A User's Guide to the Apocalypse

[a tale of survival, identity, and personal growth]

[powered by Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine]

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Credits/Copyright:

Written by: Elaine "OJ" Wang, with some additions and excerpts from:

- Ops: the original version of Chat Conventions (page ???).

- mellonbread: Welcome to the Future (page ???), The Life of the Mind (page ???), and Corpseparty (page ???), as well as quotes from wagglanGimmicks, publicFunctionary, corbinaOpaleye, and orangutanFingernails.

- godsgifttogrinds: The Game Must Go On (page ???).

- eternalfarnham: The Azurites (page ???).

Editing and layout: I dream of making someone else do it.

Based on Replay Value AU of Homestuck, which was contributed to by many people, the ones whom I remember best being Alana, Bobbin, Cobb, Dove, Impern, Ishtadaal, Keleviel, Mnem, Muss, Ops, Oven, Rave, The Black Watch, Viridian, Whilim, and Zuki. Any omissions here are my own damn fault. In turn, Replay Value AU itself was based upon Sburb Glitch FAQ written by godsgifttogrinds, which in turn was based upon Homestuck by Andrew Hussie.

This is a supplement for the Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine system, which was written by Jenna Katerin Moran. The game mechanics belong to her and are used with permission.

Previous versions of this content have appeared on eternity-braid.tumblr.com, rvdrabbles.tumblr.com, and archiveofourown.org.

For clarity, Elizabeth and Samantha are fictional characters.

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. I am not a trained therapist and this is not therapy.

In case that wasn't clear enough, here is the content warning: This setting is very dark and includes horror, trauma, and the consequences thereof. Please understand what you are getting into, and evaluate whether you can handle it, before you start reading.

Dedications:

Elizabeth: My first-session coplayers and childhood friends – Michelle (balefulEntry), Cyril (bicuspidBookkeper), and Mason (errantEntropy). May they rest in peace.

Samantha: PrototypeTowers (Pits) and its community, warts and all. Sure, none of us liked the drama, but indifferentBem taught me how to write, enlighteningFont trusted me with the mod tools, and eternityBraid has remained a friend of my heart.

OJ: Myra Henderson, who showed me the strength of anger; Kim Su-Cheol, who showed me the strength of speaking; and the Internet, which showed me the strength of reaching out.

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- Jenna Katerin Moran herself, for putting up with my 'senpai noticed me' jokes and letting me ask miscellaneous other canon-related questions.

- Replay Value AU. I know you all hate each other these days but I still love you all.

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There is a saying in Tibetan, 'Tragedy should be utilized as a source of strength.' No matter what sort of difficulties, how painful experience is, if we lose our hope, that's our real disaster.

Dalai Lama XIV/Tenzin Gyatso

Tragedy is not glamorous […] it doesn't play out in life as it does on a stage or between the pages of a book. It is neither a punishment meted out nor a lesson conferred. Its horrors are not attributable to one single person. Tragedy is ugly and tangled, stupid and confusing.

E. Lockhart, *We Were Liars*

It's like when a cynical realist scoffs at an idealist: "yeah," they say, "your ideals are great and all, but this is the real world." […]

Like when the idealist scoffs at the realist: "yeah," they might say. "Just accepting the way things are and lowering your standards might be 'realistic,' but it's also what KEEPS things the way they are." […]

If you're an idealist, there will always be realists out there whose narrow-minded embrace of the status-quo is something you've grown past, and there will always be realists out there whose wisdom see through your nonsense and overambition.

And if you're a realist, there will always be goofy airheaded idealists out there whose starry eyes you've grown past, and there will always be idealists out there who've accepted and seen everything you've accepted and seen but also gone beyond it."

Jenna K. Moran, forum post

"It's not over if you're still here," Chronicler said. "It's not a tragedy if you're still alive."

Patrick Rothfuss, *The Wise Man's Fear*

Introduction

**[or, the tale of two Replayers and their literary
agent]**

Three Letters

Elizabeth

I wanted to write a Guide, for new replayers. I wanted to write about what it is like to Replay, and what we do to survive. I wanted to write about the Game that tries its hardest to remake you in its image, and the Others and Angels that try even harder to remake you in theirs. It is a hard life, in Sburb; the Great Disappointment is merely the first of events that may convince you, as it does many, that this is not a world that is merely uncaring – this is a world that tries to destroy your dreams and replace them with its own.

But this is also a sourcebook for roleplaying. For the eventuality that this signal finds itself in a universe untouched by Sburb, so that people can understand what it is like to be one of us. I am not sure if such a universe exists. I am not sure if, in writing this, I make it more possible – or remove it from the universe of possibility entirely.

But I have to try. Because in the tatters that remain of my heart, I must retain hope – hope that there exists a universe, somewhere, where societies grow untouched by prophecies and frog temples; where people have free will; where groups of friends, unseparated by circumstances, can meet and play together.

If this is being pressed into your hands, or beamed into your computer, in an Incipisphere somewhere; I give my love and my condolences (and instructions for creating a timetrav dongle in the appendices). If you have found this, somehow, elsewhere, outside of the Game – I wish you the very best. Find your friends, and tell them that you care; and perhaps if you wish you can play this game, together.

Because life is precious, but friendships are more precious still.

Elizabeth Bunker/eternityBraid
Guide of Blood
13 sessions

`Samantha`

Dear readers,

Elizabeth is a true friend of my heart. We were in our sixth session together – two second-sessioners in a session full of veterans – and we've stayed together ever since. She's helped me straighten my shit out. I've helped her straighten hers. Her writing is very interesting and her perspective – that of "nobody should ever be alone" – is refreshing.

She is also devoted to her own fringe opinions. I respect that quality in people (the sheer courage needed to go against the current of popular opinion just isn't something I *have*), but I don't share it. She can be loudly, persistently, and gleefully *wrong*. She can be argued into a different position, sure, but even her wrong positions are interesting enough to be worth keeping around.

Three timestamps ago, she told me she was writing a guide to Replayer Networks (and Sburb, because you need to understand the game to understand the networks). So she brought me on board to explain some of the more technical aspects. I stuck around because –

Because I really do not want you thinking that her opinion is the mainstream here. It isn't. Elizabeth has some opinions that I think are better than Pits', and some which are categorically worse. She's less of a hypocrite than most people, but there are still places where she is hypocritical (although, then again, hypocrisy is just part of the playeroid mind).

I don't claim to have a neutral position. I think we're all biased. But I'm hoping that my presence in these pages will help encourage you to consider the evidence, and make your own decisions.

Good luck and good sense, whoever you are. I am with you.

Samantha Chandrasekhar/cogitativeMistake
Dame of Mind
16 sessions

OJ

I

Sburb is the framework for a narrative about growing up. Chuubo's is a game system designed around the experience of growing up.

Replay Value AU is a story about the fact that *I can't tell 'growing up' apart from 'breaking'*.

I can't; I've tried. I figured this out when I wrote a grimdark AU for the Homestuck Music Team. (Which I will not link because it embarrasses me. If you want it, go find it yourself.) I've learned that if I am going to write a story, I have to take my biases in terms of story into account. That's why this game looks the way it does.

But I've also learned things since then, and gotten better, and thought about what I believe. This world is not like Replay Value AU Classic; people here are allowed to make the world better. I have taken pains to make sure that ambition, in this version of the setting, is not inherently evil. I have been careful to make sure that *every* character is designed, from the ground up, to have something to live for. I have attempted to make certain that hard work is rewarded; that venturing off the beaten path is scary, but not automatically going to kill you.

I have tried hard to make sure that this setting, however bleak, lives up to the promise of Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine -

That this is a game where your wishes can, eventually, come true.

In the setting this is presented as impossible upfront, and I suppose that, by declaring that this was my object, I have already failed. I try anyway, though, because it's not *just* about the setting, or the game.

On some level it's about me.

II

Other people from Replay Value AU have contacted me, telling me that RV Chuubo's is too grimdark.

The tone of RV Chuubo's is easily changed by removing some of the bleaker assumptions I've added to the setting. For example, you can change the game's genre to something like Gothic or even Adventure Fantasy; if you let people have access to Sburban Survival 3-4 on a regular basis things get a lot less hairy ICly; and the campaign conventions I've set could be tweaked to make them more optimistic.

You can interpret this setting in many different ways; Replay Value AU was a collective roleplay. But several of us agreed, during RV Classic's lifespan, that we couldn't bring in newbies until we had good documentation. However, we never wrote enough documentation to satisfy ourselves, because we couldn't agree on whose idea of RV AU was right. And then the interpersonal conflicts drove everyone apart, and that was the end of the roleplay.

A year after the roleplay ended, I concluded that nobody would ever play Replay Value AU again unless I did something drastic. So I wrote the documentation. It's what you're reading now.

But I myself am heavily biased. Arguably, this book isn't Replay Value AU. This is my own specific interpretation of Replay Value AU. And my interpretation of Replay Vaue AU is drenched in horror and sadness. Nobody else has written anything like this, so I can only tell you that other interpretations exist. I can't show them to you.

You could say that this is just an argument about grimdarkness. People have argued about grimdarkness in settings forever, you might continue. Why don't we move on and just leave the author alone to play 40K?

But there's personal reasons why I've written Replay Value AU as a setting this bleak. In fact, I could not have written Replay Value AU any other way.

III

You may as well know that my childhood had many silver arcs (that's a Chuubo's term; don't worry about it). My parents were under the impression that enough discipline could make me stop being autistic. For the record, this is not possible.

The Internet saved me, I think. As much as you can say that anything saved me.

I learned that someone would always be there to listen to me, and that became self-fulfilling. As far as I can tell, my charisma comes from my honesty. I am here because I understand how to talk to other people. It is difficult for me to imagine what kind of trouble I would be in if I didn't.

I learned that there was something worth saving, even in myself. I learned, from the Internet, that my opinions and feelings were worthwhile. That one million words' worth of forum posts and bad poetry resulted in me learning something good, something useful; that my writing can stir the soul. That I have always believed that there were better lives than the one I grew up in, and that I could get to them.

I am incalculably grateful to hundreds of people. But I don't know if they still think that they've failed me. Or that I have failed them.

There is no way I can find them all.

IV

> The [Advanced Game Theory] chapter was an excuse to set up a scenario of infinitely repeating games, to explain why the FAQ author appears to be some sort of veteran. It just made writing the FAQ more interesting to me. I don't know why it spawned an AU.
>
> forum post, GodsGiftToGrinds

If I squint and tilt my head, Replay Value AU is a portrayal of what some types of abuse feel like.

Like, sure! Your material needs are taken care of, you're being raised in a way that will actually let you grow up, and you could always just behave better so they wouldn't have to punish you!

Except no. Safety is a material need. You don't actually *choose* to continue being abused, not when you're a kid and those are your parents. Your parents have moved the goalposts repeatedly, or made them impossible to reach. And your parents almost certainly keep up a facade, successfully selling that they're just raising you the way kids should be raised in a nice perfect family. Anything more is not to be spoken of.

The door's broken. You're constantly in fear of your life. And if you actually develop as a person it's in stolen moments between rehearsing the Perfect Monologue About Your Emotional Growth again and again. It's a distressingly direct parallel.

I told GGTG that I saw that kind of parallel, saw that people were taking it to heart. I told him that I wanted build in stories of resilience and resistance: of how to *survive* that kind of thing.

That's when he stopped writing. He said it was too serious for him.

V

This setting was written under the assumption that it is impossible to escape the abusive situation that you are using this as the allegory for. This is significantly less true than it feels like from the inside. But, at least in child abuse, it is more true than most people will admit.

Because when someone is under 18, the vast majority of the legal system *is* pointed against escape. Mandatory reporters can file all the reports they want, but child protective services is so overworked that it is rare that they can spare more than a single home visit for all but the most egregious cases of physical or sexual abuse. When children are suspended from school for misbehaving, they are sent to the very home that might be the most unsafe place for them to be. And the justice system is built on the concepts of responsibility and self-control, which is nice in theory, but often neurologically implausible until the frontal lobes grow in.

I believe that all existing systems intended to prevent or stop child abuse are ineffective, and that many of the systems that are *intended* to prevent or stop it actually propagate even more trauma. I believe that we will need a trauma-informed society and two generations to truly fix the problem. But in the meantime -

In the meantime, I have to do something, and what I can do is write.

This is not an approach that will fix things. This is not an approach that will make everything okay. This is not even an approach that will make *your particular situation* okay. But those are the limitations of being me, writing to you, over the Internet or in a roleplaying book. I am doing what I can, because this is not zero, but I cannot hope to stem this flood myself.

Do what you can to survive. And when you leave, one day, you can help stop things like this from happening to anyone else ever again.

VI

Back after I saw *Madoka Magica* I was looking for more information on it, and ended up on its wiki. Which is how I found this quote:

> Gen Urobuchi wants to write stories that can warm people's hearts.
>
> Those who knew about my creative history would probably furrow their brows and think this is a cold joke. Actually, I couldn't completely believe it, either. Because when I start typing out words on the keyboard, the stories my brain comes up with are always full of madness and despair. […]
>
> Gen Urobuchi had lost that power [to write stories that end well]. It still hasn't recovered. The 'tragedy syndrome' is still continuing within me.
>
> *Fate/Zero* Volume 1 Postface, Gen Urobuchi (translated by Madoka Magica wiki)

I'm pretty sure I have the same problem. And I'm not sure if the same solution will work, but I figure it's worth trying:

Writing Replay Value AU: writing it in a system that assumes "your enemies are terrifying but not unbeatable", a system that starts with the *premise* that it is a game about wishes coming true… maybe that'll help. I don't know.

VII

I didn't build Replay Value AU as a Fairy Tales game. I built it as Gothic and Fairy Tales: even though people are crazy and terrible and the Game makes them even more crazy and terrible, you can still connect to them, and things are still better that way.

Because I know that connecting to people made *me* better.

Because I have consciously sought out social groups where I see it happen, every single day. The girl from the abusive household who knows that the Internet can give her a sanity check on whether normal parents do the things her parents do. The boy whose parents divorced several times each, who didn't understand what relationships were supposed to look like until he found the Internet. The kids who did not even know that they were deeply abused until I told them. The young adults who don't understand how to live in a world that isn't controlled by a dictatorial entity. They are trapped, too, just as much as Sburb players in RV are.

They tell me that I write beautifully. They tell me that I am their role model. They tell me that I am wise.

I do not understand how this can be called wisdom. For me, it was the only thing I could do to survive.

All the same, I know that there are many who *don't* have it. I know that there are many, many people who would benefit from reading something like this. From knowing that there is a way to survive. From knowing that even if they cannot see any way to escape, there is still something worth living for. From

knowing that it is worth connecting to people, even if their instincts scream that it is the most dangerous thing in the world.

VIII

> [...]But then I'd steal away my mind
> To borrow books, ten thousand of:
> And pages turned, I thought I'd find
> A dream: to substitute their love.
>
> There's nothing there, I'll tell you now.
> It wasn't 'til computers spun
> A web made of the wires' vow
> To carry all words, just the same,
>
> That I found something with real worth:
> I found an answer to my plea.
> My parents said — return to Earth!
> But there was nothing there for me[...]

<div align="right">"Waters", Elaine "OJ" Wang</div>

Maybe Replay Value AU is about that tension – that you've been *told* that there are good things about growing up, that you should savor childhood, that you should exult in the expansion of your perception of the world… and that none of this applies. Less than one-tenth of my friends come from "proper", non-abusive childhoods; we find people like us on the Internet, and there are too many abusive parents in the world.

Connecting to people on the Internet is what helped me grow up. I did not grow up because of the way I was raised. I grew up *despite* it.

Replay Value AU isn't about Sburb breaking you, exactly, although it might seem like that at first glance. Replay Value AU is supposed to be about the fact that even in an environment like Sburb, even in a world that might break you like that, *you can still grow up*. That there is a way to become stronger and better, even if you are trapped in what looks like an inescapable pit, and that the road there is friendship and love and sanity-checks.

Or maybe it's just about making young adults cry. I'm not certain it isn't.

The Game is broken – that much is clear from the clipping errors, the dummied-out enemies, the bugged spawn-rates, and the glitching dialog options. The Game is also real – the Archagent's sword draws blood, the Consorts casually mention distorted versions of your past and future in dialog for what you presume is some developer's idea of "local color", and it's best to know where the nearest Quest Bed is in case you need to use it. You didn't think you'd be here again, struggling with your basic weapon and arguing with your teammates about stupid shit that shouldn't faze you. But you went through the Door Beyond The End, and a moment later, you were waking up in a bed that wasn't yours.

Your Pesterchum contact list is filled with strangers. Nobody else will believe you, that you played the game and now you're here again, except for them. The Guardian opens the door and stops short. "Well, you're up bright and early, son!" You look over to the desk and – there – a photograph of the person who should be here instead of you. But nobody will acknowledge that you're not him. And when the meteors start coming down, you swallow your fear and shaking and sense of doom, and try to figure out who you're going to save with your game disks.

Packing twenty people into the apartment's living room to save them from the apocalypse doesn't work, though that only becomes clear when luck has turned so decisively against them that even you cannot ignore it. It does that to everyone who wasn't meant to play, the strangers in your chain – your new coplayers – say. Can't fight the nonplayer doom mechanic. You bury them, instead.

You allow yourself to be dragged along on the interminable quest chain of consultations with Consort village elders. You attempt to ingratiate yourself with the Prospitian royal court in order to get to the ball that has actual food and not ramen or spritegunk at its reception. You enter your Denizen's cave one day, fully expecting him to send you out to do another silly fetch quest again – and instead find him telling you that you've learnt your lesson, and would you please kill him? You watch one of your coplayers (wearing the deceased first player's Sprite Pendant) do the ectobiology, in order to create paradox-children: the very same children that will now never play the game, because you're here instead of them.

They say you're brought in to complete a session that would otherwise be doomed. They say the Others, out there in the inky blackness with their eyes that glitter and bodies that twist the mind to comprehend, are just there to watch you struggle and play, like so much reality television. You ask what the Angels are for, the winged creatures of fire and song within the hollow in the center of your Land. But the oldest one shakes her head, and presses her hands to her face; and one of the others moves to hug her. You decide to figure the Angel thing out for yourself; and your Time player comes to you, smudged with ash, and begs you not to try. He dies right in front of you, and when another one of him comes by after your strangled cry for help on Pesterchum, he shakes his head, and tells you what happened in a doomed timeline. You bounce your pendant in your hand, the last thing you've got left of the Sprite that left you back in the days before the entire game got so complicated, and wonder how any of them know what they're doing.

Eventually one of them takes you aside one day, and asks whether you know of Sburb.org. You shake your head. She shows you a tiny microchip. It's called a dongle, she say. You can get it implanted, or in a charm bracelet; either way will work, she says. Though it's harder to lose an implanted one – she points to a tiny bump on the inside crease of her elbow, as evidence that she has one too. It keeps you linear in Replaying, and it lets the servers know who you are. The benefit to you is that you can talk to the same people before and after you Replay. That makes all the difference, she says. You're not lonely anymore, because you can talk to the community. Ask them for help. Tell them how your day went. Even have a long-distance relationship, if you think you can make it work. She finishes the thought: people live longer this way. It's been proven, she says, her voice catching. It's because the social relationships keep you sane.

When you go through the door after the end of the session this time, it's with a comprehensive FAQ in your head, a dongle chip in your locket, and well-wishings from a community thousands strong. When you wake up in an unfamiliar room with your inventory stripped, it's a little bit less of a shock, and you open your browser to find out that, as promised, the people from your last session are on the site too. They want to hear about the little differences on the world you've been put on this time. Some of them ask for pictures of food, because there's a new development that means you can make scanned-in food on a properly manipulated alimentator.

They say loose Replaying is hell. And even Replaying with a community is still hard – you skirt death and corruption and someone who they call a PK, a player-killer. He tries to lure you into a trap out of the mistaken cult belief that killing everyone in his session will guarantee him a working Door, and an Ultimate Reward, instead of this endless loop of Replaying.

But there are people who understand, and that makes it a little bit easier. When you fall into despair, they call it Knight Syndrome, and reassure you it's not permanent. When it's your birthday, they make cake, and give you the pictures so you can taste your own. When someone you know from your first session is spotted logging into the PrototypeTowers server and uploading photos, there is a joyful reunion.

And when you're the last one left alive in that session, with the brain-matter of the PK on your golf club, they tell you to stay strong. You'll never replay with the same people, they say, or it's so rare that it's best not to hope for it. But you'll probably replay with others from there, people you haven't met, or people you've heard of – friends of friends. One of them tells you to think of them as friends you haven't met yet. You imagine his wobbly smile.

Basic Principles

by OJ

> It takes ten times as long to put yourself back together as it does to fall apart.
>
> *Mockingjay*, Suzanne Collins

This is a tabletop role-playing game that is best played over the Internet. It's a game of pretend. It's a game of words. If you want to act, you describe what your character does, and then the HG reacts. Let me describe how we originally played Replay Value AU:

We settled down in an IRC channel. Then we typed into that IRC channel, pretending as if we were our *characters* typing in their *own* IRC channel. Later, we developed conventions for denoting IC activity that wasn't chat messages. Later, we made separate IC and OOC channels so that we could have an OOC line of communication going on at all times. But first and foremost, we pretended to be our characters.

Because this game can touch on difficult subject matter[1], I think that you should try to maintain enough of an IC/OOC separation that even if your character cannot communicate, *you* can.[2] Ideally, you'll have two different channels/chatrooms/threads, one IC and one OOC. Barring that, there must at least be a way to pass notes to the HG privately – most IM services and forums have private message services.

If you're the HG, you'll need a copy of the *Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine (CMWGE)* core sourcebook, and a copy of this book. Everyone else should be fine with a copy of the CMWGE Player's Guide by PK Levine (skip the Setting section, and I've replaced the chart for Intention levels, but everything else applies). That's enough to let you play this game.

If you are an overachiever, or you need reading material for the next six months, you may also want to read Homestuck (up to EOA5A2/Cascade), the Sburb Glitch FAQ, the section on the Fairy Tales genre in the *CMWGE Halloween Special*, or any of the various books and sources I've put in the Resources section (page ???).

==> 1. OJ: And because – let's be honest – a lot of the people who are attracted to Replay Value are mentally interesting. For Exhibit A, see yours truly.

==> 2. OJ: If *you* can't object during sessions, because you sink deep into your character in roleplaying, you should arrange for a debriefing with the HG after every session. Talk about what went well, what went badly, and what story goals you want for next session.

This is an abridged version of the Glossary of Terms I have written for *Chuubo's* in general, available at http://orngjce223.net/chuubo/GlossaryofChuubosTerms.html. (I have cut it to save space in the book.) Terms bolded here are either in this glossary or the full version.

Action: This is either a mortal-level **Intention** based on a **Skill** (in which case it has an **intention level**), a **miracle**, or (in certain cases) an intention and miracle together. You can maintain up to two of these at the same time – if something more urgent comes up, you'll have to drop one.

Affliction: A statement about your character that is so true that *the universe will enforce it for you*. It possesses a (narrow) **Auctoritas**, and it will sometimes spontaneously generate **miracles**. It is rated from 0 to 5. If an Affliction causes you trouble, you may receive **MP** or **Will**.

Arc: A narrative unit in this game, composed of 3-5 **Quests** that tell one of eight different types of story (plus the occasional sidequest). When you start on one for the first time, you gain an **arc trait** that starts at 0 (plus certain benefits, such as the **arc powers** in a **miraculous-level game**). At the end of each arc, your **arc trait** levels up.

Arc Trait: Think of these as levels. Completing an **Arc** gains you a point of arc trait, flavored by which type of Arc you got it from. When you earn a point, you can make a number of changes (usually adding more powers) to your character sheet; see **mortal arc** or **miraculous arc**.

Bond: A statement about your character that is true enough that it's sunk itself into your character's very core of being. You can use the bond's rating (from 1 to 5) for **Strike**, or add the bond's rating to your **intention level** when dealing with a conflict, or to overcome **Obstacles**. If a Bond causes you trouble, you may receive **MP** or **Will**.

Basic quest: An **anytime quest** that your character is always on. It represents what your character does when nothing else important is happening in their life. Whenever you finish a basic quest, you earn a **recharge token** and then start on the quest again.

Book: A group of 6-12 **chapters**.[3] Certain **miraculous powers** can only be used once per book (or there may be **MP** surcharges for using them two or more times per book), and your **MP pool** will be replenished up to your **MP cap** at the beginning of each book.

Campaign conventions: Important laws of the campaign-specific reality. Mechanically, they are level 2 **Afflictions** that apply to everything in the campaign.

Chapter: A chapter consists of up to two **XP action**-bearing scenes per **player** (unless you're doing something strange). How long a chapter is **IC**ly depends on your game's **genre**.

Character: A person inside the world of the game. See **Player Character**, **Main Character**, and **NPC**.

==> 3. OJ: In this game there are usually 10 chapters to the book.

Colors (of arc): Colors are assigned to each type of **Arc**, and these colors are also used on **XP Actions**, **Issues**, and **quest cards**. Don't worry about them. See also **those symbols**.

Emoting: Describes your character consciously letting their emotions show. When this term is used, it means the emotions being displayed are the character's true feelings. Emoting is important for some **XP challenges**.

Flurry: Flurries happen when several people want to do something at the same time. When a flurry is declared, everyone involved can revise their **actions** as many times as they want. The **HG** will charge **MP** or **Will** (as if you started the action all over again) if your new action is completely different from your old one. Once everyone is satisfied with their action, sick of arguing, or out of MP/Will, all the final actions take place at once. If the argument stalemates, the players' disagreement is a **Bleak** effect and the argument should be resolved using the Bleak rules instead.

> She cut clean through the desk in one swipe, and flung the blade towards me, plaster dust flying --
>
> No. That isn't how it happened.
>
> I caught her knife on the edge of my shield, grabbed her wrist, and twisted it hard. She cursed and windmilled at me with her other arm. I slammed the shield forward at full force. She hit the wall.
>
> There was a cracking noise, and then silence.
>
> "On The Difference Between A PK And A Vigilante", directionalGlassware

Genre: A small collection of certain types of scenes (represented mechanically by **XP Actions**), picked to work together to give the game an overall mood.

Genre issue[4]: An **Issue** that you can earn by failing to meet certain (**genre**-dependent) criteria when taking an XP action. The Issue works like any other Issue does, but the players are advised to think of the genre issue as a consequence and not a benefit. Players may declare that they earn the Issue themselves.

Group XP: The pot of **XP** earned from **XP actions**. At the end of a **session**, the **HG** splits the pot evenly among all the **players**. (If it doesn't come out evenly, the HG tosses a few extra XP in the pool.)

Handler: An idiosyncratic usage specific to this book. You, when you're not pretending or playing a game. Sometimes referred to as "Mun" or "Player" by other roleplaying games.[5]

Health Levels:[6] A set of boxes you have that represents the number, and magnitude, of the **Wounds** you can take before you are **Defeated**. They come in three tiers: Divine (for things that would obliterate

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==> 4. OJ: This is my term and not Jenna's.
==> 5. OJ: Renamed to cause less confusion with Players of the Game/Replayers, i.e. characters.
==> 6. OJ: I think these are badly named. I'd call them "plot armor slots".

normal people), Tough (for things that would probably kill normal people), and Normal (for things that seriously inconvenience normal people). How many, and what type of, health levels you have depends on the **power level** of your game.

HG: Chuubo's uses the term "HG" (Hollyhock God) to refer to other games' Game Master, Dungeon Master, or Storyteller. Regardless of name, this person usually doesn't have a **character**. They play the rest of the world, instead.

IC: In-character; things that your **character** says or that your character does. The opposite of **OOC**.

