



# Orizuru

a half-formed thing

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L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X template: [ElegantBook](#)

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# Orizuru

a half-formed thing

I cannot make you understand. I cannot make anyone understand what is happening inside me. I cannot even explain it to myself.

— *Franz Kafka, The Metamorphosis, 1915.*

# Introduction

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**orizuru**, *n.* An origami paper crane, regarded as a symbol of peace, happiness, good fortune and longevity.<sup>1</sup>

## What is this?

*Orizuru* is a story game about transforming into a beautiful bird.

You'll play a character who undertakes some kind of transformational quest to take themselves from who they are now, to becoming something new.

You'll take a square piece of paper, write on it, fold it and reflect on the result.

## What you'll need

There are a few things you'll need to gather for play:

**Players** You can play this by yourself or with other people.

**Time** Typically you'll probably need 60 minutes to complete the game, and most likely less if you've played the game or folded a paper crane before.

**Paper** You'll need a square of paper. This is a crucial part of the game, so refer to the more detailed notes below.

**Writing Implements** You'll also need something to physically write with. You can do this with one, two or four colours.

**Rules** It would be helpful to have a copy of the rules, including the included origami instructions, to hand.

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<sup>1</sup> Definition from: [en.wiktionary.org](https://en.wiktionary.org). Text available under [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/). Accessed July 2019.

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## Paper

You're going to be folding an *orizuru* yourself as a central part of the game. You might consider the final piece to have aesthetic value; as such, it's worth investing a little effort in the raw materials.

**Size** Larger is better than smaller; a good size is cut down from a sheet of A4 or Letter size. If you fold the top edge diagonally (at 45°) to meet the left edge and cut or tear beneath this, you'll get a square of paper.

**Weight** Choose a paper which is neither too flimsy (this can tear easily on complicated folds) nor too heavy (this can become unwieldy in later stages).

**Colour** Classic origami paper tends to be coloured on one side and not on the other; this isn't essential for the game, but if you consider the final outcome as a piece of art, choosing a colour may be important to you. Avoid dense patterns or colours darker than your chosen writing colours.

**Texture** Considering you'll be writing on its surface, glossy, textured or foiled surfaces may not be so suitable unless you have a writing implement that can cope with these.

## Acknowledgements

Whilst this game had been rattling around in my mind for a few weeks before seeing the advertisement, this game was finally brought to fruition, and its diceless mechanics confirmed, as part of the [itch.io Jumbled Up July 2k19! game jam](#). For this, I am grateful to Takuma Okada of [No Road Home](#).

I suspect that I may have been influenced by some of the wonderful, heartbreaking and inspirational [Little Games](#) “that mean something” published by Avery Alder of Buried Without Ceremony, most notably *Brave Sparrow* and *Abnormal*.

This game is dedicated to the three *orizuru* in my life, at their own stages of transformation.



## Setting Up

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Physically, sit down at a table or on the floor. Lay down your paper in front of you, with your writing implements to one side and your dice to the other. If your paper is coloured on one side only, lay it with the coloured side up. Have these rules and the origami instructions to hand.

Mentally, take a deep breath. This is an introspective game from which you'll benefit most if you can avoid distractions. If possible, mute your devices and place them out of reach.

There are natural breaks in the course of play; if this is your first game, they'll be about every 15 minutes. In later games, they could be quicker than that, unless you wish to pace it out more.

## Background

The premise for the game is simple: you are a person intending to transform themselves into a beautiful bird. You will find out why and how; you will take efforts and pains to do so; you will reflect on the outcomes.

At the start of play, or in the build-up to play, it is worth contemplating a little on the *where* and *when*, which we call the CANVAS, and the *who* and *how*, which we call the MEDIUM.

If this is your first play through of *Orizuru*, we suggest you use Late Medieval Europe as your CANVAS, and true magical transformation as your MEDIUM.

## Canvas

The CANVAS is the background against which you measure your character. Is this long ago, far away, in the deep future, or here and now? Do we look at this time and place with wide eyes and keen ears, or with a basket on our heads? Do we make use of the truth as we know it, or nostalgia, or anachronism? Do we consider this time with optimism, cynicism or pessimism?

