feeling safe/normal OK—

Maybe you learn something disturbing that indicates that the world is really going to end, or that invalidates your trust in any PCs or NPCs you've been trusting, or maybe you get scary hints of your own alien nature. Maybe it's not something you *learn*, just, one day you're about to finish up with the project and go back to your office to sleep... and you realize that you're not comfortable doing that any more. You want to stay and work more.

This realization isn't really a reward, but you *do* get one of the following benefits:

- ☼ You can redesign your Bond or your Affliction to fit the lesson/result of this quest.
- ☼ **Trick.** You've learned a bizarre new application for one of your Skills—e.g., now you can use **A Map in Your Head** to map out chemical reactions for your distillery (or for other chemistry tasks.)
- ☼ **Bonus.** You're a wicked soul. 1/chapter, this Perk acts as a +1 bonus for (choose one when you get the Perk:)
 - * ...manipulating people?
 - * ...tempting others into your vice?
 - * ...spying on people?
 - * ...finding someone's weakness?
 - * ...taking something from others?
 - * or something else of that sort?
- ☼ **Connection.** You know the ways of the mirror-world. Gain a level 2 Connection thereto. A Connection Skill to a place can be used to understand what's going on there; to fit into it; to go with its flow; to help keep its engine running; to live your life there; and/or to ritually reinforce its boundaries against incursions from somewhere beyond (i.e., reinforcing the mirror-world against Soma's influence, although, sadly, not the other way around).
- ☼ **Shelter.** The School isn't safe enough; you retreat to somewhere else or somewhere specific within. This Perk is a level 1 Superior Skill that grants you access to the place you consider to be your shelter, protects you while inside it, and makes it harder for trouble to follow you "home."
- ☼ **Health.** You've gained a new Normal Health Level.



Quest 3: "The Struggle"

32 XP Quest

3: 

Things are getting really tricky. The world is falling apart. That said, for *you*, this isn't a story of adventure or survival: it's a look into what you're going through, and what you're thinking, and what you're feeling, as things get weird; as the world, slowly, dies.

Completing this quest sets you up for the endgame—

You remember your true nature as the ex-Halloween King, or you remember something useful that the Halloween King knew. This basically closes out your story: everything from that point on is denouement. Maybe you have a big scene now, maybe it waits until everyone has finished up their own quests, but the *core* of your story is done.

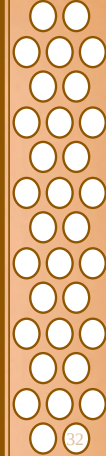


24



Quest 3: "The Struggle"

XP



Major Goals

















The HG can award you 4 XP towards this quest when:

- Everything you've been planning unravels right before your eyes.
- You're crowned or celebrated or adorned for war.
- You're betrayed by a close friend, mentor, or ally.
- You show up when everyone thought you were dead.

You can earn each of these bonuses once, for a total of 16 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

-   you're hurt or hunted by some nasty creature
-   you subvert some force of darkness
-   you find a way out of your current situation, but it makes things even worse
-   you turn to a forbidden resource
-   you sneak into someone's home for a secret meeting
-   you show up where you're not wanted
-   you sit with someone and talk about their trauma
-   you make sandwiches. Delicious sandwiches.

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

You're always allowed to take these actions, so you can declare your way out of even the most inescapable situations or subvert a new force of darkness every chapter. That said, the HG can veto or adjust the details, so you're not guaranteed to be able to subvert the force of darkness *of your choice* or choose just how *exactly* you escape.



Just in case you still need it, in that big quest-completion scene or while you're waiting for the other players to catch up, you can:

- ☼ Declare that your Affliction ("The Fallen King") has become a little more powerful;
- ☼ add +1 to a Skill, to your Bond, or gain a new level 1 Bond;
- ☼ gain a new level 1 Skill, optionally moving a point from something else to that Skill;

and!!

- ☼ pick one of the following Perks:
 - * **Apotheosis.** You may draw upon the change that this quest made in you as a one-time +3 Tool bonus for anything appropriate.

or

- * **Power Up.** One of your mundane or Superior Skills gains a supernatural twist. You can invoke this power once to treat that Skill as a level 2 Superior Skill for the duration of a scene (complete with up to 2 Edge and the ability to do borderline-supernatural things.) In addition to its other effects, spending a Recharge Token automatically refreshes your available use of this power.



The Game Plan

👁️ "The Headmaster" (24 XP):

Be a bitter, cynical wreck who can barely even make yourself care that the sun's gone out.

...until you complete this quest, make a change in your thinking or life habits, start a big project to help this situation or School, and move on to "The Project."

👁️ "The Project" (24 XP):

Get obsessed with some project you're doing, something to fix your life and this situation and this school.

...until one day you realize that the rest of your life doesn't seem safe, normal, or even OK any more, and move on to "the Struggle."

👁️ "The Struggle" (32 XP):

The sun's gone out, your little town's closed off, and monsters are coming. The pressure mounts. And there's something *nagging* at you, something about the situation or your own memories that's just... *off*.

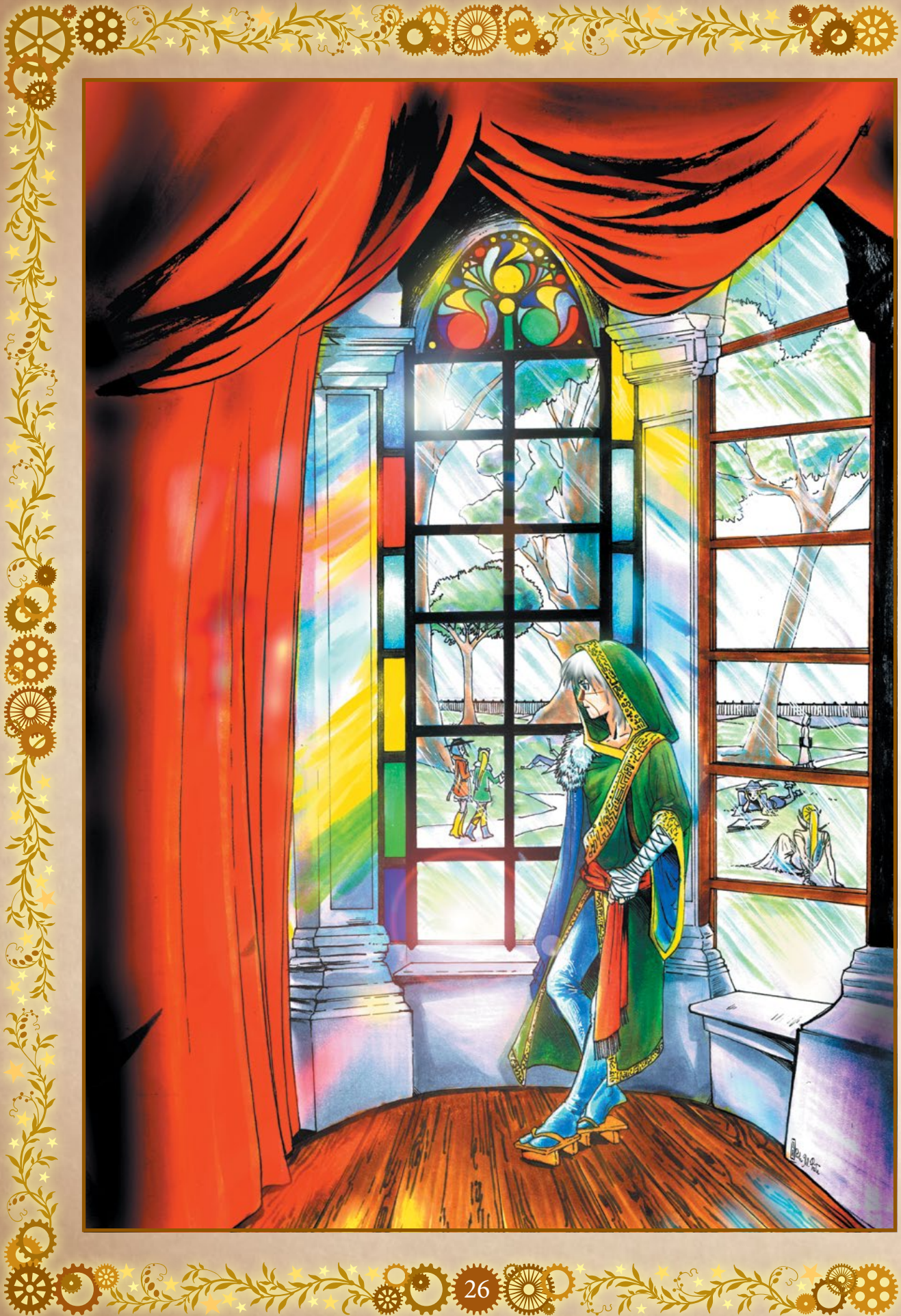
...until you remember something you'd forgotten.

(This needs to be a satisfying resolution to the quest, so it's almost certainly something meaningful in context. For instance: "I'm the Halloween King." Or, if you already knew that, something like "I remember what the big illusion/trick here is.")

Epilogue—you probably get an immediate chance to do something climactic, or are set up to do something climactic at the very end of the game. Then, because this is a one-shot, instead of moving on to a new storyline, you just hang out being cool.

Example Outcome—you retake the throne of Halloween, but then abandon it and go back to running the School.






The Ideologue

Campaign:
The Chuubo's Halloween Special



Academics Skill: Great
Sports Skill: Ordinary
Favorite Foods: Tea, Slushies, Tea Cakes, Camembert, Fish
Blood Type: O
Animal: Horse
Age: 15
An Interesting Fact About You: You can pull your own heart out.... any time that you like!

Character Description

 You are a student. You're smart, lonely, and socially awkward—basically, you're lost in your head a lot of the time, and you expect other people are right there with you, and they're usually not.

You used to be a shy, sweet girl.

You read a lot of books. You honored your parents. You dressed plainly and you met nobody's eyes. But then your parents made a mistake and let you read a book from the banned books list... and you became one of the *bad* kids, dressing in black, fantasizing about vampires and monsters, experimenting with deviant magic, and growing long hair.

So they shipped you off to Entropy's School, thinking that that'd get things back under control.

And that's probably what happened. Yes. Fresh air! Structure! You're like a *thousand* times better *already*. Yes, this academy is *exactly* what you needed. Nobody needs to suspect that you have *anything* to do with the end of the world.


...in retrospect...

—announcing that you'd done a world-ending ritual and that nobody should panic because it's really a *good* thing, using a stolen megaphone, was not your wisest idea.

Shake it Up!

For an atypical Ideologue experience, you can be **Jareth Apocynum**—a boy!

Secrets

 You... were... actually *going* to try. You were going to let this place soak into you and keep your nose clean, and get good grades, and hope that in a year or two you'd be allowed back home. You really *believed* all that stuff about “fresh air” and “discipline.”


But it all turned out to be a lie.

In your very first P.E. class, here, you discovered it; between the uniform and the sit-ups and the being hit by a dodgeball, you *realized* it; gave up on being a good girl forever and really understood for the first time that the whole world was a trap, a deception, a *prison cage* meant to keep people weak... and caught a weird sideways glimpse of the four mirrored and sealed metaphysical gates that pinned it all down. So you put together an apocalyptic ritual to break them down, and then you enacted it, and you announced it to help make sure that no one would panic, and, pretty soon?

This whole world is going to end.

That'll show that dumb kid that hit you on the head with a dodgeball! That'll teach that gym teacher and that dumb uniform and those sit-ups. Sit-ups. SIT-UPS. They're not righteous at all!


...also mumble mumble glory of the darkness. So much happy. So great!




 You're genuinely comfortable with the apocalypse and the weirdness to come—

But you'll come to regret your decision to cause it, eventually dedicating your time to searching through a dangerous labyrinth for a magic to help *fix* things.


This magic is often a new sun that you'll put in the sky... thereby, renewing the world.


Abilities


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



-  **Storytelling 3.**
You're great at working an audience.
-  **Run with It 2.**
You're good at going with the flow.
-  **Bookish 1.**
You're familiar with a lot of different books.


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

 You also have three abilities with special rules, described below. One is a magical Skill, which comes with a suite of specific techniques:




-  **Heart Magic 2.**
You can take out people's hearts and use their flesh in magic.

 And the other two are inherent, generic abilities:

-  **"Technobabble,"** a level 2 Bond that enhances actions you explain in goofy way, *and*
-  **"Starry Eyes,"** a kinship with the apocalypse that protects you against monsters, keeps you and the people you're touching from dying, and fills your eyes with night and falling stars.

 You have 1 Tough and 2 Normal Health Levels.

It's common for you to deliberately wound one of these health levels *yourself*, jostling your heart in your chest and taking the **Askew** wound (pg. 31). That'll cost you one of your Normal Health Levels until it heals, but...

-  it'll let you use heart magic on yourself,
-  it'll give you magical insight into the people around you, and
-  it *may* even let you squeeze somebody *else's* heart in there without having to first lose your own.

Fact Sheet

Summary

You are **Jasmine Apocynum, the Ideologue**. *You* did this. You broke the world. ...but you didn't mean to hurt anyone! It just... it made sense! The world was a lie! An illusion! A trap! It shouldn't have been in the first place! ...don't be mad...

Sometimes you rip people's hearts out and turn their flesh into remote-controlled monsters or whatever. But you're not a bad person, really.

Starting Quests

"Justify" (12 XP):

Pretend to be logical; sensible; sane.

"Celebrate the Darkness" (24 XP):

Enjoy the apocalypse. Be awesome. Have fun.

... until you complete this quest, get used to the world ending, and start to realize not everyone else is as happy about it as you are.

(continued in "Stepping Up," pg. 41)

Bonus XP When...

Your explanations for your plans/actions/ideas leave the other players speechless with enlightenment.

Heart Magic

Type: Magical Skill

Cost: —

You prayed to Death and learned one of the ancient powers—the art of pulling somebody’s heart out and using their flesh in magic.

Here’s how this works.

A person’s “heart” is their metaphysical center—the source of their self-awareness, motivation, creativity, wishes, and dreams. The heart is the thing that doesn’t accept impossibility—that rejects hopelessness and despair, or conversely, takes a perverse *joy* in them, pretending that it found them by choice.

The more *stuck* someone is—the more *unacceptable* their basic life situation—

The more their heart cries out to you and the easier it is for you to just reach in and... *take* it. At that point, you can transform their body into a monster that you control and/or learn to use a specific, unique magical ability associated with that person’s heart. As Jasmine, you’ll choose their new, monstrous form; as a player, you can choose the heart’s unique power... but the Obstacle will be higher, the HG can *set* it higher, if your choice doesn’t reflect the catharsis or the person in question.

The first three techniques of this Skill are technically available to everyone, although characters without this Skill face +2 to the Obstacle—

[Obstacle 0] put a heart that’s been removed back into somebody’s chest

[Obstacle 0+] reshape the flesh of someone whose heart you hold.

[Obstacle 0+] discover or use the unique power of a heart that you hold.

The rest of these techniques, on the other hand, are your magic and your magic alone:

[Obstacle 1] control someone whose heart you hold.

[Obstacle 1] speak to someone whose heart you hold from afar.

[Obstacle 1] stir up someone’s heart, making it harder for them to repress stuff*

[Obstacle 2] borrow the senses of someone whose heart you hold.

[Obstacle 2] make the idea of opening up to you/sharing their story irresistible to someone

[Obstacle 2] sacrifice a Recharge Token to crack a seal, barrier, or boundary

[Obstacle 3] place someone else’s stolen heart in your chest, gaining their Bonds and their most desirable Skill (for as long as it’s in there...)

[Obstacle 3] grant emotional catharsis, (by) ripping out somebody’s heart.

You can do this trick even if their heart’s still in their chest—just use your words!



Removing a PC's heart almost always inflicts a Serious Wound—if they want to just “accept” it, though, they can keep playing the heart itself, let you and the HG control the left-behind flesh, and emote the heart's reactions to whatever goes on until you put it back in. That's wound-free!

If they *did* take a wound, restoring someone's removed heart with your first technique also lowers the severity of the Wound one level—typically meaning that the target loses the Serious Wound and takes a new Surface Wound, reflecting their recent cathartic experience.

Someone partially defending against this technique often winds up with their heart knocked **Askew**—their self-awareness is muted rather than lost, and they count as holding their own heart. This is something you've done to yourself* once or twice—

...it manifests as a Surface Wound.




...**N**ot that you have a technique for this, but you can sort of hesitate a little to defend against your own action.

Askew

(Example “Surface Wound” from Heart Magic)

Type: Surface Wound, Superior Skill


Cost: —

 *If you've taken this wound, your heart-body connection's been tampered with—partially broken. Did your heart get knocked askew? Taken out and put back in wrong? All the way removed, but you resist the effect?*

You don't quite know who you are. You don't quite know what the *difference* between you and the other bodies around you is, any more. You can see “inside” the other things around you, feeling their life, feeling the things that their hearts and their bodies feel—

Not their thoughts, but their impulses. Their experiences.

Even inanimate things, to some extent, so you don't need light any more to be able to see.

 You're malleable now. Your *flesh* can change, now, because there's no heart to properly guide it—you, or someone with a Connection to you, can reshape it, turning it into anything from a bridge to a bird to a Halloween beast. (Though, there may be an Obstacle to changes that imbue powers, involve a lot of fine detail, or feature radical changes in scale.)

Your emotions are kind of malleable too—

You have a hard time not getting upset when people around you get upset. You have a hard time not feeling happy when the people around you feel good.


 **This Wound's benefits manifest as a level 2 Superior Skill.**

Genre Actions


In each chapter of play, you will take two **XP Actions**—


Things that'll earn XP for the group.

Here's some options that are readily available.

 **(Suffer) Adversity:** you get choked up about how your parents cast you out—


- * at a “banned book club” meeting you dragged another PC to
- * in the middle of some scene where you have a memento of them
- * just kind of in general.


 **(Suffer) Adversity:** a friend, ex-friend, or acquaintance turns on you because you ended the world, and nothing you say can make it any better.

 **(Suffer) Adversity:** you freak out over social, academic, or life stressors and revert to your original persona—sweet, shy, blank-eyed, and meek—as a form of “Just... give up.”

 **(Suffer) Corruption:** you're twisted up further by a banned/forbidden book—

- * one of the popular “Blood Fang” paranormal romances?
- * “Atlas Shrugged?”
- * “the Lord of the Rings?”
- * a roleplaying game?
- * a grimoire given to you by Death?

 **(Suffer) Trauma:** let someone else touch/interact with your heart.

 **(Suffer) Metamorphosis/Transformation:**

- * you bond with some nightmarish creature*
- * or, by staring at the pale “false sun” that replaces the real one, with *that*.

“Starry Eyes”

Type: Affliction, level 0

Cost: —

Ever since you did the ritual to shatter the gates of the world, you've changed—your eyes are full of night and falling stars, monsters are reluctant to hurt you, and Death rejects you:

Things you're touching, and you yourself, simply won't die.

You only know some of this. The eyes—they're pretty obvious. And you've got an instinct for the monsters thing. And you slapped a mosquito once, were *sure* you'd gotten it, but then it just flew off again into the sky.

This is a weak effect, so it's not like *real* immortality—

But there aren't many stronger effects around in this particular game. Perhaps the current King of Halloween and his strongest monsters might be able to kill you? Or one of the other PCs' Afflictions, if it turned your way?



🚫 **Never Say Die!**: try to persuade a detractor you've made the right choices, in life.

These can play out very differently on different occasions, but even so, this probably won't be enough to get you through the whole game—you'll need to supplement these by finding other sources of adversity and corruption, things to challenge with a **Never Say Die!**, or opportunities to take gentler actions like **Sympathetic Action**, **Shared Action**, and **Foreshadowing**.

Other Actions

In addition to the standard Adversity/Corruption stuff, here's some things you might find yourself doing in play—bearing in mind that you probably won't earn XP for out-of-genre actions unless you can make them entertaining enough to lure in the HG or compelling enough to lure in the whole group:



Wickedness

Succumbing to a temptation *can be* a 🌀 **Wicked Action**

A **Wicked Action** is most precisely something that you know you shouldn't do—or at least that you *normally* shouldn't do—but you're going to let yourself do it... just this once. If you can entertain the HG, if you can coax a "Are you *really* going to do that?" out of them, then you might qualify for this XP Action.



Or, for consistency with the Headmaster's conflation of the two, "School administrator."

"Technobabble"

Type: Bond, level 2

Cost: —

Your plans work best when they're running on nonsense explanations and circular logic. This won't break reality and make your *ideas* make sense, but... if you throw the right technobabble or illogic at things, coincidence will tend to run in your favor.

🌀 Invoke **Technobabble** when you have a chance to give a weird explanation for what you're doing to overcome an Obstacle or win a conflict, and you can add the Bond's rating (2) to your Intention level. An Obstacle usually means that you don't have enough resources to do (whatever) in the normal way in the first place. Conflict means that someone's trying to stop you.

🌀 If you get into trouble because you're driven to do and explain things in weird ways—if you talk too loudly while explaining them and attract an enemy, or if your own technobabble leads you astray and you fail at something you could have succeeded at, you can earn up to the Bond's rating (2) in Will.

Note that the exact award is up to the HG's discretion, and can easily be 0, so don't feel obligated to screw up pointless things constantly—it won't give you Will!

🌀 It is notionally possible for you to replace food, water, sleep, and even *air* with the act of explaining away things through technobabble—presumably, by using it to explain how you are alive. "Notionally possible" means that the HG can require a really high-level Intention to survive, but you never hit a wall where they say, "I get what you're trying to do, but you're in a vacuum. You're just dead."



Heart Magic

Ripping out somebody's heart *can be a*
● **Ritual**

This is in the HG's hands: if the HG decides to play it out as a ritual, then the heart-ripping itself counts as one of your XP Actions. After that the ordinary process of play pauses, and the HG will call on various players in turn to take *ritual actions*—typically the selected player's choice of:

- ❁ Stating or emoting their response to the “distress” the heart was in before you removed it—the unacceptable life situation that made it narratively easier to grab, if there was such a thing;
- ❁ Stating or emoting their response to the heart-removal itself;
- ❁ Narrating something of the form “a heart should [...]” or “a heart should be [...]”
- ❁ Narrating something about the kind of magic a heart like that should have;
- ❁ Narrating something about the form that it would be most cathartic for you to re-shape the flesh into;
- ❁ “Posing” or otherwise showing off in an iconic fashion while the heart-extraction moment stretches on;
- ❁ Shrieking *sotto voce* or otherwise dramatically reacting to the extraction process (victims and close friends/family thereof only);
- ❁ Declaring a special effect, like red lines of light radiating through the earth, fireworks going off, or the earth shaking; *or*
- ❁ If the HG has introduced other Rituals, then, doing something that invokes such a Ritual, combining and merging the two.

Playing Jareth Apocynum

Jareth is much like Jasmine, but his hair is curlier, more likely to be bleached or colored; his face more beautiful; and he limps a little from a deformed right foot. His technobabble tends more towards the poetic and his habits more towards the bohemian—

You may imagine him as a young Lord Byron and not be altogether wrong.

I doubt a single banned book was enough to set him on his path and convince his parents to exile him here; more likely it was flagrant liaisons, gambling debts, or even drugs. Whatever it was, it pains him very deeply that he broke his parents' trust.