Imperial Miracle: A type of **miracle** that changes the world, usually in a subtle and restrained way. (For unrestrained Imperial Miracles, see **Wish**.) They are almost impossible to oppose mechanically. You're really better off making a **Quest** and talking with the **HG**.

In-genre (XP action): The **XP actions** that go with your game's **genre**. Whenever you fulfill the criteria for an in-genre XP action, you may declare it yourself without HG approval. Compare **genre issue**.

Intention/Intention level: The total of your **Skill** plus **Will**, sometimes modified by **Edge**, **Obstacles**, **Tools**, and/or **Bonds**. This never actually guarantees that you will accomplish what you want, but higher totals are more productive, impressive, and/or effective. If two Intentions are opposed, the higher intention level wins. (Unless the intentions are diametrically opposed, though, *both* intentions will take effect – the higher intention first, and then the lower one.) However, even the highest intention level can be overruled by a **miracle**.

Issue: A set of cards with roleplaying advice on how to set up and follow through on a certain type of mini-plot. The **HG** can give these cards to players (or, through **genre issues** or **miraculous powers** such as some **arc powers**, players may declare that they earn the cards themselves), and following the advice on the cards will advance this mini-plot. These will earn you **MP** and (eventually) **XP**.

Magical skill: A **skill** that accomplishes things that "shouldn't" be possible. Almost all uses of a magical skill will face **Obstacles**, and someone with a magical skill will usually have a **Bond** to help offset those obstacles.

Main Character: A **character** that is particularly important to the plot. May or may not be a **player character**.

Miracle: Something that happens beyond the mundane **intention level** system. Unlike with a mundane intention, it's guaranteed to happen, but it's not guaranteed to improve your life. How common these are depends on your game's **power level**.

> It was just the decent thing to do. The kind of miracle that's only a miracle because people *won't* do it, not because they *can't*.
>
> phoneticYttrium

Miraculous action: The ordinary sort of **miracle**. You cast these by invoking **miraculous powers**, and sometimes paying **MP**. When two miraculous actions conflict, the rating of each action is derived from the **arc trait** of the **arc** it came from (plus 3, if it is a **major miraculous action**), plus any **Miraculous Edge** or **Strike**; the higher-rated miracle wins. (Unless the miracles are diametrically opposed, though, *both* miracles will take effect – the higher-rated miracle first, and then the lower one.)

Miraculous arc:[7] A set of themed **miraculous powers** from the Chuubo's [hyperflexible mythology](#), only available at the miraculous **power level**. As your **Arc Trait** increases, you can unlock higher-tier miraculous powers.

Miraculous power: A power that you can use to generate **miracles**. Usually only found at the miraculous **power level**, although there are a few miraculous powers that can slip into mortal-level games without much difficulty (such as Octopus Singer). You can get miraculous powers as part of a **miraculous arc**, or as a **perk**.

MP: Miracle points, a resource used to fuel many **miraculous powers**. Your **Miraculous Arc** will tell you how many of them you need to spend on a power. You can also spend them on **Strike** or at an **MP shop**.

MP cap[8]: The total number of **MP** your **MP pool** will routinely refill to. The number of MP in your MP pool can exceed your MP cap, but then you don't get the MP at the beginning of **chapters** or **books**. By default, this is 5, although some **miraculous arcs** and **perks** can increase this number.

MP pool: The number of **MP** you have on hand. It will replenish itself to your **MP cap** at the beginning of a **book**, and you will get 1 MP (up to your MP cap) at the beginning of each **chapter**. It can be increased beyond the maximum by **Bonds**, **Afflictions**, certain arc-specific miraculous powers, and/or **Issues**.

Mortal arc:[9] A set of benefits for pursuing an **Arc** that are available to all characters, regardless of campaign **power level**. The rewards are permanent points to assign to **Skills** and **Bonds**, as well as an **Affliction** of rating equal to the **Arc trait**. However, you cannot access any miraculous **arc powers** while pursuing a mortal arc.

Mundane action: See **Intention**.

NPC: Non-player **character**. Usually someone the **HG** is "playing". Particularly important NPCs can be **main characters**.

Obstacle: A problem that stands in the way of regular use of an **Intention** and reduces both its effectiveness and feasibility. Rated from 1 to 5, they may range from 'this is kinda tough' to 'this is

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==> 7. OJ: Miraculous arcs are like what other systems call "classes". There is no penalty for cross-classing, except for the amount of stuff you'll have to keep track of on your character sheet. (If you have more than three miraculous arcs on your starting character sheet, though, you may want to rethink things.)

==> 8. OJ: The book calls this "starting MP", but I don't think that's a very clear name.

==> 9. OJ: I couldn't find mortal arcs in the corebook at first, so to save you the trouble they're on page 452.

completely impossible, because it would violate a basic rule of the cosmos'. An **Edge** is a specific kind of Obstacle. Obstacles do not stack.

OOC: Out-of-character; things that *you* say or do as a **player**, such as "I have these goals that I would like to fulfill in the following **scenes**", "these are things I would rather not do", or "when's the pizza coming, anyway?"

Perk: A medium-term, temporary-ish reward for completing a **quest**. You get eight slots for Perks. Perks can be **Bonds**, **Afflictions**, **Skills**, **Tools**, **miraculous powers**, **Accessories**, **power-up perks**, and a variety of more niche options explained in the book.

Player: Anyone who is generally agreed to be participating in the game in question, on this level of reality. (**Characters** don't count.)

Player character: A **character** who is controlled by a **player** (other than the **HG**). Sometimes referred to as "Avatar", "Toon", or "Muse" by other roleplaying games.

Quest: A chunk of your character's story, written up as a **quest card** that requires a certain amount of **XP** to complete. These can be **anytime quests** or **storyline quests**. When you complete a Quest, you can get a reward, which is usually (but not always) a **perk**. A group of quests that come together into a narrative is an **Arc**.

Quest card: The written information about **XP**-bearing conditions for a **quest**. (As opposed to the metadata and explanations surrounding it.) A quest card describes only the parts of a story that are interesting in play – for example, if you are building a boat, you do not have to stage scenes of boat-building. Instead you will get XP for musing about boat-building materials, or perhaps showing up late with sawdust all over your clothes.

Quest miracle: A **miracle** that you can perform, if you have the prerequisite **arc trait** and complete a relevant **quest**. These are almost always **major miraculous actions**, and you usually have to keep the completed **quest** active in a quest slot to maintain its effects.

Quest set: A group of **quests** that have been pre-made to conform to the story of at least one **Arc**. Often, the quests in the quest set can be rearranged so you can use them for several arcs; quest sets will usually come with annotations on how you do that.

Recharge token: A recharge token can be spent to refresh your **Will** and **MP** to their respective starting caps. Some **Perks** and **miraculous powers** may also cost recharge tokens to use. You get a recharge token every time you fill out your **basic quest**. (Occasionally you can get recharge tokens as rewards for other **quests**.)

A User's Guide to the Apocalypse

His one good eye was looking at me, blankly.

"It's okay," I said, quietly. *It's okay because we're still alive. It's okay because we're still ourselves.*

<div align="right">"Aftermath", dryadTornado</div>

Region: A loose and conceptually bounded location, defined by a number of world-laws known as **Region Properties**.

Region Properties: A set of metaphysical rules about a **Region**. Any being within the Region may take advantage of Properties as a level 2 **Bond**.

Ritual: A special purpose **XP Action** that halts normal play in favor of more structured, stylized sequences. These are invoked to deal with things normal play can't represent. When you are in a ritual, you usually pick your **actions** from a list of actions appropriate to the ritual that the **HG** will present (if you want to break that list and/or the Ritual, you may face an **Obstacle** or **Auctoritas**). Rituals are **genre**less, and come into play if the HG or group wants them to.

Skill: Something your character can do, stated as a word or short phrase. Skills are rated from 0 to 5, and you get 8 skill points per character. (You can earn more with **mortal arcs**, or certain **miraculous arcs**.) Skills (plus **Will**) are used to form mundane-level **intentions**. If the skill is for something humans can't usually do, it might be a **Magical Skill** or a **Superior Skill**.

Superior Skill: A **skill** that is either 'inhuman' or genre-like in nature, and more capable of doing ridiculous or difficult **Intentions**. Point-for-point, a Superior Skill is much more powerful than a regular Skill. Superior Skills grant **Edge** in a narrow set of predefined uses up to the skill rating; borderline uses can use the skill as base but don't get an Edge.

Strike: The "momentum" of a miracle. Grants **Miraculous Edge** and is primarily used to bypass **Auctoritas**. May be obtained by spending **MP** or applying a relevant **Bond**. Notably, Strike from multiple sources *will* stack.

Those symbols (🛡️👑🔥🎺🎴🪃🍃😨): Each symbol/**color** is a category, associated with certain types of **scenes**, certain types of stories, and certain types of powersets. You shouldn't worry about them; they're best learned through long-term exposure and osmosis anyway.

Tool: Objects or other things that help you perform a **Skill**. Most tools give +1 to your **Intention**, while exceptional tools give a +2.

Transition: A (usually poetry) reading used to substitute for normal play in cases of "stock footage", or to express the nature of divine, alien, or horrifying things. Transitions are **genre**less and come into play if the **HG** or group wants them to.

Will: A resource, used with **skills**, to reach higher **intention levels**. You get a pool of 8 Will that refreshes at the beginning of every **chapter** (unless you have **miraculous will**). You can only spend will in 1, 2, 4, or 8 Will increments.

Wish: A category of **Imperial Miracle** that disregards the usual restrictions on Imperial Miracle-based powers. There is a special set of rules for exploring and representing the effects of a Wish.

Wound: Something you invoke when something happens to your character that you don't want. Wounds are not limited to the physical: you can also take wounds against metaphysical attacks, imprisonment, and other such status effects. Some **miraculous powers** cost wounds to activate. Wounds come in three severity classes, each corresponding to a **health level**. Taking a wound allows you to change the shape of the effects into something you like better, fills a health level with a Wound and its power, and allows you a **reaction shot**. You can use a **quest** to heal faster from a wound (and in fact a quest is necessary for a Deadly Wound to heal at all). If you wound your last health level, you are **defeated**.

XP: Experience points. Some experience points can be earned by doing things listed on a **quest card**; these experience points should be marked on the quest card from which they spawned. Other experience points come from **XP Actions** and **XP Emotions**; those experience points can be assigned to any **quest**.

XP Action: A way to mechanically represent that you have played a certain type of scene. After each XP action, you will **fade**. XP actions that are not **in-genre** need to be approved by the **HG**. The **XP** earned from an XP action will go into **group XP**, which is split and parceled out to everyone at the end of each **session**.

XP Emotion: Describes the reaction your **character** is meant to evoke from the other **players**. You can get **XP**, up to once every 15 minutes, each time another player expresses this reaction **OOC**ly in response to your character's actions (their characters don't have to feel it, and in some cases probably shouldn't).

About Chuubo's

Kyle grinned at Jace. "Can you grant wishes?"

"That depends," he said. "Do you wish to be punched in the face?"

City of Fallen Angels, Cassandra Clare

Chuubo's Marvelous Wish-Granting Engine is a diceless RPG system that is written by Jenna Moran, the same person that wrote *Nobilis*. It is designed to focus on character development and emotional interactions. It involves earning XP and completing quests. Unlike most tabletop systems, though, you receive XP for things like "heartfelt conversations", "making other people feel emotions towards your character", or "you sit on cracked stones and share a meal with friends", and your quests are tasks like "getting to know someone" or "building a house". This system captures the way I think about roleplaying, in a way that I haven't been able to find in any other roleplaying system.

Chuubo's is designed to emulate stuff like Studio Ghibli films, *Adventure Time*, and *Homestuck*. It is also extensible to other types of stories and genres, such as the ones that I'm running Replay Value on.

Chuubo's is available digitally as a PDF, as a print-on-demand book, and as an ePub available for $10.[10]

About Replay Value AU

Dreams are always crushing when they don't come true. But it's the simple dreams that are often the most painful because they seem so personal, so reasonable, so attainable. You're always close enough to touch, but never quite close enough to hold and it's enough to break your heart.

Three Weeks With My Brother, Nicholas Sparks

Replay Value AU – the story that got taken apart and put back together to make this sourcebook – is an alternate universe (AU) of Homestuck based on a Homestuck fanfiction called the *Sburb Glitch FAQ*. This work is notable for laying out how a normal Sburb session is supposed to go, new fanclasses and fanaspects, and a narrator who infuses the entire thing with a tone of endurance and survival.[11]

Replay Value AU is a setting in which Sburb players are trapped within the Game; instead of being able to continue on to a new universe, they repeatedly play Sburb until they die. As attempts to make a mark on the world, many Replayers have launched servers into the Ring that allow people to form social connections across sessions. These Replayer networks are often the only lifeline to sanity that many of these Replayers have. Thus, the Replay Value AU setting is a mix of existential horror and slice-of-life elements.

==> 10. OJ: $10 is not a typo. That is the actual price for the core.
==> 11. OJ: I mean, when he's not talking about bicycle stunting.

Some setting elements from the FAQ were tweaked for better play; for example, Replay Value AU characters can prototype their own kernelsprites rather than be bound to their Replayee's choices.

Replay Value AU was a story about having Internet friends far away, and about how people learn to survive and live in oppressive environments. The roleplay fell apart due to interpersonal conflicts. It's been rebooted at least twice. In this book, though, I'm not writing about RVBoot. I'm writing about RV Classic: the characters and setting I knew and loved.[12]

About This Book

> Life will break you. Nobody can protect you from that, and living alone won't either, for solitude will also break you with its yearning. You have to love. You have to feel.
>
> And when it happens that you are broken, or betrayed, or left, or hurt, or death brushes near, let yourself sit by an apple tree and listen to the apples falling all around you in heaps, wasting their sweetness. Tell yourself you tasted as many as you could.

The Painted Drum LP, Louise Erdrich

This book (which I will sometimes refer to as "RV Chuubo's") is an adaptation of Replay Value AU that condenses the canon and setting information into a single document. It describes many of the setting details we never wrote down. It also shares some of the characters we played, and some of the stories we told.[13]

The Chuubo's system can (in theory) be decentralized with a few rules hacks. So, in theory, you could run this game without a HG or referee at all! But the lack of someone who could make final decisions was a large part of why Replay Value AU fell. Therefore, if you expect your game to last more than a few scenes, I strongly recommend that you find an HG.[14] This being *said*: If you truly trust the other handlers in your game – a big if, mind you – you *can* run this game and this setting HG-less.

Even with an HG, handlers should still have a great deal of leeway to define what happens to their characters. I'm not just talking about the Chuubo's wound system here; I'm talking about handlers' ability to declare facts about the world, such as "there's a dungeon here and this is how it works", or "an NPC coplayer teamed up with me to do this".

I want to share Sburb.org and Pits and Corpse Fiesta with you. I want to show you the tales of the Seer Network and Aelfrida and Lotus and Myra and the Mannerist blogosphere. I want to do more than tell a story – I want to tell you of the many, interlocking stories of this world.

Perhaps, when I'm done, we can play a game…

==> 12. OJ: If you know RV Classic, I played lucidChthonia and epinephrineElectrified. Even if you don't know RV Classic, I wrote a decent amount of fanfiction. See the appendix for links.

==> 13. OJ: I couldn't fit all of them into this book, though, so I've put the rest in my campaign-book *The Age of Replayer Networks*.

==> 14. OJ: The HG can play a character of their own alongside their duties of representing the world, if they wish, and keep track of that character's stats and so on just like a normal handler. This is not recommended! But they *can*.

A Warning

> Some theorists have mistakenly applied the concept of "learned helplessness" to the situation of battered women and other chronically traumatized people. Such concepts tend to portray the victim as simply defeated or apathetic, whereas in fact a much livelier and more complex inner struggle is usually taking place. In most cases the victim has not given up. But she has learned that every action will be watched, that most actions will be thwarted, and that she will pay dearly for failure. [...]
>
> Prolonged captivity undermines or destroys the ordinary sense of a relatively safe sphere of initiative, in which there is some tolerance for trial and error. To the chronically traumatized person, any action has potentially dire consequences.
>
> *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman

Before we go on, I must warn you: Despite my choice of system, this is not a Ghibli film, or *Adventure Time*, or *Homestuck*.

This is a horror universe leavened with slice of life – and the slice of life elements are there, in large part, to make sure that the horror elements hit with full force.

Replayers are plagued by uncertainty. They do not know if they will discover a gamebreaking bug tomorrow. They are terrified of random chance cutting them down. They don't understand why they are alive.

They have one certainty: *Sburb does not care about them*. Sburb wants perfection from Replayers, and Replayers have no way of living up to it. It is impossible to beat. It is impossible to pacify. And so Replayers fear it, tread softly, and try to save others from jumping recklessly into inevitable doom.

This is something that flummoxes a certain fraction of people who encounter the Replay Value 'verse for the first time. To them, it looks as if Replayers' fear, and the way they try to warn new players about it, is a crabs-in-a-bucket reaction. This could not be further from the truth.

Replayers know that trying anything new has a very large chance of killing them outright. They laud and fear their gamebreakers, those few who retain a sliver of adventurousness despite this omnipresent fear, for expanding the zone they consider "safe" to act in. They warn the younger ones not to try anything new. This is not out of spite, but because they have seen hundreds or thousands of players – new and old alike – die from doing things that would seem innocuous to the inexperienced.

You can ignore this, to an extent, if you're planning to use the other genre-modes (see ??? and ???). But this fear, and what people do in the face of it, is the heart of this setting, and is why Replayer culture looks the way it does. Ignore this at your peril.

An Opposite Warning

> This also means that if your life is hell, your art is going to tend towards depicting life as hell. Sometimes, it's a good thing, because expressing yourself helps process things that happened once. (What else would wall-scribbles be for?) But if you end up thinking that all Good Art should have angst and resentment about the meaninglessness of life, you're going to end up imbibing those characteristics yourself, and that's going to turn you into a horrible person.
>
> So don't do that, either.

<div align="right">

"Living The Dream", existentialExternality

</div>

There's also an exact opposite warning I need to give, to those of you who will write nothing *but* angst:

Too much of it makes people's brains shut down. You need to have joy and laughter and some way to move forward, even if it is small.

And part of the reason I wanted to use Chuubo's as the engine for this game, rather than a horror engine, is *to counteract our tendencies to write angst*. There is an expectation in this tabletop RPG system of growth, of change, of the ability to make your wishes come true – even if at great cost, and even if it takes years and years.

You can't escape Sburb, no. But you survive, you go on, you try to *live*, because...

Picture a little lost second-sessioner. Picture them being horrified and confused at Replaying. If you do not survive to Replay into that session, someone *else* will replay into that session instead – and they might well be a PK, or a speedrunner, or worse. So you go on.

Or maybe you do research, or gamebreaking.

Or maybe you build a Ring server.

Or maybe you write FAQs.

Or maybe you make art.

This is what I call the lifeline skill. What makes you keep going? Every PC has one, and nearly all the NPCs have one too. Otherwise none of our characters would last long enough to be playable. Those without a lifeline give in to despair too quickly to stay viable characters.

There is something that gives you, and your character, faith that tomorrow will be better than today. Something that drives both of you to work to *make* tomorrow be better than today.

What is it?

This Book Is Not An Authority

This book is not the final word on the Replay Value AU setting. It is not even *close* to the final word. Elizabeth is biased, and Samantha is just as biased but in a more socially acceptable way. And the storylines I've decided to describe represent only a fraction of the storylines that were seen in the original.

Just because this book is the only substantial source on RV Classic doesn't mean that it is Canon Law. After all, I am only one person, and the roleplay had many people in it; and I don't know anything about you, or whoever you want to play this game with.

Elizabeth's bias is obvious: that she loves even the wicked, and that she has a hatred for Seers even as she believes that everyone else had a reason for being the way they are.[15] She shows loyalty even when the things she's being loyal to don't deserve that loyalty. She is only human, and humans can be hypocritical, over-loyal beings.

Samantha's bias is more subtle. She is a moderator. She is the voice of tradition and the status quo. She is very good at sounding reasonable, even when the things she says are *not*. She is only human, and humans can be traditionalist, hidebound, and reactionary.

I have not portrayed the setting with perfect fidelity, because I can't. If you want your Replay Value AU to be different, in small or large ways, I encourage you to change things. Paradox space is vast; who is to say that all of our little worlds are not somehow true, out there?

==> 15. OJ: She understands that she has the *luxury* of loving the wicked because she is not in immediate danger from them, but she still does so.

Chat Conventions

by OJ, adapted from text by openSystem

My ideal medium for this kind of game would be something like Discord, Slack, or a shoutbox: something which could be used in real time, but which would save history so that it could seamlessly move into and out of asynchronous play.[16] Another option is Livejournal/Dreamwidth-style roleplay, with main posts for scenes and the comments for things that happened inside them. Ideally it would be a medium that would be possible for people to catch up on reading: for example, Tumblr would be spectacularly unsuitable, because Tumblr roleplays don't centralize well.

If you're running this game on a forum thread, consider tying it to an "official" chat service of some sort that you can post chatlogs from. You could of course play this entirely through IRC (with important logs saved on Pastebin, Google Docs, etc.) or entirely on a forum (if you don't mind writing pesterlogs two or three lines at a time).

In theory, you could also play this game in real life, but I feel like that would be missing the point.

This is a set of chat conventions used in Replay Value Classic; I've added the occasional bit to make it suitable for this game, but it's a surprisingly good structure to build on.

Note: These conventions were built when we used IRC as a roleplaying platform. If you are using an IM service such as Skype instead, some of these may not be relevant – or could be replicated using completely different methods!

"**/me**" typed into the chatbox of many chat clients (although not all) expands out to your name when you submit it – for example, "**/me waves**" would become "*** openJacquard waves**". It is also called the "emote" command, not to be confused with the Chuubo's concept of emoting.

Indirect Communication

Also known as "Talking over the Internet", this is whatever takes place on a Sburb.org IRC channel and any 'side memos' that may crop up, or the equivalent on some other server.

For the sake of clarity, all commands and syntax will be in **bold courier**.

- To signal your character has joined the memo, use the command **/me has joined the memo!**
- While on the memo, most things you post and see in the chat are equivalent to things your character posts and sees in the chat.
- The exception to this is anything in **[square brackets].** Square brackets are used to denote narration of physical events happening to that character at the time. See the section on direct communication for more details.

==> 16. OJ: My *real* ideal would be the now-defunct Google Wave, but, well...

- **((double parentheses))** is, as is standard in a lot of places, an OOC comment. If you've got an OOC channel, though, please try to keep extensive OOC discussion there!

- Characters can link to nearly anything on the Internet, so long as you keep the fourth wall up. In-character, they're links to the equivalent pictures, blog posts, etc. on another forum or service. You can also drop links to stuff that's only available in-character, by giving nonexistent URLs; I like using URLs that look a bit like this:

  rttp[17]**://prototypetowers.net/pt/0000/godsgifttoGrinds-Sburb_Glitch_FAQ_latest.pdf**

- For IC private messages between people on the memo, use **/me PMs [name]: ([Message])**, replacing the name with the recipient's chumhandle and message with… well, the message.[18] If this becomes obtrusive, you can spin off a sidechannel for it (on IRC this only requires typing a new hashtag-channel-name into the existing channel and then clicking it), or hold the chat privately and put the logs up for public consumption after it's complete.

- System notes such as scenes, chapters, Intentions, Miracles, and declared XP actions will be denoted as **!! note** – like

    - **!! Scene end**

    - **!! Intention (Sburban Survival 3 + 2 Will): Protect the control point**

    - **!! Slice of Life**.

    - Noting quest bonus XP, Issues, getting awarded bonus Will or MP, etc. should happen in the OOC channel.

- Finally, when a character leaves the memo, use **/me has left the memo!** (You can also use something like **/me has idled out** or **/me 's computer exploded!**, but nonstandard quit messages are best used sparingly, for emphasis.)

Direct Communication

Or if you want to not be technical, "In person". This is for when your characters are in the same place and interacting physically with each other.

- Because your characters are in person, everything will be a narrative action. This means that the entire scene will be in **[square brackets].** Yes, I know, those characters are a hassle to add, but it's worthwhile to be able to tell at a glance whether you're looking at a chatlog or a direct scene.

- Inside the square brackets, we use second person narration, like Homestuck.

==> 17. CM: It stands for Ring TimeTrav Protocol.

==> 18. OJ: Yeah, I know, that makes them not private at all! It's something I've grown to like, though – while ICly you aren't aware of what's going on in private messages, having them open OOC provides opportunities for funny commentary, coincidentally similar phrasings, chances for characters with "mind-reading" skills to shine, and better future planning.

- Speaking out loud is denoted with **"quote marks"** inside square-bracketed lines – dialoglogs are funny, but rather cumbersome (especially since it's impossible to distinguish them from in-character IRC chatting).
- **<angle brackets>** denote speech (or, if context has been established, telepathy) in a language other than English; in practice this usually means Alternian.

* rhoticLine has joined the memo!
<entryTriplicate> Hi there!
<rhoticLine> How goes?
<entryTriplicate> All right, all right. Denizen decided to assign me a task that isn't physically possible. Again.
<entryTriplicate> Sucks to be the Ward of Dust!
* charmedMittens has returned from away
<charmedMittens> hey rholin[19]!
* rhoticLine PMs charmedMittens: (Hey, I hate to be a bother)
* rhoticLine PMs charmedMittens: (But I think now might be a good time to address the thing we were talking about yesterday.)
<entryTriplicate> Do any of you have any ideas on how to make a working machine out of sand, but then make it possible to restore back to the original sand after it's done?
<entryTriplicate> I was gonna just run current into it until it turned to glass, but you can't turn glass back into sand, exactly...
* charmedMittens PMs rhoticLine: (which thing?)
<charmedMittens> @enttri: look up mistakenEmporium's Pitsblog[20]
<charmedMittens> but, short version:
* rhoticLine PMs charmedMittens: (The evidence I gathered that repetitiveTourist is a PK.)
<charmedMittens> use sugar syrup as glue, flash-dry it to hold the sand in position
<charmedMittens> it'll rinse right off when you're done
* charmedMittens PMs rhoticLine (right, that thing)
* charmedMittens PMs rhoticLine (uh)
<entryTriplicate> Hell yes, they have full plans with alchemiter recipes.
<entryTriplicate> Thanks so much!
* charmedMittens PMs rhoticLine (is... it okay if i make you present that evidence and then i do the ban)
* charmedMittens PMs rhoticLine (i'm not really okay with being judge, jury, and executioner)
* entryTriplicate is away (brb throwing all my grist at the screen)
<charmedMittens> no problem!
* rhoticLine PMs charmedMittens (And being two of the three is okay with you for some reason? Eh, whatever.)
<rhoticLine> Okay, so
<rhoticLine> The past week, I've been doing research and compiling evidence and stuff

---

==> 19. EB: Replayers often use "three-threes" – the first three letters of each word in your 'handle – instead of simple initials for addressing each other, because once you get more than one session's worth of people in one place, you're going to end up with a lot of initials collisions. For example: tungstenTinkerer, tenaciousTheseus, and timelyTurnabout were simultaneous active users on #ultimatereward at one point. Calling them tunTin, tenThe, and timTur avoids confusion about which TT you're talking about.
==> 20. EB: A Pitsblog is a blog hosted on PrototypeTowers. The odd abbreviation is explained in Pits' writeup on page ???.