Choosing the here and now can make it a challenge to generate compelling stories; conversely, distance and time can make it harder to make multi-faceted characters. *Choose a CANVAS with which you are comfortable and familiar.*

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## Medium

The MEDIUM is the way in which a character can transform into the beautiful bird. The MEDIUM can be magical, or divine, or \*punk modification, or surgical, or technological, or substance-based, or anything. The closer you get to being able to describe the actual transformation in detail, the more uncomfortable it will feel. *Choose a MEDIUM which does not make you feel uncomfortable.*

The MEDIUM can be a true physical transformation, or one which you believe to be true. It can be one which you know to be allegorical, or a metaphorical change of which you are unaware. These are presented in order of ease of telling a compelling story. *Choose a MEDIUM which is not too hard to use.*

**Restrictions** The only restrictions that we place on this transformation are: *It is rare.* It is difficult to find the MEDIUM through which transformation can occur. *It is costly.* The MEDIUM cannot be hurried, nor pared down, nor cheapened. *It is painful.* The MEDIUM will do harm to you. *It is irreversible.* You will never return to the way you were.

## Reflection

Throughout play, you will be asked to **Reflect**. When you do this, you respond to the current prompt by writing on the visible surface of the paper. You can narrate a short scene in reference to this, or you can just move on.

Before you start play, **Reflect** on the following two prompts:

*What do you wish were true?*

*What do you wish were not true?*

If you don't have an answer, you can use the following:

*I do not wish to be human.*

*I wish to be a beautiful bird.*

Once you have **reflected** on these prompts, turn the paper white side up.



# Play



Play is divided into four stages per game, several scenes per stage, and three steps per scene.

## Stages of Transformation

There are four stages on the journey to transformation. Each has a specific set of **Fold** instructions attached, and a specific prompt. The four stages are UNSHAPING, UNMAKING, REMAKING and RESHAPING.

There are 24 **Folds** in total. In all steps you'll be making at least one **Fold**, and in some steps you'll be making two **Folds**. But progress is always forwards.

### 1. Unshaping

*What do you dislike about yourself?*

UNSHAPING is a time of reflection on your current self and breaking down how you define yourself now. It is a time for frank honesty in discussion and disclosure, with yourself as much as your acquaintances. It is a time in which you prepare the mind for this rare transformation.

There are four UNSHAPING folds.

### 2. Unmaking

*What do you hope you will become?*

UNMAKING is a time of preparation of body and provisions, and beginning to break down how others see you. It is a time for discovery, preparation, journeying and overcoming strife, alone or with others. It is a time in which you prepare the body for costly transformation.

There are eight UNMAKING folds.

### 3. Remaking

*What do you fear you will lose?*

REMAKING is a time of intense transformation, and building anew the physical form. It is a time for changing, pushing and pulling, rebirth and new growth, at the hands of the process for which you have prepared. It is a time in which the body is subjected to painful transformation.

There are eight REMAKING folds.

### 4. Reshaping

*What do you discover about yourself?*

RESHAPING is a time of reflection on your new body, and building anew the idea of self. It is a time for making fresh discoveries about yourself, both within and without, for maturation and development, with old acquaintances and new. It is a time in which the irreversible transformation is complete, but in which you become yourself once more.

There are six RESHAPING folds.



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## Scenes

Each stage is broken down into narrated scenes, which are broken down further into three steps: SITUATION, ACTION and OUTCOME. In each scene, take into account the themes of the stage.

### Situation

In the first part of a scene, narrate with complete agency what you are doing in the scene to forward your transformation into the beautiful bird. You can describe the scene in vivid colours or drab greys; you can speak for your character, or other characters, the world around, or nobody at all. You can face peril, take decisive action, swing a sword, wrestle wyrms, drink and talk and sing. You can do anything within the bounds of what your character, CANVAS and MEDIUM says you can do.