I was unable to find a picture of Jareth not either photo-bombed or occupied by engaged, detached, or infuriated girls; I have opted for the shot below, where the emotions are ambiguous.

Jareth Apocynum, aka
The Ideologue




There are two special rules in force during a Ritual:


One is that players can only interrupt one another if their two PCs are in physical contact (or if the interrupter is willing to overcome a level 3+ Obstacle); second, if a player feels their impending **Ritual Action** is particularly meaningful, they can make it one of their XP Actions for the chapter.



Normal Stuff

Helping out *can be* a  **Sympathetic Action**

Connecting to someone *can be* a  **Shared Action**

“Oh, how *neat!*” may signify  **Foreshadowing**

When you see someone *stuck* or *frozen*—even if it’s a jerk, or a monster—your impulse is to help out. If that’s interesting/self-destructive enough, you might qualify for a **Sympathetic Action**.

Connecting to people is dangerous for you in particular—you’re emotionally

fragile!

...so it makes sense sometimes, when you’re hanging out with someone, working on something together, that the HG might ask if you’re willing to *risk* making a genuine connection. That would be a **Shared Action**.


Lastly, you’ll spend a lot of time admiring things, getting lost in the moment. Stories. Events. Magic. *Stuff*. On occasion, this’ll give you an opportunity to “get caught up in it”—a **Foreshadowing Action**.

Heartless

(Example “**Serious Wound**” from **Heart Magic**)

Type: Serious Wound, Superior Skill

Cost: —

 *If you’ve taken this wound*, your heart’s been pulled out of your flesh. Now you see “inside” the things around you, feeling their life, feeling the things their hearts and their bodies feel—

Not their *thoughts*, but their *impulses* and their *experiences*.

Even inanimate things radiate this to some extent, so you no longer need ordinary light to see.

Your creativity is damaged or gone. Your self-will is damaged or gone—you’ll run mostly on instinct and the guidance of people with a Connection to you or who are holding your heart. Your ability to recognize yourself is gone—you can’t even see yourself in a mirror.

Your flesh is malleable—someone who holds your heart, or has a Connection with you, can use that heart or that Connection to reshape your body, turning you into anything from a bird to a bridge to a Halloween beast. (Though, there may be an Obstacle to changes that imbue powers, involve a lot of fine detail, or feature radical changes in scale.)

 **This Wound’s benefits manifest as a level 2 Superior Skill.**

Speechlessness

☀️ Your bonus XP emotion is *speechlessness*.

It is very important to be open and honest with people. That is proper conduct! So if someone asks you how you are doing and you are in fact worried that you might secretly have too many limbs, you know, hidden away somewhere, or that other people might *think* you might, well, it's important to say that. If you're afraid that people will wind up paired off with the wrong people when the next volume of the "Blood Fang" books gets released—you'll need to go over that *too*. And if someone wants to know why in the world you would go about bringing the *end* of the world, well, you should *tell* them, and just keep *on* telling them, until they at last understand.

And if someone is right there with you, great!

But if you lose them somewhere, and they wind up just kind of staring speechlessly at you, you've promised yourself that that'll be OK too. You'll even get an XP! Because when your logic and your sensibility and your compassion overwhelms what other people are capable of following, they may award you an XP with any of the following actions:

- ☀️ gaping at you in an exaggerated, comical, and therefore clearly intentional fashion;
- ☀️ lifting up a finger as if they're going to respond, but then lowering it again, ideally to point at a bowl containing XP tokens while silently shaking their head;
- ☀️ covering their eyes but helplessly peeking through the gaps in their fingers at you, in horrified and unwilling fascination;
- ☀️ saying, "Speechless!"
- ☀️ saying something roughly equivalent to "Right then," and moving on; *or*
- ☀️ saying something roughly equivalent to, "I think we are all now more familiar with the [topic, e.g., the reason ending the world was totally gentle, compassionate, and correct.]"

☀️ You normally only get this XP for *answering questions in character*, which means someone has to first ask such questions, or at least be standing near you and expressing confusion, uncertainty, or an interest in having something explained. However, if you are in an extremely casual game where having players step out of character to ask for your internal narration about something is common, please feel free to switch modes to the *Ask Jasmine Apocynum Hour!*, answering questions across the fourth wall.

You can earn up to 1 speechlessness XP every 15 minutes of real time. Further, if another player or PC consciously weaponizes this—that is, demands an explanation from you for the pure entertainment value of it or to stun/baffle/perplex/silence somebody in the world—you can earn a speechlessness XP that isn't bounded by that 15 minute rule.



Quests

You start the game with two *quests*.

“**Justify**” is a repeatable quest. Once per fun scene, though at most once per fifteen minutes of play, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest by attempting to pass yourself off as logical, sensible, and sane.

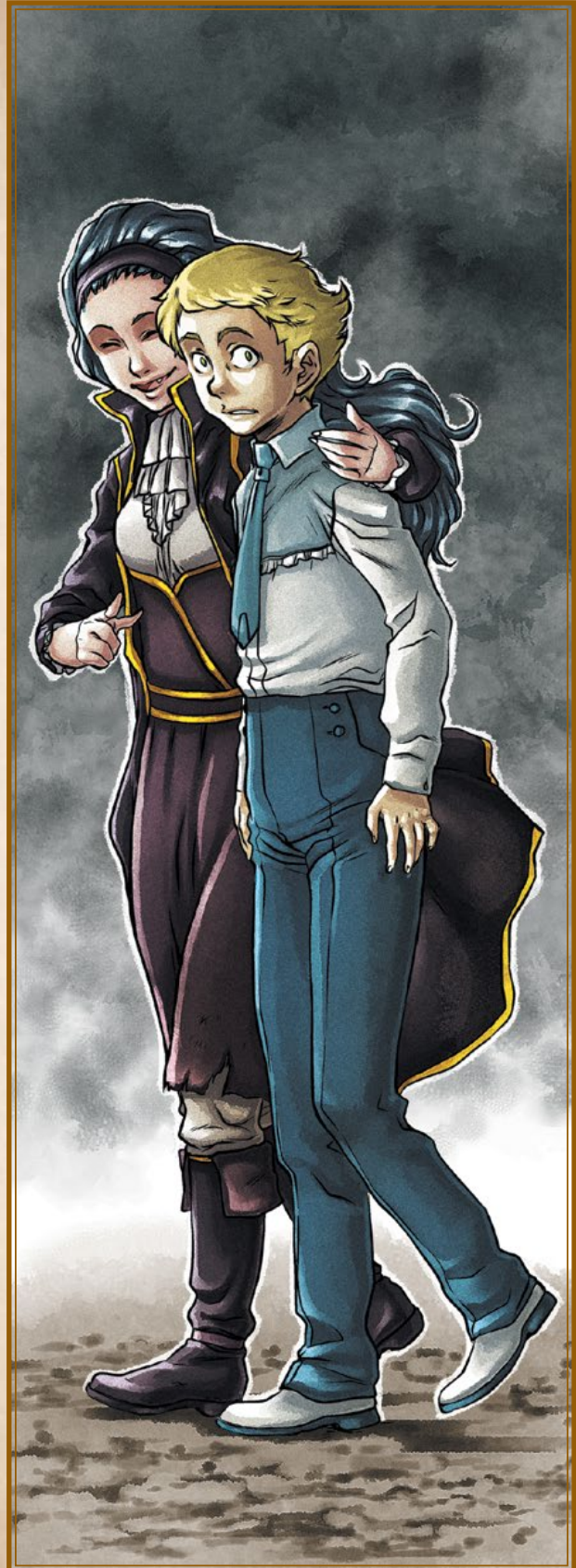
You’ll never really *finish* trying to justify yourself this way, but after 12 XP you’ll finish the quest, earn a reward, and start it all over again.

“**Celebrate the Darkness**” is a storyline quest. You’ll work your way through it and then move on to the next. This is probably what you spend your group and emotion XP on, but you can also earn a bonus XP specific to this quest once per chapter by picking a scene from the quest card and playing it out.

In general you’ll have a free hand to do just that—you might need to consult with the HG or the other players on some of the *details*, but if you want to play out a certain option, it happens, and it’ll usually happen roughly the way you envision it.


There are also bonus conditions on the card that give you 4 XP towards that quest whenever the HG feels that they happened—you don’t have to make them happen, and you don’t have the power to just *declare* that they happen, but you can play with an eye *towards* them happening... and get 4 XP if they actually do.

When you finish **Celebrate the Darkness**, that means that you’ve gotten used to the apocalypse. It’s no longer new and exciting. You’ll pick up a Perk representing what you’ve learned or gained during this time and move on to **Stepping Up**, below.



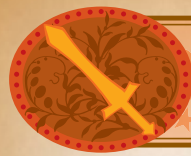
Justify

12 XP Quest

 Chibi-Quest

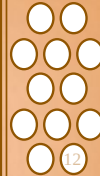


38



Justify

XP



Bonus XP

You want to be right. You want to be *good*. You want the things you do to be OK.

But there's a deep part of you, ever since you left home, that thinks you are *not*.

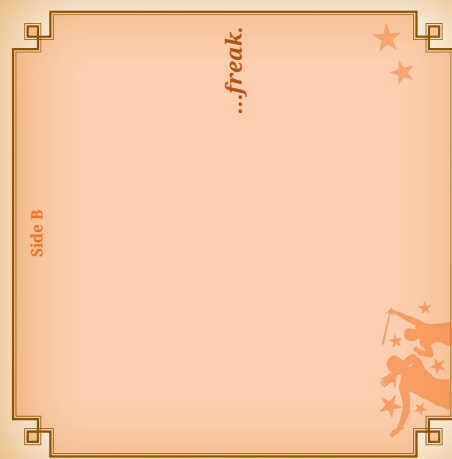
So I've provided a two-sided card.

One side—the side that faces outwards—declares that you're "Logical. Sensible. Sane." Showing that card is basically the same as *emoting* that you're a good, sensible girl. But the back side reminds you of your worries:

What if you're not?

You can earn a bonus XP towards this quest at any time (but only once per 15 minutes/scene) by holding up the sign. Equivalent modes of communication (e.g., waving your hand and saying "Logical. Sensible!" or emoting '[Logical. Sensible. Sane.]' in an online game) can work too.

Completing this quest earns you a **Recharge Token**, which you can spend at any time to either restore your Will, shake off a Surface Wound, replace a Serious Wound with a Surface Wound, or fuel your "boundary-breaking" magic technique.



Quest 1: “Celebrate the Darkness”

24 XP Quest

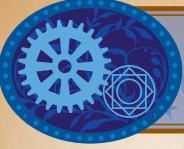
1: 

At first, when things get weird, you’re going to be *happy*. The sun’ll go out. Mist will surround the village. Horrors will slip in.

It’s so *neat*!

You’ll wander the altered environment, scratching your initials in towers, making friends with weird monsters, and staring into the shadowed “false sun.” You’ll love it when the mist blocks off the village. You’ll love it when the horrors come through. This is just *great*.

This is like living in a “Blood Fang” book!



Quest 1: “Celebrate the Darkness”

Major Goals













The HG can award you 4 XP towards this quest when:

- you make friends with a monster;
- you make a shattering discovery;
- you help someone through a strenuous, awful experience.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 12 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through:

-   leaving your mark on something
-   exploring the changed world
-   praising the neat stuff that’s happening
-   admiring what people are doing
-   talking about what life and existence are *for*
-   channeling your old “sweet, shy” self to navigate a tricky social situation

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

XP

39

24

The HG Can Award... 4 XP?

I’ve accelerated this one-shot a bit by chopping 1/5 off the normal costs for the quests—but I also took a bit off the top of the bonus XP. Sorry!





This first “quest” is just that life stage, when you basically refuse to accept that the apocalypse could be a bad thing. You’ll *never* get to the point where you don’t *enjoy* it...

But after this quest, you’ll at least stop being *agog* at the awesomeness. You’ll get *used* to it, basically, and that’ll give you a chance to have *some* perspective.

Plus, you’ll get a reward!

When you finish “Celebrate the Darkness,” you can pick between:

- ✿ **Dramatic Vision.** 1/chapter, you can look at someone and see how much trouble and distress they have in their life, and what that trouble and distress is generally about. Plus, you’ll learn one interesting fact about them!
- ✿ **Dramatic Life.** You’re a little stylized. 1/chapter, you can waive a level 1-2 Obstacle for some particular unrealistic thing you do, e.g.,
 - * changing clothes in the blink of an eye;
 - * understanding monsters that don’t speak your language;
 - * navigating in the darkness;
 - * finding a microphone and stage when there shouldn’t be one; or
 - * being right behind someone when they start talking about you.
- ✿ **Shine.** Gain a level 1 Shine Perk. You’re weirdly likeable despite everything, and *other* people doing stuff for you or to protect you can use your Shine as the relevant Skill.

Drinking Poison

It won’t work in all games, but keep an eye out for opportunities to

🌿 **(Suffer) Corruption:** you drink some sort of poison—taking a hallucinogen that gives you spiritual guidance, or sucking poison out from a wound, or tasting a mirror-world food to test it for edibility, or getting betrayed by someone who feeds you some poison. Things get weird; then, they really suck.

Quest 2: "Stepping Up"

32 XP Quest

2: 

The next stage of your life usually has you stepping up to help the people who aren't as good at dealing with this whole "everything's gone all horror" as you. You're either taking charge of the situation, trying to become a leader, or—

If that's just not plausible—

You're trying to help from the shadows and keep the School and the Village OK.

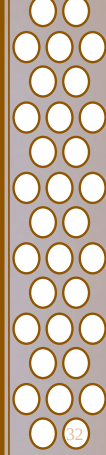


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Quest 2: "Stepping Up"

XP



Major Goals














The HG can award you 4 XP towards this quest when:

- Someone lashes out at you while you're trying to help them.
- You commit to watching over someone, even though they don't want you to.
- You're welcomed to sit by a fire.
- You locate the labyrinth that'll be the centerpiece of the following quest.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 16 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

-   you lure some monster out from the cavern or enclosure it's in
-  there's something luring *you* somewhere
-  you help someone out
-   you find a new source of water
-   you reach the top of a hill
-   false night falls. You're alone.
-   you pour your heart out to someone or something that can't answer you (although maybe you're overheard by somebody else?)
-  someone finds you and you don't know what you're doing/why you're wherever.

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

When on this quest, you can take these actions at any time (e.g., declaratively finding a new water supply) but the HG can veto or outright decide on the details, and you must still play your own actions out.



Ultimately you'll receive one of two outcomes—

- ✿ The result of “trying to be a leader” is that an enemy/opponent either praises you, threatens you in a flattering way, or tries to recruit you. That usually means that a big antagonist like “the usurper-King of Halloween” or “a mirror-world jarl” is trying to turn you to their side or to work out a deal.
- ✿ The result of “trying to help from the shadows” is that you've attracted dangerous attention to yourself—again, from something like “the usurper-King”—but you've gotten the Village and School to a stable state. Like, food, water, defenses, all that stuff, they're maybe not *amazing*, but the place isn't going to die out immediately if you turn your attention away.

These outcomes aren't mutually exclusive, exactly, but it makes sense to me that you'd only get the appropriate one.

You'll also get a Perk, chosen from:

- ✿ **Magical Technique.** You pick up a new technique for your Heart Magic Skill. What does it do?
- ✿ **Connection.** Gain a level 2 Connection Perk with someone you grew close to. This is a Skill that you can use to see into their heart, work well with them, trust them, enjoy their company, act appropriately in their company, remind them who they are, or help them fight off temptation or the power of Halloween.
- ✿ **Superior Skill.** Gain a new Superior Skill at level 1—probably something deriving from the corruption you've suffered during this quest, or just from being too awesome to be real.

Antagonists:

A Note to Jasmine Apocynum

If I seem a little vague about the possible antagonists, like I'm just namedropping them without explanation—

Here's why.

The monsters that show up in Soma *probably* come from “the Halloween World on the other side of the mirror,” and that *probably* ties into the Headmaster's backstory, and there are probably big-boss *jarls* and a usurper-King—

But it's also possible that all that's completely inaccurate, and the apocalypse and the monsters are about something *else*. It's even possible that the *labels* are right but that anything I could possibly tell you about them is going to be obsolete—revealed as a trick, deceit, or a misunderstanding—by

the time the end of your second quest rolls around!

Just what's really going on? Who are the PCs' actual enemies?

That'll be up to the HG, really; and the players of the Headmaster and the Exchange Student; and, most importantly, to the way the story evolves and shows its true colors in play.



Quest 3: “The Labyrinth”

24 XP Quest

3: 

The centerpiece of this quest is a labyrinth—e.g., the labyrinth of Soma Village, which you’d heard about but never actually *visited* before the story began, or some labyrinthine abandoned dormitory inside the School complex... or maybe an otherworldly/extra-dimensional thing.

It’s this ancient place and it’s just *full* of ancient traps and ancient powers—

I don’t know if it was before all these weird happenings *started*, but it’s sure as sin full of them *now*!

And despite the appellation “Labyrinth,” which indicates that you shouldn’t really be able to get lost in it, it’s a tricky thing. Figuring out how to progress past ancient traps, physical barriers, mist that floats in from the edge of town, and magical barriers—

It’s going to occupy you for a lot of the game.

And the reason you’re here?


The reason you’re doing this?


There’s something in it that you believe Soma and School *need*. There’s something *there* which you think can *fix* things, or at least really help out. ...but it’s tricky and confusing and you may not even be 100% sure what you’re looking for.

Over the course of this quest you’ll find strange powers in the labyrinth—ancient artifacts, weird creatures, magic writing, spells—but it’s mostly not going to be stuff that matters in the big picture. Neat, but not *useful*.

Sleeplessness

You don’t tend to get enough sleep during the course of this quest, so if it fits your personality or if you’re low on viable XP Actions you might

 **(Suffer) Adversity:** spooky things happen, shadows seem to move, you see things twitching out of the corner of your eye. You wind up huddled in a corner, shaking, freaking out, or outright hallucinating.

 **(Suffer) Trauma:** sometimes this is even a **Trauma**, instead!





At the *end*, though, you find what you were looking for:

Something that can save the day. Most likely: some kind of new sun.

Finding it mostly closes out your story. That’s who you are: “the girl who maybe broke the world and killed the sun; played in the dark for a while; but then realized how sad everyone else was about it and found a new sun, to help them to live.”

Maybe you have a big scene when you find it, maybe it waits until everyone else has finished up their own quests, but as soon as you reach the labyrinth’s heart the *core* of your story is done.

Just in case you still need it, in that big scene or when you’re waiting for the other players to catch up, you can:

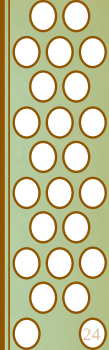
- ☼ Declare that your Affliction (Starry Eyes) has become a little more powerful;
- ☼ add +1 to a Skill, to your Bond, or gain a new level 1 Bond;
- ☼ gain a new level 1 Skill, optionally moving a point from something else to that Skill;

and!!



Quest 3: “The Labyrinth”

XP



Major Goals

The HG can award you 4 XP towards this quest when:

- You’re lost... trapped.
- You unlock something within yourself.
- Something important to you catches on fire.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 12 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest through:

- dreams of the labyrinth and of possible futures
- dreams of an enemy—only, they seem like a friend
- having fun with the side effects of some wicked artifact you’ve discovered
- describing some of the history of that artifact
- poring over your records of the labyrinth
- discussions of what happens next

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

Implicit in this quest is your ability to kind of declare minor artifacts and powers that you’ve discovered in the labyrinth into existence. They can’t be *too* useful, though—I mean, it’s fine if they turn out to be pivotal later on, but you can’t create them with the *idea* that they’ll be tide-turning awesome.

☼ Pick one of the following benefits:

- * you can replace your “Run with It” Skill with a new level 2 Superior Skill of your choice, such as **Superior Sun Goddess** or **Superior Horror**.

or

- * **Magical Technique.** Gain a new power, probably something to do with whatever you found in the labyrinth, as a bonus **Heart Magic** technique.



The Game Plan

⚡ “Celebrate the Darkness” (24 XP):

Enjoy the apocalypse. Be awesome. Have fun.

... until you complete this quest, get used to the world ending, start to realize that not everyone else is as happy about it as you are, and move on to “Stepping Up.”

⚡ “Stepping Up” (32 XP):

Step up to fix this, either as a popular leader or by helping from the shadows.

... until you complete this quest, realize that these people are going to need the treasure from the heart of the labyrinth to survive/thrive, and move on to “the Labyrinth.”

⚡ “The Labyrinth” (24 XP):

Deal with the worsening situation as the world decays. Explore the labyrinth. Hope.

... until you find the treasure at the labyrinth’s heart.

Epilogue—you probably get an immediate chance to do something climactic or get set up to do something climactic at the end of the game. Then, because this is a one-shot, instead of moving on to a new storyline, you just hang out being cool.

Example Outcome—the usurper-King is driven off, and Soma goes on, living and growing crops under the light of the new sun you found. Or, you’ve triggered a weapon that sent the PCs back in time, and now you’ll have to prevent yourself from getting hit by that dodgeball. Or something!



The Idol



Campaign:
The Chuubo's Halloween Special

Academics Skill: Good
Sports Skill: Good
Favorite Foods: Grapes, Carrots,
Tea Sandwiches
Favorite Buffalo: Water
Blood Type: AB
Animal: Cat
Age: 16

An Interesting Fact About You: You once received detention for "excessive tooth sparkle."

Character Description

You're a mysterious bishounen. You've always *been* a mysterious bishounen. You used to wear a domino mask when rescuing people in the fields at age 8. By age 12 you were surrounded by fangirls and minions. Now you're widely known as the greatest super-idol at the School—maybe even in the whole Village!

You're cool and laid back. You don't want to be a hero, really. You don't want to make waves. You'd be happy just sleeping, and playing with your dog, and having some fun, but...

The world won't leave you alone.

People are always getting into trouble. They're always needing your help. You want to sleep, like, for just another 5, 10 minutes maybe? But they need you *now*. Or someone wants to fight you or kill you or beat you in sports *now*.

So eventually you just kind of gave in. You said: *fine, I'll live the awesome life. I'll be dazzling.*

That's why you're the top delinquent on the Headmaster's hit list. That's why all the school's gangsters and roustabouts call you "big brother," turning to you when they can't rely on

anyone else. That's why you're always having to bother yourself and steal things, or fight people, or host massive parties, or save the world. You don't even mind it any more. But as fun as it gets, or as awful as it gets, you can't make yourself *care*:

You'd rather look at the clouds.

Only...

Those clouds are going to start looking pretty weird soon. The sun is going to die. Mist is going to block off Soma Village. Monsters are going to slip through from the mirror-world.

It's going to be bad.

You're going to try as hard as you can to stay out of it, to just keep living your life, but in the end, just relaxing and living... won't be an option. People are going to need you. They're going to cry out for your help. And some horror is going to personally target *you*, later on, try to make you its pawn.

You won't get to rest. Not so much. Not in *this* game. So much trouble!—

It just *never stops!*

Shake it Up!

For an atypical **Idol** experience, pick 0-2 of the following:


- ☼ You are **Soun Shoujo** (the sister) instead of Soun Shounen (the brother).
- ☼ You're not *sleepy*. Rest and naps aren't your thing. You're more interested in...
 - * Pranks?
 - * Romance?
 - * Booze?
 - * Gambling? or
 - * Something else?