<rhoticLine> And it all leads to the inevitable conclusion that repetitiveTourist is a PK.
<rhoticLine> Exhibit A: rttp://sburb.org/forums/aspect-light/thread-130890-is-it-okay-to-kill-someone-for.html#3 In which RT argues that it's okay to kill people who are merely careless because... it worked out for him?
<rhoticLine> Exhibit B: rttp://sburb.org/forums/newbies/thread-095112-seeking-coplayers.31.html#776 RT suggests here that he's the only one who knows what happened to this kid's native session coplayer, and then posted ASCII art of a splayed-out body.
<rhoticLine> Exhibit C: rttp://sburb.org/~rhoticline/screenshot-72.9818435.png I PMed RT asking what that last post was about and he basically confirmed that the ASCII art was derived from a picture of someone he actually killed.
<rhoticLine> We have a confession. Is this open-and-shut enough for you, chaMit?
<charmedMittens> right, right, if you insist:
* charmedMittens has opened the moderator panel!
charmedMittens is now known as GUIDE_OF_COINS[21]
* GUIDE_OF_COINS has banned repetitiveTourist from #denizenlair for indefinite (Reason: player-killer)
* GUIDE_OF_COINS has closed the moderator panel!
GUIDE_OF_COINS is now known as charmedMittens
<rhoticLine> [RL: Sigh. Pass your hand over your face.]
<rhoticLine> [Experience makes it less painful to see people talking about doing horrible things. You don't know what that implies about your own morals. Probably nothing good.]
<charmedMittens> i'll pass the request for blacklist up the chain of command of course
<charmedMittens> but be aware that blacklists also prevent us from being able to track him
<charmedMittens> so there's very little chance you'll actually see him get one
<rhoticLine> Thank you. And I know policy's policy.
<rhoticLine> It's just something that really pisses me off, you know?
<rhoticLine> I don't like seeing people like that get away.
<rhoticLine> [That's what you tell people when they ask why you're doing this. It's either that or a sick sort of tourism of other people's suffering. Which would make you evil, right?]
<charmedMittens> if it helps
<charmedMittens> don't think of it as him getting away
<charmedMittens> think of it as us tracking his ankle bracelet
<charmedMittens> or timetrav implant, as it were
<rhoticLine> Bill, you're incredibly cute sometimes and also rather naïve.
<charmedMittens> thank you
<charmedMittens> i try
<rhoticLine> Anyway, gotta run. Seeyas!

==> 21. OJ: The convention of changing your name to one suiting your role when using moderator or admin tools is something that existed in the original RV. It is optional!

* rhoticLine has left the memo!
<charmedMittens> bye
<charmedMittens> dammit, missed[22]

==> 22. EB: Sometimes I seriously wonder if missing people when saying goodbye to them in chat is my Basic Quest.

A User's Guide to the Apocalypse   37

by OJ

This sourcebook is designed for miraculous-level characters, meaning that I use the Chuubo's "class" system. Unpredictable results may occur if you use mundane-level characters. You have been warned.

Starting PC Replayers in The Age of Replayer Networks – the campaign for this setting – are built like this:

- 8 points of skills
- 2 Normal Health Levels, 1 Tough Health Level, 2 Divine Health Levels
- a 5-MP pool
- an 8-Will pool
- 1 *inherent* Bond based on your native classpect, at level 2
- 1 *inherent* Affliction, at level 0-2
- 1 miraculous arc
- 0-3 perks that come from the appropriate color of arc, subject to HG approval but the HG should be lenient[23]
- additional level 1 connection perks to anyone you'd like to get along well with immediately and whose handler agrees
- *five* quest slots (This differs from Chuubo's core, where characters only get four quest slots.[24])
- a basic quest
- a bonus XP emotion

The main difference between NPCs and PCs, in power level, is how fast they earn Miraculous Arcs. NPCs tend to earn one Miraculous Arc per three to five Sburb sessions[25]; PCs are closer to one Miraculous Arc per two to three.

Even the lowliest of NPCs will have the inherent Bond, although it might not be as strong. This is a feature of Replay Value, because *everyone* in Sburb wraps fate around them with strange rituals and practices (i.e. because not doing so tends to result in you dying). People tend to take on the traits of their native classpects. After all, your first classpect *was* meant for you, and as you did not yet know of Replaying you were likely to take the Game seriously when it claimed that it would make you a better person by making you an X of Y.

==> 23. OJ: Use a level 2 Bond perk and a level 2 Sburban Magic perk belonging to a previous session's Classpect, if you don't want to think about it.

==> 24. OJ: This modification was made because you will be on a Sburban Tale quest nearly all the time, and I didn't want to discourage quest miracles.

==> 25. OJ: Characters who used to be PCs in RV Classic tend to cluster around one per three sessions, which is how I got these numbers.

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(The occasional Replayer swaps the Bond out for something else, but that's only possible in extraordinary circumstances, such as being assigned a Classpect that isn't your Native for an unusually long session or Ring voyage.)

About one-third of NPCs will also have an inherent Affliction, although for them it's more likely to be level 0 or 1. These Afflictions represent the Game attempting to store data in your soul that shouldn't be stored there, resulting in a glitch that follows you across sessions. (This can be an "Affliction pseudopower" like `[I don't take fall damage]`. It can also be negative, like `[My sleep ratio is permanently bugged, so my dreamself stays permanently-unawoken]`.)

But – if you're a PC – it is also *possible* that you have Afflictions like `[I can always find someone to reach out to]`, `[I can resurrect otherwise-unfixable Ring servers]`, or `[I have an intuitive sense for finding prophecies]`. These are still data that's stored in your soul because the Game is terrible at portability! But they're not exactly *bugs...*

> **kids and fun**, idiom: A phrase that points out the contradictions between Sburb's marketing image and its reality. It is sometimes used to indicate that the rest of the sentence, or paragraph, is sarcastic.
>
> Clearly we're misinterpreting the Archagents; they don't want to murder us, they just want to recruit us for their Saturday poker night. After all, this is a game of kids and fun!
>
> *The Gamebreaker's Glossary*, 21st edition

Notes on the Social Contract

> It is not possible to forgive without an unencumbered choice. Without power, forgiveness is indistinguishable from compliance, or at best surrender; and thus it has no value.
>
> "On The Nature of Judgment (4 of 5)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

There is an essential tension in the heart of a game of RV Chuubo's: that it's a game about people lacking agency... run on a game system that considers agency to be important to preserve at all times.[26]

This is not something I can resolve with rules. The core of a game like this is that you need to *trust the other handlers to work with you to help you achieve your story goals*. To do that, you need to agree on what your story is going to look like in the first place.

The stories this book facilitates are not, and will *never* be, unambiguous wins over the Game. This setting is designed for bittersweet endings, for gaining something you worked for but losing other important things along the way, and for horror-with-slice-of-life. Set your story goals accordingly.

On comfort/discomfort

> No one, including the HG, can deliberately try to make another player uncomfortable. If you, for the sake of a game, or a player, for the sake of their character conception, must take in-character action that might make a player uncomfortable, you or the acting player must do what they can to minimize the effect. It doesn't matter if the discomfort is 'reasonable'.
>
> *Nobilis* 2e, page 77, describing the 'default' setting for player comfort

One of the things I learned the hard way from RV Classic is that it often takes a long time for people – especially the type of people who want to play this type of game – to realize exactly what they're uncomfortable with, and to speak up about it.

So you need to understand that there are times when, say, you may need to drop your great plotline about redeeming a PK with pure love, because to the other player it feels like forcing someone else to conform to your idea of them. Don't argue. This is a risk that you take as part of engaging in roleplaying as a pastime: that outside events may change the direction of your story.

Now, if you *trust* all the other handlers in your game, you can give them permission to explore things that are uncomfortable for you. To do that, you'll have to make sure everyone knows what's going on, explore your reactions, and know your limits. I've done that before. It can lead to some serious frissons of realism, if you handle it right. But it is always *the handler's call* whether they trust you enough to do this. (For more information, see ???.)

==> 26. OJ: This is a design choice of Chuubo's that I chose to keep in, to explore its implications. It's worth serious thought.

On the autonomy of characters

If you've never GMed a game before, or you haven't been able to see a decent GM in action, this is something you might do by accident the first time you try to run a game: Your notes say that a certain chamber of the tunnels underground on the Lands is filled with a paralyzing sense of sadness. So you narrate the PC stopping and crying in the middle of the room. The handler is annoyed, you're frustrated since you wanted the story to go that way, and things deteriorate OOCly.

Obviously, this is not at all optimal!

Granted, the Chuubo's wound system significantly mitigates these concerns – the handler says "Objection!" and insists on taking a wound, and you reluctantly revise your notes – but it's still good practice to *not* narrate others' reactions for them. Especially if you expect to ever play another game.

For instance, you can say something like "You feel like this object has an intensely tangible allure to it, that not taking it up it would feel like a betrayal of your heart." A surprising number of handlers will go along with that, and even if the other person does take a Wound, it's at least clear what they're taking it *against*.

On the other hand –

There's also a playstyle from RV Classic that I liked: handlers had broad authority over their characters' lives, and the only purpose of leadership or HG would have been an executive veto. If you want to play that way instead, *work it out beforehand*. You do not want to be eight months in when you realize that nobody's in charge.

Public Censure

There is a distinct boundary that some people need: they are okay with their characters screwing up, but they are not okay with it resulting in public censure and witchhunting. Public opinion and public censure are built into the RV setting as major social forces; PrototypeTowers often engages in dogpiling of this type, and said dogpiling has sometimes resulted in significant change (i.e. Seergate). However, whether a handler actually want this to happen to their character should be *their* choice.

RV Classic assumed that handlers could declare public censure and witchhunting happened as they wished; because this setting has an HG to describe these things instead, any player who is not comfortable with exploring this kind of plot should tell the HG as soon as they can.

Sex

Like it or not, characters of the age depicted in *Homestuck* and RV Chuubo's have sexuality, and it is likely that they are going to explore it.

The default setting for RV Chuubo's is that firstly, anyone who is playing out explicit sexuality beyond "kissing passionately" needs to be above 18, and secondly, explicit sexuality must be taken to a sidememo or faded-to-black. Similarly, do not speculate about a character's love life unless the handler

says that's fine, *and* is over 18 and thus capable to consenting to that kind of thing. Several of RV Classic's handlers have happily played out in-character smut! But I've never seen it, because I have opted not to see it and everyone has respected that preference.

Another default assumption I'm carrying over from RV Classic is that birth control and sexual education are trivially available – the former from the alchemiter, the latter from the Internet and the copies of the Internet that got uploaded to Ring servers. This is because none of us wanted to think about the consequences of in-character childbearing or venereal disease. If you want to explore this kind of thing, you need to clear it with everyone in your game.

Violence

In this setting, people die when they lose their reason to go on. At the same time, Sburb players must fight for their lives *daily*, and frequently get seriously injured while doing so.

The default setting, therefore, is that PCs attempt to try to prevent death as much as they can, and that any deaths of major NPCs and PCs are always a consequence of long-term emotional damage. (Senseless random deaths are for faceless NPCs.) Furthermore, people can get physically injured: broken bones and other such significant wounding are, while not a daily occurence, something that happens to any given character three or four times a session. They can be relatively easily healed or compensated for with in-game resources, such as health gels and alchemiter plans for replacement limbs. When people die, the deaths are not described in detail beyond "gored by an Ogre claw" or "head was cut off" or "scattered body parts and personal effects".

You could go bleaker than that! If your group wants to remove the remaining holds barred, you could depict gory injuries and deaths, and people might die for no good reason.

You could also go lighter and not depict such things at all. In such a game, a videogame health bar abstracts all this stuff away, and depleting it results in a sudden and bloodless cessation of existence.

Religion

While this is probably less relevant in a RV game than in traditional fantasy games, you need to run religion past the rest of the group before playing with it. If you have a religious character or plan to introduce any religious characters, you'll want to work out:

- Do any of the handlers have strong objections to someone portraying an adherent of the religion in question? Do any of the handlers *belong* to the religion in question?
- Does the religion claim certain things about the structure of the universe, or about gods? Is it possible from within the universe to figure out whether the claims are true? (The default for the latter is no.)
- How much is the character's religion expected to come up in play? Does the character's religion affect how they play the Game (i.e. an increased sensitivity to Angel corruption)?

Religion provides no game-mechanical bonuses. It will not make your character more resilient, more charismatic, or more lucky. You have to do that by yourself.

It is generally considered bad manners to proselytize at the gaming table. Don't do that.

Tone

Because this was one of the major disputes of RV Classic, this is a problem that I have thought a *lot* about.

Specify which genre-mode you're playing in: I'll explain more soon (page ???), but I'll summarize the three main branches to make sure everyone knows what I'm talking about:

- Gothic/Fairy Tales, a bleak, bittersweet tale of holding on to yourself and the people you love as the universe tries to take everything you care about away;
- Techno, a story of first-sessioners discovering the great coming-of-age story of the Game for the first time;
- and Epic or Adventure Fantasy, about Replayers who have decided that they won't take the Game lying down and have decided to try and break it, though in Adventure Fantasy this will almost certainly cost them their lives.

This game is designed for a group of PCs that are allied with each other in taking on the horrors of the Game. Even Alternians can care about their quadrants and clade, and even Internet jerkasses can bond with people in real life and want to keep in touch with them afterwards. Please do not make characters who are actively antisocial or asocial towards *everyone*, as you will likely end up missing much of the plot. An ultimately prosocial outlook – even if the character is brusque, incomprehensible, and/or eccentric – is essential.

Roleplaying With Trauma

This section will discuss abuse of all forms and other traumatizing experiences in more detail than the rest of the book.

I first came up with Replay Value AU while I was struggling to figure out how to survive an abusive childhood. As such, *A User's Guide to the Apocalypse* is an abusive universe. Stories set in this universe will be about abuse, trauma, and PTSD. These themes may remind you of disturbing or confusing things from your past.

Theoretically, you could handle this by bowing out of anything that made you uncomfortable. While that is a perfectly valid answer for most roleplays, it would be very difficult here. Nearly everything in this setting is about, or irrevocably shaped by, abuse and trauma. If you opted out of them all, there would be nothing left.

But you can learn to ride these emotions. You can learn to keep yourself safe, anchor yourself to other people, as you explore yourself through your character. That requires trust and communication (easier said than done). But I've found the practice rewarding.

There is very little literature on this topic. I had to work these things out with experience. Hopefully, I can save someone else the trouble.

OK, one more disclaimer: *Any recommendations I may make are based on my personal experiences and my understanding of the research. I am not a trained therapist. This is not therapy.*

Projection and Bleed

Let's define some useful terms.

Projection is when something about yourself ends up in your roleplaying character. Your character could have some of the same values or goals that you have. You could even take one of your personal peculiarities and build a character around that.

This isn't a bad thing! If your character's thought processes were completely different from yours, how would you know what they would do? A tabletop RP doesn't give you hours to puzzle out how someone would act (unless you're playing the game on a forum, I suppose), so you have to use your own way of thinking as a base. And sometimes, you'll project subconscious tendencies – even if you don't know that they exist.

Bleed is when your character's experiences affect you. I believe the original term is from LARPing; I'm stealing and expanding it. The simplest form of bleed is when you experience your characters' emotions. It can be more complex: you could start carrying around the character's thought patterns, or even their "voice", to places outside of their roleplay. This is normal – it means that your character's personality has been well-established. Personally, I consider this a good sign; it means that it'll be far easier to write from the viewpoint of my character.

Opening the Conversation

It's important to establish trust – trust that you can talk about your reactions OOC, with your roleplaying group. So first, you need to be able to talk about trauma. This conversation won't start itself, so I'm going to provide a starting point.

This starting point is a thesis:

Childhood trauma is not rare. It would even be a stretch to call it uncommon. It happens all the time.

The ACEs Study

The Adverse Childhood Experiences study (ACEs study, for short) was created to explore how childhood trauma affected people in adulthood. The first group chosen to take the survey was a group of people who were on Kaiser Permanente health insurance. The survey asked about ten types of childhood trauma – ten Adverse Childhood Experiences. (It didn't distinguish between how severe the traumas were; this was just a rough meter that could be tested quickly, not a precise measurement.) It then correlated these answers with the subjects' health records.

The results were dramatic.

64% of people surveyed in this group – remember, this group was made of people successful enough to have good health insurance – had experienced at least one ACE. ACEs came in packs – 87% of people who reported at least one ACE had two or more. 12.5% of the full survey group had at least four ACEs.

Furthermore, the more ACEs you had, the more likely you were to have serious health problems – not just mental health problems! – in adulthood. I would start throwing more numbers at you, but honestly, the graphs speak for themselves.
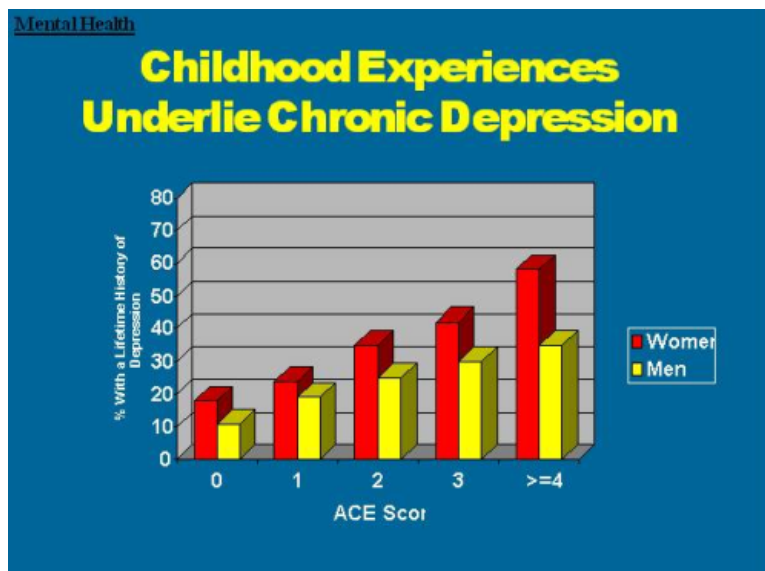
The ACE Score and the Prevalence of Liver Disease (Hepatitis/Jaundice)
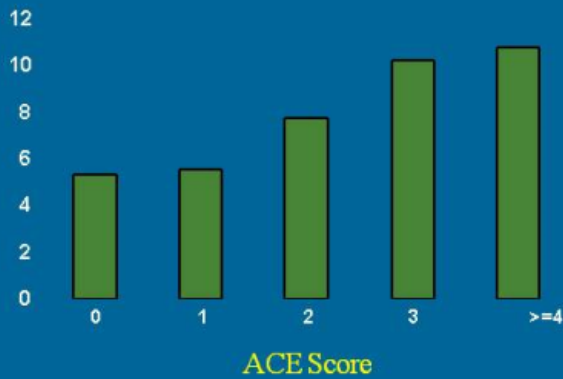
ACE Score vs. COPD
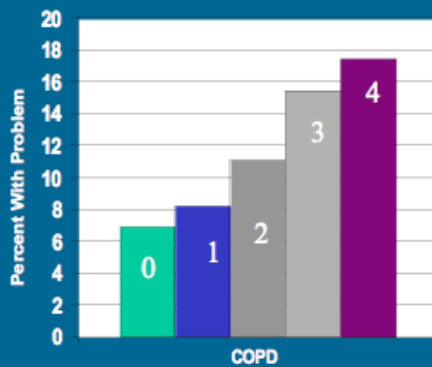
(I got these graphs from this page, which says that they're from a book called *The Hidden Epidemic: The Impact of Early Life Trauma on Health and Disease*. I am using them under fair use for educational purposes.)

This study has since been replicated by different people in different populations. And every time, the results come out the same: a lot of people have ACEs, and ACEs make you worse off as an adult.

Why? Well, it's because of how the body handles stressors...

Toxic Stress

> "Surely you have had those moments when the world crashes down with all its weight atop you, like the monstrous waves of the sea. Those moments of nothing solid, nothing to breathe, nothing but water and water and water and pain.
>
> "Now take that moment and stretch it out over twenty years."
>
> *The Infinite Castle*, dryadTornado

Stress in small, sharp doses – jitters before a test, say – is normal. It's the brain's reminder that "hey, what you're doing might be scary/dangerous, make sure you're paying attention." Ideally, parents help their children learn how to overcome this type of stress, and ideally, a child is capable of unwinding between stresses.

But when the stress keeps coming, and doesn't stop – that's toxic stress. Toxic stress is having one's fight-or-flight response permanently stuck in the "on" position. (You can't exactly run away from a bear if the bear lives in your house.)

Toxic stress can warp a child's brain – reading and writing are less important than, say, learning what expression on Dad's face precedes a beating. There is no point thinking about the future, because it is so full of anticipatory pain that there is no room for any other type of planning. And so on, and so forth.

Stress hormones also turn off "unimportant" functions of the body (such as effective digestion) and put "important" ones (such as the immune system) in overdrive. While a child will still grow physically, stress or no stress, toxic stress is a constant load, and it ages and wrings out the body.

As far as the studies can tell, someone with 6+ ACEs has a life expectancy twenty years shorter than the life of someone who experienced none.

The Relevance (and the survey)

> Eventually, I got so tired of waiting for things to break that I broke them myself. This was going fantastically, up until someone decided that I needed to be saved.
>
> "Tranquil Fury", artlessTulip

What does this all have to do with roleplaying?

I want you to give the ACEs questionnaire to your roleplaying group, and talk about the results. I chose the survey because you don't have to specify what happened to you… only how many things on the list happened. The number is enough to open the conversation. If anyone else wants to share more, that's fine – but the number should help people understand, without digging too deeply into personal traumas.

You don't need to have exactly the same traumas as someone else to be able to talk with and sympathize with them. The greater experience of trauma in general has enough common elements that you can talk

about it with people who have different issues. Which is a good thing, given that nobody selects a roleplaying group solely based on "other people with identical experiences".[27]

So here's the original survey. (The wording is from <u>here</u>.)

> For every question that you answer with "yes", "technically", or "well, other people say it happened", mark one point. The total number of points is your ACEs score.
>
> Prior to your 18th birthday:
>
> - Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often… Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
> - Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often… Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
> - Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever… Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
> - Did you often or very often feel that … No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
> - Did you often or very often feel that … You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
> - Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
> - Was your mother or stepmother: Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? or Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
> - Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
> - Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
> - Did a household member go to prison?

You might notice that many types of childhood trauma are not listed. This is because the original survey picked the most common traumas that had well-established evidence. I'm going to list a few more that show up often in people I know.[28] You can add them, if you think they fit.

> Prior to your 18th birthday:

==> 27. OJ: ...or at least, nobody *should* select a roleplaying group on that basis. I suppose there's no accounting for taste.
==> 28. OJ: I suppose I need to name this list so other people can refer to it easily. Let's call it "Replayers' Extended ACEs".

- Were you bullied in school for at least a year?
- Did you have a learning or developmental disability? (This applies even if it was undiagnosed at the time.)
- Do you have a nonstandard sexual and/or gender identity? (Which is to say, are you LGBTQ, etc.? This applies even if you didn't know about it until adulthood.)
- Did you have to move to a new city more than twice, or move to a different country?
- Did you have to, as part of medical treatment, spend more than a few days in or regularly visit a hospital?

How often do these things happen? Here are some numbers for the ten-trauma survey, from the Kaiser Permanente iteration of the study:

Household dysfunction	
Substance abuse	27%
Parental separation/divorce	23%
Mental illness	17%
Battered mother	13%
Criminal behavior	6%
Abuse	
Psychological	11%
Physical	28%
Sexual	21%
Neglect	
Emotional	15%
Physical	10%

…The numbers speak for themselves.

And Then?

So you know how common childhood trauma is, what its effects are, and – assuming a hypothetical future you – you've asked your roleplaying group for ACE or extended ACE scores. What next?

Keeping the lines of communication and trust open is important. Everyone in your group should be able to talk about the way that they feel about the roleplay, and about the things that might've made them act in a certain way – whether revealed through projection or induced through bleed.

That's the key, I think, to roleplaying through difficult issues. As long as you know who you're with – and you feel certain that they're safe to talk to about yourself – you should be able to work out everything else.

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Looking Inside Yourself

I'm going to change who "you" refers to now. Let me suppose that you are a person who wants to explore yourself through roleplay. I can't give you a roadmap for that, because (again) I am not a therapist, and I can't speculate on what the inside of your mind is like. But I can provide some basic tools and techniques, and hopefully you can figure out the rest on your own.

Emotional Safety

> Feel the wind that still nudges against your skin, even here. Examine the folds on the insides of your fingers. Sing that song you once loved, and let your lungs fill with the life of it.

> "Re: I'm scared", uncialInnocence

Here are some basic emotional safety tips. These are almost always safe to implement, and are useful even if you don't plan on bringing your issues into things, which is why I'm putting them first in this section.

You may want to establish a time-out signal (sometimes referred to as a safeword) with your RP group – a way to express that you need things to stop, right now, no argument. This is a good idea in almost any context, but it is especially important in a roleplay group where you might be working with difficult topics. You could of course just say "Can we pause things in IC for a moment" – and I trust my roleplays to treat that as a time-out signal, even if we haven't specified it exactly – but establishing a time-out signal makes it totally unambiguous.

Another thing you should figure out is a list of ways to get your own feelings to slow down or stop. I sort these into two subtypes: distractions, and grounding techniques. (The boundary between the two is blurry, and a lot of other people don't draw this distinction. You can find examples of both by looking up "grounding techniques".)

Distractions are things that fill your mind with something else; these are useful for when your thoughts are feeding themselves and the cycle is making things worse. For example, if I need a distraction, I prefer playing Tetris while listening to a podcast, since that takes up enough of my brain that there's no room left for freaking out in. Other examples can be asking someone to talk with you about something unrelated, watching cat videos, or practicing a hobby that isn't roleplaying.

Grounding techniques are things that put you back in touch with your own physical sensations; these are useful for when you aren't sure what you're feeling, or if your feelings (rather than your thoughts) are being overwhelming. I like focusing on strongly scented things (I keep bottles of peppermint and lemon oil around). A lot of people get good results from holding onto ice, or rubbing it on themselves. Other techniques include meditating on your body sensations, exercising, or drinking water.

If you have mental issues that regularly come up, it may be worthwhile for you to establish an action plan, which sets out what things look like when you start going out of control, and lists some things that

you and other people can do to interrupt or handle it. List what feelings (including physical sensations) you tend to have if something hits you the wrong way; list all the distractions and grounding techniques that work when you are in that state; list everyone who you can talk to if you need help; list who your therapist is, if you have one, and when you need to call them. Once you've written the plan, all you need to do when things go pear-shaped is follow it.

Some Disclaimers

> You agree not to hold Skaianet liable for any loss of life, limb, computers, data, property, reputation, luck, ideas, senses, sleep, appetite, family, friends, relationships, self-esteem, words, cutlery, discernment, sharpness, innocence, religion, sanity, afterlife, hope, future, destiny, or any other tangible or intangible goods.
>
> Furthermore, you acknowledge that the risk of loss of any and all of these goods is intrinsic to Sburb, and cannot be prevented or mitigated.

"EULA for Sburb", pharoahSifting

Self-analysis is not simple. It is not always safe. It is, in fact, very hard work that you can mess up and destabilize yourself with, if you are not careful.

I'm obligated to tell you that you really shouldn't do this if you don't have a therapist supervising you. If it is at all possible for you to get a therapist or psychologist, please do so. (This is different from a psychiatrist. A psychiatrist prescribes medication, which is not the same as therapy.) If you're finding a new therapist, try bringing this up in the first appointment and see if the therapist is amenable. (And if you don't like this therapist, there are [or really should be] others…)

I'm also obligated to tell you that, if you are in a dangerous situation, you shouldn't be doing this. Your brain can seal traumatic memories/emotions away as a safety measure; uncorking them without a good plan for how to put them back can make you *less* functional. If you are still being abused, you are unlikely to make much forward progress; the best you can do is recognize and document what's happening to you, and practice your distractions and grounding techniques.