### Action

At some point, you'll come to a problem which you can't just work through with narrative, and to which you need to step back to refer to the mechanics. This is the central issue at the heart of the scene. The barrier to entry is low, but it's there, and it's three questions about failure:

- **Is it *possible* to fail?** Is failure, or success, rare? Is this something you would normally try, or that you're only trying because it's what you need to do?
- **Is it *interesting* to fail?** Is failure, or success, irreversible? Can you try again, or is this the only chance you'll get?
- **Is it *problematic* to fail?** Is failure, or success, costly or painful? Do people try to avoid this course of action for that reason?

If you can answer yes to all of these, then you should follow the rules to take action; otherwise, follow the story.

### Fold

When you take action, **Fold** — follow the next instruction to further complete the *orizuru*.

Every step on the journey to transformation is a step forward — you always **Fold**. Sometimes you **Fold** again; and sometimes you **Reflect** instead. Sometimes you end up **Doing Nothing**.



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## Determine Outcome

After that, look at the folded paper in front of you, and count how many of the phrases from your earlier REFLECTIONS are visible, right now, on the piece in front of you. Full phrases count as two; count partial phrases as one, if they are still intelligible (and otherwise count as zero).

*If the total is four or more, your action is a RESOUNDING SUCCESS. **Fold** again.*

*If the total is one, two or three, your action is a MIXED SUCCESS. **Reflect**.*

*If the total is zero, your action is a FAILURE. **Do Nothing**.*

When you **Reflect**, respond to the current prompt and write on the visible surface of the piece as it is now. You can narrate a short scene in reference to this which is more introspective in nature and which has no central problem or issue; a monologue, a quiet conversation, a reflective idea. You can just move on, instead.

## Outcome

When you've determined the mechanical outcomes, **narrate the fictional outcomes**.

Use the ideas of RESOUNDING SUCCESS, MIXED SUCCESS or FAILURE in your narration. The below is a guide; use your own fiction to better interpret these. Remember, every step is a step forward.

RESOUNDING SUCCESS: You make more progress than you had intended; you gain something useful, like an ally, knowledge or a thing.

MIXED SUCCESS: You make progress, but there's a complication. Something stands in your way, you lose something, you are injured or suffer a setback.

FAILURE: This is a cost to you on your journey; you lose an ally, a thing, or knowledge turns out to be useless; you are harmed, or a setback is more serious than it seemed.

Use the REFLECTIONS on the piece in front of you, in your narration. If they're partial, try to reflect their state now in your narration. If they're complete, use them as per your original intent.

## Moving On

**New Scenes** At the end of a scene, when you've narrated the outcome, move onto the describing the situation in the next scene.

**New Stages** If the previous scene has moved you into a new stage of transformation, take a short break from the piece and the fiction.



## End of Play



At the end of the RESHAPING stage, the final scene completes the *orizuru*. At this point, take a short break from the piece and the fiction.

### Epilogue

When you come back, it's time to narrate a short epilogue. This is when you've resumed your life. In some ways it's going to be different to how it was before, and in some ways it's going to be the same. This should be a scene about how your life looks now. How do you do things differently? How do others perceive you? How do you perceive others? Are there changes to how the world works for you? And, how it works against you?

Look at the REFLECTIONS that you can see. For each, answer this question: *How does this affect you now?*

If you can see REFLECTIONS *you disliked about yourself*, then you haven't managed to escape those problems.

If you can see REFLECTIONS *you hoped you would become*, then those have come to pass.

If you can see REFLECTIONS *you feared you would lose*, then you have lost those things.

If you can see REFLECTIONS *you discovered about yourself*, then those have begun to shape your new life.

If you see no REFLECTIONS, then you have gained everything that your dreams would have you believe.

### Plenary

Finally, put the completed *orizuru* at arm's length in front of you. Set other materials aside, leaving a blank space in front of you. Take a minute to think about the game. And after that, the game is over.

# Orizuru

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You'll play a character who undertakes some kind of transformational quest to take themselves from who they are now, to becoming something new.

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