(Change your quest options and suggested XP Actions accordingly.)

Or, for a *really* weird experience, what about playing White River, the family's big ol' dog, instead of *either* sibling—


Probably after winding up as the mascot of the Headmaster's School?

Abilities


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

 **Empathy 3.**


You're great at reading people, not that you want to be.

 **Delinquent 2.**

You're good at sneaking, fighting, and other delinquent stuff.


 **Student 1.**


You're familiar with academics, sports, and student life.


 **Snazzy Clothing 1.**


You know your way around a clothing store.


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


 You also have three abilities with special rules, described below. The first is a Connection Skill—a Skill that binds you more tightly to someone or something you care about:

 **Connection: White River 1.** You're close to your dog.

 Two are inherent, generic abilities:

 **"Heart-Reader,"** a level 2 Bond that lets you see the truth of the people around you; *and*

 **"Mysterious Bishounen,"** granting you the power to attract butterflies when resting on the grass, sparkle, keep clean when wading through the sewers, and in general be cooler-than-life in a passive, romanticized way.

 You have 1 Tough Health Level and 2 Normal Health Levels, which is fairly typical for a mysterious bishounen—

One Tough Level to absorb wounds like "you must live on without me now," and two Normal Health Levels for "oh no! A wound!" sort of injuries.

Fact Sheet

Summary

You are **Soun Shounen, the Idol**. You are a mysterious bishounen. People have appointed you the chief delinquent and the biggest super-idol at the School, but really, you'd rather just sleep through the day!

Your sister is named Soun Shoujo and your dog is named White River.

Starting Quests

"~Sparkle~" (12 XP):

Live excellently.

 **"Just another Day" (32 XP):**

Have fun. Stay in school. Duck the weird.

... until you complete this quest, figure out who you want to be in life, and start in on a grand scheme either to live that out—or to save the world, so you *can*.

(continued in "the Grand Scheme," pg. 60).

Bonus XP When...


People put their faith in you.


Genre Actions


In each chapter of play, you will take two **XP Actions**—

Things that'll earn XP for the group.


Here's some options that are readily available.


 **(Suffer) Adversity:** things keep interrupting your rest/naps until you give up on the very idea.


 **(Suffer) Adversity:** teachers or Headmasters that don't like you stack absurd detentions or assignments or complications onto your shoulders, which you handle with grace... until it goes so far that you wind up on catatonic autopilot or in a hallucinating frenzy.

 **(Suffer) Corruption:** somehow you get dragged/persuaded into being a willing par-

ticipant in some club, sport, or troublesome situation.

 **(Suffer) Corruption:** you're bitten or cursed by some horror that's crossed over from the Halloween World, and now things've gone weird.

 **Never Say Die!:** you attempt some goofy delinquent scheme ("steal all the Academy's pens") that you don't really expect to succeed at, but, well, you are going all-in!

 **Never Say Die!:** you're one of School's top sports-ers, but you're not really that good—you just keep finding ways to win by the skin of your teeth! Get drawn into a sports battle that you don't expect to win. Be overwhelmed and outmatched—and fight on, anyway, refusing to lose!








These can play out very differently on different

White River

Type: Connection

Cost: —

Your dog, White River, is a big ol' dog, a golden retriever, handsome and surprisingly smart. Your Connection with him is basically a Skill that you have in:

-  seeing into his heart,
-  working well with him,
-  trusting him,
-  enjoying his company,
-  acting appropriately in his company,
-  reminding him who he is*,
-  and helping him fight off temptation or the power of a mirror-world/Halloween monster.

This isn't that big a deal—it's just level 1—but it's enough to get basic concepts across to him and, combined with your other abilities, to read *him* like a book.

P.S. he's a dog.



occasions, but even so, this probably won't be enough to get you through the whole game—you'll need to supplement these by finding other sources of adversity and corruption, things to challenge with a **Never Say Die!**, or opportunities to take gentler actions like Shared Action, Foreshadowing, and Slice of Life.

“Mysterious Bishounen”

Type: Affliction, level 0

Cost: —

You are mysterious. You are glorious. You are magical. You can generally assume that if you want butterflies to land on you or the wind to flutter your cape or flowers to bloom underfoot or whatever, that you can have that; if you want a *ting* from your smile; if you want a deer to approach you in the wilderness and lay its head on your lap; if you want to disappear when someone looks away for a moment—

If you want to be ridiculously glamorous and just a little bit dramatic and cool, in short, you *can*.

Sometimes it happens when you're not even trying at all!

“Heart-Reader”

Type: Bond, level 2

Cost: —

You can't help it. You're *connected* to people. You close your eyes and daydream and it's like you're there *with* them, you're with their hearts, you can feel their dreams, their aspirations, the things their heart is wishing for.

You see people and it's like you *know* them. It's like you've *been* them, under their skin.

You try to keep them at a distance, you try to forget their names and act more important than everybody else, but it doesn't always work. Sometimes they need something and... you just can't say no.

☼ Invoke **Heart-Reader** when you're trying to understand someone—their dreams and hopes and wishes, in particular—and there's an Obstacle or conflict in the way, and you can add the Bond's rating (2) to your Intention level. You'll face Obstacles when you have no real data to work from—when you don't know the person well enough to know their hearts and dreams. Conflict comes from their affected inscrutability, or, a third party's deceit.


☼ If you get into trouble because you can't resist helping people, you can earn up to the Bond's rating (2) in Will.


☼ It is notionally possible for you to replace food, water, sleep, and even *air* with the act of daydreaming about other people's hopes, dreams, and wishes. You've never really tested this, though, and in the long term it's probably hard.

Other Actions

In addition to the standard Adversity/Corruption stuff, here's some things you might find yourself doing in play—bearing in mind that you probably won't earn XP for out-of-genre actions unless you can make them entertaining enough to lure in the HG or compelling enough to lure in the whole group:

Play it Casual

Sometimes you take a break, when you shouldn't, and *that can be*  **Wicked Action**


Trusting in people *can be*  Science, Faith, Sorcery


You have an idiomatic vice—normally “being sleepy/laid-back.” Sometimes you're tempted to take a nap or at least a break when you really can't afford to. If you act on it, that could be **Wicked Action**.


You also have a tendency to believe in people. To tell them what you know about them and what you *believe* about them...

and then to consciously extend your trust. That's a **Science, Faith, and Sorcery Action**.

Weird Situations

Living in the world *could be*  **Slice of Life**


Seeing cool stuff *can be*  **Foreshadowing**

Doing your thing *can be*  **Shared Action**

Assuming you *can* tempt the HG into it—

If you're out in the world, ...

- * ... interacting with stuff, and then there's a nice moment? That might be **Slice of Life**.
- * ... and there's neat stuff to *see*, or *hear*, or whatever? *That* might be **Foreshadowing**.
- * ... and you're doing your thing, and someone's hanging out with you? *That* could be a **Shared Action**, and earn Shared Action XP.



Quests

You start the game with two *quests*.

“~**Sparkle**~” is a repeatable quest. Once per fun scene, though at most once per fifteen minutes of play, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest by taking your dramatic self-presentation over the top. Chew the scenery, sparkle, maintain perfect hair, and actively look for opportunities for dramatic poses, one-liners, and high cape-swirling places to stand.

When you finish filling out ~**Sparkle**~, you get a reward and can start over again on the quest.

“**Just another Day**” is a storyline quest. You’ll work your way through it and then move on to the next. This is probably what you spend your group and emotion XP on, but you can also earn a bonus XP specific to this quest once per chapter by picking a scene from the quest card and playing it out. In general you’ll have a free hand to do just that—you might need to consult with the HG or the other players on some of the *details*, but if you want to play out a certain option, it happens, and it’ll usually happen roughly the way you envision it.

There are also bonus conditions on the card that give you 4 XP towards that quest whenever the HG feels that they happened—you don’t have to make them happen, and you don’t have the power to *declare* that they happened, but you can play with an eye *towards* them happening and get XP if they do.

When you finish **Just another Day**, you’ll figure out something about where you want your life to go—who you want to *be*. You’re actually probably well on your way there, or, at least, you can put your feet on the path... but you’ll likely have to save the world first or Armageddon will screw it all up.

You’ll pick a Perk—a reward—and a plan, and move on to “**The Grand Scheme**,” below.

You’re Up!

Your bonus XP emotion is *confidence* or *faith*.

You specifically want people to look at something impossible, some terrible threat or some situation that they want you to handle, and go “Soun Shounen can do it!” You want them to feel confident that you’ll get them through.

For balance’s sake, though, you’re *also* allowed to get bonus XP if people have confidence that you’ll *fail*—that *not even you* can do... this thing they’ve foisted on you, or the challenge that you’re now taking on. If they have faith that you’ve gotten into deeper trouble than even *Soun Shounen* can handle. That you’re totally going to be beaten—*this time*.

In short, you want people to put on a serious face and solemnly put their faith in you to win, but it doesn’t matter for XP purposes whether they’re being serious, faux-serious, or outright sarcastic.

Standard expressions of confidence are:

- ✿ Pointing at you and saying, “You’re up!”
- ✿ Raising a fist at you and saying, “Ganbatte!” or “Do your best!”
- ✿ Telling you, seriously or sarcastically, “You have [my/our] trust.”
- ✿ Telling you, seriously or sarcastically, “You can do it!”
- ✿ Ceremonially presenting a physical XP token as a symbol/burden of honor and trust.

Each such gift of confidence earns you one XP.

You can earn up to 1 confidence XP every 15 minutes of real time. If you don’t *have* to take a given situation or problem on, if you could duck out of it or ignore it but you accept the challenge because someone offers you/dares you to with an XP, that particular XP is not limited by the 15-minute rule.



Playing Soun Shoujo?

The Soun kids were born a year apart but they're closer than twins. They have the same soul and the same personality. The only difference is age:

Whichever one you're playing is about a year older.

Because they were about a year older, the younger one got used to leaning on them—just a little. And the older one got more used—just a little—to taking matters in hand. And as the years went by the older one increasingly sheltered the younger, kept them from being thrust too much into the spotlight, and the younger one became ever quieter, gentler, and more reserved.

If you're playing Soun Shoujo, then Shounen still *exists*—

As your cute younger brother, sort of a sidekick, sometimes a nice prop, but mostly someone who exists in the background, his brilliance hidden by your ever-so-slightly-more-brilliant light. He actually *gets* to take naps now and then because, well, you're there, taking care of things, just that tiny bit more. He didn't get dragooned into being the chief delinquent, because: you were there first. He doesn't get called on to save the world, because: well, there's *you*.

You have the hard job. You have the burdens. You even have the dog.

(... 'cause you feed him ...)

What it all adds up to, anyway, is that you won't have to play Shoujo any differently than you would play Shounen; all the differences are external. You're a bit shorter. People treat you a bit differently. You have a brother instead of a sister. And... for some reason... tailors conspire against your having pockets. Seriously: girls always get expected to save the world but they won't even let us have *pockets*.

It's not right!


Soun Shoujo, aka
The Idol





~Sparkle~

12 XP Quest

 Chibi-Quest

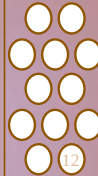


56



~Sparkle~

XP



Bonus XP

Arrange for a sign. It says “Over the Top.”

Sometimes when you’re being sparkling and dazzling and majestic—you’ll take it a little bit over the top.

At such a time you may flash the sign (up to once per fun scene/15 minutes) to earn a bonus XP towards this quest.

Completing this quest earns you a **Recharge Token**, which you can spend at any time to look awesome without having to do anything special—and either restore your Will, shake off a Surface Wound, or replace a Serious Wound with a Surface Wound.

Did you know? A purple quest like this one usually has a catchphrase and not a sign... but I figured that you’d have more fun flashing an Over-the-Top sign like this than saying “I emote drama” or “I emote ‘over-the-top!’”



Quest 1: “Just Another Day”

32 XP Quest


1: 

You’re just... living your life. Trying to pass your classes. Trying not to get into too much trouble. Having some fun.

Sure, maybe the sun goes out. And then maybe there are, like, monsters, or whatever.

But isn’t it better if things try to stay normal? What’s the point in getting all worked up about it? If the world *really* is going to end or something, you’ll take care of it. For now, you’re a kid. Stay in school.

The first quest is you trying to hold on to normalcy—



Quest 1: “Just Another Day”

Major Goals









The HG can award you 4 XP towards this quest when:

- You’re given an unlikely, ridiculous detention or punishment.
- Someone needs you to save them.
- You lure a monster into a game of *shiratori*, kickball, Connect 4, or your established preference for a casual game.
- You’re given the mission to break into somewhere dangerous/forbidden.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 16 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when you:

-  play *shiratori*, kick-ball, or some other casual game
-  experiment with a ridiculous outfit or disguise
-  work on a project for class, despite possible distractions
-  nap in the library or under a tree
-  hang out with some friends. Kind of casual.
-  check up on how somebody’s doing
-  get challenged by someone whom you think is trying to rise in the delinquent or sports-team ranks
-  hang out near the other PCs, reading a book

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

XP

32

The HG Can Award... 4 XP?

I’ve accelerated this one-shot a bit by chopping 1/5 off the normal costs for the quests—but I also took a bit off the top of the bonus XP. Sorry!





But towards the end, you'll realize that you want something. That you have a dream.

It's actually a new experience for you. You've only ever wanted to coast. You've known about dreams and ambitions from other people, but not from *yourself*. Only, now: you have an ambition. There's something you want to do or to be.

... and it's going to be hard, because, well, the sun's gone out and, y'know, monsters are all up in your biz.

In addition to the *major* reward of *a goal in life*, you'll also get your choice of the following Perks:

- ☼ **Bonus.** 1/chapter, this Perk acts as a +2 Tool for some niche ability that came up in the story—not being lost, holding your breath underwater, juggling, or whatnot.
- ☼ **Connection.** Gain a level 2 Connection Perk to someone you spent a lot of time with this quest. This is a Skill that you can use to see into their heart, work well with them, trust them, enjoy their company, act appropriately in their company, remind them who they are, or help them fight off temptation or the power of mirror-world stuff.

Are You Playing White River, the Idol Dog?

☼ So... you used to just be named “Dog.” Well, “Soun Dog.” You thought that this was absolutely terrible and gave Soun Shounen a flat stare every time he called you that but he was impervious to your disdain—

Until you saved his life from a laundry-room flood and he reluctantly gave you a name.

And just in time, too!

You both started at School just three days after that and you can't even *imagine* how embarrassing it would be if people thought “dog” or “big ol' dog” or “puppy” was your actual name!

☼ As **White River, the Idol Dog**, you will be the competent one, the sane one, the one who holds it together and keeps everyone alive through the troubles that are to come. Also, you will be a dog.

White River, aka
The Idol





The Game Plan

 **“Just Another Day” (32 XP):**

Have fun. Stay in school. Duck the weird.

... until you complete this quest, figure out who you want to be, and start a grand scheme either to live that out—or to save the world, so you *can*.

 **“The Grand Scheme” (24 XP):**

Work on that grand scheme.

... until it starts to bear fruit: things are going to change.

 **“The Emissary” (24 XP):**

Something’s chosen you as an emissary—to Soma, or to the Halloween World, or whatever. Something’s trying to change you, corrupt you, or challenge your conception of yourself. Plus, your scheme’s started to pay off. How do these things relate? Figure it out when you’re starting the quest.

... and at the end of the quest, you meet the appropriate fate.

Epilogue—you probably either get a big tragic moment or a big heroic moment, or you get set up for one at the end of the game. Then, because this is a one-shot, instead of moving on to a new storyline, you hang out living your life.

Example Outcome—you become a legendary Halloween-world pop star, but don’t get to go home. Or, you break free of an evil *jarl*’s possession just in time to save the day... but *now* what do you do with your life?



Quest 2: “The Grand Scheme”

24 XP Quest

2: 

You’ve figured out who you want to be. *What* you want to be. And now: a grand scheme to either... *do* that, *here, now*, or to save the world so that you can do that thing later on.

This quest is for stuff like

- ✿ “I want to be a radio star! Let’s get the station built.”
- ✿ Or “an evil Halloween world’s invading? Let’s build a *warship*. Let’s hit them *back*.”

Either way, this quest is the story of how having the sun go out and monsters invade and stuff is *seriously* in the way of your plans for your life, and it reaches its end just as/before that starts to change. Maybe you’re on the verge of beating back the invading monsters. Maybe some *jarl* of the mirror-world is about to offer you the perfect way to realize your dreams.

...but by the morning after this quest completes, the first big signs that you’ve succeeded/are going to succeed in moving forward appear.

60

“Halloween World?”:

A Note to Soun Shounen

If the phrase “Halloween World” comes out of left field for you— there’s something but it’s not monsters at all?

Here’s what’s going on.

You can adjust your Perk options and my story suggestions to match.

The monsters that show up in Soma during the course of this game *probably* come from “the Halloween World on the other side of the mirror.” It’s *probably* ruled by a “usurper-King” and five subordinate “*jarls*.” That’s not *necessarily* the case—

...but it’s what’s most likely to come out of the other characters’ stories.

If you happen to know, from paying attention to what other people are doing in the game, that that’s *not* what’s happening here, that that’s *not* where the monsters are coming from, or there are no monsters, or



Quest 3: “The Emissary”

24 XP Quest

3: 

In this quest, you’re chosen as an emissary. Usually it’s by a powerful force that’s partly possessing you: like, the usurper-King of Halloween corrupts you and turns you into a spokesperson. Or some hidden witch living in Soma Village uses you to strike at or parlay with the mirror-world.

Sometimes you’re chosen/selected in an ordinary way, by ordinary people:

Selected by Soma to represent them, for instance, in peace negotiations. Or made the public rep for a radio station, sent to try to establish a broadcast license in the Halloween World.

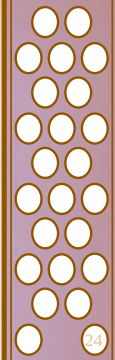
Even if your emissary-hood is normal, though, *something* is infecting you. Something is getting under your skin. Trying to *change* you. Challenging your conception of yourself. Something unrelated, maybe, like a monster that’s targeted you, or maybe being a radio rep is really getting to you and starting to undermine who you are?



Quest 3: “The Emissary”



XP



Major Goals







The HG can award you 4 XP towards this quest when:

- You get dragged into a fighting tournament.
- Something gets under your skin—Traumatizing or Corrupting you.
- You trash your own work to escape an awful fate.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 12 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

-  you stumble on an impossible problem
-  there’s something trying to devour you
-  you try to figure out new sleeping arrangements
-  you prep or do a test run for an event
-  you have coffee or something with work friends
-  you receive some sort of mild honor from your peers

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

The completion of this quest is usually *sort of* a bad thing.

You err. Or fall from grace. Or are changed. Usually, in short, you *lose* or *sell out*. You find a place among the mirror-world creatures, or betray the Village but get saved by others anyway, or you're corrupted and trapped and they can't rescue you. Sitting on a lonely throne somewhere in the Halloween World with your eyes glowing and your skin like a corpse's is a common ending—

But you're also allowed to have a happy ending, instead, wherein you grow as a person, cast out whatever tried to change you, and become a big damn hero at the end.

Either way, completing this quest means that your story is basically done. Everything from that point on is denouement. Maybe you have a big scene now, maybe it waits until everyone has finished up their own quests, but the *core* of your story is done.

Just in case you still need it, in that big scene or when you're waiting for the other players to catch up, you can:

- ☼ Declare that your Affliction (Mysterious Bishounen) has become a little more powerful;
- ☼ add +1 to a Skill, to your Bond, or gain a new level 1 Bond;
- ☼ gain a new level 1 Skill, optionally moving a point from something else to that Skill;

and!!

- ☼ pick one of the following rewards:
 - * you get to move 1-2 points between your Skills, or to a brand new Skill. For instance, you could sacrifice Delinquent to push Student to 3 or Empathy to a legendary rank 5;
 - * **Offensive Aura.** 1/chapter, your presence can trouble those around you. This is an action that you take that adds +1 to the Obstacle (max 3) for a certain category of actions, such as “evil magic,” “breathing,” “speaking,” or “feeling at ease.” Pick a more specific special effect—can you cancel out mirror-world powers? Can you radiate cold and make it hard to feel warm? Do you have a magic microphone that keeps people from interrupting you? or
 - * **Support Aura.** 1/chapter, your presence can support and help the people around you in some fashion. This is an action that you take, that acts as a +1 Tool for others taking appropriate actions. For instance, maybe you can help people fight the Halloween World, or help them rebuild society, or whatever.





The Exchange Student



Campaign:
The Chuubo's Halloween Special

Academics Skill: Above Average
Sports Skill: Ordinary
Favorite Foods: Seaweed Crackers, Pickled Vegetables, Stinky Cheeses
Blood Type: O
Animal: Mouse
Age: 12
An Interesting Fact About You: You have a stuffed rabbit toy that originally came from the Halloween World.



Character Description

Six years ago, you showed up.

You were a creature from the mirror-world—not human. Pointed ears, so—maybe an elf? Or maybe that’s just what angels look like, now-a-days?

Whatever.

You were six. You didn’t know. You don’t even really remember how or why you got here, to Soma, except that it was really hard, and there was darkness, and there was fire, and you were more tired than a person can be tired and live.

You found a place here, though.

You snuck yourself into a great detective’s family, right under her nose—well, maybe she let you—and hid your ears under a cap and you just tried to live.

...only, *she* died. And your dad *died*. And you *didn’t know what to do*. You tried hard...

You were *eight*.

You couldn’t figure it out.

So eventually you just gave up, turned yourself in to the Mayor as a troubled orphan, let him ship you off to Entropy’s School for, well, “de-troubling,” and started up a small detective agency there to pay for your juice boxes and cheeses.

A Home Away from Home

You don’t live in your dorm room. You don’t want to be found when you don’t want to be found. Or maybe you just couldn’t face moving in.

So you moved into an abandoned dormitory instead.

You jury-rigged up enough power to put up a flickering lightbulb. You brought in tossed-out stuff from the trash.

You sometimes tell people that it’s just your “office,” but it’s not. It’s your home. It’s your nest.



Shake it Up!

For an atypical **Exchange Student** experience, pick 0-3 of the following:

- ☼ you’re a few years older than 12. (14? 15? 272?)
- ☼ you are **Chuubo**, a boy from the mirror-world—
 - * and the *girl* in the mirror is named *Edony Marguerite*,
 - * and you’re not an elf, but a snake-person, with freely dislocatable/relocatable limbs
 - * and you don’t wear a cloak of night but a scarf you control like a snake’s tail
 - * and “*Superior Snake-Person*” is your Superior Skill
- ☼ you’re a cat-eared goblin instead of an elf/snake-person.

Secrets

☀️ You've known all your life that you were exchanged, but you didn't know until recently "with whom?"

Now you do.

As of a few days ago, you've *met* him—this boy named **Chuubo**. He lives in the mirror—well, not really. He lives in "the Halloween World" or "the mirror-world" or "the Halloween world on the other side of the mirror," instead.

...something like that.

It's apparently an actual place, just, y'know, kind of metaphysically relevant. Like, maybe the holiday gave rise to a kingdom somewhere out beyond the world, or maybe it's just called that because it's always Halloween there.

Apparently he'd been swapped for you, adopted by one of the mirror-world's *jarls*, but then he'd slipped away six years later and found a mirror and brought you a warning.