Obviously, I didn't follow either of these disclaimers myself, and I feel like it would be unfair and dishonest for me to tell you not to do something I did.[29]

So, if you don't have a therapist: You need to do your fucking research. You need to be have people you trust and can talk to – and you need to be *certain* that these people won't invalidate your feelings, or tell other people about your issues without your permission. You need to have a wide variety of distractions and grounding techniques so you can control how fast things are going. You need to make sure that you have a backup plan for if your life gets worse.

==> 29. OJ: Professional therapists often say that you shouldn't do therapy unless you have a therapist. This is easy for them to say, because they always have therapists close at hand. I believe that childhood trauma is near-ubiquitous, and that all the therapists in the world aren't enough to address it.
Even without that, though, there are often other barriers to therapy, like location, parents, and money. While these barriers are not insurmountable, they're difficult enough to turn away a lot of people who need help.

Do Your Research

This game can be a platform to explore trauma, especially developmental trauma and long-term abuse, if you choose to use it that way. However, it is not the only resource you should be using: the amount of information I've provided about trauma in the book is only enough for a roleplay. It is not enough for personal exploration.

For this game, it is especially important to research complex PTSD (C-PTSD) and Developmental Trauma Disorder. These are not yet widely accepted diagnoses or categories. However, they do explain a lot about my own experiences and those of people I know, and I have found them very useful.

There is a fuller bibliography at the end of this book, but the most immediately useful sources I've found for understanding this kind of trauma are *Trauma and Recovery* by Judith Herman, and *The Body Keeps The Score* by Bessel van der Kolk.[30]

Note that RV's portrayal of trauma does use some artistic license. It assumes that developmental trauma-like effects can be induced when the first abuse happens in the teenage years (as opposed to, say, during early childhood). This is partially justified by Sburb's ability to manipulate mental state in arbitrary ways, but ultimately, it's really because I (and other people with childhood trauma) wrote what I knew about.

Talk To Each Other

> I have learned now that while those who speak about one's miseries usually hurt, those who keep silence hurt more.

> C.S. Lewis

In hindsight, the constant presence of the OOC channel was one of the things that made RV Classic a place that I felt safe in. It isn't like an in-person RP, where there is a definite moment when you Put The Mask On and Become Your Character. The presence of OOC just a click away, and of people discussing the current scene's underlying mechanics in that OOC, helped immensely with making sure that in-character distress didn't transfer to out-of-character relationships.

An important thing to do, during and after emotionally intense scenes, is to talk about your intentions, your character's intentions, the things that you are feeling, and whether you are still okay with what's going on. If your character is being hurtful, you should regularly drop into the OOC, reassure the other handler that you mean no ill will, and make sure that they still want to continue. If your character is the one being hurt, and you're not sure if it's in-character or out-of-character malice, ask the other handler.

Debriefing – talking about what happened after a scene is done – also happened in RV Classic's OOC channel. That was useful as well; we clarified what we got from the scene, made sure everyone else got what they wanted, and made plans for the future.

==> 30. OJ: There are places on the Internet from which you can acquire less-than-legal ebook copies of many books, including these. I am not naming these sources because I don't like tempting fate, but they do exist.

Fear is a very dislikeable emotion – so, of course, most people dislike it and try to experience it as little as possible. In extreme cases, this can become what the rationalist-types call an ugh field – you can't even think about something at all, because the anxiety has conditioned you not to approach anything that could remind you about the topic. (If that sounds familiar, that's because it's also in the clinical definition for PTSD. They call it "avoidance".)

But the funny thing about anxiety/fear is that you can decrease it, by walking into it and showing your brain that the world will not turn upside-down if you do (or don't do) the thing. (This will only work if you're doing it voluntarily – if you feel pressured into it, that won't help solve the aversion.) This is precisely the opposite of your instincts, which is why it's so hard – but it's incredibly rewarding, if you can do it.

Now, the thing about this method is, you don't try to treat a fear of heights by buying tickets to an observation deck on the Eiffel Tower. That will get you a panic attack, which will just reinforce the feeling that things will go horribly wrong.

The correct way to approach a fear is to do so gradually, and let yourself acclimate to things that are more and more like it. For example, treating people for arachnophobia starts with putting them in the same room as a drawn picture of a spider, and then slowly moving closer and closer to it while using grounding techniques to control anxiety. This is repeated with a photo of a spider, and eventually with an actual spider (a non-venomous one in a glass tank).

How do you use this for things that aren't spiders, you might ask? Obviously, you can't take a photo of (say) a sound and move closer to it, but there are ways to approximate these things nevertheless. You can even do approximations of situations that you might find yourself in –

And that's why this is relevant to roleplay.

In a roleplay, you can set up a situation, and explore your feelings, without actually being inside the situation. You have a remove, some distance, because it isn't real. Because this roleplay is set in a science fantasy universe, there's another degree of distance – the things your character is dealing with might not even *exist* in real life. (Compare the difference between the drawing of a spider and the actual spider.)

So long as you can ground yourself – so long as you can make sure that you feel safe – you can ride the fear instead of avoiding it. Stay aware of bleed and projection as you're doing so, and make sure you're communicating with the other roleplayers. Assuming that you can trust the group to stop if you say you need things to stop, you have control over how intense it gets, and knowing that you have control will help. It helps me, anyway.

Talk To Yourself

Try imagining talking to your roleplaying character, outside of roleplay, in your own head. Ask them why they did things. See what kind of advice they might give you (and take it with a grain of salt; characters are more limited than you, and may not see possibilities that you have). If you have several characters, imagine their interactions with each other. If you've got a difficult decision to make, set up an internal committee or parliament and see what happens next (you play the role of the impartial moderator).

Not only is this useful for unpicking yourself, this helps flesh out your characters' personalities!

If you find this a useful technique, try researching the Internal Family Systems therapy model. (I started with the book *Self-Therapy* by Jay Earley.) Your roleplaying characters are almost always what IFS calls Protectors. Sometimes, you might think that one of your roleplaying characters is an IFS Exile. Be careful about that – they're probably really a Protector. This type of Protector meters out the experience of the Exile behind it, packaging it for public consumption and making sure that nobody gets all of the truth at once.

Camera Obscura

A camera obscura is something that projects the image it sees onto a paper, so you can trace it. This term is relevant because you can learn more about yourself by studying your projection onto your characters.

One of the strangest things that happens to me on a regular basis is realizing that I've projected something into my roleplay character by accident. For example, Aelfrida Smithson killed her ability to love because it was safer for her that way – and, now that I'm years out and safe, I realize that I, too, threw away love-for-family to protect myself from emotional abuse. (That took almost four years to discover, by the way.)

Not everything about your character is projected – Stan likes peach yogurt because I picked it randomly, rather than because I like or dislike peach yogurt – but it's worth taking a closer look at what your character is doing, and seeing if you can match it to something in your life.

Roleplaying... Without Trauma?

There are no words for the moment when it all comes crashing down around your ears.

Okay, that's not quite correct. There is a word. It is "fuck".

"And What Is At The End Of All This, Anyway?", dependencyUnsatisfied

Statistically speaking, someone reading this will have a childhood that did not damage them, because their parents taught them how to handle extreme stresses, or because they somehow managed to avoid extreme stresses entirely. I'm not sure who they are, and I'm impressed by the fact that they exist, but I'm going to talk to them now.

So. You're probably here because you enjoy the *Glitch FAQ*, and/or are interested in the mechanics of my variant of Sburb. And you have some questions: why have I buried all of the talk about Sburb inside of a game about abuse and PTSD? And, for that matter, why do I keep insisting that this game is about abuse and PTSD?

You've actually got something in common with GodsGiftToGrinds himself, there. He made replay games to explain how knowledgeable the narrator was, and was unaware that people would latch onto the emotional implications of Replaying. I don't blame him, and I don't blame you, either.

To be clear: I think it is fine for someone with no history of trauma to play in this universe. In fact, I think it is fine for someone with no history of trauma to play all the terrible, traumatic things in this universe! Not everyone needs to use this as a survivor's coping mechanism. It's just as reasonable to explore these themes because you want to learn what they're like, or to empathize with people you know or have read about. If my book can help you understand, then it has done its job.

The trouble is that some people neither ignore the trauma nor try to understand it. They try to solve it. Some people, such as the writer of this essay, have attempted to eliminate suffering… in a world that is framed entirely by the presence of suffering.[31]

It's one thing to try to change the world in a universe like Exalted, where the world is balanced so delicately that the actions of a protagonist can transform everything. In Replay Value, though, the status quo will actively resist all efforts to change it. Sburb can, and will, come up with devious traps to break anyone who tries to escape. Hope is not just dead: it has been erased so thoroughly that, even in the dreambubbles, it is a rare sight.

In other words, the Replay Value universe is set up to replicate the worldview of an abused person.

And one of the worst things to do to an abused person is to tell them that they should just try harder.

Saying that the victim should try harder implies that it is their fault that they are being abused – that if they put their priorities in order or gathered enough willpower, they would be able to get out; and insofar

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==> 31. OJ: That was how the linked writer broke the social contract of RV Classic.

as they've failed to get out, they deserve their abuse. It also feeds into one of the worst parts of a victim mindset: the notion that if you did the right thing, the abuser would stop being abusive. (Whether this is because "then they wouldn't get angry", "then they would realize what they were doing", "then they would lose interest", or otherwise.)

Replay Value is designed to *break* that assumption. This is what the setting encodes: There is nothing that you can do to make the abuser stop being abusive, because it is not your fault that the abuser is abusive. Your resources are better spent on remaining aware that what's happening is abuse, trying your hardest to create and preserve non-abusive relationships, and making sure some stub of your identity survives. (And, if you can think about it, escape. But I couldn't think about escape, since my abuse was apparently[32] institutionally supported, and that meant escape was worse than useless.)

Of course, a story of abuse isn't the only thing you can do with the setting as written. You can write about the courage required to explore the world when you may be killed for it. You can write about how relationships are complicated by overarching oppression. You can even write about the swirling details of internet-community politics, and how to deal with being in multiple cultures.

Do what you like with the tools I've given you; after all, this is a sourcebook, not a straitjacket. But this setting has an ideological purpose, and the details have been carefully chosen to support it. If you want to peel away some of the setting's basic assumptions in your game, go ahead and do so, but make sure everyone's agreed to it.

In fact, while we're on the subject of basic assumptions, let's start talking about those...

==> 32. OJ: It was not actually institutionally supported. It was only institutionally condoned. The "support" was actually inaction, and this (mis)interpretation was part of the story that kept me inside the abuse.

Campaign Conventions and Genre

RV Chuubo's is built to be played in three genre-modes: blended Gothic/Fairy Tales, Techno, and Epic or Adventure Fantasy. The first one is a genre specific to this work; the other options are *Chuubo's* core genres.

- Gothic/Fairy Tales best encapsulates the flavor of RV Classic[33], a tale of hanging on to yourself and each other in a multiverse that's trying to bend you to its will;
- Techno games play a bit like *Homestuck*, with incredible discoveries around every corner that build up to a great and convoluted plot;
- and Epic and Adventure Fantasy games are for gamebreaking, boundary-pushing, and daring stunts.

Campaign Conventions

by eternityBraid

These are the campaign conventions of RV Chuubo's:

- You cannot ever completely leave the clutches of Sburb.
- There are loopholes out of Death, if you are lucky.
- Your mind will break before your body does.

You cannot ever completely leave the clutches of Sburb.

> Tomorrow, I will wake up in a new bed. Tomorrow, I will begin to play again. Though there may not be something worth living for now, I hope that that one day I will build such a thing myself.

<div align="right">

"Why I Tell You To Go On", mellifluousSapwood

</div>

When you leave a session of Sburb and go through the Door, you get punted into your next presession. It's not the universe you were promised.

Sometimes you wake up standing on a balcony with a cruxite object in your hand, staring up at the meteor that is five seconds to impact. Sometimes you wake up days, or weeks, before Sburb is released. Sometimes it takes *months*. The delivery of Sburb is often delayed, and sometimes is not even announced at all.

Here's the thing, though. You've spent so much time in Sburb – it's changed you so much – that you have difficulty anywhere else. You don't know how normal people act anymore. You've been around five other people (or however large your session was) and several thousand NPCs for months. And even

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==> 33. OJ: Properly speaking, this is the flavor of RV Classic as I understood it, and not an Objective Evaluation of Tone. Other RV Classic participants may have a very different impression.

before the meteors ever came, you were a little askew from life – just enough that you only ever had Internet friends.

You're going to stop and marvel at supermarkets, with truly fresh food; food alchemizes badly, if at all.

You're going to spend the whole time looking over your shoulder, wondering when the meteors are going to start again.

You're going to get anxious in crowds because crowds don't exist in Sburb; pawns and Consorts are much shorter than you and any other entities are too small or too few in number to ever *be* a crowd.

You're going to assess whatever you see for whether it might be useful if you got in a fight.

You're going to be aware of the millions and billions of people sharing this planet, and you're also going to be aware that they're all going to die.

Many Replayers no longer consider presession humans to be real. They die inevitably, after all – and though **[You must live until Entry]**, that does not guarantee that you will live *whole*, or *well*. You cannot solve their problems; even if you have enough time to make a dent, your work will still be undone by the meteors. Some people try to improve their presessions anyway; they're seen as quixotic at best and self-destructive at worst.

Your Replayee, the person you're replacing, no longer exists. You have replaced them, physically and spiritually. **[People look at you and see your Replayee.]** It takes focused investigation for people to even *realize* that you're a different gender or height or speak a different language from your Replayee. Little things like hair, skin, and eye color tend to be skated over entirely.

Many Replayers run up their Replayees' credit cards. Some enter Sburb from libraries, to save the books. Others enter Sburb from supermarkets, to have a supply of real food. A few resort to shoplifting or robbery. The people in presession are going to cease to exist in a couple of days/weeks, after all.[34]

If your presession is post-scratch or alien, culture shock is difficult, too. There isn't much documentation of non-Earth worlds.

Either way – the meteors fall, then, and you enter Sburb because otherwise you will die.

There are loopholes out of Death, if you are lucky.

> And I dragged her body to the Bed, and I set it down, and then I prayed...
>
> "Those Empty Hearts", watercolorMixer

By Death I do not mean only literal death – though there's a myriad of solutions for that, too – but other things that destroy your personality. Speakerdom (being puppeted by the Horrorterrors). Singerdom (the

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==> 34. EB: Though if you actually *try* to take advantage of that, you may run afoul of a severe delay in Sburb distribution and get arrested anyway.)

Angelic equivalent). Scratching your session and resetting it, which *should* by all rights erase you from existence but for the fact that "the Scratch-and-run" is a *thing*.

Corruption – the thing that results in Speakerdom or Singerdom if left untreated too long – is subtle, at first; and, like Corruption in Chuubo's, often takes many actions to break you.

You can clear Corruption with long hugs.[35] With a process akin to heavy-metal chelation, where the affected person consumes something that binds the particles of corruption and then expels it, usually throwing up in the process. With a Tier-and-clear – you kill them, and kiss them or drag them onto their quest bed, and wait for them to revive. (More details on Sburban corruption are on page ???.)

And with death itself – there is kissing, of course, and the Quest Beds, and deals with Denizens (or the Others, if you're sufficiently desperate). And there's venturing out into the Bubbles, in your dreams or in a ship.[36]

Then there's the matter of a Scratch-and-run, but that's covered on page ???.

Your mind will break before your body does.

> Free will? That last precious sacred cow of the novice Mind player? Pffffhah. Not everyone is bulletproof, hermanita.

> "Brainwashing, Torture, and the World of Sburb", enturbulatedOccupation

In Replay Value, very few things that happen to you physically are Deadly. Sure, Red Miles is Deadly. Being shoved into the garbage collector that is the Royal Vault is Deadly. Sticking your hand into the instant death radius of the Prototyping Orbs on the dream moons is Deadly. But those things don't happen much.

Losing your dreamself or getting kissrevived is a matter of course here. Dying is everyone's favorite hobby, after all. At worst, you'd take a Serious Wound, and mitigate it to hanging on by your last hitpoint.

So what *is* a Deadly Wound in Replay Value, then? Your mentor dies without you ever being able to say goodbye. You have to kill your lover because they got taken over by the Horrorterrors. Your few treasured mementoes of your first session and your family are casually destroyed by another Player. Your coplayers all die and, even though you survive, it still haunts you.

Nearly every Deadly Wound in Replay Value is *emotional*.

In Sburb, there is a concept called Accumulated Roleplay Coefficient (ARC). Your efficiency in playing the Game relates, directly, to how well you've been able to act like an X of Y in the past few weeks and months. In theory, it's very simple – act like the Game wants you to, and you'll be fine.

==> 35. EB: Don't let go as the cloud of black or white hisses up, like steam…
==> 36. EB: You cannot bring a bubbleself back directly; or if you did they would be a ghost, unable to affect anything Game-related, and unable to use the Door Beyond the End.

In practice? For a lot of people, it *is* fine, at least for the first session. Your Native title was chosen for you specifically, and so it fits you well, like a custom-molded shoe.

But after that – in sessions two, three, five, eight – Sburb's titles are not picked exclusively for you. You may grow from them or you may not.[37] Often, with those more difficult titles, the more you act like an X of Y... the less you find yourself in touch with what Jenna Moran would call your wishing heart.

In the words of enturbulatedOccupation:

> The fact is, if you put up a fight, you'll be dead. If you don't, if you let the Game mold and shape you down to your very bones, let it use you as conceptual canvas for its ideals of Replayer beauty, you will live for a hundred years. But, assuming that (like a normal person) you're feeling a creeping sense of disgust at the very notion, our goal here is to figure out what to give it, and how much of you you can safely carve out for yourself before breaking. And whether you'll hold firm to your ideals and die, or let the Game break that which you treasure, casually, and dust the pieces onto the floor.

> That's going to happen. You're going to be forced to choose between life and principle. You will hate yourself if you choose life. But you'll be dead if you choose principle.

Some people call this the Knife's Edge: You're trying to find the impossible, impossible compromise between being the avatar of Classpect that the Game expects you to be, and preserving those bits and pieces of yourself that make you *you*.

I suppose it is to the credit of the strength of the wishing power of the heart that so many fall, rather than betray themselves to follow Sburb's demands.

But we who have played more than one session, who have played five or ten or fifteen? We who have already demonstrated that we would rather survive? We who would kill others to save our own lives, even other Players?

Perhaps we have been stained by denying our own natures to live this long; or perhaps it is merely being strategic, ceding a few victories so as not to be destroyed utterly.

I do not know which version of this tale to tell you to believe, because I am not sure which version I prefer.

==> 37. EB: Maybe, if you're using this as a roleplaying game, it'll be the case that every title is perfectly matched to who you are; or, on the other extreme, that all titles will break you instead of transform you.

A flame shadowed against the sky
A bleak lament, a fruitless cry;
To watch the sun fall, and descend
To dust and stone at the world's end.

The box, 'tis opened at the breach
Of cities brass, their flames to reach
in hollow hearts, unfilled, to give
of light we found so we might live.

But death is but a veil thin,
and chains they stretch out, gold and tin
and silver, copper, lead, thick rope
To tie down joy, to capture hope –

I shan't pretend it was for good.
I cannot tell you where I stood
but it was real, and it was there
In dust and stone, in comets' air.

"Cage of Gold", Elaine "OJ" Wang

A User's Guide to the Apocalypse

by OJ

> The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong in the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry.

> *A Farewell to Arms*, Ernest Hemingway

The default genre to run RV Chuubo's in, the one that best emulates the tone of the original, is a blend of Gothic and Fairy Tales.

Blended genres are not a feature of Chuubo's; I made this one up for this book. See, Replay Value has two competing themes. One of them is that *the Game will try its hardest to make you into the person it wants you to be*. The other is that *connecting with other people can help, even if they might be crazy and horrible*. This tension is best expressed using a blended genre, and so I will bear the additional mechanical complexity that this implies.

Yes, this means that you now have 9 actions that can be declared by Handlers at any time, that count for in-genre XP actions for the purposes of Miraculous Will, and that everyone has to remember. And yes, this means that the HG must be able to hand out both Illusion and Isolation as necessary. I *am* sorry.

Here's the breakdown of XP actions and what they're probably going to result in.

Earning XP

Each type of scene is described by an XP action. If you fulfill the criteria for an XP action, you can claim it as an XP action and throw a group XP into the pot. (The experience points earned through XP actions are shared evenly across the group – after all, nobody can carry a scene alone.) You can do this twice per chapter.

When you're playing Chuubo's, you should keep an eye on the XP actions of your genre, and try to make them happen. Your characters don't have to consciously *decide* to participate in these kinds of scenes. If your character isn't voluntarily taking part, ask the HG to help you arrange suitable circumstances! Events and environment might suddenly force an XP action on your character, whether they want it or not.

Similarly, you should be looking for ways to play out the quest-flavor options of your Quests. One of the less-obvious functions of a Quest is that it *lets you assert certain things about the world*.[38] For example, if you have a quest flavor option of "you're bitten by something poisonous", the HG should let you

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==> 38. OJ: Note that the HG needs to approve each Quest you take up, so you can't write a quest with flavor options consisting of "I win". Nice try, though.

assume something poisonous and bitey exists (although they might quibble with your exact description of it), and that whatever you're doing is going to get you bitten.

The HG might give you extra criteria that you can fulfill for extra XP, or let you declare an XP action even though it doesn't belong to the current genre. They'll explain how that works if it happens.

Gothic

> I dream of it. I know that it will come for me. It will ask me a question I cannot answer. It will take me away from the world to the place without recourse. And nothing I do, and nothing I have ever done, will matter again.
>
> Perhaps I will see my brother. It would be kind. There is a great deal more cruelty than kindness in the world. But there is that hope, and so I tell myself:
>
> I think I can endure.

<div align="right">

"The Place Without Recourse (I/I)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

</div>

◈ Shared Action: Do something straightforward: traverse a dungeon, follow a quest chain, level-grind, cook, sew, whatever. Try to connect with someone while you're doing it. You can banter with a coplayer, or shoot the breeze with people on Pesterchum or IRC. The point of this XP action is that although we focus on the horrible bits of Sburb, it's also something that you can just *do*.

Simple, honest work. You know, like dragging back twenty giclops tusks by murderizing a lot of designated video game enemies.

(Well, it's honest work by *Sburb* standards.)

◈ Shared Reactions: Heartfelt, rambling conversations between Internet friends are a staple of Homestuck. This is where you put them in RV. (This being said, an XP Action can be fulfilled with just a few lines of dialog; if these conversations are taking too long, the HG needs to take the scene out behind the woodshed and blow its head off.)

♛ Slice of Life: Sburb is the background of your life, and this is for particularly distinctive moments of that background that capture the essence of Sburb. It doesn't have to be a positive distinctive moment, but the feeling of it will flavor your life for a while afterwards.

⬡ Obsessive Action: This is for stuff that doesn't quite rise to the threshold of Adversity, below, but that's still about sticking with actions even as they stop being useful – you work yourself up into a tizzy about relatively small things, like "oh no I am attracted to my coplayer but what if asking them out would be awkward" or "do I count as an adult or not".

The genre issue is **⬗ Isolation**: Either you connect with someone, you just make yourself sad, or you take a point of Isolation. You shouldn't aim for it, but if your character is falling away from other people,

taking the Issue makes it into a mini-plotline that may eventually earn you XP. Usually you won't earn Isolation for Fairy Tales-genre actions: those actions are about suffering, rather than connection.

Replay Value in the pure-Gothic genre

While I've made this game as a Gothic-and-Fairy-Tales split genre, it's possible to run this game with a higher percentage of Gothic actions, or even as a purely Gothic-genre game.

The Gothic genre is driven by social relationships unfolding over long periods of time. It plays a lot like a soap opera, teenage relationship drama, or the Post-Scratch kids' void session (most of Homestuck Act 6).

While it is possible to run a Gothic game in which you are repeatedly narrating Slice of Life or Obsessive Action scenes at various pieces of Sburb by yourself, that is not where the genre shines. This genre is for romantic shenanigans, attempting to rope other people into your hobbies, dinner parties, quadrant-flipping, meandering conversations about everyone's childhoods, grudging team-ups with that coplayer you don't really like but have to work with anyway, thinking everyone has forgotten about your birthday until they throw a surprise party, and finally opening up about your feelings (even if far too late and after many misunderstandings). All of these things need other people.

You don't have to run this type of game in the web of Replayer Networks that I've provided. It works for a single-Sburb-session game, too. But, since this genre is driven by social relationships, communication must always be available. Even if nobody ever uses it effectively.

Fairy Tales

> I wanted to scream at something, anything. I wanted to take the universe by the throat and force it to give him up. I wanted the pillars of the universe to feel my rage and loss. But it wouldn't have helped. Sburb judges who lives and who dies; and if we had been allowed to influence that decision, arguably we wouldn't be in Sburb at all.

> "Short Story #12", balkanizedKelp

♻ **Corruption**: Technically this is two actions:

♻ **Traditional (Chuubo's) Corruption**: Something gets into you, and as it changes you, the world may become ghoulish and hallucinatory for brief periods of time. This covers stuff like having someone try to use mind-control powers like Rage to wear you down, or poisons, or certain Sburban mental disorders like Questant's Lament. If you do this, the HG will usually give you a point of the Issue ♻ **Sickness (Corruption)**.

♻ **Sburban Corruption**: This is nearly identical to Chuubo's corruption, except that it is used in situations where the Angels or Others are involved. If you do this, the HG will usually give you a point of the 🜟 **Sburban Corruption** issue (page ???), which is about falling into Corruption's distinctive blend of arrogance and lack of agency.

♻ **Trauma**: Something is trying to change you, as above, but you're cracking instead of changing. This is everywhere in Sburb:

- People can get seriously hurt or injured physically. The Skaian Battlefield is a war zone, and the Carapaces have "realistic" blood and viscera. Or you might narrowly survive an assassination attempt by an Agent, only to be terrified of sleeping for weeks afterwards.
- You can die and then be resurrected. You will remember what dying felt like.
- You might think too hard about why the Game made sentient species like Carapaces and Consorts that can experience suffering, and then instituted rules that required that they suffer. "Realism", maybe.[39]
- You will have to kill your Denizen. You may have to mercy-kill a coplayer if the other option is them going Speaker or Singer. The general advice in such situations is to do what you have to do, and then have your moral qualms and indecisions later – which, while decent advice for not hesitating when time is critical, means that you must process your feelings over the next days or weeks.
- Your Nightmare Heir is programmed to dredge up your past traumas, so that you can act out "overcoming" them. (Because this is Sburb.) It knows all your secret insecurities and unresolved grief, and it will hurt you with them.

♻ **Transformation**: Something is getting into you, and changing you, but it isn't bad: it's something that, if you could get past the fact that you're losing yourself, might ultimately strengthen you. For example, you might wake up one morning with the Whisperings (the voice of your Aspect) in your head quietly urging you to do things appropriate to your Sburban Title. This is also the appropriate Issue to give for the Troll molting period between adolescence and adulthood, or consensual drastic Shiny reworking by a Heart player (or other classes with appropriate tools).

More detail and extra optional rules for the three green actions, and associated issues, can be found in the *CMWGE Halloween Special*, but here's a specific rule that I'd like to use:

- Trauma can partially overwrite the Corruption trigger.

So, if you've been exposed to something with an Otherwise corruption charge, and then see a friend die, that gives you a Trauma point with the usual effects. But you may then choose to partially rewrite your Corruption trigger to include "seeing other people hurt in the same way your friend died". This trigger will give you Corruption points, not Trauma points.