Trouble is coming, he'd said.

☀️ He's an ordinary boy. He's kind of bland, really. For a guy who grew up on the other side of the mirror, he's *shockingly* normal. But he says that the monsters are coming. That the world you live in, and Soma Village in *particular*, is going to end.

It makes you really unhappy. All your life you wanted wherever you came from—

You wanted it to be *good*.

☀️ **Later on, he'll probably get in trouble for warning you—it's common to need to rescue him, or bring him through, or something, as a side-plot during your second or third major quest.**

Fact Sheet

Summary

You are **Edony Marguerite, the Exchange Student**. You're not human. You're not a native. You were *sent* here, long ago, exchanged for someone from Soma Village, and you thought it was to help.

...but lately you aren't so sure.

A few days ago, your counterpart came to you in a mirror—the human boy you were exchanged with, a boy named "Chuubo" who grew up in the Halloween World—and he brought you a warning. **Halloween is coming...** and it's not going to be nice.

Starting Quests

"The Boy in the Mirror" (12 XP):

Talk to the boy in the mirror.

🌍 **"The Girl from Halloween" (28 XP):**

Learn about the mirror-world. Try not to take sides—it can't be *that* bad, right? But you shouldn't let people get hurt...

... until eventually you come to a decision about what you have to do about all of this.

(Continued in "Things Go... Poorly," pg. 79).

Bonus XP When...

Players emit an "aww!" or wince in sympathy at:

- 🌸 the things you go through;
- 🌸 your character's shy or helpless reaction to the same.

Abilities

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

☀️ **Schoolwork 1.**

You're familiar with this "studying" and "homework" phenomenon.

☀️ **Fearlessness 1.**

You're aware that being brave is always best.

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

☀️ You also have five abilities with special rules, described below. The first is a Superior Skill, which functions much like the abilities above (only better):

☀️ **(Superior) Cloak of Night 2.**

You're good at hiding and sneaking around.

☀️ The next two are magical Skills, which come with suites of specific techniques:

☀️ **Night-Craft 2.**

You can make life out of mud, blood, and spit.

☀️ **Changeling 2.**

You *are* one of these.

☀️ And the last two are inherent, generic abilities:

☀️ **"On the Case,"** a level 2 Bond that helps with detecting/problem-fixing, *and*

☀️ **"Inhuman,"** which gives you access to the natural powers of, well, whatever you are.

☀️ You have 1 Tough and 2 Normal Health Levels.

(Superior) Cloak of Night

Type: Superior Skill

Cost: —

You're naturally pretty good (Skill 2) at hiding, sneaking, tailing people, and just generally *not being seen*. But your magical cloak—

...OK, your repurposed childhood blanket—

It takes it to a whole new level.

When you're *wearing your cloak* and sneaking around or hiding, you have 1-2 Edge in an otherwise fair contest. It's a subtle magic, but you think it actually darkens the shadows around you in order to ensure you have somewhere to hide.

Why is it that your childhood blanket does this?

You're not sure.

You're not sure if it's a confidence thing, or a genuine-magical-cloth thing, or if it's an item that works because your belief feeds it power. But you think it's *probably* because of the cloth being some kind of magic—because you've tried *really hard* to believe that your old stuffed rabbit toy from back then was just as magical, that it can... can move, and talk, and shoot lasers or whatever? And it *doesn't*. It doesn't even make you better at jumping!

It just sits there, your rabbit, all ragged and loved.

“Inhuman”

Type: Affliction, level 0

Cost: —

You aren't quite human. At first this mostly just means “pointy ears,” but later on you might find yourself getting unexpected bumps to your archery Skills, having weird things happen, etc.

Let the HG know a range of acceptable concepts—it obviously matters whether you're “an elf, only from a scary world” or “an elf-like creature” or “one of the Fair Folk” or “a Halloween creature with pointy ears”—but beyond that, this isn't really under your control.

As your true self emerges, the HG will offer benefits and drawbacks as they seem to fit—things like

- ✿ bonuses to archery, equestrianism, woodcraft, hunting, or torture;
- ✿ improved hearing, vision, balance, and/or sense of smell
- ✿ the ability to speak in other peoples' voices
- ✿ the ability to compel others' devotion
- ✿ the ability to cast illusions and glamours
- ✿ the ability to wake and bind corpses into your service
- ✿ the ability to command fire
- ✿ the ability to conjure up a pale horse from the night
- ✿ the ability to tear open portals into the Halloween world
- ✿ you grow an extra eye
- ✿ small puffs of flame/bits of red cloth float randomly in the air around you
- ✿ you lose the ability to make emotional connections to humans
- ✿ iron starts burning you at a touch
- ✿ people stop being able to notice your arrivals: you're simply there, or not there
- ✿ animals start hating you
- ✿ the whites, irises and pupils of your eyes go away: there's just a vision of night and falling stars
- ✿ your shadow comes to life, *or*
- ✿ you no longer feel pain, for better or worse....

You won't get *much* of this, but you *should* get a few cool tricks and the occasional drawback from this Affliction—if that doesn't happen, prompt the HG.

Night-Craft

Type: Magical Skill

Cost: —

This is a dirty magic. It's not nice.

You don't know where you picked it up—probably from your nightmares. But it lets you do stuff like:

- [Obstacle 1]** Spin out your nightmares into steel-strong thread.
- [Obstacle 1]** Mold unusually sturdy things out of dirt, mud, and sand.
- [Obstacle 1]** Distill shadow and soil into various nasty poisons.
- [Obstacle 2]** Wake things you mold out of dirt, mud, and clay into servants
- [Obstacle 2]** Animate your blood or saliva, using will to move, solidify, or liquefy them.
- [Obstacle 3]** Given sufficient time, construct elaborate creatures out of your blood, soil, and your nightmares.


If you do too much of this, it'll affect you: your saliva and blood will become thick, black, and viscid, with a smell like slightly rotten fruit.

Genre Actions


In each chapter of play, you will take two **XP Actions**—


Things that'll earn XP for the group.


Here's some options that are readily available.


 **(Suffer) Adversity:** you're freaked out by...

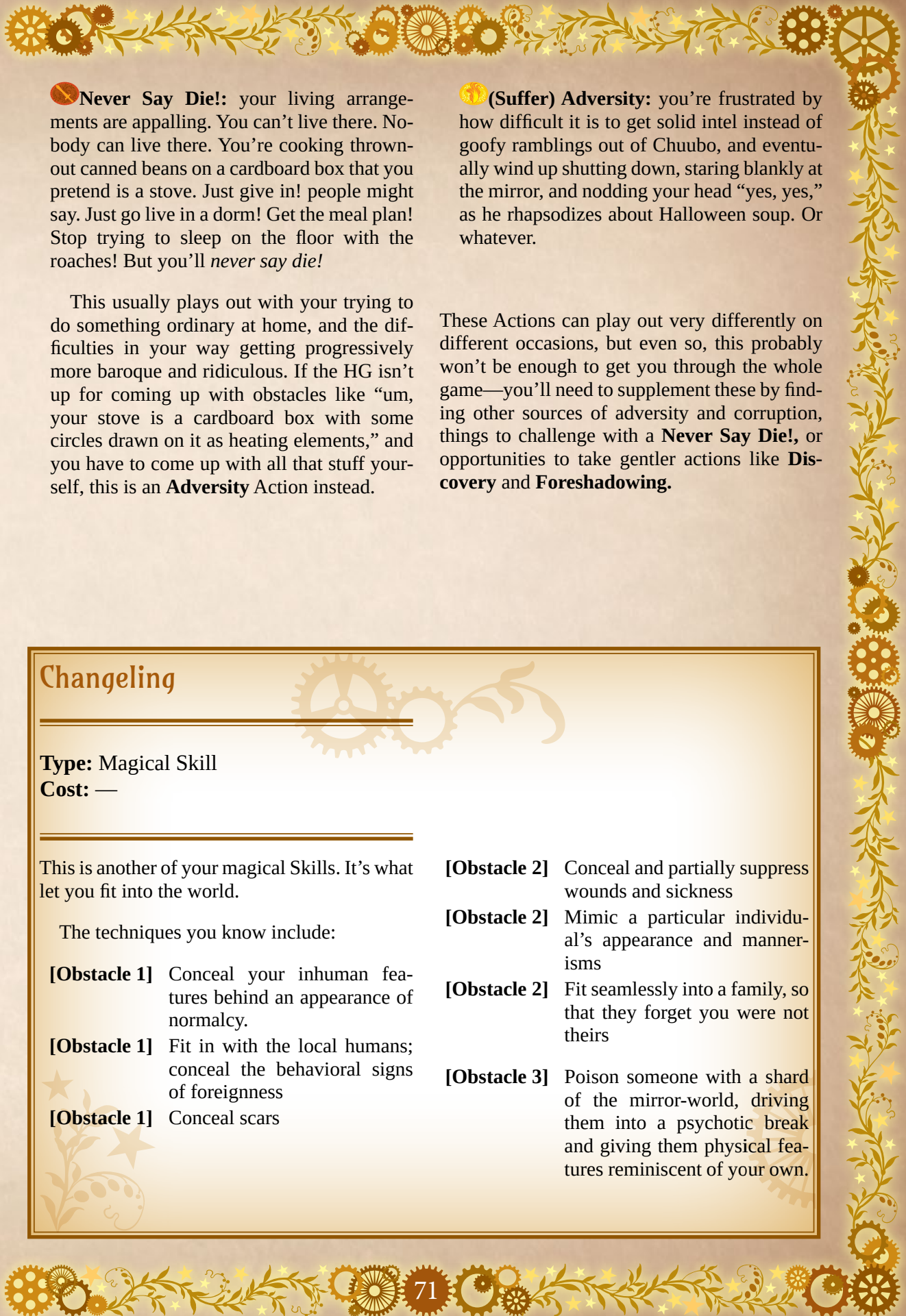
- * not knowing what you are exactly or why you're here
- * people being cruel to you as the not-human kid
- * discovering that your homeland isn't nice
- * realizing that whatever sent you here, it probably wasn't "to help"
- * ...leading to delirious daydreams of being surrounded by Halloween monsters, or lynched/dissected by humans.

 **(Suffer) Corruption/Trauma:** there's something evil in you trying to get out. If it's inherent, or some enemy from the mirror-world trying to take you over, this is Corruption. If it's basically imaginary, then it's Trauma.

 **(Suffer) Metamorphosis/Transformation:** your true nature is awakening as Halloween approaches. Your vision and balance are sharpening. You're remembering archery, hunting. Your ears are lengthening and your features are growing a bit less human.

 **(Suffer) Adversity:** your true nature is awakening as Halloween approaches—and it *hurts*. Memories of hunting are appearing in your head with migraines right next to them. Your facial shape is changing and *ow ow ow ow ow ow ow*.

 **(Suffer) Trauma:** one of your "cases" leads you to a rotting corpse. Or, a case reminds you of your family's death.



🚫 **Never Say Die!**: your living arrangements are appalling. You can't live there. Nobody can live there. You're cooking throw-out canned beans on a cardboard box that you pretend is a stove. Just give in! people might say. Just go live in a dorm! Get the meal plan! Stop trying to sleep on the floor with the roaches! But you'll *never say die!*

This usually plays out with your trying to do something ordinary at home, and the difficulties in your way getting progressively more baroque and ridiculous. If the HG isn't up for coming up with obstacles like "um, your stove is a cardboard box with some circles drawn on it as heating elements," and you have to come up with all that stuff yourself, this is an **Adversity** Action instead.

👉 **(Suffer) Adversity**: you're frustrated by how difficult it is to get solid intel instead of goofy ramblings out of Chuubo, and eventually wind up shutting down, staring blankly at the mirror, and nodding your head "yes, yes," as he rhapsodizes about Halloween soup. Or whatever.

These Actions can play out very differently on different occasions, but even so, this probably won't be enough to get you through the whole game—you'll need to supplement these by finding other sources of adversity and corruption, things to challenge with a **Never Say Die!**, or opportunities to take gentler actions like **Discovery** and **Foreshadowing**.

Changeling

Type: Magical Skill
Cost: —

This is another of your magical Skills. It's what let you fit into the world.

The techniques you know include:

- [Obstacle 1] Conceal your inhuman features behind an appearance of normalcy.
- [Obstacle 1] Fit in with the local humans; conceal the behavioral signs of foreignness
- [Obstacle 1] Conceal scars

- [Obstacle 2] Conceal and partially suppress wounds and sickness
- [Obstacle 2] Mimic a particular individual's appearance and mannerisms
- [Obstacle 2] Fit seamlessly into a family, so that they forget you were not theirs
- [Obstacle 3] Poison someone with a shard of the mirror-world, driving them into a psychotic break and giving them physical features reminiscent of your own.

Aww!

Your bonus XP emotion is *sympathy* or *pathos*—you want to tug at the players' heartstrings. Maybe it's because you really wanted your homeland to be a good place, and it isn't. Maybe it's because your reactions to trouble are cute.

Basically, you want to wobble between getting a high-pitched *aww!* at your cuteness and getting a low-pitched sympathetic *aww!* at your pain. And, just in case the other players are all life-hardened bastards who wouldn't *aww!* at a three-legged puppy, you can also get a bonus XP from overacting, trying too hard, and failing *so thoroughly* to tug at the heartstrings that they'll laugh at your *trying* instead—

They just have to throw in a fake *aww!* at the end.

Anyway!

Each *aww!* earns you one XP, and you can earn this XP up to once every 15 minutes. If another player *challenges* you to push yourself, despair, or otherwise do something appropriately (sym)pathetic, and you manage to earn an *aww!* out of it, you can earn an XP that isn't bounded by this rule.

Other Actions


In addition to the standard Adversity/Corruption stuff, here's some things you might find yourself doing in play—bearing in mind that you probably won't earn XP for out-of-genre actions unless you can make them entertaining enough to lure in the HG or compelling enough to lure in the whole group:



A Certain Kindness

Getting people to open up *could be*

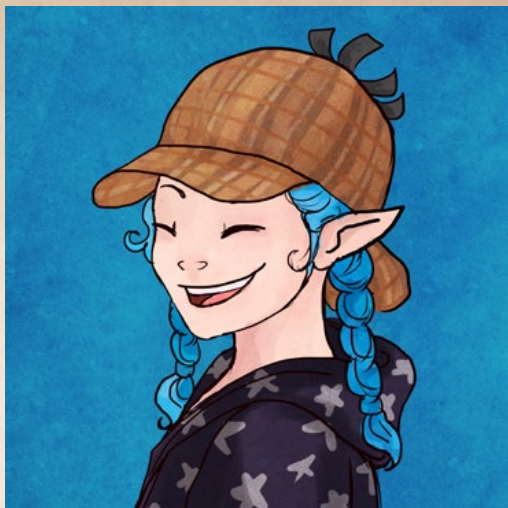
Shared Reactions

Trusting them *can be*  **Science, Faith, Sorcery**


You're more kind and forgiving than most people deserve... though, will that apply to nightmarish Halloween-World things, to humans, or both? Anyway, when you reach out to them, talk to them about your problems or theirs, and try to get them to open up—and if you're willing to make a genuine emotional connection that'll bond your fate to them long-term—that could be **Shared Reactions**.


If you decide to trust them, when there's no reason to, or, at least, when it's not obvious that you should? That could be **Science, Faith, and Sorcery**.






On the Case!

Time to investigate! *can mean*  **Discovery**

Seeing cool stuff *can be*  **Foreshadowing**

“I have a theory...” *could be*  **Science, Faith, and Sorcery**

If you’re exploring something—whether that’s talking to Chuubo or investigating a “case”—the HG might give you the opportunity to discover something neat, scary, or mysterious as a **Discovery** Action. Or you might get caught up in watching some fascinating event or listening to a story—

That could be **Foreshadowing**.

When it gets to the point of having theories about a case, or about who you are, or about what’s going on, then the HG may push you to *test* those theories—to find something that goes beyond what’s obvious, what’s known, and take a risk testing your idea out. That’s **Science, Faith, and Sorcery**.


“On the Case”

Type: Bond, level 2


Cost: —


You don’t actually have a detective *Skill*—your mom tried to teach you, but you wound up “learning” more from old Bogie movies and the “Blood Fang” books—but you’re still pretty serious about your little detective agency.

Pick 1-2 “cases” that you’re on at any given time—mysteries people have asked you to investigate, or people who’ve asked you for your help.

 Invoke **On the Case** when you’re on the case—investigating one of those mysteries, or trying to help a client with the specific thing they asked about—and if there’s an Obstacle or conflict in your way, you can add the Bond’s rating (2) to your Intention level.

An example Obstacle is “you’re too far away to see what’s going on.” An example conflict is someone that you’re tailing trying to lose you.

 Invoke **On the Case** when you get in trouble because of a case, and you can earn up to the Bond’s rating (2) in Will.

 It is notionally possible for you to replace food, water, sleep, and even *air* with the act of being on the case. If you’re clinging to the outside of a submarine because you’re trying to stick with a stolen object that you’ve been asked to retrieve, (and it’s inside), then in *theory* hanging on long enough for the submarine to cross the ocean is just extremely difficult (Obstacle 4) instead of fiat impossible.

This may be because you’re not human, or it may just be a **Fairy Tale** life kind of thing.

Playing Chuubo? Then...

☞ You think you are secretly a giant snake. But you do not want to be a giant snake.

Being a giant snake—you cannot emphasize this enough—is not productive. You cannot read comics efficiently, as a giant snake. You cannot play well with toy cars. You frighten people when you try to bump them on the shoulder and you have to eat your enemies *live*.

That is why you kept your head down.

You were probably sent here by loyalists to the old King of Halloween, sent to bring the apocalypse so that he could return to his throne—you have dim memories of this—but bringing an apocalypse carries with it implications of turning back into a giant snake and eating everyone instead of, like, savoring tasty tea cakes instead. So you didn't.

You didn't even try.

That is why you are so very upset to learn that the apocalypse is apparently going to start anyhow.

This girl, “Edony Marguerite,” recently showed up in the mirror. She apparently got swapped for you, all those years ago. You're not sure you believe her. Those pointed ears suggest “monster.” But she *says* she got swapped, and, hey, maybe she just learned changeling magic, like you.

Anyway, she'd gotten away from the *jarl* that adopted her to bring you a warning:

Halloween's coming. And all will not be well.

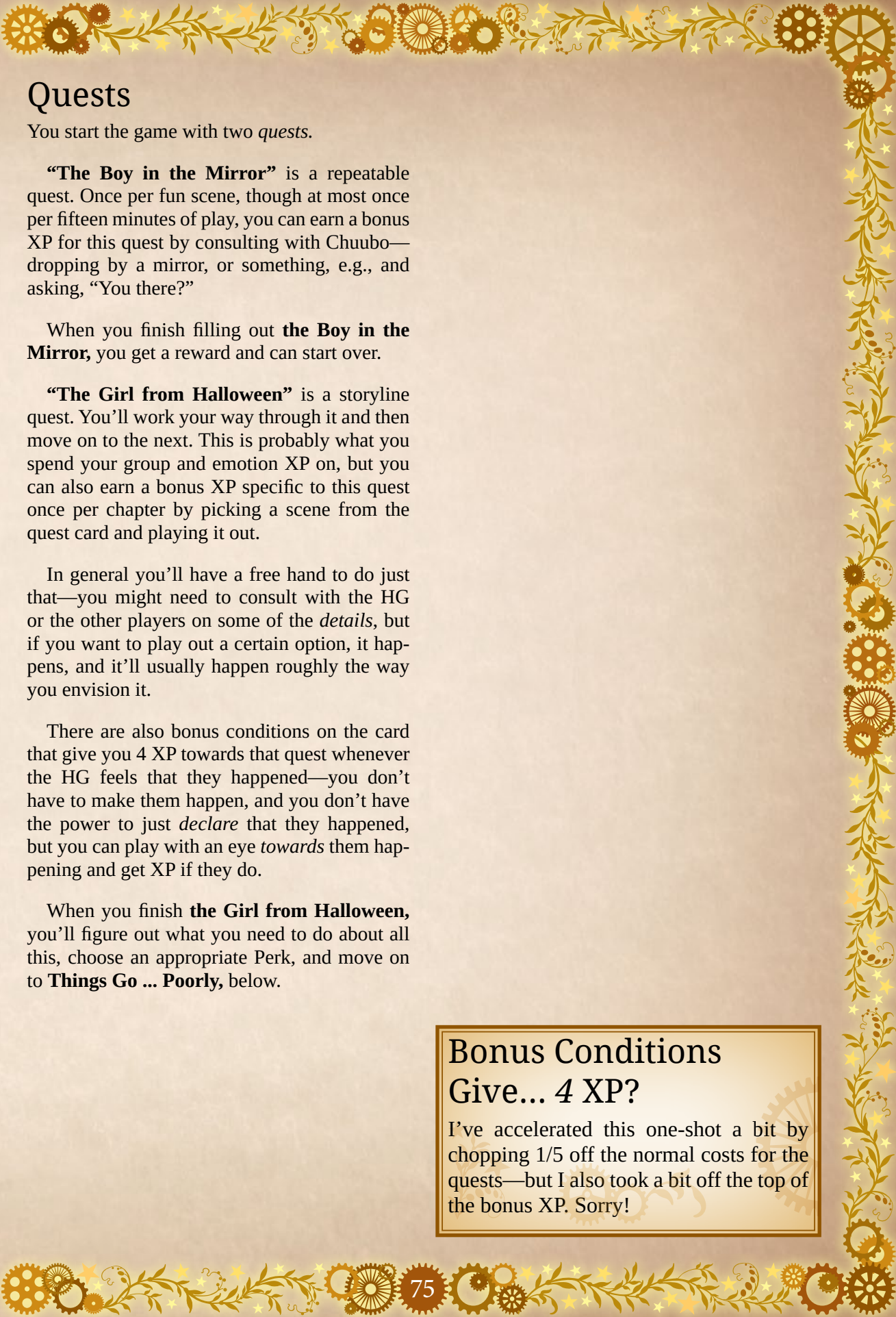
Now you are torn. You want to help her get out of the mirror. You want to remember more than a few flashes of where you came from. And you want to see the old King of Halloween on his throne. You're not sure if that's an ancient remembered loyalty or something programmed *into* you, but you *do*....

Only, you also really want the whole thing to just... go... Away!

☞ As Chuubo, your **Superior Snake-Person** Skill replaces the cloak of night, giving you a venomous bite, freely dislocatable and relocatable limbs, a good sense of smell, and control over your prehensile scarf.

Chuubo, aka
The Exchange Student





Quests

You start the game with two *quests*.

“**The Boy in the Mirror**” is a repeatable quest. Once per fun scene, though at most once per fifteen minutes of play, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest by consulting with Chuubo—dropping by a mirror, or something, e.g., and asking, “You there?”

When you finish filling out **the Boy in the Mirror**, you get a reward and can start over.

“**The Girl from Halloween**” is a storyline quest. You’ll work your way through it and then move on to the next. This is probably what you spend your group and emotion XP on, but you can also earn a bonus XP specific to this quest once per chapter by picking a scene from the quest card and playing it out.

In general you’ll have a free hand to do just that—you might need to consult with the HG or the other players on some of the *details*, but if you want to play out a certain option, it happens, and it’ll usually happen roughly the way you envision it.