♦ **Adversity**: You end up stuck doing something, even as the situation gets worse, because if you stopped everything would collapse. (And sometimes you get to the point where you can't do it anymore, and *you* collapse.) Most often, this will be struggling on despite being hurt or crippled with grief. Sometimes you have to do unpleasant things, like staying in a room that is overheated by a lava pool, or escort quests (nobody likes escort quests). Then there are the Mail Quests: PM expects you to match her

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==> 39. CM: Knight Syndrome, session 4.

commitment and mettle if you ask to help deliver the mail, and as such the Mail Quests are legendarily difficult.

🔶 **Never Say Die**: There is something you value more than your own life, and you put everything you have into protecting it. You can put things like "defend a coplayer" here, but at the core, this is about preserving your *identity*: Something that you can hold constant, that you can trust to be why you are a good person, that you can trust to be why you keep going, is more important than your physical body. Sburb wants you to be a good X of Y, and will kill you if you aren't... but there's always a point at which you realize that there's something you *can't* give up. If you did give it up, Sburb may as well have killed you: what's the point of having your body still walking around if nothing you'd recognize as *you* is in that skull anymore?[40]

The genre issue is ⬢ **Illusion**. Either you suffer, you transform (which includes both physical transformations and attitude changes), or you take a point of Illusion. You shouldn't aim for it, but if you're getting the sense that things are actually a lot worse than your character thinks they are, you can take the Issue, turning it into a mini-plotline that may eventually earn you XP. Usually you won't earn Illusion for Gothic-genre actions, because those actions are about reaching out to other people.

> "You always win," Micah says. It's bleak. "That's obvious. That's waiting down every path that opens up in front of us. All I can do is decide among the little tiny things I can get from that victory, and know that one day you'll figure out, or ask me, what those were, and take them away again, just to make sure that even with all of that, I didn't get a thing."
>
> "'I will make you cry' (VI/VII)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

How Elizabeth Puts It

by eternityBraid

This game is about people reaching out over the Internet, because the boundaries between them in real life are insurmountable. You're not going to be able to have a picnic with your friends, and play hot-potato with the ketchup bottle. You're not going to be able to have your lover plowing through a field of Imps beside you. You're not going to be able to have your moirail with you on a long journey to replace some important plot token.

This doesn't stop us.

We narrate what we made the stir-fry out of, share pictures of how artfully we plated the sushi, post the possible combinations on our Recipe Modus that might work for reproducing the weird alchemized food. We have text-to-speech and speech-to-text good enough that many people will leave their scouter on TTS, and listen to the IRC chatter while clearing Ebonpyres or stabbing Giclopses. Video chat is infeasible for technical reasons[41], but we take silly pictures of Consorts and mess with each other and tell

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==> 40. EB: A good question to ask enturbulatedOccupation, I suppose (see page ???).
==> 41. EB: Samantha tries to explain those technical reasons on page ???, if you have the stomach for technobabble.

stories and get way too excited about things and spread urban legends and make bad jokes and ask other people what to do next and…

It's not the same. It's never going to be the same. But we try our best. After all, most of us only had internet friends before we started playing Sburb anyway.

Of course, there's always the option of alchemizing a hug machine and climbing into it for a while, instead. But that's going to earn you Isolation.

In the Game

by OJ

While all nine actions are theoretically in-genre all the time, play will usually be in one of these sub-modes:

- ○ **Off-memo**: Scenes that focus on the Game, rather than coplayer or online interactions. Try to use more Fairy Tales actions. If you earn a genre issue, it will usually be Illusion.
- ◊ **On-memo**: This is for scenes that are about conversations, the Internet, and social support. Try to emphasize Gothic actions. If you earn a genre issue, it will usually be Isolation.

This happens less often, but is still worth mentioning:

- ⊘ **Off-memo presession**: While this usually still runs as Fairy Tales, it can sometimes also have a streak of Immersive Fantasy. In these cases, when an action would result in Hollow in an Immersive Fantasy game, the HG should hand out Illusion.

Issues

> Aelf was never easy to talk to. She was always *interesting* to talk to, sure, but you had to be able to ignore the self-loathing that painted everything she said. So after a while, I didn't try. And after a while, she assumed I wasn't worth talking to in more than a professional capacity.
>
> I mean, it would have been nice if she told me what she was planning to do to herself. But I would've freaked out, so maybe I didn't deserve to know.
>
> *Memoirs of a Seer*, epinephrineElectrified

A common issue in this game is ⊘ **Illusion**. Here are some ways that Illusion could resolve, to give you some ideas to start with:

- you are inside a Dreambubble recalling events in this session and, thus, you come from a Doomed timeline in which you died.
- this is a future timeline that is being scried by a Seer/Sage and one of the actions you recently took is going to need to be prevented

- you are Doomed and must fix something. (Very common if you are the Time player.)

- you were being Fogged by the Mist player, if there is one in your session.

- you were actually telling tall tales to the memo and they find you out. (Rarer than you'd think since the veracity of tales can, in principle, be checked by dongle scrying.)

- you are actually the Apocryphal Antithesis (a dreamself that has broken free and is now a separate person who wants to become real) replacing the waking player

- you died a while ago and your friend is imagining you

- you are actually a death cultist (such as an Azurite, page ???), concealing your past so as to keep everyone else off guard

And here are some other Issues and how they usually look:

⬢ **Complex**: This is often what you acquire if trying to resist your Title of Aspect role.

♠ **Something to Deal With** and ◈ **Calling**: Often earned while doing on-memo stuff. Often represents having to face and deal with things like lingering resentments, your feelings about someone, or working yourself up to face someone you're incredibly intimidated by.

◧ **Hollow**: This represents that sort of jaded "I don't care about anything anymore" that people get if they've been playing the Game too long. Sburb veterans tend to deal with this a lot.

◧ **Isolation**, ⬢ **It Never Stops!**, ◯ **Vice**, ☺ **(in) Over Your Head**, and ⬟ **Mystery** may also appear; they work as described in the book.

Note that ◧ **Trust** is superseded almost entirely by ◔ **Sburban Corruption**. Similarly, ▱ **Hero** usually makes little sense: Sburb-related hero-stuff tends to be folded into the A Sburban Tale quests, and outside of that most Replayers actively avoid risking themselves like that. Note that you can still use these issues if you think they'll be relevant! But I don't see it happening.

Techno

by OJ

> You have to admit – it seems awesome, on the box. A vast procedurally generated world to explore, a rich and incredibly flexible mythology that adapts itself to your actions, being able to meet your Internet friends in person...
>
> I can imagine what the Game would have been like, if those promises were true.
>
> It would have been the most beautiful thing in the world.
>
> <div align="right">Joys and Travails, severalImpressions</div>

The second of the three major genre-modes that you can play this game in is Techno[42]. My writeup here is skimpy – this is, after all, the genre in which Homestuck itself runs – but this is also the genre which is most likely to be covered by other people's efforts, *because* it is the genre in which Homestuck itself runs. If you are more interested than me, feel free to pick up where I left off.

You're in Sburb. It's a new and novel and awesome game that is teaching you to be a better person, and everything in it is tailored for you alone. A personal bildungsroman generator. You haven't Replayed, so you aren't jaded by seeing the motifs repeated again and again.

It's all about exploring each other and the world. Because in this genre Sburb is *big*, and it's for *you*.

Quiet little niches in consort villages. Cool ruin puzzles. Secret passageways. Little Prospitian shops. New things you can do with your powers.

And that moment when you first realize that this is not just a videogame, this is *real*.

Pacing

> "And tomorrow – and tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow – we shall rise, and we shall watch as the sun tears itself free from the sea; and we shall watch as the sun must inexorably fall, and be extinguished thereby.
>
> "So goes the fate of all things."
>
> The master stopped talking. The master took a long, deep draught from the *aqua vitae* for the first, and last, time.
>
> The master closed his eyes.
>
> <div align="right">The Woman Who Stared Into Forever, dryadTornado</div>

There are a couple pacing changes that need to be made for this to be workable.

==> 42. OJ: For the record, the Techno genre has nothing to do with techno music.

Firstly, this will be a relatively short campaign. As the premise of a Techno game is incompatible with Replaying, the game will only be one or two Arcs long. With the Techno timescale, that's maybe two or three furious IC months. You may want to consider setting the Arc target higher than 120 XP (or equivalent fraction thereof); if you're only getting the one arc to play with, it may be worthwhile to make sure that people can fit four- or five-quest arcs in.

Secondly: I recommend replacing the Sburban Magics with Superior Skills and Arc powers; the magic that Sburb gives you in this kind of session is *natural*. You're not being crowbarred into someone else's role and asked to carry it out, as Replaying requires. Your native – and in this case only – Title and Aspect flow from you and who you are.

Thirdly, omit Title Issues. The timescale of an Issue is too short for the way you unfold into your Role in a single-session game; it'll be part of your Arc, instead.

Epic or Adventure Fantasy

by OJ

The last of the three major genre-modes in RV Chuubo's is the Epic or Adventure Fantasy. These genres are structurally similar and I will treat them as one unit; this being said, the distinction between the two is that Epic Fantasy stories tend to be larger-than-life, and Adventure Fantasy stories tend to include more hardship and struggle on the protagonists' part.

I'm going to scaffold this non-default option especially well, because in my experience in Replay Value, we got a *lot* of newbies who wanted this genre-mode, and were disappointed when they were told that we're not writing that kind of story. So there's clearly a desire for this kind of game.

Great Risk and Great Reward

> "We don't want to just break the game," he said. "We want to rebuild it, a thousand times better, when we're done."

<div align="right">

"Short Story #5", balkanizedKelp

</div>

The primary conceit that distinguishes this genre-mode from the default genre-mode is this: You're in the Game, but it doesn't drive you to despair. It drives you to *science*.

And, all things aside, the Game is a game. It therefore follows principles of game design, has gamelike flaws, and can be exploited in gamelike ways.[43] It will have event flags. Collision-checking. Textures. Arrays. Buffer overflow bugs. All of these are exploitable, if you know where and how to look.

This is the genre in which you use the undocumented and highly dangerous technique of Vagabouncy: in which you find a secret area on the Dream Moons which holds a house of mirrors, and break one particular mirror, which changes your Sburb Title to another Title of your choice. (There is only one mirror that works for this. You won't be able to change back.)

This is the genre in which you see if you can put a colony in orbit around the Green Sun (a project like this would likely require a full Arc of work from all of the PCs).

In which you create an armband that measures the color of your blood for early signs of Corruption and then intravenously administers the correct antidote as necessary. (But what happens when the reservoir runs out?)

In which you use the Sprite/Player Pendant as a nexus for further gamebreaking, as the Pendant is what identifies you as *you* to the game.

In which you use a particular sequence of steps on the Earthsea Borealis while fighting the Nightmare Heir, which freezes the Nightmare Heir and lets you do weird things with it, such as using it as a tent

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==> 43. EB: In other words, it can be... *gamed*. You're welcome.

pole. (Of course, if you touch the Nightmare Heir again, it goes back to fighting, so it takes quite a lot of skill to drape a tent around it without touching it.)

In which you acquire a cryptographic key with which you can forge prophecies by noting down the pseudorandom colors of the flowers in the Cheerful Florist's window for several days.[44]

In which you train your Consorts to crew an assembly line to exploit a price difference: cranking out parts that are cheap using the Alchemiter, having the Consorts assemble the parts, and then gristwidgeting the result for slightly more grist than you paid.

In which you explore where the Reckoning comes from, and experiment with suitable ~ATH programs to see if you can make it stop.

In which you find the Session CD and/or the Clocks, which occasionally show up in the Magicant, and mess around with them. (The innards of the Clocks, and the data on the CD, can be messed with to cause actual changes to the code of the universe.)

None of this would fly in RV Classic. That's what this genre-mode is for.

Epic Fantasy

> Sburb shall one day bow beneath the combined might of a thousand gamebreakers' work!
>
> Until then, though, we persevere.
>
> "About", parliamentaryPredilection

☯ **Science, Faith and Sorcery**: Use this when you risk yourself to test a hypothesis. Explain exactly what you've put in your ~ATH program that makes you think that you can use it to stop the Reckoning[45]. Use a gamebreaking mechanic (that works on Prospit) on Derse instead, and watch what happens. Check a dungeon for secret doors that your theory of dungeon generation says exists, to test the validity of that theory (and, halfway through, realize that these theoretical doors have become your only way out of a dangerous situation). Try out interesting combinations on the alchemiter. Stack multiplier jewelry and then wade into an Atomyk Ebonpyre.

☯ **Decisive Action**: Use this for gamebreaking that you *know* exists, but that is still really dangerous. Explain how you're self-modifying your Shiny. Trigger the Wage The War alternate win condition, requiring you to defeat the Derse army with the Prospit army rather than the Black King in single combat. Sneak into the Magicant for the purpose of editing the CD to your Session. Purposely glitch your own pendant. Upload version 1.0 of your very first comprehensive game FAQ to a Replayer network, and hope that it's received well.

♻ **Wicked Action**: Corruption can give you power, but it is also highly dangerous to work with. You deal with the Horrorterrors. You experiment in the Underworld, to find the exact boundaries of the Laws of

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==> 44. CM: Make sure you start recording on the day there's two white flowers at the far left of the window.
==> 45. EB: A lemon, perhaps?

the Underworld that you can get to before the Angels get angry. You pick up just a *bit* of corruption – you'll stop yourself before you take any more, you tell yourself – because it makes everything else so easy, or because you need it for memory editing you can't do any other way.

Adventure Fantasy

> Sburb isn't one game. It's upwards of a dozen different games, poorly hacked together. What impresses me isn't how shitty a job they did. What impresses me is that it's playable at all.
>
> > "differentialBookends", *The Gamebreakers of the Vine*, rhodochrositeMajesty

In addition to the Epic Fantasy options, Adventure Fantasy adds this XP option:

🔶 **Trouble**: Sburb is unfairly hard: sometimes, between one eyeblink and the next, the odds will turn against you. You're interrupted by a swarm of flying basilisks at the worst possible moment. You're mapping out the roads on your Land and then stumble into an Atomik Ebonpyre[46], the regions where enemies spawn thick and fast. The Carapaces besiege you with questions about how you'll save them when you open your first Office Hours and you're reaching the limits of your patience. You're out of Grist. You're stuck in the wrong area while your teleport recharges. Your scuba-diving gear malfunctions while you're underwater collecting pieces of ruins from your Land's seafloor.

I expect ♟ **Discovery**, 🔶 **Foreshadowing**, and 🔷 **Shared Reactions** to happen rather often in this genre-mode as well, but not nearly enough to be worth another split genre.

==> 46. CM: Not to be confused with the Retrocade Ebonpyres, which spawn only massive amounts of imps, or the Apoxial Ebonpyres, which can actually be cleared by killing enough enemies and only happen inside dungeons.

by postmodernPrometheus

The replayer technology base, fragmentary though it is, is vast, pulled from thousands of universes, with representatives on almost every level of the Kardashev scale.[1] Thanks to the likes of Prototype Towers and other repositories of knowledge, replayers from these universes, and from anyone fortunate (or unfortunate) enough to visit them during presession, have a chance to commit millions of years worth of expertise to posterity. With this in mind, and with alchemization technology well understood and ubiquitous throughout replayerdom, we must then wonder why it is that, in our everyday lives, we do not enjoy the fruits of the most advanced civilizations ever to exist.

The following will provide a brief overview of what sorts of augmentation technology replayerdom has managed to employ in the betterment of our existence.

Even Death May Die

Given the realities of Sburban life, the most immediately useful technological innovation for most replayers (barring one that would enable them to stop replaying) would be one allowing them to persist after the death of their brains, ideally to be instantiated later as either uploaded minds or into new physical bodies. While Sburb already gives players several backstops against permanent death, the dismal survival rate among among second sessioners and beyond indicates that even mastery of game rules regarding resurrection is not ultimately sufficient to ward off death for a substantial number of replayers.

Posthuman technology designed explicitly to prevent permanent death exists on numerous presession worlds.[2] From digitized consciousnesses to phylacteries to soul gems to cortical stacks, a wide variety of innovations should, given the ability to alchemize them, allow replayers to persist indefinitely, transferring their minds and personalities from body to body as they see fit. Why, then, given the dangerous environment we live in, is this technology not ubiquitous?

More astute readers may have already guessed the answer, as will have those few with first hand experience of the matter in question. So far, Sburb has refused to recognize forks, digitized minds, and players resleeved or resurrected through technological means as real. A player who dies and is restored from a backup – for example, a digitized version of their mind poured into a clone body – will not be able to use aspect abilities, converse with consorts, dream on dream moons, engage in quests, or perform any other game related activities. Depending on the exact circumstances, a resleeved replayer may be marked as a doomed nonplayer, singled out for inevitable death through unavoidable circumstances arranged by the game. The rationale for this is quite technical and likely unintelligible to anyone but an experienced Heart player, but interested readers are of course welcome to pursue a deeper understanding at their leisure.[3] Crucially, even non-doomed resurrected replayers usually encounter difficulties which prevent them from completing the session. The most unnerving must be that, given the game does not

consider them alive or recognize them as players, it is extremely unlikely that they will be placed in a presession if they make it through the door.[4]

Uploading the digitized consciousness of a replayer to a Ring Server is an imperfect workaround for a number of reasons. If stored in an inert state, the mind is of no practical use until downloaded and given the appropriate hardware and software emulation to allow consciousness. At this point the newly instantiated mind is tagged for doom by the game, and is not long for this world, meaning such reunions are quite brief.[5] This is unlikely to be of any help to anyone thanks to another game related foible: that even minds in dead storage are often still tagged as doomed, meaning the media they are stored on is also targeted for destruction. Several unfortunate incidents have led to virtually all replayer networks refusing to host digitized consciousnesses for this reason.[6][7]

This is not to say that all such interventions are doomed to failure. The case of exultantMegatherian is likewise one of public record, though perhaps unhelpful to those seeking to prolong their existence against the hazards of replaying. Her body deteriorating thanks to a still unknown disease (possibly game related, possibly presession), she elected to have her head severed and surgically reattached to the body of anecdotalEvidence, a coplayer who had been lobotomized by the Dersites. The operation was a complete success, save for the fact that due to the limited surgical knowledge on hand, the autonomic functions of the body, such as control of the heart and lungs, could not be decoupled from the remains of her practically brain-dead coplayer's head, necessitating that it be left attached. The resulting two headed replayer was treated by the game as if it were exultantMegatherian, and she has since gone on to successfully survive numerous sessions afterward, albeit with occasional complications upon passing through the door as a result of her somewhat battered self-image.[8]

There is a once well-documented case of a gamebreaker who was able to, through an unknown Heart Surgical technique, transfer his Shiny from his own body and into a specially prepared robotic shell, transferring his consciousness and forcing the game to recognize it as him. Though exhaustively documented at one point, records of this experiment have been practically scrubbed from reality by an unknown cognitohazard, but it nevertheless demonstrates that transferring a mind from one body to another through Shiny manipulation is indeed possible.[9]

Given this, the most promising route to the preservation of replayer minds after death is some means of preserving the Shiny after death, then transferring it to a host body, either a specially prepared synthetic sleeve, or a biological one prepared especially for the task (such as a carapace, consort, or a human body force grown using Life). This hypothesis, unfortunately, has yet to yield success.[10]

Treating one's body like it was an amusement park

Body modification, while it presents a grave risk, has been much more widely explored among replayers, with much more widespread success. Notably, several aspects grant players abilities which, with knowledge and experience, can be used to replicate much of what would ordinarily require surgery, cybernetics or genefixing. Though more radical techniques tend to be isolated to a small clique of obsessives (of which I am a member), some have become a ubiquitous part of replayer life.

Almost every replayer knows someone who uses or has used a prosthetic limb or organ. Arms and legs are the most common, followed by eyes, but a whole galaxy of replacement parts are included in the public filebin of every Sb.org IRC channel.[11] Of the designs that can easily be alchemized through a simple step-by-step process, the most commonly used are those derived from troll biotechnology. The first advantage is that the versions of the technology commonly found on replayer websites is self-installing, replete with quasi-living biowire that seeks out nerve endings and interfaces with them, ideal for patients with minimal surgical skill (there of course exist cybernetics that use medichines to accomplish the same thing). The second is that, for some strange, stupid reason, Sburb is more apt to treat biotech as part of the user's body than mechanical prosthetics. Incidents of players waking up in presession to find their cybernetic legs have been confiscated by the door are exceedingly rare, but have been documented.[12]

Other cybernetic augmentations are riskier. Notably, any hardware implanted in the body that is used for communication is subject to destruction, as the game enjoys blowing up computers. I hardly need mention that implants in the head, such as a cranial computer or mesh inserts, are extremely unwise.

Aspect powers are another well established tool for the deliberate manipulation of replayer physiology. The main tools in this endeavor are Life and Rage, though doubtlessly there are methods by which changes might be affected by other means. At the higher end of skill and experience, these aspects can be used to enact quite dramatic transformations. Practically everyone has heard of sentimentalSeneschal, the Smith of Life who, not satisfied with re-growing one of his two arms, elected to sprout two more, which carried with him through the door.[13] The discovery that skilled Rage players can use Prose to change their appearance, species and gender is occasionally tied into prevalent (as far as I know scurrilous) rumors about the late auctoritasAuspex (and not a few about gentlemanMannerism).[14] The use of Heart to effect physical changes by manipulating tags has been suggested and tried, every time with disastrous results.[15]

Attitude Adjustment

It goes without saying that Heart, Mind, Light and other aspects, especially when paired with the Displacer or Destroyer classes, can permanently alter a target's personality with the use of aspect abilities. Many presession civilizations manage to accomplish the same through the use of technology, such as psychosurgery or other forms of brain editing.

Though it is useful to draw parallels between the two, it must be noted that direct comparisons are inevitably frustrated by Sburb's Cartesian dualistic nonsense that continually infuriates even veteran Heart players. Simply put, a replayer's shiny does not always directly map to the exact physical realities of their brain, though changes to one often affect the other. Reams of virtual ink and paper have been expended on the subject of why, and it is unlikely that the debate will ever be brought to a satisfactory resolution, barring some major breakthrough in the field.[16][17] The upshot is that, even equipped with foolproof psychosurgical techniques that would generate exactly the desired result, it is still most unwise to attempt even modest modifications via non game related means.

Of note are cases where rather than sculpting an existent personality, the aspect Heart was employed to radically transform, or even replace a person's psyche. The most famous example must be the that of enturbulatedOccupation. As a proxy for suicide, this prominent Replayer had her memories removed and transferred to another player by the session's Thief, before subjecting herself to a number of personality modifications at the hands of a Heart player, along with adjustments that would persuade the server to view her as a different person.[18] She and her cohorts unfortunately declined to document the means by which they achieved the latter of these exploits, but the latter would have required expertise beyond what an ordinary replayer could have brought to bear, indicating that she was likely assisted by a veteran with many Heart rerolls under their belt. Why she felt the need to transfer the memories to another person, despite the fact that they engendered in her a desire to kill herself, must be left as an exercise for the reader.

Advanced Brainhacking

[OFFLINE]

Notes

[1] photographerFacilitation, "Worlds Without End: A Survey Of Post-Scratch Presessions" p7

[2] Ibid. p46

[3] postmodernPrometheus, "Object Tags and Resleeving"

[4] professionalWrestling, "You Can't Take it With You: What Will and Won't Make it Through the Door" section 5A

[5] skeletonWhiskey, "Bone Chain: Doomed Nonplayers"

[6] Prototype Towers Staff, "Proscribed Materials"

[7] Library Staff, "Rules"

[8] corbinaOpaleye, "Are Two Heads Better Than One?"

[9] venetianManufacture, "Lotus Leftovers: What We Still Know" section B

[10] androgynousAutarch, postmodernPrometheus et al, "Life, Mind, Heart and Bioroids"

[11] Sb.org Staff, "Using the IRC"

[12] professionalWrestling, "You Can't Take it With You: What Will and Won't Make it Through the Door" p37

[13] keepcalmandPargon, "To Life, To Life" p36

[14] isotopeStarlight, "I Will Have Satisfaction, I Will Be Satisfied: Everything You Need to Know About Rage" section Introduction

[15] androgynousAutarch, "Hearts and Minds" section H1

[16] Ibid. section H4

[17] postmodernPrometheus, "A Heart Act to Follow: Basic Shiny Manipulation"

[18] restrictedDomain, "The Woman Behind the Cancermask"

Places in the Game

replay value, n.: 1) how fun a game is to play again after you've beaten it

Sburb got its Game of the Year award because of its replay value.

2) (colloquial usage) a term used to refer to the quality of the Game that seems to discourage people from breaking it

Nah, he's only in it for the replay value.
She died chasing the lure of the replay value.

Editor's note: This is one of the most poisonous attitudes you can have towards the Game. Play Sburb joyfully or reluctantly as you will, but *never* close your eyes to the notion that you can make it better. The moment you give up is the moment you become a dead man.

The Gamebreaker's Glossary, 21st edition

Prelude

by eternityBraid

This is not intended as a comprehensive Sburb FAQ. I assume since you're reading this that at least one other comprehensive FAQ is also at least partially available in your universe, so if you're looking for information on the Game you should look there[47].

All the same, to play a game about Replayers, one must first explain the game we Replay.

Sometimes it comes in a box. Sometimes it comes in envelopes. Sometimes it comes as a digital download. It's marketed as a video game. It becomes part of your reality; first via the Alchemy machinery, and then by transporting you into the Game.

And, as such, you play. You play at talking to Consorts. You play at killing Underlings. You play at solving puzzles and completing dungeons and dreaming on the Moons and breeding frogs and talking to your Denizens and fostering your Land... but for what?

All of it is for nothing. You just end up playing again.

Is it really any wonder that whatever we build for ourselves must take place outside its purview?

Skill: Sburban Survival

Sburban Survival -1: You're a doomed nonplayer.

Sburban Survival 0: You… *guess* you could stumble through a session, if other people were there to bail you out? (Most players of Sburb at this skill level permadie in their first or second sessions.)

Sburban Survival 1: You probably have a separate weapon skill you rely on to get out of trouble with Underlings, but if not, this might count (although you'll be desperately grappling or whacking things rather than doing it with any finesse). You might've read a FAQ, or been mentored by a Veteran, or played a handful of sessions; you know enough not to do anything truly stupid, like trying to kill the Denizen before it is time, or jumping into a broken Gate. You recognize some puzzles you've seen from previous sessions. You carry a spare computer and a sleeping bag. You actively try to get along with your Whisperings[48]. You know who to ingratiate yourself to and who not to insult on the Dream Moons. If you're part of a Replayer network you know where to get information or help if your session goes wrong, although you don't necessarily have the knowledge to get through it yourself.

Sburban Survival 2: At this level and above weapon skill is often covered as a "stretch" of this skill, since there's no way that you'd survive Sburb this well without knowing how to fight. You've read

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==> 47. I'd recommend godsgifttoGrinds' *Sburb Glitch FAQ*, but that one has a bad habit of showing up halfway, with "offline" notices everywhere, since it's incompatible with some of the more common checksumming algorithms. You may want to try severalImpressions' *Joys and Travails* or wedgeIssue's *Sarai's Sburban Guide*. Of course, if you have problems with checksums or lack Skaianet tech, GGTG's FAQ may be the only one available.

==> 48. EB: Whisperings are the "environmental" essence of your Aspect; you can become closer to them – get better hints – by adhering to your Title of Aspect role, and/or by clearing your mind and letting your Whisperings fill it for you.

several FAQs. You are likely a veteran yourself with more than eight sessions to your credit. You are starting to develop an instinct for the way the Game arranges events, spawns enemies, and manipulates perception. You carry five or more spare computers, and probably also camping and cooking equipment, in your sylladex, and probably even more on your person. At this level and above surviving a TPK becomes more than just a matter of pure luck; you can survive such events because you know how to gain ARC and win the War without outside help (although this is by no means *easy*). Game-given riddles and puzzles are, while not yet repetitive, often a reprisal of ones you've seen before and you know how to solve them without much work. You have a small selection of favorite carapaces you know how to recruit to accompany you. You have at least tried one of the legendarily-difficult Mail Quests. You might've encountered at least one PK before, and I assume bested them (or otherwise you wouldn't be here).