There are also bonus conditions on the card that give you 4 XP towards that quest whenever the HG feels that they happened—you don’t have to make them happen, and you don’t have the power to just *declare* that they happened, but you can play with an eye *towards* them happening and get XP if they do.

When you finish **the Girl from Halloween**, you’ll figure out what you need to do about all this, choose an appropriate Perk, and move on to **Things Go ... Poorly**, below.


Bonus Conditions Give... 4 XP?

I’ve accelerated this one-shot a bit by chopping 1/5 off the normal costs for the quests—but I also took a bit off the top of the bonus XP. Sorry!



Side Quest: The Boy in the Mirror

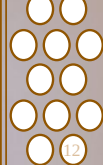
12 XP Quest

 Chibi-Quest



The Boy in the Mirror

XP



Bonus XP

There's a boy in the mirror—

A human boy named Chuubo, who took your place back in the Halloween World. He can tell you about the place—about your *hometown*, about the threats that are troubling Soma Village, and about what's going on.

It's got you in turmoil.

It's inchoate. You know? There isn't something you can just always *do* to show how you're feeling about all this. There may be something you can *do right now*, but whatever that thing is, it evolves.

This quest is about how you feel but there's no simple, repeatable way to express those feelings. Instead, it's like this:

You can earn an XP at any time (though only once per fun scene/15 minutes) by finding a mirror or something mirror-like and saying, "You there?"

Or anything else where you wouldn't normally expect someone to be. The sky. Your hands. A mirror. A dead phone's handset.

"You there?"

Completing this quest earns you a **Recharge Token**, which you can spend at any time to have a plot-relevant flashback or insight—and either restore your Will, shake off a Surface Wound, or replace a Serious Wound with a Surface Wound.

Quest 1: “The Girl from Halloween”

28 XP Quest

1: 

So let’s start with you as **Edony, the Exchange Student**, and the School’s best detective.

You solve cases—mostly schoolkid cases.


You’re not human, but early on, nobody’s going to hold that against you. I mean, kids, sure, they’re jerks sometimes, but *Soma Village* doesn’t think there’s anything wrong with being an elf. There’s even a few random *you-kai* here, you know, a foxboy, a pavilion *tsukumogami*, a few ghosts, and the like.

And you’ve always wanted to know more about why you’re here and where you’ve come from, only, now that you’ve found out? It doesn’t seem all that great.

You don’t know where your loyalties lie.

Where they *ought* to lie.





Quest 1: “The Girl from Halloween”

Major Goals














The HG can award you 4 XP towards this quest when:

- Intruders break into your sanctuary.
- Mirror-world information is helpful in the real world.
- You’re in serious trouble, most likely in School.
- Something associated with your parents shows up unexpectedly in play.

You can earn up to three of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 12 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

-   you want to run away to the mirror-world
-   you fix up your sanctuary/home/office/nest
-   you drag a friend into some kind of investigation
-   you tell stories of the real world to the mirror
-  you’re forced to hang out with somebody
-   you get in a fight, probably over your heritage
-   you take on a new case, or pursue an ongoing one

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

XP

77

28



Figuring that out is this quest; when you get to the end, you'll know what you have to do about all this. A path you're called to walk. Whatever.

By default this is the "right" path for you, although if you don't want that certainty, you can have the HG boil it down to 2-3 options and pick (the possibly wrong) one instead.

Completing this quest also comes with a reward—your choice of:

- ✿ **Superior Dreamer.** You gain the a level 1 "Superior Dreamer" Skill, which comes with lucid dreaming and a generally heightened ability at coping with weirdness.
- ✿ **Bonus.** 1/chapter, you can call upon your relationship with Chuubo as (choose one):
 - * a +1 Tool for faking humanity;
 - * a +1 Tool for any action, but only if he's right there in the mirror;
 - * a +1 Tool for any action, but only by "channeling" him and becoming more like him.
- ✿ **Bonus.** Another Halloween entity has shown up in the mirror—a friend of Chuubo? A being claiming to be your maker? Someone *replacing* Chuubo?
1/chapter, you can call on this creature as a +1 Tool for any action, even when it's not there, but when you do so, it progressively influences you.
- ✿ **Bonus.** You have a small power relating to mirrors. Can you use them as light sources? Can you find them in improbable places? Are you really good at freshening yourself up? This is either:
 - * 1/chapter, a +1 Tool for some talent; or
 - * a new Obstacle 2-3 technique for your **Changeling** magical Skill.

Quest 2: "Things Go... Poorly"

28 XP Quest

2: 

You've decided what to do. Whose side you're on. How to solve the situation with Halloween.

But...

It's difficult to *stick* by this decision.

This quest is basically the time period where going with your plan is really... *hard*. Where you have factors that keep coming up to make you doubt yourself, or make you feel like you can't trust yourself, or make you want to give up.



Quest 2: "Things Go... Poorly"

Major Goals













The HG can award you 4 XP towards this quest when:

- You learn something horrifying about yourself.
- Something wicked shows you honor, or, you tame it.
- Someone teases you about your old stuffed rabbit.
- You wake up, covered in blood.

You can earn up to three of these bonuses, once each, for a total of 12 XP.

Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

-   you monologue about the Halloween World
-   you fight off a mirror-world beast, or, at least, you give it a try
-   you hunt for something that's been hurting people
-   you stake something out with a friend
-   you dream of a huntress
-  you get distracted mid-conversation by a mirror, or something seen in a mirror
-  you talk to someone about what it means to be/*not* to be human

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

XP

79

28



After 28 XP, though, you can let go of that. You can accept the path you're on. And you'll earn one of the following rewards:

- ✿ **Bonus.** You've gotten a power tied to a responsibility that you didn't really want. This is a one-time* +3 bonus to (pick one):
 - * Binding or defeating Halloween beasts;
 - * Opening a gate to or from Halloween;
 - * Arbitrating the succession in the Halloween world (if, e.g., the usurper-King is dying);
 - * ...or something else that fits the story you played.

or ...

- ✿ **Bond.** Gain a level 1 Bond representing something bad that happened to you, e.g.,
 - * "Forbidden entry to the Halloween World."
 - * "Alone in the world."
 - * "Bound to the life of the mirror-boy."
 - * "One shot, one kill."—meaning, you can't hold back with archery.



Technically, it's "once per story," but this campaign is a one-shot!

Quest 3: “How Sharper than a Serpent’s Tooth”

24 XP Quest

3: 

Something is reaching out from Halloween to change you. You’ve heard the voice of your “creator” or “parent,” and maybe it’s that creator/parent, or maybe it’s someone working for them, or maybe it’s an enemy and your creator’s trying to warn you—

But there’s *something* that’s corrupting you.

You’re becoming... not what you want to be.

And this quest continues right up to the point where you *beat* that. Where you find a part of yourself that *hasn’t* changed. Or *won’t*.



Quest 3: “How Sharper than a Serpent’s Tooth”

Major Goals











The HG can award you 4 XP towards this quest when:

- Something Corrupts you, taking over your actions for a time.
- You defeat some impossible enemy.
- Something precious to you is lost, or unexpectedly remade.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of 12 XP.

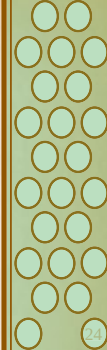
Quest Flavor

1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP towards this quest when:

-  you can’t sleep. Nightmares? Agitation? A snake in your bed?
-   you’re haunted by dreams of being eaten, devoured, *lost*
-   something is changing how you look
-   someone reaches out to you, or tells you how much you help
-  you gather people together to talk about something
-   you fall into despair

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

XP



24



At that point your story is pretty much done. You've found your loyalties and you've found yourself. Maybe you do something big and definitive then. Maybe you wait for the others to finish out their quests and *then* do something awesome. And afterwards, until the end of the game, you just hang out being **Edony**.

But your story ends there.

Let's give you some rewards for finishing your story out. You can:

- ☼ Declare that your Affliction (Inhuman) has become a little more powerful;
- ☼ add +1 to a Skill, to your Bond, or gain a new level 1 Bond;
- ☼ gain a new level 1 Skill, optionally moving a point from something else to that Skill;

and!!

- ☼ gain a rare and probably magical weapon—either literally a weapon, or something that can be used as such under the circumstances. This becomes part of your character sheet, so you can take a wound to prevent it getting broken or taken away.

The Game Plan

🌐 **“The Girl from Halloween” (28 XP):**
Learn about the mirror-world. Try not to take sides—it can't be *that* bad, right? But you shouldn't let people get hurt...

... until eventually you come to a decision about what you have to do about all of this, and move on to “Things Go... Poorly.”

🌐 **“Things Go... Poorly” (28 XP):**
Your plan goes... poorly. It's hard to stick to it.

... but eventually you let those doubts and uncertainties go, and move on to...

🌐 **“How Sharper than a Serpent's Tooth” (24 XP):**
Something from the other world is trying to corrupt you. To *change* you. It's connected in some fashion to a creator or parent—or at least to something responsible for your

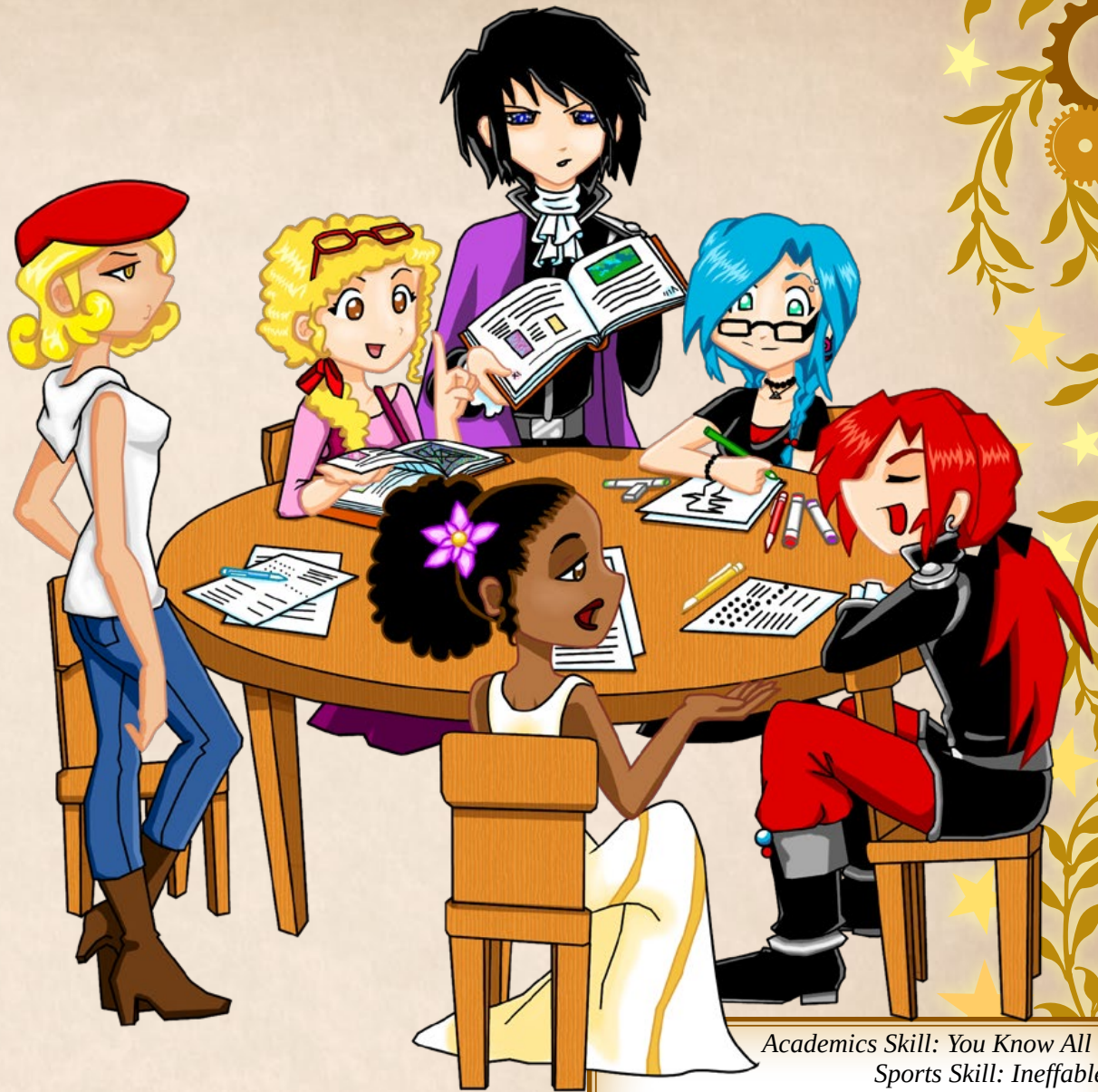
ending up here.

... and at the end of this quest, you find something about yourself that they were unable to corrupt. Something that hasn't changed, or *won't*.

Epilogue—you probably do something big and cool, although your story is mostly personal so it probably won't resolve the big-picture situation on its own.

Example Outcome—you defy the usurper-King of Halloween, breaking his power and letting the Headmaster defeat him. Or, you realize that everyone in Soma has always been Halloween-World creatures in masks, and you laugh, and you go off to play with your newly inhuman friends. Or, you have a tearful goodbye with Chuubo in front of a mirror, and then it breaks.

The HG



*Academics Skill: You Know All
Sports Skill: Ineffable
Favorite Foods: Snacks
Animal: Tiger
An Interesting Fact About You: Your title
derives from the Victorian language of flowers—
you are “the Hollyhock God.”*

Campaign:
The Chuubo’s Halloween Special

Backstory

Here's a summary of the story so far, with a few icons added for tone.

17 years ago:

Six *jarls* of the Halloween World betray the Halloween King, cast him down, take his power and his nature from him, steal it, prison his holy flame in the heart of a jack o'lantern, and build the world (or at least Soma Village) to contain him. A usurper-King takes over the Halloween World.

6 years ago:









Edony shows up from the mirror-world. If Chuubo's story is legit, he gets kidnapped to the mirror world and adopted by a *jarl*.

4-5 years ago:

Edony's family dies. (Why? How? If Edony starts talking about why and how ...believe her. Otherwise, ignore it; or make something up; or let the answer emerge through natural play.)

Rules Tweaks

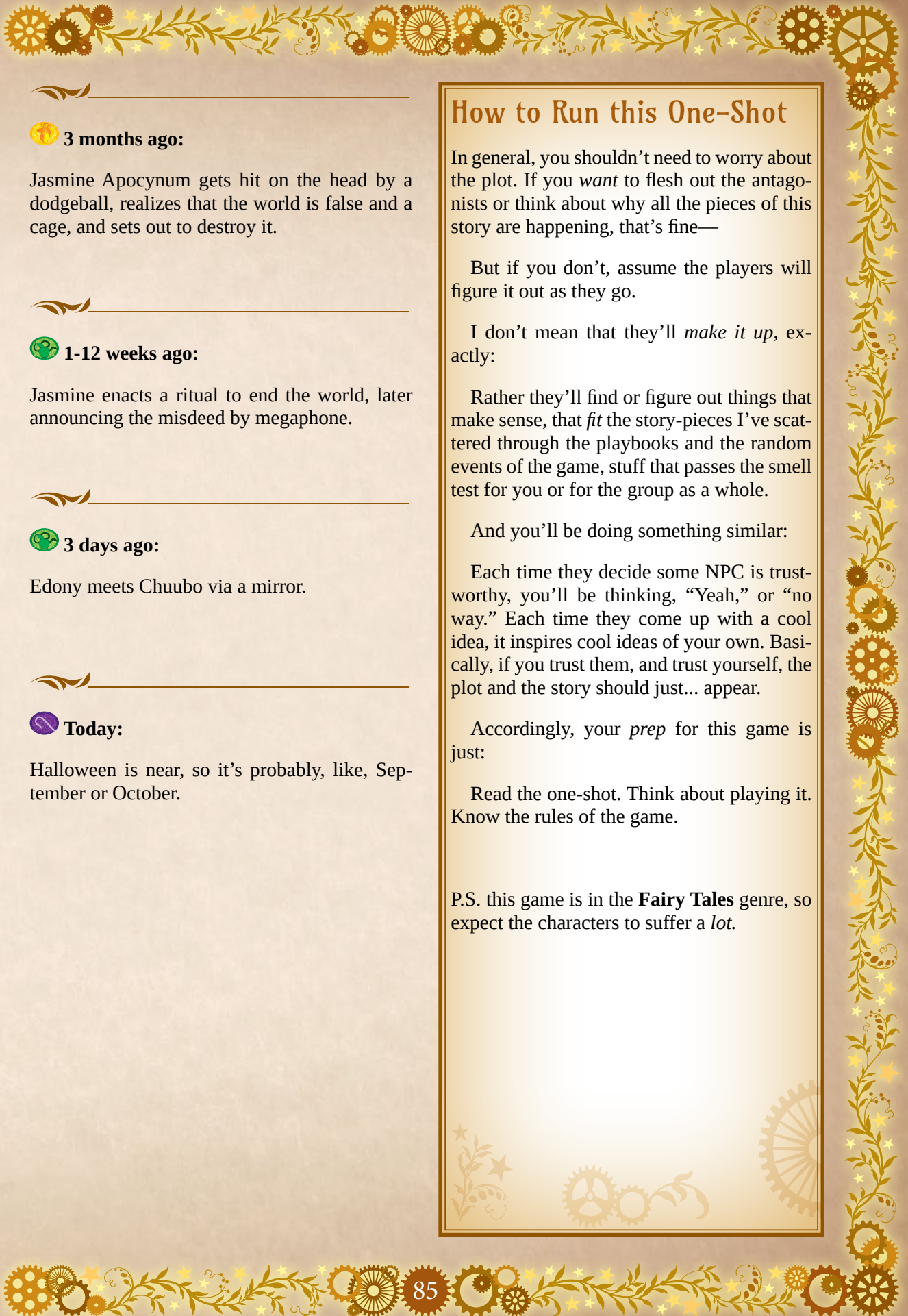
The major tweaks to the standard *Chuubo's* rules are as follows:


-  this is a one-shot, so once-per-story powers have become one-use.
-  I've cut quest costs down by 20%.
-  I've cut 5 XP bonuses down to 4 XP.
-  I've given minor special effects to the Recharge Tokens.
-  I've added ways around the 15-minute rule for emotion XP.
-  quests are pre-assigned, and players can't pick new ones.
-  Perks are chosen from short lists rather than the space of all possibility.
-  your first Arc finishes when you complete your three* storyline quests, regardless of how much total XP you earned.

You'll also notice that characters can use Recharge Tokens to heal a little faster from wounds, rather than needing a separate 15-XP quest just for that. This isn't a rules change for this campaign, but rather, a recommended rules option for **Fairy Tales** gaming in general.


Or four, if you're using the roll-your-own PC rules on pg. 119!






 **3 months ago:**


Jasmine Apocynum gets hit on the head by a dodgeball, realizes that the world is false and a cage, and sets out to destroy it.

 **1-12 weeks ago:**

Jasmine enacts a ritual to end the world, later announcing the misdeed by megaphone.

 **3 days ago:**

Edony meets Chuubo via a mirror.

 **Today:**

Halloween is near, so it's probably, like, September or October.

How to Run this One-Shot

In general, you shouldn't need to worry about the plot. If you *want* to flesh out the antagonists or think about why all the pieces of this story are happening, that's fine—

But if you don't, assume the players will figure it out as they go.

I don't mean that they'll *make it up*, exactly:

Rather they'll find or figure out things that make sense, that *fit* the story-pieces I've scattered through the playbooks and the random events of the game, stuff that passes the smell test for you or for the group as a whole.

And you'll be doing something similar:

Each time they decide some NPC is trustworthy, you'll be thinking, "Yeah," or "no way." Each time they come up with a cool idea, it inspires cool ideas of your own. Basically, if you trust them, and trust yourself, the plot and the story should just... appear.


Accordingly, your *prep* for this game is just:


Read the one-shot. Think about playing it. Know the rules of the game.

P.S. this game is in the **Fairy Tales** genre, so expect the characters to suffer a *lot*.

Timeline


Here's a summary of the story to come.

 **Chapter 1:** We meet the PCs.


 **Intro to Chapter 2:**

The sun goes out, and a “false sun” rises. Strange weather effects begin.

- ✿ **Entropy** mostly tries to ignore the weird happenings.
- ✿ **Shounen** mostly tries to ignore the weird happenings.
- ✿ **Jasmine** enjoys them.
- ✿ **Edony** stresses out over whether to be on Team Human or Team Monster.


 **Intro to Chapter 4:**

A trackless mist surrounds Soma Village.


 **~Chapter 5-6:**

Characters begin finishing their first quest and moving on to their second:

- ✿ **Entropy** comes up with a big project.
- ✿ **Shounen** starts his own grand scheme.
- ✿ **Jasmine** tries to step up and take charge, or, to help from the shadows.
- ✿ **Edony** makes her choice, but has trouble sticking to it.


 **~Chapter 6:**

Monsters from the Halloween World start slipping through. (Why? Think about it, but you don't have to have a definitive answer.)

 **~Chapter 10-12:**


Characters begin finishing their second quest and moving on to their third:

- ✿ **Entropy** tries to figure out what's nagging at the back of his mind.
- ✿ **Shounen** becomes an emissary from one world to the other.
- ✿ **Jasmine** hunts through a labyrinth for a new sun (or somesuch.)
- ✿ **Edony** struggles with something trying to corrupt/control her.

 **~Chapter 15-18:**

Characters begin finishing their third quest and resolving their stories:

- ✿ **Entropy** lives up to his title as the original Halloween King.
- ✿ **Shounen** suffers a tragedy.
- ✿ **Jasmine** finds what she was looking for.
- ✿ **Edony** breaks at least partially free.

 **~Chapter 18-21:**

The story comes to an end..

Antagonists

The major antagonists for this game are the six *jarls* that stole the throne of the Halloween World. You can start with vague concepts here—I'd suggest

- ☼ concepts taken from your own ideas for nightmarish/Halloween monster-gods.
- ☼ or from weird angelology stuff
- ☼ or from the “Six Sins” discussed on pg. 243-244 of the *Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* RPG:
 - * the “blood magician, and eyes of a dead god,” **Lee Scathing**;
 - * **the Exultant**, who loves wickedness because it is wickedness;
 - * **Owler**, the body-thief;
 - * **Mourning**, the vampire prince;
 - * **Glass Spider**, who can inject others with compulsive/intrusive ideas and likes to put on plays; *and*
 - * **Impious**, who loves the wounded and their strength in surviving hardship.

and expect to sharpen the details during:

- ☼ play, when random correlations/ideas occur to you;
- ☼ NPC descriptions of them—if you notice that whatever you're saying is interesting the players to the point of justifying a **Foreshadowing** Action, run with it, keep free-associating or talking about your ideas;
- ☼ PC deliria—the hallucinations and surreal effects at the end of **Adversity** Actions or in the middle of a **Corruption, Trauma, or Metamorphosis** Action often evoke or relate to a *jarl* or other big Halloween deal; *and*
- ☼ during the escalation stages of a **Never Say Die!** or **Trouble**-based conflict with them.

Either the worst of the six *jarls*, or some other entity—Chuubo?—has been lifted up to be Halloween's usurper-King.

It's probably best to give the *jarls* PC-level Health and treat most of their powers as magical Skills. That said, if you're familiar with the miracle rules, consider giving the usurper-King himself a rank or two of the miraculous Trait **Become Somebody**.