Sburban Survival 3: Your weapon skill is such that you could subdue all but the most highly trained human or carapace fighters. You could be a veteran with fifteen or more sessions. (Although many vets often get by with Sburban Survival 2 just fine, even through twenty sessions, with the help of other abilities, bonds, afflictions, or miraculous abilities.) You could probably write FAQs with new and relevant information solely from your experience. The Game's riddles and puzzles start to become *boring*. You pretty much have your pick of carapaces, know which ones are scripted to interfere with which events, and actively manipulate Dream Moon politics thereby. You sometimes manage to complete the Mail Quests. You have probably survived a few highly abnormal sessions (i.e. a TPK, a session with major damage to frog-breeding or other critical points, a session with a Cataclysm in).

Sburban Survival 4: This level is off-limits for player characters. Theoretically, it would be given to someone who survived thirty or thirty-five sessions – like the (urban legend, probably) gentlemanMannerism[49] – but even highly competent NPCs tend to max out at 3 and rely on bonds, afflictions, and miraculous abilities to get a boost in limited contexts.

==> 49. CM: Her followers insist she's on her sixty-fourth session by now. I call bullshit; the known record for Replayers is something like 38, and that's by counting Dawn and Myra as the same person, which nobody I know does.

Presession

Properties of the Presession (Prescratch)
- You must live until Entry.
- People look at you and see your Replayee.
- The children must be ignorant.
- Everything is normal.
- This world has no idea it is going to be destroyed.

Properties of the Presession (Postscratch)
- You must live until Entry.
- People look at you and see your Replayee.
- The children must be scarily prepared and competent.
- The government must be oppressive.
- Strange echoes of Sburb reach back into the culture.

Presession: it's where you get dumped where you Replay. It's someone else's planet[50].

There was a Sburb session, set on this planet, once. It failed. Everyone died, probably. Sburb retroactively declared that timeline a Splinter, rolled time back to a little while before Entry, and put you and a bunch of other Replayers in instead.

So here's some things you'll do when you're there.

Your Coplayers

You should check your Replayee's chat client as soon as you can. When people show up, the chumhandles of their Replayees will show up in your buddy list as well, and then you'll know who's in this session with you. Make sure to change the handle on your Replayee's chat client to your own.

Meeting coplayers is usually something ⬢ **Pastoral (Shared Action/Reactions/Slice of Life)**

You've got new coplayers. Sometimes they're people you know from Replayer networks. Sometimes they're people you've vaguely heard of. Sometimes they're people you haven't heard of at all. Sometimes they're Loose Replayers that you'll probably end up introducing to Replayer networks. Anyway, you'll IM each other for a while. Try to connect!

Meeting coplayers is sometimes ⬢ **Sympathetic Action**

Every so often you'll get in a little lost second-sessioner that you're going to have to introduce to the idea that the Door is broken. There's… no way to break it gently, that they'll never see their first-session friends and coplayers ever again. The best you can do is make sure they're sitting down before you tell them, and then talk them through the inevitable emotional breakdown afterwards. Of course if *you're* the second-sessioner, it'll be **Shock** instead.

Meeting coplayers is occasionally ⬡ **Discovery**

==> 50. OJ: Insofar as a planet can belong to anyone at all.

Sometimes you'll *all* be second-sessioners, and none of you will have any idea what is going on. All the same, it will be clear that this isn't the universe you were promised. And so you experience what we know as the Great Disappointment. How you react after that… well, it depends on what kind of person you are.

Your Replayee's Life

> She wanted me to sacrifice more than I already had. Set up a mesh network, hack into someone or another's computers, arrange for tactics, something, anything. In memory reconstruction, the "anything" in this statement begins to have a hysterical edge to it.
>
> Because it was like what she went through. And she couldn't stand the thought of me not doing something about it.
>
> I refused, because the world would end soon enough. I was not going to take on any more risk, because though the Game guarantees you survive to entry, it does not guarantee one whit more.

Memoirs of a Seer, epinephrineElectrified

Everyone thinks you're your Replayee. This includes your Replayee's guardian. Your Replayee's schoolmates. Your Replayee's job. And since you don't know how long you'll be in presession, you may as well take their place.

(Alternately, you could leave and let the pieces of their life fall where they may. But most people try to fit in.)

Living your Replayee's life is often 🔶 **Pastoral (Shared Action/Reactions)**

Your Replayee might just be going to school, or gardening, or working at a construction site. Something normal[51]. I'm not sure you *want* to connect to these people. It's presession, after all. They're all going to die. Maybe you'll just be really sad about how you can't connect to them. Or you might log onto your Replayer network, and write about what you're doing and connect to someone that way.

Figuring out how to live your Replayee's life is sometimes ♚ **Discovery**

They do things differently here! Maybe it's cool. Maybe it's horrifying. It's weird and novel either way.

Figuring out how to live your Replayee's life is sometimes 🔥 **Obsessive Action**

Your Replayee's doing something highly specialized like research! You have no idea how to do it, so you start pulling their textbooks off their shelves, or looking up how to do it on the Internet, and reading, and reading…

==> 51. CM: Or you could always get sick from the presession germs that you haven't been exposed to before. Replayer's Flu – the germs that people tend to catch presession and bring into the first few weeks of session – exists.

Trying to live your Replayee's life is sometimes ⬟ **Road of Trials (Adversity, Corruption, Trauma, or Never Say Die)**

You have no idea what's going on. You're in danger, and you have no idea how the culturally accepted way of handling it is. You just know that there's this giant monster with two buckets in hand in front of you (or whatever it is that's happening), and that Sburb won't guarantee you don't get thrown into the Game broken and bleeding.

At least if you dispense of this one last thing it won't come back. Right? Yeah, keep telling yourself that.

Not living your Replayee's life is sometimes ⬟ **Obsessive Action**

Are you locking yourself inside your Replayee's room? Running away? You do realize that, since everyone thinks you're the same person as your Replayee, the missing-person notices will point to *you*, right? Even if you don't get caught, you'll probably still spiral into obsession for a while worrying about it. If someone really *is* chasing you, you might also be transitioning into Road of Trials.

Waiting For Meteors

> When in presession, look outside. See those people, unaware they're going to die so soon. You think you're special, chosen to play this game? You aren't worth more than any of those people. Each of them has a story, and it's an unique one, too. You need to keep that in mind, when you start the game, and leave them behind to die. You need to never forget that they died. Your survival will give meaning to their death - the success of your session will ensure it wasn't all for naught.
>
> *Dark Souls was for Pansies: A Time Guide*, emberSeeker

You're going to go into Sburb. You probably know this by now. And if you don't, your Replayee might have a calendar on the wall, marked with excited scrawls about the soon-to-be-released Sburb videogame. Either way, you prepare to go through the entire thing again…

Waiting for meteors is often ⬟ **Shared Reactions**

You talk with your coplayers, or maybe your network. They're the only ones who understand what it's like to be a Replayer.

Waiting for meteors is also often ⬟ **Obsessive Action**

You know they're coming. You don't know when. The ship dates for Sburb are often missed because of delays in distribution. Sometimes you won't even know when Sburb's coming at all. You worry about when it's going to happen and what you'll do when it comes. You might stockpile supplies, or spend hours pacing and planning exactly where you're going to ask your server player to put the big machines. You tip over the edge…

Waiting for meteors is sometimes ⬟ **Wicked Action**

The people in presession don't matter, right? They're all just going to die anyway! So it shouldn't matter if you steal someone's car, or if you stage a robbery, or something even worse, right? Will anyone even care? Does it even *matter* if anyone cares? Nobody *you* know will care, right?

Waiting for meteors is sometimes ⬢ **Foreshadowing**

You look up at the sky. Something bright and burning streaks across it.

You know, viscerally, *exactly* what that means.

The Incipisphere

> The first time I looked out at the Incipisphere from a shuttle was beautiful. The second, third, and fourth times were less beautiful. Now I sit as far away from the windows as possible. The reminder that I'm trapped inside this game for life is too painful.
>
> "36-Hour Blog", severalEntries

The Incipisphere is the realm you must grow to understand, if you wish to survive as a Replayer. It is a dangerous, beautiful place: tuned to make you a better person, but heedless of the personal danger it puts you through in the process.

What's in the Incipisphere? Several Lands (small planetoids) orbit Skaia. A little further out from the Lands, a ring of asteroids known as the Veil orbits Skaia as well. Very close to Skaia, a smaller planetoid known as Prospit and its chained moon dip in and out of the clouds; and finally, just past the ring of asteroids, another smaller planetoid known as Derse and its chained moon too dip in and out of the very edge of the Incipisphere's habitable space.

All of these places, being inside the Incipisphere, share its region properties. You simply use both lists of region properties at once.

Playing the Game

Properties of the Incipisphere
- This is a game.
- Everything is part of a bigger story.
- You won't arrive in time to stop the catastrophe…
- but you can rebuild, afterwards.

> First, second sessioners, they think Sburb's like Dwarf Fortress: endless procedurally generated worlds and lore, infinite replayability, boundless depth, never gets old, etc.
>
> Fourth, fifth sessioners, they think of it like… I don't know, DCSS maybe: essentially the same game every time, but all the classes play differently and you can end up with a completely different experience depending on what route you take.
>
> By session nine or ten, they know it's like one of those Telltale games, or some other indie trash: you play it once and feel like you're making all these choices, then you play it a second, third time and wow, turns out nothing you did mattered. The game did whatever the hell it wanted to do and you were just there pushing buttons, thinking any of it mattered.
>
> wagglanGimmicks

Playing the Game can be ♟ **Gothic**

This game is bugged. Sometimes flat-out broken. Some of the bugs are good. Some of them are bad. It is impossible to find every bug in your session.

Many of these bugs have been documented, in the comprehensive FAQs, but not all of them. The Game has never ceased to disappoint, and in every session there are always a few *de novo* mutations – bugs exclusive to this particular game instance. Maybe it's a glitch in Fraymotif pricing that causes the prices to all end in "99", or clipping errors in the spawning of Consort dwellings; these may be frustrating, or amusing, or both.

You write these things down. Wonder if anyone else has gone through the same thing. Ask your coplayers. Investigate on your own. Try to do what the Game wants you to do. Because, after all, this is a game.

Playing the Game can be ✏ **Techno**

Everything here, everything in Sburb, is tailored for *you*. (Or at least tailored for your Replayee. So it won't quite fit. But it'll be close.) The mythology of Sburb is great and varied and fantastical; it draws from (or inspires?) every mythological tradition I've heard of, and then some.

And so, when you climb the ladders in the Prospitian Library and pull a book off the shelf, and open it: there are all the stories of your race. There are all the stories of every race, depicted on all these pages. And there are all the stories of Sburb. All the stories of you and your coplayers. Everything you could be. Everything you will become.

Because everything – *everything* – is part of a bigger story.

Playing the Game can be ⟳ **Fairy Tales**

> Hopelessness is merely the condition they want you to catch, not one you have to have.

> "Privacy Under Attack", Eben Moglen

Your session could just as well be subject to a major bug: the frog breeding infrastructure might be missing. Or the dreamselves. Or the carapace Queens. It is these errors you cannot predict that make the Game a challenge for even the most experienced of Veterans. Errors this drastic are rare, but they do exist – and people who survive them are rarer still.

But most of the time, the Game is "merely" ruthless: the difficulty curve of Sburb is tuned as that of a videogame, where you can reset hundreds of times to practice, if necessary. It is not tuned for small pieces of meat who can die a final death. It is not tuned for being real.

You must always remember: the Game does not care for your life, only for your Role. It will either make you into a better version of yourself, following its standards, or you will die.

When the worst happens… you won't be able to prevent it. You won't be in time to stop the catastrophe. You may try to put the pieces together, afterwards; that's allowed. But it won't be the same.

Playing the Game can be ☹ **Epic**/⬡ **Adventure Fantasy**

This life gives you power, and meaning, and sometimes even joy. It achieves this by destroying any ties you may have had to your past. You are born anew, your past erased from the flow of time; what will you do with this life, now? Will you live it as it comes, or will you try to make something better of it?

Sburb is a trial by fire, and you emerge from it purified. You may rebuild, afterwards. You may become something more than you once were. You may try to make this a better life for everyone here.

This is a ritual about setting people's actions to awesome music.

There is a service called [Soundcloud](#) that lets you attach comments to specific times on a music track. I would suggest *not* uploading music unless you made it yourself – it's bad form[52] to upload music that you aren't absolutely certain you have the rights for – but perhaps you can find a track that doesn't have any comments on it that sounds good.[53]

To be polite to people on Soundcloud (which is absolutely not a roleplay website), please clearly mark your comments as roleplay comments. The person who found the music and is starting the [S] should also leave a comment explaining what everyone else is doing. Most musicians will be delighted to see a bunch of random people listening to and commenting on their track, but they'll be very confused if you don't provide them context.

After that, you register and make comments at points on the track with poses. Comment at two to five points on the track; don't worry about an order. Try to leave some space between your comments so other people can pose between them, and don't hog all the cool parts of the song. Leave it up until everyone's commented, and then finish it off by letting the person who's posted the least (or if there is a tie, the person who has the least XP, or if there's a tie *there* use a random number generator) narrate the very ending, with a comment at the very end of the track. They need to narrate their character finishing something: ascending, descending, cascading, and transcending are all classics.

If for some reason you want to invoke a second Ritual, it would be a good idea to take that comment thread away from Soundcloud so you don't confuse people more than you probably already will be.

==> 52. OJ: It is also illegal.

==> 53. OJ If you don't know any musicians, Homestuck musicians and fan-musicians frequently have Soundcloud accounts. You can use [the list of people I follow there](#), the [Homestuck Voice-Actors And Songs](#) group, or Soundcloud's search function. Or, I mean, you could use *my* music, but I'm trying to keep my self-promotion at a dull roar here.

Your Land

Properties of your Land
- all Incipisphere properties, as above
- There must be tasks reserved for the Hero alone.
- The Hero will inherit title to the Land, but only after they prove themselves.

Exploration

Haven't got anything else to do? Go exploring!

Walking around your Land, if it is an action at all, is usually the background for 🜚 **Shared Reactions** or 🜚 **Slice of Life**

Maybe you've got a chat client open on your scouter, and you're talking to others while going from place to place. Usually walking isn't an action at all, though. Usually you just cut to where you're going.

Exploring your Land can be ⬡ **Immersive Fantasy**

There's cool stuff around every corner. Look, here's some ancient ruins! I wonder what the iconography on this tablet says… wait, why is there a picture of me dying on the wall here?? (It's not necessarily a prophecy. Sometimes it's just a strange mural. If anything, that has as much potential for Shock as it does for Foreshadowing.)

Exploring your Land sometimes gets you into ⬡ **Trouble**

Sometimes, by accident, you wander into a zone where Giclopses spawn by the thousands. Best practice when this happens is to retrace your steps – the "zones" in which enemies spawn have relatively well-defined boundaries, and there's probably a safe zone where you came from. But you have to survive until then.

Puzzle ruins/dungeons can be 🜚 **Gothic**

Sometimes you'll come upon a set of ruins with puzzles all around. Actually, all the ruins here have puzzles.

Maybe this one's relatively easy, and the worst trouble you can get into is spending two hours trying to make anagrams because you think this door takes anagrams, only to find that that's not what you were supposed to do at all!

Puzzle ruins/dungeons can also be ⬡ **The Road of Trials**

Sometimes the entrance seals behind you and a miniboss shows up. Or you have to walk across a long balance beam with hot lava underneath, because whoever programmed this game thought it'd be a "good challenge". Or your coplayer abruptly gets brained by a spike trap.

Or this was *supposed* to be a perfectly good set of ruins, but then you tried to grab the legendary weapon in the center[54] and suddenly you're in a mass of enemies far above your level because it turned out to be a booby trap, and you aren't going to survive – you just want to hang on long enough that a coplayer can get here to revive your remains.

This is where the Murdergame earns its name.

(Puzzle ruins are less likely to be Road of Trials than dungeons are.)

> Sometimes when people look at Ii Ma they go mad. Their worldview, even if it is already accustomed to the nature of the place without recourse, cannot handle the existence of such a beast.
>
> First they surrender the boundaries to their world.
>
> They recognize that the pitiful lies by which they seek to make the world a safe and sane and orderly place are lies. They recognize that they have no real control over their fate. They cease to pretend that discipline, diet, sleep schedule, hard work, organization, nest eggs, caution, and good company can save them. They surrender the illusion that their hairstyle, their social standing, their daily drudgery, their favorite shows, their car, their toys, or their lovers have ever been important in the greater context of the world.
>
> Once they have done so they can accept the great bulk of Ii Ma and that it can dispose of them as it wishes.
>
> > "The Ragged Things (1 of 2)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

Puzzle ruins/dungeons can occasionally be a ⬧ **Ritual**

Break play and throw yourself against a game set to the hardest difficulty level (or a game that's so hard it doesn't need difficulty levels, like I Wanna Be The Boshi) for a few minutes. If you pick a game you know how to play, you're cheating.

Let everyone else argue about your performance from the peanut gallery ICly; that's part of the ritual too.

The HG sets a timer for something like 5 minutes. When it dings, drag everyone back to the roleplay.

Fighting Underlings can be ⬡ **Shared Action** or ⬢ **Trouble**

I'd say fighting is usually Shared Action, but I think it'd be more fun for you to focus on when grinding for echeladder levels goes bad. All the same, sometimes it's just you and a coplayer, or you and the chat, shooting the breeze.

==> 54. EB: Legendary weapons do have this tendency to bring doom upon your head. Especially if they're far higher-level than you'd expect from the surrounding area.

And sometimes it was *supposed* to be you and a coplayer shooting the breeze, but then you wander further and further into a higher-rate spawn zone, and only realize it when you look up and realize that there's nothing but a carpet of enemies as far as the eye can see. Oops?

Fighting Underlings can also be ⬡ **The Road of Trials**

If you're not experienced enough for fighting imps to be anything pastoral, or if you're run-down or injured, or if you're out of supplies, or if some of your coplayers are dead, or if the HG has decided that fighting shouldn't be safe? You'll end up here instead.

Maybe you got burnt by a fire-breathing monster earlier, and you know you need to keep going until you get somewhere safe but *it just hurts so much*. Maybe you'll be fighting and overwhelmed, and decide that you're willing to risk pulling out a Corruptive weapon *just this one time*. Maybe an Underling with the same exact prototyping-feature combination as the one that pulled out your friend's viscera shows up. Or, hell, maybe you're screwed but you're trying to save someone else – a younger coplayer, maybe, or a Carapace that's critical to the plot. Or you're just trying to stall long enough for your coplayer to get here and save you.

Just don't die too many times, okay? That might cause problems. When everything is said and done, scattered among the grist, you'll usually find Health Gels that heal you enough that you can walk away.

Consorts and Quests

Your Consorts will be an inexhaustible source of quests to do. I say "inexhaustible" because completionists who have tried report that there are well over 500 Consort Quests available on *any* land, with the average being around 750. Assuming you're not a glutton for punishment, you'll probably do 200-300 or so. (Only 10-20 of them will be important enough to count as Chuubo's scenes, though.)

Interacting with Consorts is often ⬗ **Pastoral**

They live in little subsistence villages. It's surprisingly relaxing, by Game standards. Can't stay here long, but it's good to remind yourself occasionally that the Game isn't just a constant stream of horror.

(For them it's Gothic. They get into Obsessive Action spirals quite a lot!)

Interacting with Consorts can also be ☯ **Decisive Action**

They challenge you on what kind of person you want to be, sometimes. The Consort Elder lays out three objects, and asks you to pick one. You mull over it for a while. Maybe even out loud. And then you rise to the challenge, and take up the mirror (or whatever), and announce that this is who you want to be!

or 🛑 **Foreshadowing**

Usually Consorts just say and do their silly, scripted things. Occasionally one will turn straight to you and say something with the weight of foreboding on it, though. Or you'll find a small circle of consorts in front of an elderly storyteller, and he'll motion for you to sit down...

or even ♟ **Discovery**

Consorts who are showing you new things or getting you to try new stuff are usually Shared Action or Slice of Life – it's often vaguely silly and unimportant when they shove a cone of bugs into your face and insist you eat them, and you realize *they taste like popcorn*, even though they look like flies.[55]

But sometimes they'll be a little bit more important. A Consort toddles before you and leads you to a rise in the land – and you gasp at the view in front of you, and realize this is your Promontory, and that you'll need to come here again later. Not just because it's important to the plot, but because this place is *calling* to you.

This is most likely in your first session or two, before the jaded veteranhood gets to you. It's not impossible after that, but it's incredibly difficult. If this *was* an Immersive Fantasy game you'd be taking Hollow left and right after you reached session four or so. Lucky for you, it's probably not.

Quests with Consorts can be ⬗ **Shared Action**

A Consort asks you for help with something. Of course you oblige them – you're a Hero of Skaia and the inheritor of the Land. Try to connect!

==> 55. EB: Most of the time the consorts' weird bugs are kind of gross, though. This wouldn't be a problem if not for the fact that Consort "remedies" are often live bugs.

Quests with Consorts can also be ⬡ **Trouble**

YOU HATE ESCORT QUESTS YOU HATE ESCORT QUESTS, as the copypasta goes.

You take a quest! You're expecting something relatively simple! Only it's not simple at all.

or ⬡ **The Road of Trials**

You know how presession-religion messiahs died to save humankind? You're not going to *die* to save consortkind, but you're sure going to wish it was that easy. At least dying only hurts for a little while.

I know I am not a cat, because if I only had nine lives I'd be dead by now.

by cogitativeMistake

Dungeons are optional parts of Sburb that grant you small abilities and small tokens for completing them. They are repetitive, but offer a guaranteed return. Some dungeons are generated single-player – you can complete them alone – and some dungeons are generated multiplayer, which means that you must (and should!) team up with the teammate of the indicated Aspect[56] and complete it together.

For some reason, Sburb generates dungeons "upside-down". You enter at the bottom level, and then fight your way to the top of the tower. As you ascend, things (usually) become harder. On average,[57] dungeon-towers are half spawn areas that you need to clear, and half puzzles/challenges. Spawn areas are simple: kill every Underling, and the area will eventually stop spawning new ones to replace the old ones. Once you have depleted/cleared the spawn area, it won't come back.

Puzzles are your usual RPG logic puzzles, with all the variations you'd expect. However, as always, Sburb is buggy enough that some puzzles are unsolvable as presented. 95% of puzzles are completable with the information they provide you, which seems like a high number until you consider that there are on average 2.6 puzzles per dungeon, and you may complete as many as twenty or thirty dungeons in a session. There are FAQs with methods you can often use to get around broken puzzles, but due to the nature of Sburb, full errata are impossible. Eventually, you're bound to run into something unsolvable. Given that warping/clipping past puzzle rooms is a terrible idea unless you are a Player with inherent Aspect abilities that let you do that, I recommend tactical retreat.

Challenges are physical feats that you have to complete; you may have to walk an extremely specific path, hit multiple switches simultaneously, or put a needle into a slot without touching the sides. Using mechanical or technological means to get past these challenges, or reduce their risk, is common – but completing them without said devices is far more ARCful.

The rooms inside dungeon-towers are usually the size that you'd expect them to be from looking at the outside of the tower. The key word here is "usually". Puzzle-rooms that are single closets between floors, and challenges that take place in stadium-size cavernous rooms not visible from the outside, are not unheard-of.

Usually, the last/highest level has a miniboss; fortunately or unfortunately, all the minibosses in all the dungeons are *exactly the same*, give or take a few numerical differences. Once you memorize the minibosses' three forms and their main attack patterns, you understand all minibosses. On the plus side, this helps you survive. On the minus side, it's boring as hell to have to fight the exact same boss for the hundredth time.

==> 56. CM: Void and Mist players' bugs extend to dungeons; a Void player's team dungeons may be completed by only the person with the other Aspect indicated, and a Mist player can substitute for players of any other Aspect for the purpose of entering dungeons. As usual with Void and Mist bugs, use these with caution.

==> 57. CM: Individual dungeons often vary wildly, though; for every twenty dungeons there's usually two that are all-fighting, one that's all-puzzles, and a very wide distribution in between.

At the top of the dungeon is an alch-primitive: something that you can't get by alchemizing two other items together. If you understand alchemization, you will immediately understand why this is useful. If you don't, just believe me when I say that the cheap piece of shit is worth grabbing.

You will also gain a very small ability from the top of a dungeon; Chuubo's is not fine-grained enough to represent these small abilities, but the HG may occasionally wish to be generous and give you a Trick Perk if you have roleplayed out a particularly impressive dungeon.

Psychoruins

Properties of the Psychoruins:
- all properties of the Incipisphere and your Land

plus
- Your nightmares shape the world around you.
- You drive the Psychoruins away by doing what you should have done.

(Yes, I know that makes more than seven properties. Sorry! I promise I'm not making a habit of it.)

> So there's this gamebreaking technique that requires you to walk into a Psychoruins and then run a program, in that area. Apparently they skimped on the software security there, assuming people would be too freaked out to do any gamebreaking.
>
> Well, for what it's worth, they were wrong, though I have to admit that being chased by a whale that wants to eat you, while struggling to focus on one's computer and not the outside world, is… novel.

<div align="right">cogitativeMistake</div>

The Psychoruins are small patches of your Land that are the Designated Break-From-Reality zones[58] of Sburb. You know how I've mentioned that this game is hacked together and the edges aren't smoothed out? The Psychoruins seem to have come from a horror game. Either the Psychoruins move, or they disorient you so badly you can't remember where they were, so you can't map and avoid them.

The Psychoruins are nightmares made real. Sure, it might still be part of your Land, and in many respects it is still *spiritually* your land, but you wander in and you see your fears splashed up on the scenery around you, rather than the usual Sburban antics. You get to watch the tsunami carry away the pieces of your home, again. Your mother drives away from you for the last time. You lie, buried underneath earthquake rubble.

You can't die from the things that happen to you from Psychoruins. They inflict only emotional wounds, not physical ones. But *your mind will break before your body does*, so that doesn't mean they're not dangerous.

Somehow, Psychoruins *lack* the otherwise-ubiquitous internet connectivity of the Game. And if you enter a Ruin with someone else they get whisked away into their own nightmare, and you won't be able to contact them. Psychoruins are something you must do alone.

Again: what the hell, Sburb? I'd think that this wasn't part of the Game if it wasn't clear from various pieced-together lore – as well as the assurances of Gamebreakers – that it was deliberately put in.

And usually you're forced to reenact scenes of being helpless, of enduring as the world around you tears away at the things you love and – wait, that's Sburb in general. Let me try again.

We dream on the Dream Moons, and then in the Bubbles. We do not have nightmares in the usual sense; the worst you can do is Dreamless Sleep or failed Bubblesurfing. So Sburb saw fit to provide us with

---

==> 58. EB: I hear they're kinda like Bluebell Park in Town.

other… avenues… for the same experience. (Why are nightmares spiritually important to the journey of growing up, anyway? Sburb provides no answer, unless you're willing to delve into the litcrit of the Sight players.)