You can probably improv descriptions of the monsters from the Halloween World—

Just come up with scary-sounding stuff, it doesn't have to be grounded in a coherent ecosystem. In rules terms, monsters from the Halloween World are *mostly* an excuse for **Corruption, Trouble, Trauma, and Never Say Die!**—I mean, you can stat them up with terrifying Superior and magical Skills at level 2-3 in case of a conflict, but the numeric conflict in a mortal-level game isn't *that* interesting. Instead, assume that players willing to burn a lot of Will can probably brute-force defeat them, but either figuring out a trick to defeat them, or using them as engines for XP Actions is best.

Flashbacks

Edony and the Headmaster are both able to have plot-relevant flashbacks or insights by spending a Recharge Token. The players may handle this on their own—don't be *too* surprised if you see Entropy's player throwing down a Recharge Token and launching into a detailed flashback about the mirror-world without even asking you—but if they're looking at you to narrate something, here's your goal:

- * Give them something they can use to resolve whatever's at the top of their mind.

Chuubo

Chuubo is a major source of information on the Halloween World—and, unfortunately, he’s in contact with Edony *long* before you’re going to know the details of how that world works.

There are three ways to handle this.

First, I should note that if an IC conversation really goes haywire, you can always push for the game to shift towards XP Actions, or keep the information abstract—“he tells you stories of the places and things he’s seen for a bit, while we scene-shift to...”

That said, if that’s not satisfying, one option is to assume Chuubo’s presence is fragmented and distracted. Maybe he can only make it to the mirror on occasion. Maybe his voice is from far away. Maybe he can only show images, mutely, most of the time. Maybe you ask him questions and he nods and says, “I’ll get back to you,” and then you wake up with answers taped to the other side of the mirror the next day.

Basically, stuff to constrict the channel of information flow.

Another option is mostly OOC: make Edony’s player responsible for most of the indumps. If Edony starts interrogating Chuubo, switch to asking the player, “What do you expect to find out here? What do you think the answers are? Give me some thoughts.”

And then work from there.

The final option is to assume that Chuubo is fundamentally rather ignorant: he’s seen many surreal sights and creatures, and many scary events, and he can describe them, but he doesn’t know the military plans or the powers or the weaknesses of the *jarls*. He doesn’t know why the sun died, though he can take guesses. He’s super-impressed by the usurper-King but he has no idea why. He probably heard about the invasion because the *jarl* doesn’t always pay attention to his presence when having guests, but he doesn’t know the details. He probably broke into a treasury to get whatever magic lets him appear in



the mirrors; it may be that he stole the tool or weapon the *jarl* was going to use to invade, and *that's* what lets him appear; he can be *cool*—

But he's not a *source*.

He's just some random *kid*.

I'd recommend that the *jarl* who took him be either:

- ☼ a fairy-tale giant, if you're into generic scary stuff—one of those “grind human bones to make their bread” types who's always threatening to eat him;
- ☼ a creature with human, eagle, boar, and snake heads and four arms and random wings here and there; *or*
- ☼ Lee Scathing, who's teaching him “alchemy.”

The most important thing here is that basically, Chuubo's a goofy kid who has more guesses than data. If the PCs won't have any of that and push him towards a complicated plan to find out the exact data they want, let him vanish for a bit to implement it—

He can't be in a mirror *while* investigating stuff on his side.

As a helpful guide to playing him, I note that I'd expect...

- ☼ The shocking twist that he's a completely ordinary kid, about two games in five;
- ☼ The shocking twist that he has an extraordinary talent, about two games in five; *and*
- ☼ The shocking twist that he's the usurper-King of Halloween, faking innocence to fool Edony into doing something that plays into his hands—about one game in five.

If you assume that last option is true, you'll be well-set-up to change your mind later on.

Note

Edony's storyline occasionally references other things that show up in the mirror—for instance, her alleged “creator” or “parent.”

This will usually be some Halloween creature that's either Chuubo's “friend,” or possibly his original source of information, or someone that's found out he's talking to Edony and is compelling him to share his mirror-talking device. Personally, I keep imagining big winged poisonous snakes.

Chapters and XP

☼ A typical chapter plays out in 15-90 minutes, so this game should last 5-30 hours. You *may* find it taking several times longer than that if you linger over the stuff between XP Actions, which I think **Fairy Tales** incentivizes—

But that's up to your particular group.

☼ Each chapter, encourage the players to earn 2 Action XP and 1 Storyline XP.

In particular, if they're not all taking two XP Actions each chapter, something is *wrong*—by a strict reading of the Fairy Tales genre rules, that can only happen if one or more PCs have lost all their health levels and become NPCs.

Try to make sure emotion XP happen.

Try to remember to hand out Issues between chapters, or even mid-stream.

If the PCs' quests are progressing too slowly, start introducing the optional bonus XP rules for the XP Actions—they can potentially speed the game up by 50+%.

☼ When beginning a new chapter, read from the chapter intro (on pg. 90-97)... or prep your own equivalents thereto and do *those!*

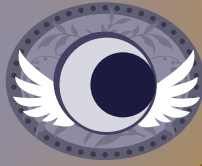
Intro to Chapter 1

Welcome to Soma! It's an ordinary day. The sun is bright. People seem happy. There's laundry hanging on the laundry-lines and soups cooking in the kitchens and the homes.

The Academy sits partway up "Kailas Mantra," the little mountain above Soma Village.

Birds fly beyond the Academy walls. Clouds scurry in the sky.

Those walls seem to seal you in.



Intro to Chapter 2

The sun goes out.

There is a long darkness, and then a "false sun"—pale, flickering, pre-eclipsed—rises in its place.

A while later...



Intro to Chapter 3

The sky is different today.

There are swirls of purple, orange, and darkness moving among the stars.





Intro to Chapter 4

“The stars seem to taunt you. They are like glittering eyes.”

There is a mist around Soma Village and the mountain—people who’ve tried to leave seem to vanish, or show up back in town. And the ones that come back speak of the stars—as if personally wounded, as if traumatized, as if their time spent in the mist was also spent being mocked and laughed at by the sky above.



Intro to Chapter 5

The false sun did not rise today. The moon is barely a sliver.

It is dark.

This chapter is a +1 Tool to sneaking, treachery, and spite.



Intro to Chapter 6

Later in the day it begins to rain—not ordinary rain, but this horrible cheap alcohol.

You worry about fires.

Note: if it hasn't happened yet, this might be a good time for the first monster to show up.



Intro to Chapter 7

There are lights flickering in the sky—like television screens. There’s a silver glow, sometimes distant static or voices, occasional distorted faces showing up amidst the starlight above.

You can see yourself up there, sometimes—like there’s a screen showing a filming of you.



Intro to Chapter 8

The false sun is back, rising amidst the stars—stars that wobble like puffs of orange flame.

This chapter is a +1 Tool for celebration, drinking, dancing, and unbound passion.

Note: if it hasn't happened yet, this might be a good time for the first or second monster to show up.

Intro to Chapter 9

The fires in the sky are bloating outwards from the “stars,” running along the sky in rivulets, and dripping down in great globs of pitch-fueled flame onto the world below.

This chapter is a +1 Tool to desperate measures, cutting ties, and hiding from your fears.



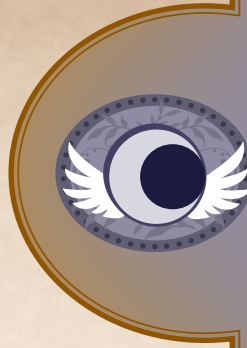


Intro to Chapter 10

The fire in the sky is hidden behind the red-lit clouds. It's raining again—

Gumdrops, lollipops, candy, apples—

They're just falling from the sky.



Intro to Chapter 11

The clouds have passed on and the sky is one great sheet of fire. The false sun is writhing, screaming, as if it were a person. You do not need its light.

This chapter is a +1 Tool to doing harm and murder.



Intro to Chapter 12

The sky has burnt out for now. It is black and crisped, like caramelized sugar. The false sun hangs loosely in the sky, as if exhausted.

Ash blows through Soma on the wind.

Many who have gone into the mists of late have not returned.



Intro to Chapter 13

It feels like there's something moving behind the sky. You can hear screams—distant, tormented howling—beyond it.

This chapter is a +1 Tool to deeds of repentance, acts to cleanse your conscience, and acts of fear.

P.S.: if the PCs have affected the sky, you may need to start improvising.



Intro to Chapter 14

The moon is struck by a black arrow; it tumbles from the sky. It lands in Soma, great and cracked and broken—round as a kettle, big as an inn, split on impact, and made of chalky stone.

Its light is dead. Its place in the sky is lost. There was something inside it, a hollow at its center, but that thing is gone.

At night, if you do not stop them, wolves will slink into Soma, take bites from the moon, and run away again, until there is nothing left.



Intro to Chapter 15

There are stars again, but their positions are nothing like you know.

Is that constellation a scorpion? Is that one a lion?

A real scorpion is spotted skittering away, and the discussion goes quiet, at least for now.

This chapter is a +1 Tool for continuing on your ongoing path.





Intro to Chapter 16

A drizzle of good wine from the sky lifts a few spirits until it unexpectedly transitions to blood.



Intro to Chapter 17

The rain is over but the clouds remain. A wind blows and bends the trees. Fireflies are everywhere: they rise up from the grass in great bloated swarms. They dance in the mist that's surrounding the town like so many will-o-wisps.

Now and then, there are a few moments when the false sun is visible through the clouds: like a bone protruding from the flesh, it is; like a soul without its veil.

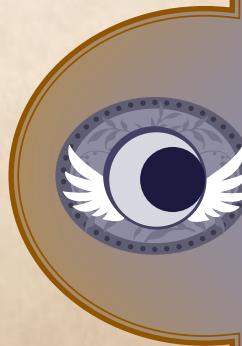
This chapter is a +1 Tool towards foolish schemes, visions of distant lands, and endings.



Intro to Chapter 18

It is true night. The false sun has set, and time seems to slow—

It will be a while until morning.





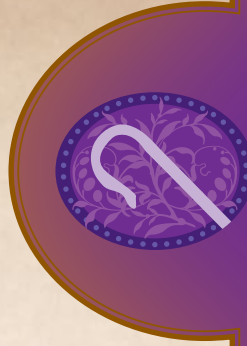


Intro to Chapter 19

The false sun rises for the last time.

You can see it. It's struggling. The sky is like treacle; like black soup; it is too tired to move through it. If you're lucky, it'll stick there until the story ends; if you're unlucky, it will set, and be gone.

This chapter is a +1 Tool towards melancholy, quixotic sympathy, and love.

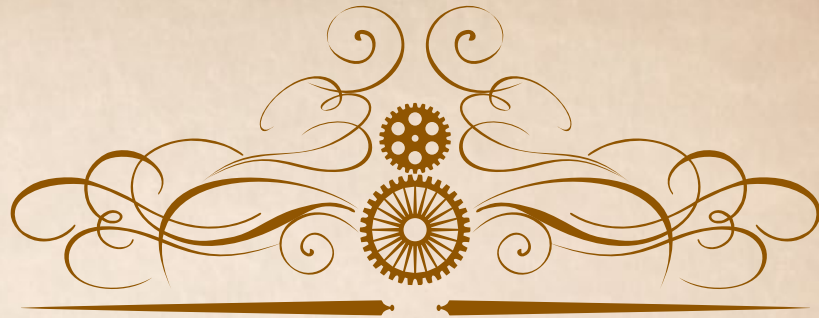


Intro to Chapter 20+

[[invite a player to describe the sky.]]







The “Fairy Tales” Genre



The “Fairy Tales” Genre

The default genre for the *Chuubo’s Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* Halloween Special is a Fairy Tale—

Only, “happily ever after” is a long way away.

Consider, for instance, the standard **XP Actions** for the genre:



Fairy Tales



(Suffer) Adversity: you experience something awful. So awful!



Never Say Die: you’re overwhelmed and outmatched. This is a doomed and impossible battle—but you’ll still fight to your last drop of strength!



(Suffer) Corruption, Trauma, or Metamorphosis: something outside your control is *changing* you. Things get a little weird and surreal.

The default mode of play is that every PC works through two Actions like this every “chapter”—there are a few nicer options, but they’re not guaranteed—and after each such Action they’ll be a wreck for a while, fading briefly into the background of play. Their best hope for survival is to manage, *most* of the time, to roll with the punches; to get hurt in a way that lets them get up again afterwards... rather than falling into a death spiral of ever-increasing brokenness that ends, ultimately, with a character unable to resist the whims of the universe: enslaved, dead, or broken. An NPC.

And while that fate is uncommon, it’s hardly *unheard of*.

Unlike in most *Chuubo’s* genres, it’s not even *rare*—because these are **Fairy Tales**, and sometimes you just plain *will* prick your finger on a spindle and fall asleep for a hundred years; or, e.g., lose control while turned into a bear and devour your best friend. This is a genre where a love potion might actually work on you, or an enchantment control you—where you might not be *you* for a while.

It’s a scary genre—and that’s all right, because *Halloween is on its way*.



Adversity



(Suffer) 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

Here's how this works in practice.

(Suffer) Adversity is the easiest XP Action to take in a **Fairy Tale** because its condition is so *subjective*. It doesn't matter if the only thing wrong is a single pea under, like, fifty mattresses: if you *say* that it makes you miserable, it makes you miserable. If you say that it's getting harder and harder to think about anything other than how incredibly uncomfortable this bed is, with that *pea* under those *mattresses*—

Then so it must be.

This also means that you can just *generally* suffer adversity at any time, if you're burdened by grief or hate the world or have a wounded leg or whatever—as soon as something sends you into a spiral of thinking about how awful everything is, you'll have the chance at this XP Action.

The “tip over the edge into delirium” option means that you start seeing things, mumbling to yourself or talking to the walls, ranting irrationally, screaming, staggering around in a fever, or just kind of generally losing it. You tend to have a reasonable amount of control as a player over how much this affects you—if your Adver-

sity is that you're hiking through the mountains and you're sick, and you start hallucinating and talking to ghosts and shivering uncontrollably, you can usually assume you *also* keep walking forward. You might find out afterwards that you did a few other small things that you *didn't* expect: you realize when you recover that you've been marking the path, or drawing maps to places you don't know about, or having conversations you don't remember with family, or whatever else—but you kept moving forward.

The other option is the “Just... give up.” option: you go semi-catatonic, either slumping to the ground and becoming minimally responsive to whatever's around you or becoming pliable and puppet-like and just going along with the flow. This doesn't have any real *advantages* over delirium, but it often fits the story and the character better.

Note, for clarity, that every incident of Adversity is different—

It's not that you have exactly two possible responses to an Adversity experience, it's that those responses are broadly classified as delirium (*yang*) and catatonia (*yin*.)

Adversity and Illusion

A core feature of the **(Suffer) Adversity** Action is that you suffer, and you end up broken.

You have to *sell* it as that: as someone losing it, someone being genuinely wounded. Even *being* in that state, even taking the action—pushing on in delirium, or falling down—should hurt a little. It shouldn't be healthy to push on in delirium; and if you fall down instead, then when you're just kind of *there*, fallen down, things should get a little bit worse.

I mean, it's *semantically* valid to go with "Oh, no! I can't stop thinking how much I hate that pea that that princess in that story slept on. It sucks. So much! I'm going to slump semi-catastrophically into this hot tub and be non-responsive while the staff here rubs my feet." ... but that barely counts as an Action, much less as Adversity!

On the other hand, I don't want to restrict you. I don't want to make it a game of "can you make your Adversity 'real' enough for the group, or do you have to go back and try again?"

So here's the rule:

If you **(Suffer) Adversity**, but the suffering isn't convincing and the action didn't have an impact on you? Didn't hurt you, didn't change you, didn't really affect you at all? Then it's valid, it *counts*, it's still an XP Action that you've taken this chapter—but you'll pick up a point of the **Illusion** Issue: something is weird, here. Something is wrong.

If the suffering *is* convincing, though, I'll let you ignore that, even if there's no long-term effect. So these are your choices:

- ☼ real suffering;
- ☼ it hurts or at least changes you; *or*
- ☼ **Illusion** +1

Framing Adversity

In general you *don't* have the right to just declare that bad things happen to you—you can't just say "a manticores leaps out and eats me" or "I'm caught in a landslide."

It's not a *problem* to say stuff like that, but the HG has the right to back up a step and say "what are you doing to inadvertently attract manticores?" or "what, right there in the shop?" Players always have the power to take actions, but it's the *HG's* job to describe the world and what happens, so a player's claim that something "happens" falls out of bounds.

The other side of that, though:

I don't want to slow down play by having you flounder around trying to gin up adversity, and I don't want you to default to wholly subjective suffering when you have better ideas. So I do suggest that you feel free to say: "Hey, I want to take an Adversity Action, can a manticore leap out and eat me?" or whatever, and I encourage the HG in general to go along when they can.

I've attached a few ideas to the playbooks for Adversity Actions that should likely be fine.

Reaction Shots

As an optional rule, Adversity earns a second group XP 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. It's up to the HG when to count NPC reactions here—usually they count if the HG is invested in them, but not if they're just local color.

I suggest that you bring this rule into play once your group has the basic XP Actions down pat—it motivates you to do your Adversity Actions *near the other PCs*.

Corruption



(Suffer) 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.

Here's how this works.

Something's attacking you—it's trying to poison you, corrupt you, or possess you. You're hit by a mutagen, or mind control, or projective empathy. You're bitten by a werewolf. A ghost is trying to take over your flesh. A god is trying to command your loyalty.

And you don't have the strength to defend against it, or, at least, you fail to do so this time.

You **(Suffer) Corruption**, instead.

The action itself kicks in before you go to the wound system. You "experience surreal effects," which usually means that you narrate, or get the HG to narrate, weird experiences. Maybe this is purely subjective, hallucinatory stuff. Maybe it's a *break from reality*—an unusually cinematic or stylized moment. Maybe the world legitimately goes all weird.

After that—the influence settles in. You sicken, or become sicker than you were; you become corrupted, or, at least, more corrupted than you

were. You lose more control of yourself to whatever is possessing you. And *then* you go to the wound system—at least, if it's bad enough and you're fighting it hard enough that turning to the wound system is the right thing to do.

"Surreal Effects"

Sometimes it doesn't make sense to do much with this aspect of things. Sometimes just *saying* "the world goes weird" or "I'm hallucinating or disoriented, a little, I guess" is the most reasonable way to handle the surreal element of this XP Action.

If the surreal stuff is important or interesting, though—if there's a full-fledged *break from reality*, or if the HG just kind of liked what they saw here, or if they describe something here themselves that they think is cool and you then run with it—the HG may, as an optional rule, add another group XP to the pot.



Triggers

Once you've suffered corruption, it's *in* you. You don't need another "attack"—it can get worse on its own. Each time you sleep, maybe; or when you see the moon; or maybe just whenever your corruptor wants to push you a little more.

You can just be walking along, and suddenly you'll **(Suffer) Corruption** again—

If you hit the *trigger* for your corruption getting worse.

Usually you'll only have one Corruption trigger floating around, tied to one persistent source of Corruption. If you're a werewolf, and you're injected with a mutagen, then when you see the moon, your "mutant werewolf" problem gets stronger. If you're a mutant werewolf, and a ghost tries to possess you, then maybe the triggers merge together a little:

"When you see the moon, or see something *like* the moon and the ghost takes advantage of it, your 'mutant werewolf being possessed by a ghost' problem gets worse."

In practice, what this means is that when you or the HG notices that trigger, the influence of your ongoing Corruption resurges, and you have the opportunity to take another **(Suffer) Corruption** Action. Things get weird. You experience surreal effects. For instance, your body ripples and turns all mutant wolfy and you hear the ghost's commands yammering in your brain and it's hard to think and everything tastes of blood and silver and the sky goes dark. ...or whatever.

Objectivity

(Suffer) Corruption is more objective than "adversity," above—you can't just *decide* that you feel corrupted; there has to be an action or environmental hazard or something that gets past your defenses to warp, weaken, sicken, or control you.

And then your ongoing problems get worse.

In general the HG decides the trigger if you didn't take a wound—if you took Sickness, instead, or just accepted whatever happened, then the trigger is HG-designed. If you took a wound, though, or *tried* to take a wound but failed because you were out of the relevant wound slots, then you probably get to decide on the trigger yourself.

Either way, if the trigger happens and you *don't* take this XP Action, the HG may treat it as a new attack on your well-being instead.

You can remove a trigger upon the resolution of an appropriate Issue, recovery from an appropriate wound, the loss of your last wound level, or the start of a new "book" of play. Or whenever, really, but those are when it makes sense.

Corruption and Illusion

As with **(Suffer) Adversity**, a proper **(Suffer) Corruption** action requires that things be *bad*. You have to *sell* the incident as genuinely warping you, weakening or sickening you, or undermining your control over yourself.

...or it has to palpably hurt or change you—e.g., with a wound, or a big change in your IC state.

...or both.

But if neither of those things happens, your **(Suffer) Corruption** action remains *valid*—just, as with Adversity, you'll pick up a point of the **Illusion** Issue to indicate that something's wrong. From a game-world perspective, this means that maybe the reason you weren't corrupted is that the ghost had been controlling you *all along*, or the ghost wasn't *trying* to control you, or the mutagen *isn't* a mutagen, or whatever. From an OOC perspective, a high enough Illusion is as bad as getting possessed or transformed—you're at risk of losing temporary control of your character.



Trauma



(Suffer) 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 an elder god."

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 resurgence of this trauma and a new Trauma action, later on.

So the difference between this action and Corruption is mostly ideological.

Corruption is when something actually gets *into* you: takes partial control of you and warps, weakens, sickens, or corrodes who you are. There's an action just for that because there are all kinds of stories—mostly horror stories, but sometimes just darker fantasy—where that's a real and a terrifying thing.

I'm separating out Trauma, even though it plays exactly the same, to say you can be traumatized without being corrupted. You can be messed up by stuff without it corroding who you are. And I'm *also* going to say that that's not true just as a life thing, but as a fun gaming thing too: that you'll tell better stories and have more fun in gaming if you draw a sharp line between Trauma and Corruption and know which

one happens in each case in play.

Anyway, something happens that you can't cope with. It can *look* a lot like a corruption or possession: a "psychic attack" that fails but beats you up in the process will be Trauma. But Trauma also includes stuff like your first encounter with death, or corpses, or your first time killing in self-defense or in the discharge of some sort of police-like duty, or waking up with a dead horse head on the other pillow, or carving into a Thanksgiving turkey only to discover that there's a yellowjacket hive inside, or whatever.

Stuff where you wouldn't say that it *twisted* or *perversed* you—

...but *dang* does that stuff mess you up!

“Surreal Effects”

Trauma has the same optional bonus XP condition as Corruption—

★ As an optional rule, if the HG likes what happened during the “experience surreal effects” part of things, they can add another XP to the pot.

Triggers

In general a character shouldn't have separate Corruption and Trauma triggers. In fact, if you have an ongoing Corruption, my specific recommendation is to have a Trauma action rewrite the Corruption trigger:

That *particular* moment may have scarred you psychologically, but future recurrences just open a path for ongoing Corruption to dig its way in. For instance, you've been bitten by a werewolf, and then at Thanksgiving that whole yellowjacket thing happens. I think that instead of having separate triggers like “buzzing freaks me out, and people cutting into round things freaks me out, and the moon makes me wolfier,” you should just have “being trapped near buzzing or people cutting into round things can give me a wolf incident.”*

This is kind of up to your discretion, though—

I just think that having separate triggers for Trauma and Corruption, or progressive Trauma and progressive Corruption, *tends* to muddle your storytelling.

Trauma and Illusion

I have to admit that anything could be traumatic. Being freaked out by turning the corner and finding a bunch of corn is comedic, but it's not really my place to say that you *can't* find corn cobs traumatic. And certainly stuff like “heights” or “enclosed spaces” affect people in really different ways.

So here's how this works.

Either ...

- ☼ the incident is objectively traumatic;
- ☼ or it observably hurt, changed, or traumatized you;
- ☼ or you pick up a point of **Illusion**.

In some cases, that **Illusion** means that the trauma isn't about what it “appears” to be about; in others, it means that you're suppressing or avoiding your actual reaction; in a few, it means you're a doppelganger or something else weird.

And, yes, I do think you can now ignore the full moon. Seriously! There aren't even yellow-jackets in it!



Transformation/Metamorphosis



(Suffer) 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 by the distant actions of some god-monster NPC.

Again the difference between **Metamorphosis/Transformation** and **Corruption** is mostly conceptual.

Something's getting to you. Something's changing you. It's generally outside your comfort zone—unpleasant, unnerving, and maybe even unwanted—

...but you don't think that it's *bad*.


You're bleeding out in a forest, and magical energy is getting *in*. Your mind is merging slowly with your significant other's. You're turning into a dragon, and you *like* the idea of becoming a dragon. A ghost is trying to take you over, but they're a heroic ghost, and they're doing it so they can save people. You've been injected with something that'll make you superhuman, but it's a long hard road from here to there. You're

going through your species' puberty, and it's kind of awkward, but in the long run, not being a child forever is for the best. You have a parasitic living creature growing inside you—but it gives you *powers*. And/or, you're voluntarily pregnant!

And you don't have the strength to defend against it, or, well, you just *don't*.

You **(Suffer) Transformation/Metamorphosis**, instead.

The action itself kicks in before you go to the wound system. You "experience surreal effects," which usually means that you narrate, or get the HG to narrate, weird experiences. Maybe this is purely subjective, hallucinatory stuff. Maybe it's a *break from reality*—an unusually cinematic or stylized moment. Maybe the world



legitimately goes all weird.

After that—

The influence settles in.

...all exactly as it was for corruption, in other words, except that this “corruption” is ... not all that bad.

Metamorphosis Triggers

You can have separate triggers for Metamorphosis and Corruption/Trauma. That’s the *norm*. If your mind is merging involuntarily with your significant other’s, and you’re mutating, then neither of them overwrites the other:

There’s something that happens to deepen your mind-meld, and there’s something that happens to mutate you further. They’re unrelated processes, and more importantly, they’re often *opposing* processes:

If one of them “peaks” by triggering the resolution of an Issue or taking your last wound level, it’ll tend to eradicate the other. If you’re overwhelmed by the mutagen, it’ll interrupt your mind-meld; if you become one twin-bodied twin-mind with your significant other, it’ll tend to stabilize or subvert the mutagen’s destructive effects.

Metamorphosis and Illusion

Metamorphosis tends to hurt. Change is *hard*. Like all these actions, it tends to leave you “broken”—just, it’s a little easier afterwards when you get up again.

So either ...

- ☼ you genuinely suffered—it was hard;
- ☼ or it observably changed (or hurt?) you;
- ☼ or you pick up a point of **Illusion**.

This usually means that if someone appears to go through a super-happy but invisible metamorphosis, and talks all the time about how wonderful it is to have Zorblax infesting their soul, and how there are no problems in their life now that Zorblax is with them, and in fact it is better than *Cats*—

There is some feature to the Zorblaxian influence that is not as it proclaims.

...or maybe that PC isn’t talking about Zorblax at all? Maybe that’s someone *else*’s hallucination? Who can say?

“Surreal Effects”

Metamorphosis/Transformation has the same optional bonus XP condition as Corruption—

As an optional rule, if the HG likes what happened during the “experience surreal effects” part of things, they can add another XP to the pot.

Never Say Die!

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!**

The key to a **Never Say Die!** action is that you don't narrate victory.

In most conflicts you will—at least aspirationally. You'll declare things like "Intention 3: I subdue this crook," "Intention 4: 'you're under arrest!'" or "Miraculous Action: I sap all his strength."

But here?

You're overwhelmed. You're overmatched. You can't frame Intentions like those because you aren't *expecting* any given action to work. Your Intention has to be more like "I *try* to subdue this crook."

As for the miracle—well, that miracle's just illegal! (In a **Never Say Die!** fight, I mean.) So I hope "I sap all the strength I can get" is a valid way to rephrase.

Phrasing things like this isn't just cosmetic, either. It has a knock-on consequence: any victory that you get is going to be a gift from the HG.

There's never going to be a miracle or Intention that definitively wins the fight for you.

There can't be—you couldn't use it!

Your only hope is to be so awesome that giving you a win is more satisfying to the HG than is crushing your hopes.

How it Works

You'll need to invoke this Action when you're actually in a conflict, or, at least, in a position to begin one. I can contemplate omnipotent gods, goddesses, or Hedy Lamarr, and feel like in comparison I am overwhelmed and out-matched—

But I can't really *fight to my last drop of strength* against them, so that doesn't work.

So this action always starts with a conflict, and then you have to be willing to declare that your reason for fighting isn't that you think you

can win. It's because... well, of something. Of something *else*:

Because you have to? Because you won't give in, you won't give up? Because you're a distraction?

...because you can't help it?

Something like that.

This is the nicest **XP Action** in the whole genre, I will admit that, but it's not all puppies and candy. You could win, it's *allowed*, the HG is allowed to *let* you, but you're not going to. You are going to *lose*.

You are *so* going to lose.

...and even knowing that, *you can't stop*.

Optional XP

So as you've probably noticed, each XP Action has an optional rule that can give extra XP.

For most of them, you can take them or leave them, or play for a while without them and then add them in when you've got the hang of the rest. For **Never Say Die!**, it's kind of a big deal, so I'm going to recommend that you go for it—

Maybe not in the first few sessions, but *definitely* by the time that you know the game and things are on a roll.

Optionally, anyway, the HG can add another group XP to the pot each time you seem to *finally* have a shot, or even a sure victory, in a *Never Say Die!* conflict—and then it's overturned by a sudden, unfair bump in the encounter's difficulty.

This can keep happening, potentially 3-4 or even more times, from the moment you throw yourself into the struggle to the moment of your final victory or your defeat.

Never Say Die! and Illusion

The action itself is to “fight to your last drop of strength”—

Which means that even if you *do* win, somehow, you are going to be out of strength. That's what unites **Never Say Die!** with the genre's other, more awful actions: you will *suffer* here, you will hurt, you will most likely be broken, *even if you somehow manage a win*.

If you do manage a **Never Say Die!** action, and it's not grueling, if it *doesn't* hurt you and you *don't* end up a broken wreck on the ground, then you'll pick up **Illusion**. Something is wrong. You went into that fight knowing that you were doomed, and then, what, you threw a one-punch KO? That's wrong, right?

There's something weird, right? Going on?

In sum,

- ☼ it was genuinely grueling, and you wound up convincingly out of strength;
- ☼ or you were observably changed or hurt by the battle;
- ☼ ...or, you pick up a point of **Illusion**.

What if No One Shows Up?

There doesn't have to be a *literal* fight—a poetry slam, food fight, or other contest is fine—but if there isn't *any* sort of conflict, you fail at the XP Action in the first place, and the whole thing doesn't count.

You can't **Never Say Die!** a challenge to your kung fu teacher if they apologize but refuse to fight today because a black cat crossed their path. Don't you know? That's bad luck!

Illusion

The **Illusion** Issue represents a lie or trick woven into the substance of play—something that happens in the game, something that you’re playing through in all forthrightness, isn’t actually “what happens.” There’s going to be a revelation in the future that retroactively cancels out or changes the meaning of some of this stuff.

This is how the *Chuubo’s Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* RPG handles reveals like

- ☼ “you were kidnapped and replaced by a fetch two chapters back.”
- ☼ “we’ve been playing out the story as your PC tells it, but the truth is something different.”
- ☼ “that brutal fight between you all and that *jarl*? Faked. You got him on your side in a secret meeting beforehand.”
- ☼ “you’ve been possessed all along.”
- ☼ “and then you wake up...”

A reveal like this *can* be wholly beneficial, but more often it’s a form of retroactive defeat. As your **Illusion** climbs higher, the chance that you’ve “already” been captured, possessed, taken out, or turned on your allies grows as well—

At the very least, a shocking reveal that *isn’t* entirely in the player’s hands is on its way.

Here’s how this works.

A PC picks up points in this Issue when they weather the Actions above without being hurt or changed—when there’s no suffering and no meaningful impact on their life and heart... e.g.,

- ☼ they (**Suffer**) **Adversity** over a paper-cut, but they don’t *convincingly* suffer;
- ☼ they (**Suffer**) **Corruption** from a “demonic influence,” but they completely fight it off;
- ☼ they (**Suffer**) **Transformation** from an “angelic influence,” to ambiguous/meaningless effect;

- ☼ they (**Suffer**) **Trauma** from “watching a bad comedian,” but the player doesn’t go into it; *or*
- ☼ they tackle some problem with **Never Say Die!**, only to win it with ease.


If a character reaches level 3 in the **Illusion** Issue, they automatically receive a Serious Wound. If they’re low on Health Levels, this *could* wind up defeating them, in which case the above description is simply false. The paper-cut hit an artery and they’re rushed to a hospital. The demon or angel takes them over. The bad comedian literally drives them into a psychotic break, or possibly is a murderous stalker (and hunts them down later that scene.) The “easy win” is merely a fantasy; the character is utterly defeated instead.

If it can’t defeat the player, though, this is just a wound—the player slots it into a Health Level, optionally reacts (e.g., saying “hmm...” after that easy win), and then picks up a bonus related to the “most likely” explanation for their Illusion Issue. If there isn’t one, they take a wound more like **Just an Image on the Water**, below.

The Illusion-given wound is persistent—you can’t heal it while you’re at Illusion 3.

In a game like **the Chuubo’s Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine RPG Halloween Special**, where you only have Tough and Normal Health Levels, an unhealable Serious Wound is pretty brutal—it can take you from “shrugging off attacks” to “awfully close to defeat.” Even in a higher-powered campaign, it’ll still eat your error margin against the more serious threats. And if you *do* get defeated while a wound like this is around, the explanation for that defeat will probably have a retcon involved in it too:

Something *happened*, or *was true*, that made you extra-vulnerable to whatever it was that took you down in the end.



At **Illusion 4**, the wound's intensity escalates. Rewrite it if your thinking has changed; it is now a "Deadly" and not a Serious Wound. More importantly, though, at level 4, the Issue becomes susceptible to *resolution*: it's now possible to figure out what the illusion actually is, even without your defeat.

... what is it?

I'm admittedly kind of hoping that you know. I'm kind of hoping that it's obvious, that the players have been *joking* about it or *anticipating* it, that the hints will be obvious. I'm kind of hoping that as a player, you can just say, "OK, time to reveal that I've been the big bad's puppet all along" or "yeah, this monster I beat up is just a guy in a mask" or "I've been dead this whole time!" or whatever, and it'll make sense. Or that the HG can do the same.

From the player perspective, this is the optimal moment to resolve the Issue—

You're not defeated, so you have a say.

In practice, this means that either the resolution is obvious or the HG runs it by you. In *theory* what this means is that you can take actions to prevent retcons you don't like—e.g., fighting off the doppelganger that's retroactively replacing you and proposing your own secret retcon instead. (This gets complicated, though, so I officially recommend the HG propose, but let you veto, possible retcons instead.)


Sometimes the HG can't come up with anything, and you can't come up with anything, and the Issue just sits there until you get to **Illusion 5**. At that point, you're immediately defeated and the HG takes over your character. You and the HG then work out a time frame: over the course of a fixed time *by the real-world clock*, they'll work out what the Illusion is; when that time runs out and the clock metaphorically strikes twelve... the Illusion will shatter, the truth will out, and you'll come back into play.

Just an Image on the Water


(Example "Serious Wound" from Illusion 3)

Type: Serious Wound, Tool

Cost: —

 *If you've taken this wound*, then there's something going on that the players and HG haven't been told. This "life" that you're living—

It isn't quite what we see.

 **This Wound's benefits manifest as a +1 Tool on *compromised actions***—that is, you can take any Intention that you like and add +1, at the cost of asserting that that action probably has something to do with the subject of the Illusion. If you use that +1 to win a fight, then there's something "wrong" with how you won a fight. If you use it to build a bridge, there's something "wrong" with *that*. If you use it on everything, which you probably can, that heightens the likelihood that "you" aren't there, or aren't real, or aren't yourself at all: you've been replaced by someone more competent, or everything you "do" is a lie told later on.

Other XP Actions

If you're familiar with the *Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* RPG, you'll know there's another 14+ XP Actions out there, and they're mostly less dangerous.

But the thing is?

In the **Fairy Tale** genre, you don't have the unfettered right to take them, even when you meet their condition. Instead, you can pretty much only take them when you can make them something the HG wants to see happen or when the group as a whole thinks that they fit. From a player perspective, that means you can expect to take a relatively innocuous Action like, e.g., "Shared Reactions," when—

- ☼ you're willing to negotiate with the HG on how troubling the action can be—e.g., you're Headmaster Entropy, and you know that giving students life advice is **Shared Reactions**, so you go, "OK, how bad does my advice have to be for me to get away with this as an Action?" or
- ☼ the HG has prepared something, so that they can say, when you go to talk to someone about something, "Want to try Shared Reactions?" or
- ☼ the action is inherently ominous/neat.

There's no actual requirement here that the Action hurt or change you, nor will you pick up **Illusion** if it does not—that rule is purely about the "default" actions for the **Fairy Tales** genre. However, you should still assume that pain, transformation, or the risk of them is always going to be a factor.

Classically the HG is the one who keeps track of the other available actions, and they'll phrase the Action itself as a question—**Foreshadowing**, for instance, has a Condition that you're

paying a lot of attention to something, and an Action of getting caught up in it. So if you've stumbled on something that the HG thinks might be Foreshadowing, they could go:

"You're paying a lot of attention to this, right? Yeah? Do you want to... **get caught up in it?**"

I'm painting the HG as kind of adversarial here, and that's not quite right. In *Chuubo's*, in general, the HG's not particularly obligated to make life hard on the PCs. The HG just plays the world and, to some degree, helps to manage the game.

The reason the HG is restrictive with out-of-genre Actions in a **Fairy Tale** game, and is more likely than usual to make them perilous, is that suffering, corruption, and trauma are defanged if it's too easy to avoid them.

Put another way, the HG is playing the world—


But the world, *here*, is a dangerous, dangerous place.


Here's some XP Actions as you might experience them in a **Fairy Tales** genre campaign, with proposed HG language in bold:


🌀 **Shared Action:** You find someone who's doing something simple and honest, like cooking, cleaning, or practicing their martial arts katas. You join them. You help them out. **Willing to risk a genuine emotional connection?**


🌀 **Shared Reactions:** You talk things through with someone—sort out your head on stuff, or help them do the same. **Willing to risk a genuine emotional connection?**





 **Slice of Life:** you travel, admire the scenery, have a meandering conversation about nothing in particular... in general you experience stuff and emote your reactions to it. **That was a nice moment. Willing to have it “haunt” you for a while?**


 **Discovery:** you explore somewhere you’ve never been, or try out something you’ve never done. **What do you find? If it’s neat, scary, or mysterious enough, I’ll toss you a Discovery XP.**


 **Decisive Action:** you’ve been monologuing about your hopes, dreams, actions, plans, or thoughts—I hope you’re going somewhere cool, because if this monologue leads to a big enough and risky enough decision, you can take a Decisive Action!


 **Science, Faith, and Sorcery:** you interrupt your explanation or contemplation of how something works with a theory, an idea—**You should test this out! Give me an interesting, daring way to test this, and you can take a Science, Faith, and Sorcery Action....**


 **Foreshadowing:** you’re paying a lot of attention to something. Logically, looking at that from the outside, it must be foreshadowing! **Do you want to get caught up in it?**

 **Sympathetic Action:** you see someone who’s frozen up or shut down—paralyzed by something that’s happened. **They seem... stuck. Want to offer comfort, reassurance, or physical help?**


 **Shock:** Someone’s noticed that you’re frozen up or shut down. They’re offering you comfort, reassurance, or physical help. But they want you to take the XP Action instead. **Is this “Shock?”**

 **Obsessive Action:** you’re getting worked up about something. Best if you build slowly but eventually go right over the top. **Do you want to tip over the edge into delirium? Or maybe just... give up?**


 **Wicked Action:** you know you shouldn’t be doing this, but you are. 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! **Do you really want to do this?**

 **(Be in) Trouble:** oh no! This is bad! **Are you overwhelmed and outmatched?**

In general, you can’t rely on having access to any of these—probably 1-2 every session, plus the occasional Transition or Ritual—

 **Transition/Ritual:** I’m doing a Transition or Ritual. Remember that any or all of you can earn XP from these—once I invoke them, I’m implicitly giving permission to take the associated XP Actions.

—and that’s all.



At the End of a Chapter

The end of a **Fairy Tales** chapter usually brings about a repeated event—e.g.,

- ✿ a tinker comes to town with stuff for sale, leaving after the new chapter's first Action,
- ✿ your fairy godmother shows up to help you sort your life out,
- ✿ a star (of the 42 41 stars remaining) falls out of the sky,
- ✿ there's a narrative interlude wherein the HG shares facts about the local town,
- ✿ there's a "backstage" moment, like you see in some video games, where the PCs hang out in a non-story context talking about and explaining the events of the story so far,
- ✿ the IRS shows up at your house looking for a PC, but the PC isn't there—they're still occupied with whatever their last XP Action was,
- ✿ your aged grandmother brings home and adds another pink elephant tshotske to her shelf. Every 8 chapters or so the shelf falls down, all the elephants collapse and then disappear, and everyone is cured of all their wounds,
- ✿ there's a repeated phrase to mark the end of one part of the story and the beginning of another, like "the sun and moon and stars all wheel around, around the sky,"
- ✿ something timing-related happens, like a new dawn, a new season, or a new year, *or*
- ✿ you get news from a distant place.

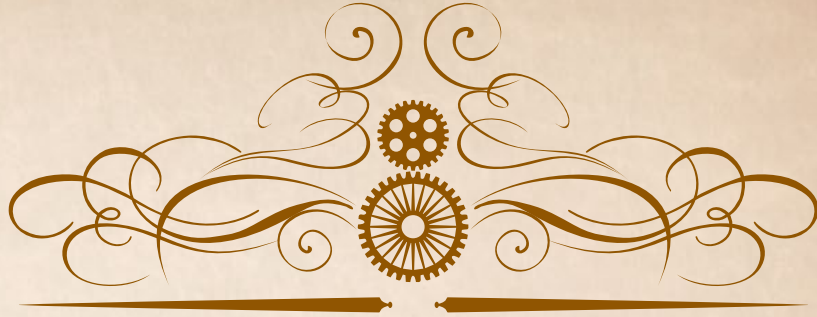
Part of the claim of a Fairy Tales game is that this *only* happens between chapters: at the very least, if that event ever happens mid-chapter, it's a big, boundary-crossing moment.

In this *particular* story, the between-chapter

moments are celestial events—

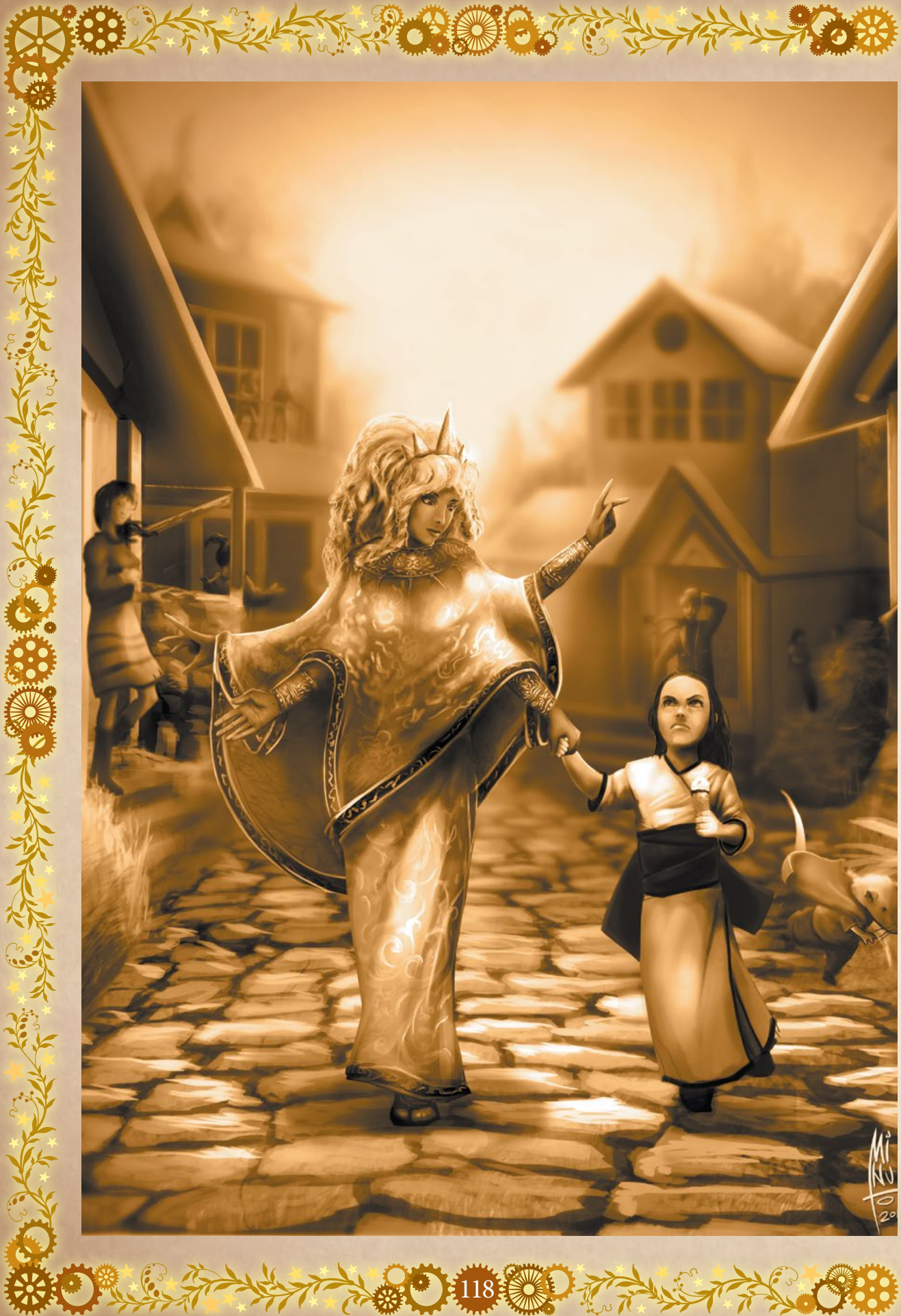
Between chapters, there's a change in the sky.