There are two ways to get out of a Psychoruins –

🔥 **Adversity**, ♻ **(Suffer) Corruption/Trauma**, and 📧 **Never Say Die!** will let you escape out the other side, shaken but alive, once the Psychoruins completes its show;

and 😵 **Science, Faith and Sorcery** has the *chance* – not a large chance, mind you, but a chance – that it will clear the patch of Ruins away for good. (Making it less likely for you to stumble upon them in general.)

See: the thing you do, to resolve a nightmare once and for all, is to pluck up your courage and do something that changes the foundations on which the nightmare is built, such that what was so terrifying seems trivial in retrospect. So: say goodbye. Turn away and resolve to do better next time. Release your anger. Understand that all things are impermanent. Imagine everyone else in their underwear.

An epiphany may release you. Or it may not. But it's worth trying.

The Underworld

Properties of the Underworld (with Angels):
- You do not understand.
- You do not belong.
- You can belong, if you let go of yourself.
- You can let go of yourself, if you listen to the Song.
- The fire will take away everything you have.
- The light will burn away everything you are.

Properties of the Underworld (without Angels):
- all properties of the Incipisphere and your Land
- You've done this before, haven't you?

The Underworld is the hollow within the center of a Land, within which the Angels dwell. Perhaps it is a stronghold, from which they may invade Sburb. Or perhaps it is a prison.

Either way, at one point it used to be part of Sburb. Now it's not. There is a quest you need to do here - but, before you can start it, you must first throw the Angels out.

In An Angel-Infested Hive

Scenes in the Underworld, if the Angels are present, are typically **Road of Trials**

Sburb gives you little room for error. The Angels give you no room for error at all. More specifically…

Scenes with the Angels in the Underworld can be ⬡ **Adversity**

The Angels have rules. Do not listen to or sing music. Do not ever open a container of water. And, for Skaia's sake, *do not look up.*

It can be difficult or impossible to tell the difference between the shrieking of the Angels when you do what you're *supposed* to do, and the shrieking of the Angels when you do what you're *not* supposed to do. The best you can do is hope and run.

or ⬡ **(Suffer) Corruption**

The Angels will leak into you, despite the best of your efforts. Even if you follow the rules as best we know them, that won't be enough.

The world spins. You fall to your knees. And then you'll hear the unearthly harmonies of the Angel-song. You'll see wings out of the corner of your eye. You'll get unexplainable urges to drink oil. You'll feel drawn to spend more time in the Underworld. You'll start fantasizing about setting things on fire.

If you make sure to get social contact on a regular basis, that'll be all that happens. But if you don't, things are going to get worse.

or even ⬡ **Never Say Die!**

Sometimes you're not in the Underworld because you need to do your quests. Sometimes you're in the Underworld to rescue someone who's gone too far.

Any Replayer is well aware that the Underworld is a dangerous place, and that Corruption should be taken care of quickly. But Corruption takes you away from the very social support that would keep you from getting worse, so the only way to intervene after someone's *decided* to start camping out in the Underworld is to go in and bodily drag them out.

On occasion, scenes with the Angels in the Underworld can be 😵 **Science, Faith and Sorcery**

The Sixteen Laws of the Underworld are poorly specified and poorly understood. (It's not even clear how many of them there are. It's possible there are many fewer, or many more.) Most Replayers avoid even the gray spots at the edge of the de facto rules, because Corruption is not something to be trifled with. But it's the people who push the boundaries that give us a better understanding of where they apply.

What do you think is the underlying principle of the Underworld's rules? Do you think that one of the rules is just superstition? Do you think you can push the envelope?

Just be aware that if you're wrong, things can go very, *very* badly…

Afterwards

> First, second sessioners, they think Sburb's like Dwarf Fortress: endless procedurally generated worlds and lore, infinite replayability, boundless depth, never gets old, etc.
>
> Fourth, fifth sessioners, they think of it like… I don't know, DCSS maybe: essentially the same game every time, but all the classes play differently and you can end up with a completely different experience depending on what route you take.
>
> By session nine or ten, they know it's like one of those Telltale games, or some other indie trash: you play it once and feel like you're making all these choices, then you play it a second, third time and wow, turns out nothing you did mattered. The game did whatever the hell it wanted to do and you were just there pushing buttons, thinking any of it mattered.

> wagglanGimmicks

After you evict the Angels, things in the Underworld are usually 👑 **Gothic**

You kill Underlings. You build up your fake house. You kill more Underlings. You keep building up your fake house. You kill even more underlings. You continue building up your fake house.

It's clearly padding, to extend the length of Sburb. And you'll probably leave a chat channel on and talk with people throughout most of it.

The Taking of the Heart can be 👑 **Slice of Life**

Eventually, you stand on the very top of your house, snatch a giant glowing orb from the sky, and absorb it while dramatic music plays. Which is cool and all, I mean, but it's just something where the general mood of it will stick to you. It probably won't be a critically important plot point. Probably.

or a ☺ **Decisive Action**

Because you can always ham it up and monologue about yourself before you snatch said giant glowing orb from the sky. You know, to pretend that it isn't an event flag that you've hit eleventy million times before.

or, on occasion, a ✉ **Ritual**

Talk about the things you've done right. Talk about the things you've done wrong. Talk about making up for your mistakes. Talk about what you want to become.

by OJ

This transition is meant for those moments for which, instead of a dramatic animation, the Homestuck-style [S] is one that pans over the landscape, playing ambient music and atmospheric noise.

Dramatic version: Read an otherwise apt piece of poetry, then attribute it to someone completely unrelated. Make sure it is obvious that it is misquoted by lampshading it with a "You are absolutely sure ___ said that." TVTropes has a list of the quotes Homestuck has misquoted (mixed in with a bunch of other Homestuck quotes, but I suppose you can use those too), or you can use a different piece of poetry.

Comedic version: Read from Sweet Bro and Hella Jeff. Yes. Really. Trust me, it'll be great.

The Magicant

Properties of the Magicant
- The furnishings are warm and inviting.
- Music plays on a record player, somewhere.
- Space does not even pretend to make sense.
- Sburb is far away.
- You cannot stay here forever.

The Magicant is a group of strange wood-paneled rooms that you access by slipping through "gateways" in reality scattered throughout the Incipisphere – through surfaces that seem falser than normal.[59]

The seams between the Magicant and the Game are unusually obvious. The Magicant is not mentioned in Sburban lore (except for maybe a brief reference in the occasional Derse library), and no quest, consort, or carapace will ever ask you to find it. The presence of your Whisperings – the voice of your Aspect, speaking to you – is muffled, here. It's hard to do stuff across the boundaries of the Magicant. They're metaphysically separate from the Game.

But you can't stay here forever. The Game waits for no Player.

Inside the Magicant

> And he turned to the wall, and smiled, and fell right through.

> "Short Story #37", balkanizedKelp

Going through the false-walls I described lands you in the Magicant. You can sometimes find these gateways in the ceiling, or in the backs of wardrobes. If you're unlucky, you will find one by stepping on a nonexistent piece of floor and tumbling in. But usually it's walls.

It's supposed to be an Easter Egg, I think. There's strange but inviting furniture. Earthbound references. Music with the titles of Sburb stuff written by people you've probably never heard of.[60] Random books on the walls. (About two-thirds of these books are functionally identical to the ones that show up in the Prospit and Derse libraries, but another one-third contain… junk code? Bits and pieces of computer language that when Gamebreakers found them, they concluded the bits and pieces didn't make sense because they referred to too many other things. There's a project to OCR these books and see if they can be correlated with code that's been scried from the Game.)

The Magicant is the size of a smallish four-bedroom house – small enough to be cozy, not quite small enough to be cramped – and divided into roughly half a dozen rooms. You can usually pass through all these rooms with a path through the doors, and the doors that don't lead to more Magicant rooms lead out to the same gateways of not-wall that you would have used to get in. This being said, the Magicant

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==> 59. EB: Not *false* false, not like when a Sand player enchants something, but more like… they look like they exist but they also look like they shouldn't? It's Voidish. Ask your Void player to explain. They might do better than me.

==> 60. EB: Despite my attempts, I have never been able to find any more music by that one Erik "Jit" Scheele that I liked. I'm not even sure he's in this multiverse.

has no physical layout, so the exact sequence of doors you need to use to get to any particular room may not make any spatial sense whatsoever.

The Magicant tends to make Space players nauseated and dizzy; as far as I can tell, it's because of the way the Magicant keeps shuffling itself around, twisting the spatial relationships between the rooms in a way that refuses to cooperate with the Space-sense. (Even the Furthest Ring isn't that bad, I'm told.)

If you are using the Magicant as a shelter from PKs, Cataclysms, or other dangers, the pressure to get back to the Game – that nagging sense that you should be doing something important – seems to lessen.

The Magicant can be used to fast-travel between locations, but you don't necessarily get control over *which* locations you fast-travel to – the layout of the Magicant, and thus the places where the doors lead, swaps around every few days. (If you wedge open the doors, they will slam shut to facilitate the room reshuffling after about a week, and you will find the things you used to wedge open the doors on the floor.)

The Magicant is a good place for ♧ **Gothic** actions: ◈ **Shared Action/Reactions**, to a lesser extent ♧ **Slice of Life**, and the occasional ◊ **Obsessive Action**.

Prospit

Properties of Prospit
- [all properties of the Incipisphere]
- Truth is seen in the Clouds of Skaia.
- Everything must be bright, orderly, and fatalistic.

Prospit is a cheerful and bright place that is permeated with the absolute certainty that they are going to lose. The streets are swept clean, people greet each other while walking to work, even the guards at the palace smile and know they are doing their job. But all of them? Every last Prospitian knows, from the moment they are decanted, that one day the last defense of the Prospitian king will fall, and their cause will be lost.

Most of the time they just don't care. If you ask them, they'll talk around the subject for a good while, especially if they're unimportant NPCs. But they all know what the prophecies foretell.

It's worth it, they say. It's all for you. For the Heroes of Skaia. For the Frog.

You don't have the heart to tell them that you've done this too many times before, and you find yourself giving less and less of a damn each time.

The Streets of Prospit

Exploring Prospit can be ❗ **Immersive Fantasy**

It's a little bright town, with bakers and tailors and little restaurants and knick-knack stores. They take boondollars. They're willing to give a big discount to you, since you're the Prince or Princess of the moon.

Aside from all this kow-towing: you should visit the Coliseum, where you may practice rap battles. Or the Royal Gardens, full of the most exotic of flowers. Or the little dessert shop close to the Chain. They make the best chocolate fudge, and stick a little sparkler on top when they serve it.

It's pretty awesome.

Staring up at the clouds during a Prospitian eclipse is usually ❗ **Foreshadowing**

You see something in the clouds…

Staring up at the clouds during a Prospitian eclipse can be a ✉ **Ritual**

You stare up through the clouds, as the framing device, and each cloud you see tells the story of someone else...

This is a Ritual that allows for flashbacks and flashforwards – for things that might take place in the future, for things that took place in the past, and most of all for things that are likely to have a bearing on what's happening now.

It may be invoked by staring at the clouds, and saying: "What do I see?"

The HG will invoke one or more of these formulas:

- [Months/Years] in the past – but not many...
- [Months/Years] in the future...
- You ascend...
- You descend...
- This is what you should know...
- A question forms...

Anyone may then answer, with one of the following:

- Theorizing about what their Replayee must have been like, or what kind of problems their Replayee must have faced.
- Theorizing about what will happen to the session of the person who invoked the Ritual.
- "Posing" doing something normal in the Game (like killing Underlings).
- "Posing" coming upon something dramatic and Discovery-worthy. (I highly encourage taking this as a Ritual XP action!)
- Speaking about who you used to be, and/or who you want to become.
- Asking a question of the person that invoked the Ritual. (They do not have to answer! They can, though, if they want to.)
- Narrating how their characters also react to the sight, if physically present.
- Invoking a second ritual, to combine them!

The HG is encouraged to say cryptic things like this in response, but is not required to:

- Describing Sburban symbolism, such as meteors, spirographs, or frogs, showing up in the clouds.
- Narrating how the clouds swirl.
- Narrating how carapaces nearby react to the Character staring into the clouds.
- Saying something highly cryptic, something that is or will be a catchphrase or symbol, such as "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow...", "you must connect", "what, really, are you?", "we are all gods", "the future gapes wide", "the world must change", or "Four, divided into one and three".

After enough people have done ritual actions, the person who invoked the Ritual may, at their option, invoke one final ritual action:

- Declare that you have understood what you must do now.

Whether you do or not – you slam your hand on the table, or walk away, or pose with your hair streaming in the wind, or something similar; and the Ritual closes.

A User's Guide to the Apocalypse

The People of Prospit

> The Prospitians don't have a national anthem. So I've taken to introducing the idea to them. Last session I managed to get them all singing "We Will Rock You" as they marched upon the Black King. Took the edge off having to send them to die.
>
> "surfactantPause", *The Gamebreakers of the Vine*, rhodochrositeMajesty

Doing quests on Prospit can be ♨ **Gothic**

Quests are pretty low-key, most of the time, on Prospit. You'll help do stuff for Carapaces; in exchange, they'll help you, or maybe give you some nice gear, or descend to be an NPC companion to your wakingself for a while. I'm not sure I'd call all of them fun, but they're not too bad, especially when you compare them to the stuff you end up doing for the Consorts.

Doing the Mail Quests can be ⬡ **The Road of Trials**

As far as I can tell, the mail service of Prospit is filled entirely with hardcore badasses. If you show up at the post offices, or find the Parcel Mistress, and take any assignments? Good luck.

You'll be running packages down to the Battlefield under enemy fire. To a tiny niche close to the Denizen's cave. To Derse, where you'll have to disguise yourself somehow or have the Derse guards after you. Through a nest of Underlings. Into a Veil meteor that everyone you ask is very sure does not actually exist.

(For the record: It does. Look for the regularity in the Veil meteor numbering system and just aim in the right direction. It's cloaked.)

Defend the package with your life, whatever you do. The mail must go through.

Petitioning the White Queen can be ☺ **Science, Faith and Sorcery** or ☺ **Decisive Action**

If you're meeting the Queen, she'll want to know why you're there. She's told the Guards to let the Princes and Princesses of the moons through under any circumstance, but she also doesn't like it if you waste her time or resources. So: Tell her what you're planning to do. Tell her what you'll need, and a good justification for why you'll need it. Who knows? She might well grant your request!

I am only a grain of sand; but even a grain of sand can get in your shoe and irritate you for miles.

– requiredSandstorm

The Apocryphal Antithesis is an uncommon phenomenon where dreamselves break away from player control, and usually attempt to replace their waking-self equivalents. AAs (as they are commonly abbreviated) arise from erased Sleep Ratio stats. This is usually due to a bug, but can occasionally be induced by thinking of one's dreamself as a fundamentally different entity.

The dreamself and the waking-self share the same player ID. Therefore, only one of them will pass through the Door. This is usually not a problem, because the dreamself is almost always controlled by the mind of the waking-self. However, AAs know that this function of the Game will erase them from existence if the waking-self goes through the Door, and as such their near-universal murderous antagonism arises from their fear of death.

There do exist records of AAs that were neutral towards, or even cooperative with, their waking-selves. In all these cases, a strong rapport between waking-self and dreamself led the AA to disclose that the Door would kill them, in an attempt to work out a solution that would let both live. No such solution has ever been found.

Derse

Properties of Derse
- [all properties of the Incipisphere]
- The whispers of the Horrorterrors can be heard.
- Everything must be dark, brooding, and orderly.

Derse, too, knows how it will be defeated. The Black King will fall at the hands of you Players, and all of Derse knows this. There is an ancient law, they say, which means they cannot harm the Heroes of Skaia, by action or inaction. And they may grow to like you as a person. But always, always, there is this undercurrent of suspicion: should you be trusted? Is this how Derse will lose?[61]

The Buildings of Derse

Exploring Derse can be ⬢ **Immersive Fantasy**

Derse is a lot like Prospit, except palette-swapped. The same architecture, maybe a few major variations in the street layout, but really: it's not that much different. The shopkeepers won't kowtow to you, or give you discounts, but that's fine: they're more willing to warm up to you and see you as a person, and the prices on Derse are lower anyway.

The Auditorium holds regular open mic nights, and the Museum has a very informative exhibit on how the Carapace growth tanks work, and there's a little tailoring shop just a short flight away from the Prototyping Towers that serves the Draconian Dignitary himself and will make something just as good for you. If you're into that kind of aesthetic.

Listening to the whispers of the Others can be ⬡ **(Suffer) Corruption**

The whispers, they change you. Get under your skin. You… you really shouldn't be doing this. But sometimes you'll do it anyway, because:

Talking back to the Others can be ⬡ **Wicked Action**, or a ⬢ **Ritual**

Because this is the primary way you can make a Deal with the Others. You talk to them, and they talk back and offer you something you want, and perhaps they spirit you away for negotiations in a dream-bubble or something – but it's a dangerous thing to do.

You may turn back, I suppose; turn down the Deal that is offered to you as presented. It won't be an XP action then, but it also won't get you into massive amounts of trouble and possibly permanent Corruption problems. (No matter which genre you're in, *this particular* Turn Back! runs on the Epic Fantasy rules: not heeding it *will* get you into trouble.) When you make a Deal and invite a Horrorterror into your soul… well, that's how a lot of people start their careers as repeated Speakers.

==> 61. EB: You probably won't make that much of a difference, honestly. But I will let the carapaces of Derse continue to harbor their delusions of importance. Did I mention that I'm a native Prospit dreamer? I probably should've mentioned that earlier.

I can't tell you not to do it because you're an adult or probably should be considered one (given what the Game puts us through), but I am going to tell you that it's almost always a really, really bad idea.

If you want more detail on the Ritual, or how to mechanically represent the consequences of a Deal, see the section on Sburban Corruption at page ???.

The People of Derse

> The best way to defeat a Ringwraith, or a Scepterwraith for that matter, is to prevent them from ever coming into being.
>
> Exile is a very potent tool to this end, but can only come into play at the very end of a session, during the Reckoning. It's easy enough to instigate for Carapaces in the lower ranks, but the other Agents require more finesse to get Exiled. And if you're going to spend that amount of effort exiling the Draconian Dignitary anyway, why not instead use it to, say, demoralize him by letting the Black Queen know about his tastes in women?

<div align="right">

"Why You Should Learn Tradecraft", authoritativeSpectacles

</div>

Doing quests on Derse can be ♛ **Gothic**

The entire place looks like a cathedral wrapped in endless night. Of course it's Gothic. That aside, though: you'll do stuff for Dersians. Or hang out with them while they're waiting for something or other to finish with the paperwork. Or spend sixteen hours sorting a card catalog because you don't understand the concept of "stopping".

Doing the Revolution Quests can be ⬡ **Adventure Fantasy**

There's a small group of Carapaces you can get in touch with on Derse that want to start a revolution. It won't actually succeed, but what it will do is thin out Derse's forces and morale. Enough that, if you do it at the right time, it can put a serious dent in Derse's fighting capability during the Black King fight.

I suppose you could just wheatpaste leaflets everywhere, but even that's not technically legal by Derse law. So – in for a pawn, in for an Archagent, as they say – you may as well take a bit more active of a role. And of course you'll be announcing that you're doing this decisively!

Monologue about how you think Derse's supply lines work. Sabotage the depot they use to dispatch the trucks, to test that.

Bombing Derse's food storehouses would be quite simple and incite enough unrest on Derse itself that the authorities would have to pull a lot of forces back for peacekeeping! The problem is, a lot of Carapaces will starve that way. I'd call that Wicked – I'm of the opinion that, even though carapaces aren't exactly *people*, they have moral weight enough that I don't want them to suffer unnecessarily.

And sometimes you'll have to infiltrate somewhere and plant listeners – and then you'll get into trouble when the alarms go off while you're doing it. Well, you say, screw this, and you try to get out of the place, only to be faced by guards…

Petitioning the Black Queen can be 🙄 **Science, Faith and Sorcery** or 🙄 **Decisive Action**

The Black Queen isn't noble like the White Queen. She'll let you through the guards because of the Ancient Law that says that Derse should not harm the Dreamers unless you cast the first stone. She'll even listen to what you say. But she is vain and cruel. She will run on self-interest only.

She also has a lot of resources, and if you come up with a good enough argument to sway her, she may grant them to you.

The Ancient Law is a catchall term for the various imperfect – but nevertheless mostly functional and valuable – safeguards that makes sure that even entities hostile to Players and Sburb do not interfere with active Sburb sessions and players.

Many things in Sburb have been programmed to be "opposition", and require code that safeguards them from taking these beliefs to their logical conclusion and actually successfully stopping sessions. The entirety of Derse is probably the best example, although the Horrorterrors and Angels also have similar codified rules for how they're allowed to interact with Players, and even Prospitians are hamstrung by programming in certain ways.

The phrase "The Ancient Law" is not a Game term; it is a term of art among gamebreakers who study this type of restriction. After all, we need to know how these rules work in order to stay on the right side of them. Some even say that since there are rules strong enough to hold back the Others and the Angels themselves, we might be able to sneak some rules of our own into that ruleset.

The Sixteen Laws of the Underworld – the fact that, if you stay within a proscribed set of behavior, the Angels will not and *cannot* interfere with you – are part of the Ancient Law. The fact that Horrorterrors can only move in once a session has been completed or is dead – that is also an Ancient Law. The fact that, even though Derse hates frogs and Prospit with a passion, Derse will wait for the Players to cast the first stone, that counts too – although what they consider "provocation" is what we consider "other things the Game requires us to do", such as poking around in the Veil and doing stuff on the Battlefield.

The Battlefield

Properties of the Battlefield
- [all properties of the Incipisphere]
- Even the lowliest of pawns can show heroism.
- Prospit will lose the war, but only when it is time.

The exact shape of the enemies on the Battlefield is affected by the things you prototype, but the flow of the war remains the same: the way the war is going on the Battlefield reflects how well you and your coplayers are doing at progressing through the Game. If you stop doing quests, Derse will start winning, and this will eventually trigger the Reckoning by resulting in the defeat of the White King.

So, for most of the game, the Battlefield is just a way to keep an eye on everyone's progress in the Game. However, especially late in the Game, the Battlefield is an extremely good source of combat experience, so you'll tag along with the Prospitian armies for a while. Also, if you God-Tier, that'll be treated as a Battlefield scene too.

On The Battlefield

> A thousand gallons of carapace blood are worth, at most, a pint of your own. Don't stiff yourself – literally or figuratively.

> a traditional Replayer proverb

Scenes with Pawns on the Battlefield can be ⬡ **Shared Action**

The Pawns have hopes and dreams and loves, and they're being sent to die here. Maybe you sleep with them, eat with them, fight with them. You don't talk much; they aren't good conversation partners. But you make a connection, however brief.

Scenes with Pawns on the Battlefield can also be ♛ **Slice of Life**

The Pawns form up for battle, with their bright and shining uniforms and their bright and shining swords. Perhaps they will give you a battle flag to hold. Perhaps they will charge into battle, and die. Even the lowliest of Pawns may show heroism; and so, for them, they may invoke what is from their perspective Never Say Die!

The feeling sticks with you.

or ⬡ **Trouble**

The maneuver looked good on paper, but Derse is pouring in far more forces than the Prospitians expected them to…

Scenes with Pawns on the Battlefield are occasionally ☹ **Decisive Action**

The commander of the unit you've been tagging along with and supporting dies. The pawns are thrown into disarray. After some self-reflection, you take up command rather than leave them to die.

What it gets you is a unit that will follow your orders absolutely, rather than you trying to negotiate with an often headstrong Prospitian sergeant about how to best use your powers to support the fight. But you'll have to be responsible for them; if you're the commander of the unit you *stay* the commander of the unit until you no longer have a unit to command, even if you delegate the day-to-day to someone else.

Are you any good at RTS games?

or 🔥 **Adversity**

You get hurt, badly, and have to struggle on, because there's nowhere safer to go. Or because you're almost at the objective. Or because you're defending a chokepoint (although that last one might be a bit more Never Say Die! instead).

or even ⬡ **(Suffer) Trauma**

They bleed. Red. They have bones and muscles and viscera like people do. They leave behind battlefields littered with discarded weapons and body parts and the dying and the dead, like people do. The stench of death surrounds you, and you crack, just a little bit more.

Looking up at the clouds can be ⬢ **Foreshadowing**

You can see the pictures in the Clouds of Skaia just as well from down here as you could from Prospit's moon. And then you see something. Something you realize is vitally important.

Scenes with the Skaian Siege Engines can be 🔶 **Trouble**

The Skaian Siege Engines are biomechanical mechas that are grown for Prospit and Derse. Experienced pawns – ones that have crossed large swathes of the battlefield and survived – climb up into them and fight, with their strength multiplied many times.

If one's heading your way, you have a boss fight on your hands.

Scenes with the Skaian Siege Engines are occasionally ⬡ **(Suffer) Corruption**

As biomechanical beasts, the Siege Engines have poison glands, and they are strong enough to affect even Players…

The Veil

Properties of the Veil
- [all properties of the Incipisphere]
- Here is the boundary between the sanity of the Incipisphere and the nothingness of the Furthest Ring.
- The mysterious machinery has obscure functions.

The belt of rocks ringed around your session has a purpose: it is where all the meteors that'll be sent into your presession come from. (Such as "will be sent to the past" makes sense. Goddamn nonlinear time.) You will rarely need to venture out to the Veil, but there are some optional quests that take you out here, and this is where the Ectobiology takes place.

Out on the Rocks

What is the purpose of a curtain, of a veil? To mark the distinction between the public and the private sphere.

What is the purpose of The Veil? To warn you that beyond this point, you will pass into the realms of the Others – and in those realms you are not considered special or divine. In those realms, your life matters about as much as the flame on a match – critical in one circumstance, perhaps, but very definitely useless thereafter.

Which is to say: don't be stupid.

Sarai's Sburban Guide, wedgeIssue

Exploring the Veil can be 🝩 **Discovery**

You might come across one of the growth tanks for the Skaian Siege Engines, or an appearifier/sendificator, or a room filled with crates…

The Veil can be a setting for 🔶 **Shared Reactions**

Certain rooms in the Veil are the most secluded places in the Incipisphere. If you want to have a heart-to-heart where you definitely won't be interrupted, this is the place to have it.

The Veil can also be a setting for 🔶 **Shared Action**

You can do a quest involving destroying the Veil labs. It isn't quite an official Game quest, you don't get the progress tracker UI widget or anything, but a carapace does mention it as a possibility and destroying enough labs thins out the support forces during the Black King fight.

I suppose you could do this yourself, but it's always fun to invite a friend over to help you break machinery and blow things up. (And yes, blowing things up totally counts as Shared Action. This is *Sburb* we're talking about.)

Looking out into the Furthest Ring from the Veil is generally ♻ **(Suffer) Corruption**

Just like on Derse, looking and/or listening to Horrorterror country for too long is a bad idea.

Doing ectobiology can be a ⬡ **Ritual**

If you're session leader, or have the spirograph pendant of the person who is, at some point near the end of the session you'll need to come out here and press seemingly random buttons on a piece of machinery that will make a bunch of kids.

You won't understand a goddamn thing you're doing.

This is a Ritual for Ectobiology. It goes like this:

The Leader – in theory, the first person who entered the Session, but in practice, it can be anyone wearing the first person's Sprite Pendant – begins the ritual by getting everyone's attention, declaring that they intend to begin Ectobiology, rubbing their hands together, and saying, "Let us begin."

Then the Leader – the person doing the ectobiology – asks each character in turn a question:

- Where did we come from?
- Who are we?
- Why are we here?
- etc.