Appendix A: Bonus Characters







Bonus Characters

Shake it up!

If you have access to **Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake**, you can add the following characters to the playbook mix:

- ✿ **A Fortitude Rat**, a talking rat who lives in the walls of the School, on the Pastoral version of the Odyssey; and
- ✿ **The Sosunov Shrine Maiden/Priest**, sent away to School, on the Aspect version of the same.

If you have access to **Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon**, you can add this character too:

- ✿ **The Child of the Sun**, daughter of the sun goddess Jade Irinka, on a Mystic Arc, with the reduced power level as described below.

If you have access to **Fortitude: the Legendary 139**, you can play one of those legends as an eccentric teacher; **"The Teacher"** would replace **Jasmine Apocynum** and use **Jasmine Apocynum's** quests.

Finally, you can feel free to create your own mortal-level character and fit them into this storyline. To tie them in well I'd recommend that they be on a **Bindings** Arc, with the "weird and forbidden" stuff they deal with being:

- ✿ Something they summoned from the mirror-world;
- ✿ Jasmine Apocynum (or "the Teacher," left);
- ✿ Edony;
- ✿ Headmaster Entropy;
- ✿ Some kind of Halloween-related magic; or
- ✿ The students at the School as a whole.

(P.S. Soun Shounen isn't weird or forbidden, so he gets left out.)

Then you can investigate the weird goings-on, with those investigations being the **Scientific Adventure** quest set—maybe a four-quest arc: the 20 XP version of **Science!**, the 35 XP version of **Someone's in Trouble!**, the 25 XP version of **Engineering!**, and finally the 20 XP version of **Above the Fray**.

(Though, that said: reduce all XP Costs by 1/5, and all 5 XP bonuses to 4.)


The Fortitude Rat

Campaign:
The Chuubo's Halloween Special







Academics Skill: Good
Sports Skill: Very Good
Favorite Foods: Fruit, Candy, Melons,
Tomatoes, Cheese, Yakitori, Eggs
Blood Type: B
Animal: Rat
An Interesting Fact About You: The great love
of your life turned into a bird one day
and flew away.

Playing the Fortitude Rat






 You're a talking rat who lives in the walls of the Academy. Sometimes you'll whisper the answers to students on difficult tests.

For details on how to build a Fortitude Rat, see *Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake*.


 Your Arc quests are from “an Odyssey:”

-  *Stale Life* (40 XP),
-  *Learning the Ropes* (20 XP), and
-  *Wrecked* (45 XP).

...but, for parity with the other PCs, you'll adjust the costs as follows:

-  Reduce the cost of your basic quest to 12 XP.
-  Reduce the cost of *Stale Life* to 28 XP.
-  Reduce the cost of *Learning the Ropes* to 16 XP.
-  Reduce the cost of *Wrecked* to 36 XP.
-  Reduce the 5 XP bonuses for these quests to 4 XP.

You'll have to do some of the integration into the overall story yourself.

 For details on “an Odyssey,” see *Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake*.

Quests

“Basic Quest” (12 XP):

What is your basic quest?

“Stale Life” (28 XP):

You're not happy with the way you've been living. It's time for a change.

... and then a new responsibility drops into your lap—you'll figure out *what* based on what would make sense in play—and you move on to *Learning the Ropes*.

“Learning the Ropes” (16 XP):

You've made a change in your life, and now you're completely kind of... lost.

... you muddle through, anyway, but there's a big challenge coming up in *Wrecked*.

“Wrecked” (36 XP):

You're caught in an impossible situation—metaphorically shipwrecked, without the resources that you need to survive.

... are you haunted by the memory of the love of your life, who turned into a bird and flew away? Or some other tragedy? Then maybe, almost magically, you bring that to a resolution.

... or are you just being as awesome as you can in a troubled situation? Then a chance of greater happiness will fall on you as you end this quest.

Epilogue—you probably have somewhere to go once this story ends, but for now, you just hang out being cool.

Example Outcome—you turn into a bird and fly away. You sail off. Or, you travel off into the Halloween World to defeat the *jarls*.

The Sosunov Shrine Maiden/ Priest

Campaign:
The Chuubo's Halloween Special



Academics Skill: Better-than-Average
Sports Skill: Frail
Favorite Foods: Rice, Stir-Fried Veg, Cocoa
Blood Type: A
Animal: Rabbit
Age: 15

An Interesting Fact About You: You don't live here—you're studying "abroad" for a year.

Playing the Sosunov Shrine Maiden/Priest

☀️ You're a shrine maiden or shrine priest from Fortitude—one of the guardians of that Pastoral Region's dreams. You did something that your family really didn't like—attempted suicide? Joyriding and sinking a merchant ship? Alcohol? Drugs? Neglecting an infant sibling? Disrespect?—so your family sent you here for a year.

For details on how to build a Sosunov Shrine Maiden/Priest, see *Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake*.

☀️ Your Arc quests are from “an Odyssey:”

- ✿ *Stale Life* (25 XP),
- ✿ *Home for a While* (40 XP), and
- ✿ *Learning the Ropes* (45 XP).

... but, for parity with the other PCs, you'll adjust the costs as follows:

- ✿ Reduce the cost of your basic quest to 12 XP.
- ✿ Reduce the cost of *Stale Life* to 20 XP.
- ✿ Reduce the cost of *Home for a While* to 28 XP.
- ✿ Reduce the cost of *Wrecked* to 32 XP.
- ✿ Reduce the 5 XP bonuses for these quests to 4 XP.

You'll have to do some of the integration into the overall story yourself.

☀️ For details on “an Odyssey,” see *Fortitude: by the Docks of Big Lake*.

Quests

“Basic Quest” (12 XP):

What's your basic quest?

☀️ “Stale Life” (20 XP):

You're not really happy with the way you've been living. It's time for a change.

... and you figure out how to make one.

☀️ “Home for a While” (28 XP):

Your quest features a lot of flashback and flashforward scenes—memories of your home before you left, and dreams of surviving all these troubles and going home for a while.

... something a family member said, or that someone says about your home, or that you imagined a family member saying in a flashforward, gives you an insight. You see something you wouldn't have been able to before.

☀️ “Learning the Ropes” (32 XP):

You've made a change in your life, but now you don't know what to do, and people keep expecting totally ridiculous things out of you.

... until one day you finish up an obligation, optionally come home and take your shoes off, and learn something shattering.

Epilogue—you probably have somewhere to go once this story ends, but for now, because this is a one-shot, instead of moving on to a new storyline, you just hang out being cool.

Example Outcome—you helped save Soma, but there's trouble at home. Or the “shattering news” is that whatever plan people have blew up in Soma's face and it was all futile and now you're all going to die; make peace with that.

The Teacher

Campaign:
The Chuubo's Halloween Special



Academics Skill: Variable
Sports Skill: Typically Good
Favorite Foods (Often): Crackers, Sweets
Blood Type (Often): B
Animal: Phoenix
Age: 22+
An Interesting Fact About You: You've come from another world.

Playing the Teacher

☀️ You came from Earth on the legendary ship. You don't know how, or why. You found yourself in Fortitude, knocked about for a while hunting legendary treasures and such, and later made your way to Soma, where you became an eccentric teacher or tutor at the Headmaster's School.

You don't know what's up with the story's weird events, but they're not the weirdest things you've ever seen. You're not even scared by them—just fascinated at first, and then sad or angry when people start getting hurt.

For details on how to build someone from the legendary ship, see *Fortitude: the Legendary* 139.

☀️ Your Arc quests are borrowed from Jasmine Apocynum:

- ☀️ *Celebrate the Darkness* (24 XP),
- ☀️ *Stepping Up* (32 XP), and
- ☀️ *The Labyrinth* (24 XP).

... and you'll want to look over her playbook to understand them. You can substitute something else for the "sweet, shy self" that she falls back on sometimes—maybe you revert to your pre-adventuring self, losing some combination of your confidence and your cool?

☀️ You might want to borrow her XP Action suggestions, too, tweaking them a bit for your character's flavor.

☀️ Although you're using Jasmine Apocynum's quests, and maybe her Actions, you're not **the Ideologue**. There's no reason to think you're responsible for the apocalypse—it's probably just happening on its own!

That said, you're a legendary and eccentric figure, so people may blame you anyway.

Quests

“Basic Quest” (12 XP):

What is your basic quest?

⚡ “Celebrate the Darkness” (24 XP):

This is an adventure, so you're in your element. Enjoy it. Be awesome. Have fun.

... but eventually it pushes you too far, and you move on to “Stepping Up.”

⚡ “Stepping Up” (32 XP):

Step up to fix this, either as a popular leader or by helping from the shadows.

... until you complete this quest, realize that these people are going to need the treasure from the heart of the labyrinth to survive/thrive, and move on to “the Labyrinth.”

⚡ “The Labyrinth” (24 XP):

Deal with the worsening situation as the world decays. Explore the labyrinth. Hope.

... until you find the treasure at the labyrinth's heart.

Epilogue—you probably get an immediate chance to do something climactic or get set up to do something climactic at the end of the game. Then, because this is a one-shot, instead of moving on to a new storyline, you just hang out being cool.

Example Outcome—the usurper-King is driven off, and Soma goes on, living and growing crops under the light of the new sun you found. Or, you've all escaped on a sky-ship to Earth. Or something!


The Child of the Sun

Campaign:
The Chuubo's Halloween Special



Academics Skill: Ordinary
Sports Skill: Ordinary
Favorite Foods: Evildoers (edible), Taiyaki
Blood Type: AB
Animal: Hen
Age: 15
An Interesting Fact About You: You are the daughter of the original sun.


Playing the Child of the Sun




 You are **Jasper Irinka, the Child of the Sun**. You're a sincere, cheerful girl—a pillar of strength in these troubled times. You'll fall out of the sky into Soma, sometime between chapters 1 and 2, when your mom (the sun) is killed.

... you won't manage to catch *by whom*, although you'll kind of suspect your father, Glass Spider, whom you've only sort of ever met.






(In chapter 1, you can hang out in the sky suffering about stuff like "I never get to meet any humans" or you can play an NPC student, Gladys Macabre, whose mangled corpse turns up mysteriously around the first chapter's end.)

For more details on Jasper Irinka, see *Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon*—but in this game, you're not the new sun, at least not yet, and the weird physical changes are rarer.


 Your Arc quests are from "Literary Medal-Bait":

-  *A Troubled Protagonist* (25 XP), with one of the "Frozen Heart" signs;
-  *An Unlikely Friendship* (45 XP); and
-  *Your Social Burdens* (35 XP).

... but for parity with the other PCs, you'll adjust the costs as follows:

-  Reduce the cost of your basic quest to 12 XP.
-  Reduce the cost of *A Troubled Protagonist* to 20 XP.
-  Reduce the cost of *An Unlikely Friendship* to 32 XP.
-  Reduce the cost of *Your Social Burdens* to 28 XP.
-  Reduce the 5 XP bonuses for these quests to 4 XP.

You'll have to do some of the integration into the overall story yourself.

 For details on "Literary Medal-Bait," see *Fortitude: the Glass-Maker's Dragon*.

Quests

"A Mortal Life" (12 XP):

As seen in your *Glass-Maker's Dragon* playbook.

"A Troubled Protagonist" (20 XP):

Something is changing in your life, but you're not sure exactly what.

... until there's a "miracle." This is probably a sign of hope that your mother somehow survived or that you can become a new sun to replace the false sun that's shining now.

"An Unlikely Friendship" (32 XP):

You meet or spend more time with someone representing the false sun, or a Halloween creature, or maybe Jasmine Apocynum—someone who is metaphysically kind of opposite to you. You form an unlikely friendship. You're tempted to, well, accept them.

... and then your life just plain falls apart.

"Your Social Burdens" (28 XP):

Your life's a mess, but you're important. You're the child of the sun. You find yourself becoming involved, will you or nill you, in the plans of Soma and the Halloween World. You try to strike out and form a plan of your own, a way to play things against one another.

... it doesn't blow up in your face, exactly, but it doesn't work out either. Things are confusing. The closest thing to an ending you get is that: things are confusing, sometimes. Things are hard. You've just got to... go on.

Example Outcome—there's a new sun, and that's ... you, somehow? Or your mom? Maybe? You think? Or, you leave Soma to serve as a Halloween-World jarl's assistant and heir. You don't know what the future holds.

Abilities

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

- ✿ **Graceful 3.**
You're extremely graceful and well-mannered.
- ✿ **Riding 1.**
You're familiar with horses and bicycles.
- ✿ **Art/Craft (your choice) 1.**
You're familiar with something else.
- ✿ **Lore 1.**
You know scraps of secret lore about the sun and Halloween.

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

You also have three abilities with special rules, described below. One is a magical Skill, which comes with a suite of specific techniques:

- ✿ **Sun-Spells 2.**
You have some power over the sun—and even the false sun.
- ✿ And the other two are inherent, generic abilities:
 - ✿ **“Mark of the Shared Heart,”** a level 2 Bond that mystically connects you to a person you've been talking with recently—it marks you with a symbol representing them, and gives you a bonus to doing things “their way;” and
 - ✿ **“Extra Limbs:”** you occasionally grow weird magical features and limbs.

You have 1 Tough and 2 Normal Health Levels.

Sun-Spells

Type: Magical Skill

Cost: —

You have the power to bring hope and light to the world—

But this power isn't yours yet. It *oughtn't* be yours yet. It's not natural to you, but instead a taxing, draining, *difficult* magical Skill.

Techniques include:

[Obstacle 0] be a warm and sensitive listener*

[Obstacle 1] know how hopeful or despairing someone you care about is, even from far away.

[Obstacle 1] inspire a local sense of hopefulness

[Obstacle 2] shape the light around you, directing/focusing it and its shadows.

[Obstacle 2] light a path for someone nearby—sunlight, or false sunlight, will point or guide the way to something lost or a distant friend.

[Obstacle 3] divine what would bring somebody hope.

[Obstacle 3] devour evil magic, or conjure a lion of fire and sunlight to do the same.

[Obstacle 3 or 5] send your senses out away from your body, traveling through sunlight (3) or the light of the false sun (5).



“Extra Limbs”

Type: Affliction, level 0
Cost: —

You’re not quite hum—actually, you’re not at *all* human, are you? You’re half-sun and half-Halloween-thing. Being human-*like*—

That’s just a costume!

Occasionally the real you shows through, a bit, with a temporary alien feature that comes with a minor power of some sort. For instance, you’ll develop—

- ☼ a hair-tendrill pointer that acts as a +1 Tool for your “point the way” magic.
- ☼ an aura of holy fire that only burns your enemies.
- ☼ two freaky spinnerets mounted over your shoulders that spin/shoot webs
- ☼ a breeze around you that acts as a +1 Tool for seeing/smelling clearly
- ☼ hair-thin twenty-yard tendrils of light that you can use to pick things up with
- ☼ thickened feet and legs—a +1 Tool to balance and strength
- ☼ a third eye in your forehead that opens to see what people really think of you *or*
- ☼ a pair of fiery wings

After a chapter, you can ask for a new weird feature if you don’t have one, or ask for the one that you had to dissolve.

“Mark of the Shared Heart”

Type: Bond, level 2
Cost: —

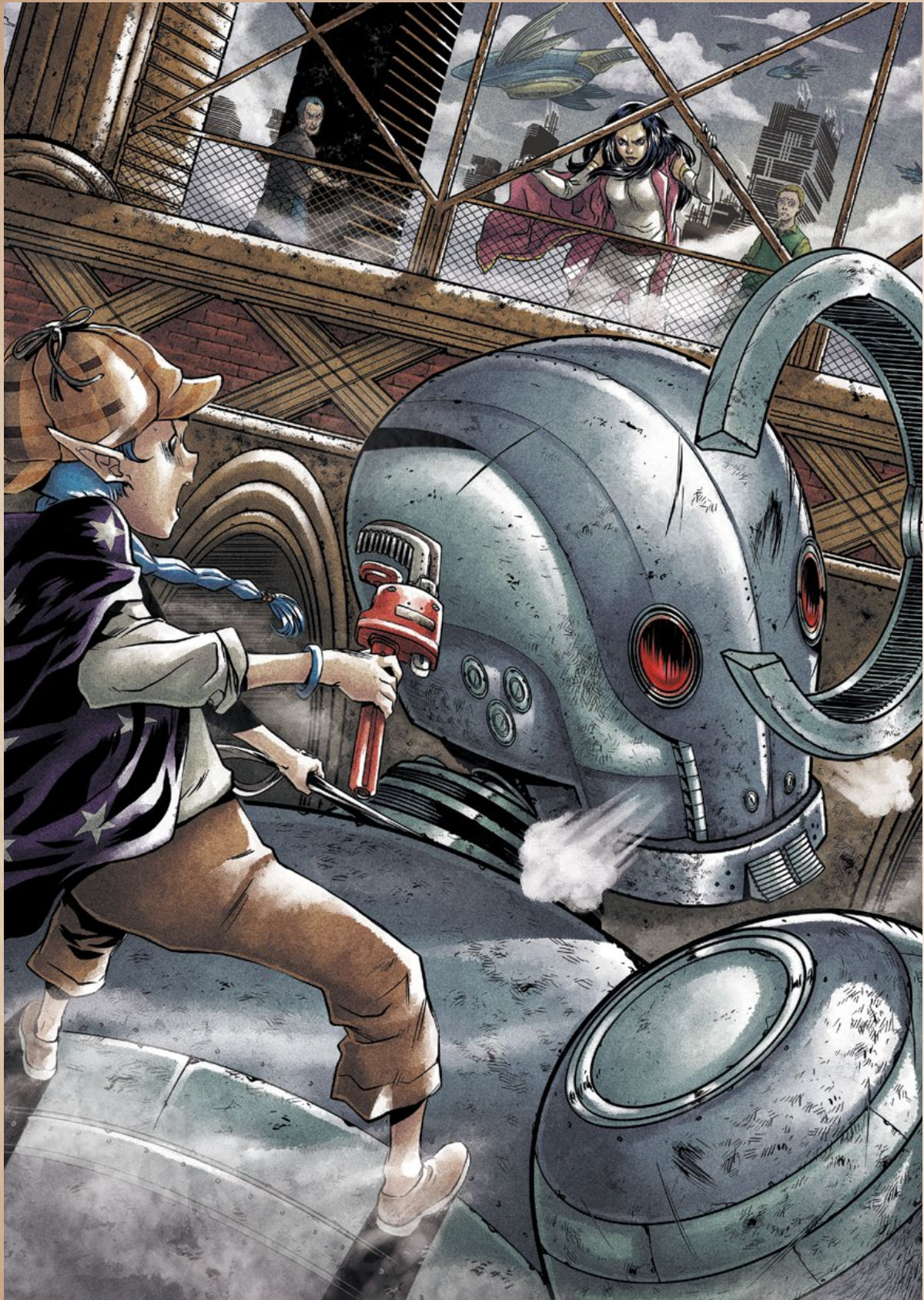
Sometimes when you’ve been talking to someone for a while a tattoo or symbol appears on you somewhere—something evocative or symbolic of them.

You have one such mark at a time, and 1/ chapter can choose (OOC, not IC) to replace it with a mark relating to whomever you’ve been talking to now.

- ☼ Invoke **Mark of the Shared Heart** when you’re trying to do something the way they would do it, and there’s an Obstacle or conflict, and you can add the Bond’s rating (2) to your Intention level.
- ☼ If you get in trouble because of your relationship with that person, or the tattoo/symbol, you can earn up to the Bond’s rating (2) in Will.
- ☼ It is notionally possible for you to replace food, water, sleep, and even *air* with the act of doing things the way that person would do them—although obviously this only works if they are a person who doesn’t need food, water, sleep, or air. Basically, though, if you wind up marked with the symbol of a Halloween skeleton, you don’t need to eat as long as you’re indulging in their general skeleton life!

This technique isn’t actually magic.







Appendix B: Handouts





A Quick Refresher on Skills

handout for the *Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* RPG

You'll find the actual rules on Skills in **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine**. For now, here's what you need to know.

To do stuff, form an **Intention** by spending 0, 1, 2, 4, or 8 Will and adding that number to the rank of the most appropriate Skill. You can have up to two Intentions running at a time, but you have to stick to the Intention's basic game plan while it's up—so feel free to choose big-picture/long-term Intentions, but remember you might have to drop them if you change your mind!

After subtracting any "Obstacle" that gets in your way, your Intention gives you results like:

- 0—it doesn't really help anything
- 1—at least you made yourself feel happy/competent/at peace/whatever
- 2—something actually definitely happens
- 3—you performed the task properly
- 4—you performed the task effectively
- 5—you performed the task productively
- 6—you're pretty awesome
- 7—it's super-effective!
- 8—it's extremely productive.
- 9—this was the right thing to do, for some nebulous meaning of "right."

Once you're done, if you spent Will on an Intention and succeeded or failed, you get 1 Will back. If the Intention just kind of petered out, you don't get that back at all.

Some PCs have Skills that let them cheat at the world, doing things they really ought not be able to do. Those are called "magical Skills."

Some PCs have Skills that make them unworldly, inhuman, but also just plain *better*.

Those are called "Superior Skills."

Superior Skills often give you an edge, or "Edge," when you use them, which is sort of like an Obstacle for anyone else when they're trying to beat you. They also function as regular Skills.

Intentions go away, and the pool of Will refreshes, when a new chapter begins.





A Quick Refresher on Health

handout for the **Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine** RPG Halloween Special

In this campaign, your PC will have 2 Normal Health Levels, 1 Tough Health Level, and 0 Divine Health Levels. This is the standard for **the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine Halloween Special** PCs, and it puts you at roughly action hero level—

minor/"Surface" Wounds heal in 0-2 chapters, usually in the interlude between chapters; "Serious" Wounds may or may not heal by the end of the game.

I wouldn't want to go after you with a knife or a handgun or anything, because you're tougher than nails, but ultimately, you're mortal. You can be taken out. You can fall. Here's how the wounds work:

- ☼ If something happens to you that you don't want to happen, you can "take a wound" to prevent it.
- ☼ Most wounds will use up a Normal Health Level, and when you're out of Normal Health Levels, they'll just ... do nothing, game mechanically.
- ☼ Serious and Deadly Wounds will fill up your Tough Health Level, if you have one left, instead. At this point all the wounds in your Normal Health Levels will go away, and you'll get those Health Levels back.
- ☼ If you lose your Tough Health Level, and *then* all your Normal Health Levels, you're no longer a PC.

So one really bad wound, *followed* by two wounds of any sort, and you're no longer a PC.

That said, this is a fairy tale, so this kind of thing happens a lot. You get badly hurt; you're "dead" or "enslaved by magic" or "turned evil" or whatever. After a while—probably pretty quickly, since this is meant to be a relatively short campaign—something happens to shake you out of it, and you're a PC with all your health levels free again; or, if your fate seemed really final and there's a different character available, you can pick up that character and play them instead.

If you don't get defeated like this, then



Basic Principles

handout for the *Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine* RPG

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, emote, take quest-related actions, and earn XP—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 would, 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.**

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.
- ✪ **Chapter**—this term isn't completely standard. This refers to a short unit of play with a relatively coherent beginning and ending, usually taking 15-90 minutes of tabletop play or a week or two on a forum.
- ✪ **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...."



Happy Holidays!