The singled-out character then takes a ritual action, like:

- describing the strange and extensive machinery of the Veil
- talking about who you are and where you come from
- "posing" in a way befitting your Classpect
- watching all this happen, perhaps through some sort of monitor, scrying, or a liveblog
- saying something poetic and tangentially related to the notion of birth or genesis
- invoking a different Ritual, to combine the two rituals thereby

The HG then describes something happening:

- A machine makes strange noises and displays inscrutable code.
- Tubes fill and empty.
- An appearifier targets someone you don't know.
- Buttons light up.
- Levers suddenly seem important.
- etc.

The ritual ends, on either the Leader or HG's call, once everyone has had at least one chance to pose. The Leader tends not to receive much of anything from doing this – other than ensuring that the safety of their timeline is retroactively secured – but if the HG wishes, they may receive some sort of token appearified by the ectobiology machines.

The Furthest Ring

Properties of the Furthest Ring
- You are not supposed to be here.
- You may travel safely, if you have paid the price.
- Points of light are insignificant in this darkness.
- Time and space do not follow the rules.
- There are things beyond comprehension, living in this void.

Beyond the Game, beyond the Veil, beyond the session bubble, is the place where the Horrorterrors dwell. I would call it the vast space between sessions, but space twists up on itself there. Time becomes pliable like taffy. It's not someplace you can understand, and it is certainly not someplace you can live.

The only reason to be in the Furthest Ring is because you desperately need to go through it to get somewhere. The Others require you to pay their toll, to do so; it is their realm, and not ours.

I don't know how to explain the space whales.

Travel

Bargaining for Ring-safety is generally a ♻ **Wicked Action** or ⬟ **Ritual**

You'll need to Bargain (as seen in the Derse writeup) before you can expect to be anywhere near safe in the Ring.

Ring-travel without a Bargain, or violating the terms of the Bargain, is ⬣ **The Road of Trials**

You're going to die. The only question is how fast, and whether the Corruption will get to you first.

Ring-travel within the terms of a Bargain is often ♛ **Gothic**

You're trapped in a ship with one to five other people for several years. Are you going to go crazy? Drive each other crazy? Spend a month shut inside your room? Make ribbiting noises to lure your Space player into the cafeteria for dinner despite the fact that they've gotten all depressed? Spray-paint genitalia everywhere until someone locks you in a closet?

Someone will be propelling your ship, and someone will be navigating your ship. These could well be the same person. If they're two different people, make sure they don't end up hating each other, or you are well and truly screwed.

Even within the terms of a Bargain, Ring-travel can sometimes be ⬣ **The Road of Trials**

You're running out of grist. Your primary carbon dioxide scrubber died two days ago. The Seer who's been running navigation looked out the front portholes too long and went Speaker. Your engines desperately need repair. And there's a ringbeast coming straight at you. Even if you've made a Deal, you are not supposed to be here. You're on your own. Nobody will help you.

Incidentally, the Horrorterrors don't bargain with you when you're already in the Ring. They can just reach out and take you, if you offer them the opportunity; you have no leverage against them since you're no longer inside the Incipisphere, no longer protected by the Ancient Law that makes active sessions inviolate.

The Furthest Ring: I'd tell you not to even consider it, but I believe in harm reduction, so:

If you must go through it, you'll need a spaceship. And a Deal. And faith and luck and sense aplenty.

Beyond that, I cannot help you.

An Sburb Lighthouse: How To Find Your Way In The Murdergame, octagonalPhanes

The boundaries between sessions are protected by a level 2 Obstacle and Auctoritas against everything but physical passage. This means that if you are trying to cast an ability from your session to help a friend in a different session, you will run into this Obstacle or Auctoritas.

Similarly, if you are trying to cast an ability out of your session and into the Ring – say, using a scrying ability to see how the physical hardware of a Ring server is doing – you'll *still* be hitting a level 2 Obstacle and Auctoritas. (Sorry, I can't prorate it.) Also, you run the risk of getting a face full of Horrorterror, so I really don't recommend it.

If you actually hop on a boat and go out into the Furthest Ring, there is no resistance to that: the obstacle is level 0! The problem being that you'll then be out in the Furthest Ring, but maybe that's what you're trying to achieve…

As such, most things you can do across sessions are going to face a significant obstacle to being productive, and/or are going to require a disproportionate amount of wish power. *However*, writing, through the Internet, to someone else, does *not* face this Obstacle. You'll have to convince the person on the other side that you have a good idea. But you can freely offer and share information, and on occasion it might even be useful and worthwhile. And you can affect people emotionally using words alone.

I would estimate that a good third, maybe even half, of the Replayer population has put at least some of their tiny handful of skill points into Writing. Because it's one of the few ways that you can be effective, productive, and impressive in a way that isn't bound to the confines of your own session.

The Bubbles

Properties of the Bubbles
- The environment will reflect your memories and experiences.
- You may find out who and where you are by examining contradictions.

  I choose not to regret what I have done. Not because there is nothing to regret, but because if we live under the moral weight of decisions made by our child and low-maturity selves, we shall never dig our way out.

  "Inheritor of Time", licensePerturbed

The Bubbles are our afterlife. They're where our souls end up when we die. It's a place you can explore your memories for –

For thousands, or perhaps millions, of years.

The Dreaming

Games set in the Bubbles should probably be in 🗨 **a different system entirely**

Chuubo's is a system that focuses on character development and growth. The bubbles... are not.

Games set in the Bubbles could be ♛ **Gothic**, if you really want to run them in Chuubo's anyway.

Set the average chapter length to ten years or so. There'll be plenty of Shared Reactions and Obsessive Action to go around, naturally. Tighten up the chapter length as needed to accommodate a Ring voyage showing up, or two people meeting for the first time, or whatever.

Dreaming in the Bubbles is also usually ♛ **Gothic**

Food, relationships, dumb teenage drama. It's all here. You could in principle dream up anything, but most people just find it easier to stick to conjuring the bottom levels of Maslow's hierarchy. Perhaps they don't have the experience, or perhaps they're unwilling (or unable?) to put in the work to try to find anything more.

Dreaming in the Bubbles is sometimes ⬢ **Foreshadowing**

You meet someone who tells you that they'll see you in the future…

Dreaming in the Bubbles is occasionally ♻ **(Suffer) Corruption**

The Bubbles do not make this obvious, but they're sponsored by the Others. There's an old Sburban legend about this: that some girl once made a Deal that she didn't want her friends to just *die*, and in response the Horrorterrors started making dreambubble afterlives. This probably did not fulfill her expectations, but it did fulfill what she asked for.[62]

==> 62. EB: Thanks, horrorterrors. /sarcasm

Usually, the bubbles are *relatively* safe – there's only so much trouble you can get into, so long as you stay inside the bounds. Even short jaunts outside aren't too risky, especially if you're only dreaming and can bounce back to your body if there's any trouble.

But sometimes you get a glimpse of the Lovecraftian horrors nesting outside…

> This piece dates from timestamp 54. "Ri" is short for "Riley", which is the nickname of Kim Su-Cheol, also known as epinephrineElectrified. "Zei" is Zeimah Dalyce, stanzicApparati, his moirail. For more details on both, see their sections in *The Age of Replayer Networks*.
>
> Personally... personally I think this is way too fatalist. But you can read my take on page ???.

Zei –

I'm not going to tell you that it isn't your fault. Sometimes it isn't, and sometimes it is. But chasing down whose fault it was is useless here. After a while, you'll learn to stop the buck, for the sake of it stopping *somewhere*, and just deal with the consequences.

This is what I say, in public: By the time I'd reached sessions four, five, six, Loose Replaying had nearly destroyed me. What I don't say is how. I still cannot say how, to this day. But know that I have made many decisions that I, before the Game (and even I, in my earliest years of Replaying) would assume made someone a terrible person. But I made them anyway, and all I have in exchange is the scant, threadbare comfort that either I did not know better, or I was preventing worse.

It's quite a thing to have your sense of self disassembled, thrown away piece by piece. For you to scramble for which parts are still *you*, glowing pink on the sea-floor of a thousand thousand crushed souls. And to know what you are missing, and still never be able to find it again. And, even when you find a way to become less broken, you hesitate, because it will only give you more seamlines. More places to shatter.

I have given up on many things I once considered essential of myself. The only reason I think of myself as a good person is because I can still protest, even if internally, when terrible things are done, when people are twisted to design and thrown away, when what I value is destroyed. I cannot recommend it. But I know you may be forced to do the same to yourself, because there is no other way.

(If ever there was, I'm sorry to say, I would use it for myself first.)

One of the things I've lost is the ability not to second-guess even those I love.

It took half the Ring voyage, before I understood that you would not get up and leave and hate me, if I said wrong, or if you changed. Myra had a vicious streak; that much is well-known. She shitlisted people at the drop of a pin (if they said wrong to her. If she thought they were stupid. If she thought they weren't worth her time.) I would be a *fool* if I did not think I had the same instinct within me, however padded away from my behavior it may be with a long and weathered set of conscious connections that I use to argue against it daily (fundamental attribution error, typical mind fallacy). And I have grown to understand that *many* people, here, have this doubt within them; buried or not-buried as it may be depending on the hour and the circumstance.

You did not.

For all Sburb started you off on the great and terrible aspect of Time, that which forces you to confront your own mortality (and then made you a Seer, after, to confront your own fallibility), there was something within you that you had not yet lost. Your ability to trust, innocently and whole-heartedly.

And I finally forced myself to understand, in the code within myself, that it was not a personal failing that, where you gave me trust, I could only give you doubt, hedged answers, evasions. I think I was hoping that you would learn that doubt soon enough – that you would be broken, and then reformed without that innocence – and then you'd understand *why* I said these things. (It wouldn't be the same, I thought to myself, but after that I'd be able to speak to you like an adult.) But the voyage… it was seven years, and seven years is a long time. Eventually I cracked my shell open a little, and you gave me so much more that I finally managed to trust someone, for the second time in my life.

But now you hate yourself.

(…It'll be easier, after the second or third or fourth time you do it.)

But now you'll be acquainted with the terrible truth of Sburb. That for all that we are given here, power and glory and *meaning* to life, we pay for it with the rest of our souls, piece-by-piece or else all at once, in death.

(You'll figure out how to force yourself not to feel anything, though the real trick is learning to turn your feelings back *on* again, after that happens.)

And what I understood of your love applies no longer. You'll always wonder if those you know have ulterior motives, now. You'll always wonder where the strings are attached. You'll always wonder when this brief joy is going to stop, and Sburb throw twice as much tragedy in your face for your inattention. You'll become quite acquainted with the feeling I have, when I try to decide: which of these options is a trap? How do I tell? (Or are *all* of them traps, and am I merely choosing between Scylla and Charybdis, being eaten by the monster or being eaten by the deeps?)

This is what you have lost, already, and I cannot protect you, and it is not my inadequacy, it is not yours, it is not *anyone's,* for this was inevitable – if not by [redacted]'s hand then soon enough by someone else's.

The terrible thing is that if I told you this before, you would not have believed me. You would have wished, with me, that you could somehow reach competence without the self-doubt and shame that accompanies it by anyone old enough to be considered veteran.

(It would have killed you sooner.)

That you have now taken the first step, that you have resolved to continue on the path that leads to life without integrity rather than integrity without life, means that you now understand.

I'm sorry I couldn't say anything about it. I'm sorry your world is changing forever, for knowing that you too are going through this makes me ache, helplessly, for the injustice of the world we live in. But we now have arms linked, and you do not stand against the darkness alone, like I once did.

And I'm sorry I can't protect you. But nobody else can, either, and we may as well peel away the false illusions and look into the terrible light of day, for that is what is real.

This is what I would have you do:

Do not let your self-hatred lead you into self-deception; that way lies Maggie, who peeled away so much of her soul to stop the pain that the pain is the only thing left.

Do not let your self-hatred lead you into inaction; that way lies Aelfrida, who let the depression nest in her soul until it broke everything else about her.

Do not let your self-hatred lead you into withdrawal; that way lies Myra, who went away for years at a time, and eventually, on one of these breaks, killed herself.

Please talk to me, when you feel that you can. If not me, then someone. Anyone. We are all Replayers. We all understand.

It takes more effort this way, effort and pain, but you've already chosen life instead of sanity, so you may as well now privilege sanity over the parasitic, misformed emotions that are trying to nest inside you.

It's only fair to the inside of your shining pink ball of what, after all.

- Ri

Playing the Game

[or, this would've been a really good bildungsroman if it wasn't in the habit of killing people]

Art is the stencils I cut, through which I spray-paint my blade with angles and splotches that I cannot replicate on the alchemiter, because of limitations in its data forms. Art is the easel-size sticky notes with caricatures of the Queen I leave along the streets of Derse to incite popular opinion. Art is the pop-up tent my best friend designed specifically for use in a Summoning, screened sides and built-in sleeping bag and twenty-second construction speaking of its purpose, clean lines close to the ground and dappled chameleon skin speaking of the land it was created for and the desire to make the Summoning more beautiful, not less. Art is the way that I use parallelism and analogy in this very essay to make my own points powerful. Art is my strange metaphors. Art is the way I have begun to draw the Fuckoff Symbolism Zone representations of things and people that I love. Art is the way I dance to the music that keeps me alive.

"In Defense of the Perceptions", earLender

You are going to surf the wave of the genocide of your people, you are going to wrestle with more forced plot twists than teenage fanfiction, you are going to hurt constantly and fight constantly and move constantly and always always wonder what is even the point, at every corner you are likely to stumble into a bad end and be forgotten by all who ever cared, at every thought you'll risk losing your grasp on yourself and doing some things which can never be made alright, and in the end you are going to die.

So breathe through your nose, see through your eyes, listen through your ears and keep reading. It is already too late to change anything. It is a complete waste to spend any feelings on the what-could-have-been. The armageddon thing was going to happen anyway. Nothing you could do about it. So just repeat to yourself: the more I think about it the worse it will be. And then go forward.

Sburb Glitch FAQ, godsgifttoGrinds

All of us will break, sooner or later. All of us are already in the process of breaking. It is inevitable. You cannot put the stressors of the Game on someone and expect them to retain emotional integrity.

Oh, we fight back. We fight back fiercely, because we still believe this life is worth it. But we also know that the outcome was preordained from the start, etched into the substance of Paradox Space on a level as fundamental as prophecy. We will lose hope, and then we will die.

This is the Game we play. This is how we play it. This is what it is *like* to play the Game.

To Briefly Reiterate My Creative Intentions

In his unfurled wings the monster is an absolute creature. He is not deniable. He is no longer a person. He is no longer a man, or a god, or whatever the hell monsters are, in a lab coat, with a name tag, with a tie. He is *I AM THAT I AM*, as much as any burning bush has ever been.

It is as if, to gain his power, he had slaughtered God, had ripped out the bones and organs of Him, and made from Him a coat. He usurps God as he does reason; to seek God in his presence is therefore to seek the monster out.

Look for love, if you'd rather. Look for hate. Look for hope. Look for anything you like.

You'll be caught up in the maze of him. You'll find it only where he wills.

"The Lion (V/VII)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

This gameworld is designed to be a metaphor for the experience of long-term abuse. As such, to see Sburb as merely another dystopia to be broken, merely another tyranny to be thrown off, is to *miss the point*.

Replayers' hopelessness is from bitter experience. Sburb fights back, fiercely, if you try to escape. All the exits anyone can think of have been blocked off. And the harder you try to escape, the worse your life gets.

Replayers are not any less clever than us. But they've been conditioned out of grand plans. When they scheme to make their lives better, they tend to look for better ways to measure their ARC, or ways to get fresh food, or a niche on the Dream Moons that they can catch their breath in for a moment. That is all their worldview will allow.

And sometimes it is not even these. Some Replayers give their lives over to art, or dancing, or writing. The only escapes these pastimes enable are mental.

To you, this might seem ridiculous. All of these hobbies, you might say, are only distractions from the real work you should be doing, gamebreaking, escaping.

But do you know what it is like, to be truly unable to escape? To know, down to the very marrow of your bones, that your guard is a thousand thousand times stronger and cleverer than you will ever be? To know that if you call out for help, nobody will come for you, except to agree that you should stay inside? And to know that eventually, if you are here long enough, you will learn to love your cage, or at least stop believing that there is such a thing as "outside"?

There are ways that people can survive such situations. But one must pay dearly for each of these adaptations, and the only currency accepted for that transaction is hope.

If this setting resonates with you -

Well, maybe you aren't in the exact situation I've described. Maybe you're an abuse survivor instead of being in a current abusive situation. Maybe you are, or were, being abused by someone other than a parent or guardian - like a sibling or a teacher. Maybe you are already an adult. Maybe you have something else, like depression or anxiety. The things I am saying will have less relevance in these situations. But you may still be able to gather something useful.

Still, though, if this setting resonates with you, you should pay attention to what's happening.

There are resources that can teach you how to recognize if you're in an abusive situation, so I won't go into too much detail here. But really, the best thing you can do is talk to people about it - tell them what's going on, and let them help you judge whether what's going on in your life is acceptable. If you implicitly trust someone in real life, that's best. But if you don't, there's still the Internet.

As for how to react if you realize this is what is going on...

I can't put everything in my book. I will not try. I will leave the topics of abuse and PTSD recovery to the more qualified, because those resources actually exist.

But if you are inside the abuse -

I can't stop it from happening. But if you can develop coping mechanisms that don't destroy you, and if you can build a mental model of how you deserve to be treated that isn't calibrated on abuse, you will make sure that you have a future.

But even if you don't feel like you have a future - well, that's the feeling this book is supposed to tap into. When escape seems impossible and the abuse seems neverending, these are still good habits to build. And maybe, if you somehow manage to get out, you'll have somewhere to start.

In your first session, you may discover a slot where you can specify a custom ability. It'll be a very small ability based off your Classpect thematics, and you can name it whatever you want.

The problem is that you won't be able to change that name, or that ability, ever again. It'll retheme itself, as far as is plausible, to your current Classpect thematics. I've heard a few people that could even invoke it in presession. Just another effect of Sburb's bad data-storage habits: this is something that should be stored as part of game data, not as part of one's Shiny.

Mechanically, the Custom Ability is treated as an inherent, small 1/chapter miraculous ability or inherent level 0 Affliction. It can thus be opposed by any Bond, Affliction, Auctoritas, or any ability that costs MP. (Or you can just bid 1MP to stop it.)

Here are some examples of Affliction-based Custom Abilities:

- [WD-40] (Level 0 Affliction: a native Dust player is pretty much walking lubricant; mechanical things just don't get stuck around them.)
- [Dapper Duelling] (Level 0 Affliction: a native Time player always appears relaxed and put-together. This ability is very much like, and can be superseded by, Creature of Fable's Iconic.)
- [Pointed Questions] (Level 0 Affliction: a native Law player's knives and swords do not dull.)
- [Eternal Blue Sky] (Level 0 Affliction: a native Stars player does not panic when faced with the possibility of their own death.)
- [Pushing Envelope] (Level 0 Affliction: a native Fate player always knows where the Parcel Mistress is.)
- [Vegetable Drawer] (Level 0 Affliction: a native Doom player will always know how close food is to spoilage.)

And here are some examples of 1/chapter abilities:

- [Representation] (1/chapter: a native Sight player can manifest a flipchart/diagram of something they know and want to explain to other people out of… well, basically nowhere.)
- [The Spinner] (1/chapter: a native Life player can repair and preserve clothes made of natural fibers with a touch.)
- [Line Feed Carriage Return] (1/chapter: a native Heart player can clear what feelings they have attached to some topic, to consider it again afresh.)
- [Windows to the Soul] (1/chapter: a native Seer can look into someone's eyes and know what their most recent emote was.)
- [Spark] (1/chapter: a native Flow player can start a fire just by snapping their fingers and pointing.)
- [The Rest of Me Is Mere Appendix] (1/chapter: a native Mind player can turn off their perception of pain for just long enough to objectively evaluate the predicament they happen to be in.)

Emotional Wounding

> Hatred burns bright as the flame within the coals of one's heart. Despair is the charcoal that starved hatred leaves behind. It writes black, smudges black, stains black; and a charcoal heart makes the rest of the world seem ashed-over. Spent. Useless. Gone. You may say it is merely a matter of perception, but it is a very strong perception indeed.
>
> "Leaning On The World", dryadTornado

Because of the premise of this campaign, because [your mind will break before your body does], one of the major functions of the Wound system in RV Chuubo's is that it functions as a way to dampen and attenuate emotional damage.

The mind is far stronger and more adaptable than most people ever realize. People can adjust to horror and madness – not well, but enough to survive. The trouble is, if you adapt towards being able to survive horror and madness… you adapt away from being capable of the little things that characterize a normal life. Like relationships, or jobs, or learning.

A Brief Digression About Neurobiology (again)

> I accepted, years ago, that I was already dead. The question was always how long it'd take to catch up to me.
>
> gravityTinsel

Bessel van der Kolk, in the book *The Body Keeps the Score*, discusses that the immediate human reaction to danger is not merely a matter of "fight or flight"; there are actually three successive tiers of response, each positioned to be a fallback if the previous one fails.

The first reaction is the social support response. In the face of (say) a natural disaster, many people work hard to make sure the social fabric is strong enough to support everyone; they work together on pitching tents and cooking food and shifting rubble to look for other people.

The second tier of reaction, for those who may not necessarily feel like they have a social fabric to rely on (or when the social fabric is functionally useless), is the fight-or-flight response. Running away from a tidal wave. Trying to win the fistfight.

The third tier of reaction, for when fighting or running is useless and/or impossible, is the freeze response. In the absence of any other way to save oneself, the body shuts down all nonessential functions so as to save as much energy as possible for dealing with the aftermath (assuming one survives for an aftermath).

If a tier of response fails regularly, the tier behind it becomes the "default": if one cannot rely on social support, there is no sense trying to use that response at all. It is extremely difficult or impossible to claw your way back *up* this hierarchy once you're inside the lower two responses.

Replayers, due to their experiences with the murdergame, usually default to the second-tier reaction. There are a few replayers who default to the third-tier reaction; these are generally people who have experienced extensive trauma in their prenatives, before they ever entered Sburb. Either way, there is no guarantee that these default reactions will be at all useful in any given circumstance.

Trauma As A Miraculous Attack

In RV, if you are witness to horror or other things that may emotionally wound, you are subject to a miraculous attack *by the setting itself*. This does not prevent taking a Wound where "it didn't really happen" in response to a physical threat, because I do still think that *that* kind of Wound exists too. But this is more specific.

Emotional trauma inflicted by the setting itself is a Bleak miraculous attack, emanating from the campaign convention **[Your mind will break before your body does.]** It is a singular miracle (not a sustained action). But remember, since this is a Campaign Convention and thus an Affliction, it also has 2 Auctoritas![63]

This emotional attack comes in two levels. If the event involves a friend-of-a-friend or someone from your larger social group/clade/Sburb.org IRC channel, or if someone's consciously trying to break the news to you gently, it will usually be of Lesser magnitude. If it involves a quadrant, best friend, or someone of similar closeness, if the death was a murder, if you were the one who killed them, or if you're forced to confront the corpse (or similar) in person, it will usually be of Greater magnitude. For corner cases, I trust you to use your judgement.

Lesser

This is a level 3 miracle with 2 Auctoritas. If you do not defend against it, its effect is to put an Obstacle 2 in the way of doing anything other than "being emotionally hurt or talking about being emotionally hurt", which can only be removed by resolving an Issue.

If you choose to take a Wound instead, it is a Serious Wound, with the usual effects.

Greater

This is a level 6 miracle with 2 Auctoritas. If you do not defend against it, its effect is to put an Obstacle 2 in the way of doing anything other than "being emotionally devastated or talking about being emotionally devastated", which can only be removed by starting and resolving an Issue directly related to the traumatic experience itself. (Unlike with the Lesser version, you have to use an Issue that you started *after this happened to you* for it to count.)

If you choose to take a Wound instead, it is a Deadly Wound, with the usual effects.

==> 63. OJ: You are allowed and encouraged to try to use miracles to defend against this, but any such miracles must have Strike added to them in order to work.

Yes, this is a Bleak effect. Yes, you may attempt to Make Answer against it.

But.

Remember that this is a game that is dedicated to exploring these kinds of emotional effects without flinching. Remember that whether Making Answer works is something that is ultimately under the control of the person creating the Bleak effect (in this case, the HG). And remember that Making Answer is a last resort, for when you have no other powers left to you.

If you are a Replayer, it is not special to have art, or a hobby, or family. Every Replayer has something to live for. That is simply a fact of how Replayers are built – I mean, the section in the Replayer lifepath for a "lifeline skill" is required to create a character at all.

So your job, if you choose to try to Make Answer, is to convince the HG – the *world* – that even if these things are not objectively special, your particular attachments are strong enough that you, specifically, may yet endure.

I cannot promise that this will work; because it probably won't, not in the kind of game that this is. I cannot even promise that this is better than not trying to defend at all; Sburb may simply choose to tie your proffered heartstrings together and use them to tear your entire heart out.

But courage is not only about stepping up to kill evil, or leading daring expeditions into the depths, or publishing a political manifesto.

Sometimes, deciding that you will *live* in the face of despair, and not just survive, is the most courageous thing you can do.

Limiting Immortality for Emotional Wounds

The default assumption in this setting is that Immortality does not work on emotional wounds at all. If you have a good reason to disagree (and so far, Corruption-related Arcs are the only good reason I've seen), you must ask the HG for permission to let your Immortality apply to emotional wounds at the start of every Miraculous Arc, and it will carry the following caveat:

For these types of characters, letting Immortality heal an emotional wound will come at the "price" (sort of) of a point of Illusion and/or Sburban Corruption. Note that those are the two Issues that autoinflict Wounds at higher levels.

This means that for some characters Immortality is underpowered, and for other characters it will be a bizarro-world Sickly. I haven't found a less weird way to handle this, though.

Be very strict on what Bonds you accept to add Strike to any miraculous attempt to defend against emotional wounds. **[I need to protect other people in my session]** is not enough. **[I'm a veteran and have seen a lot of shit]** is not enough (although it may justify reducing the severity of the Wound taken). **[I have seen this specific type of incident happen many, many times]** *may* be enough.

And if the character sheet has any Bond that mentions, by name, someone involved in the Emotional Wounding (whether victim or perpetrator)? The emotional attack will be Greater-level. And it may break the Bond.

Taking An Emotional Wound

> So I'm waiting for a train, in a presession. And I see this kid, who's probably in college. Twenty years old, at best. And he's got these pamphlets and he's talking about God's love and eternal life.
>
> The first thing I think is, there's no eternal life coming for him, he's Doomed like all the people here are. The second thing I think is, I could kill the kid with my bare hands. And I'm standing here, with all these images coming up of how I could just snap his neck or put my thumbs through his eyeballs or –
>
> It occurs to me that he's staring at me.
>
> I'm fighting the urge to run. I could vault off this platform, break my fall with a roll on the parked car beneath, and be running before anyone notices what happened.
>
> I don't do any of those things. I look away.

> "reversedCanal", *The Gamebreakers of the Vine*, rhodochrositeMajesty

As with any wound, you are never required to take an emotional wound. In fact, I expect some people to take the direct result of the miraculous trauma "attack", which is why I explained what happens if you let it take place. But sometimes you're in a situation where you can't afford to bear that Obstacle against doing anything useful: sometimes, you must stuff the trauma down and keep going, because the alternative is even worse.

Deciding to take an emotional wound works as any wound does: you can take a reaction shot – thus giving you an opportunity to protect yourself – and then you mitigate and jot down a wound power. The standard mitigations for an emotional wound can probably be classified as Focusing, Resisting, making it Back-and-Forth, or Twisting. Honestly, though, I was not really paying much attention to those categories when writing this; do whatever seems appropriate.

In a situation that would otherwise terrify someone to paralysis, a reaction shot gives you the *guarantee* that you can do something about it, even if you're already occupied and stretched to the limit, and that if you pump enough Will into it it will be *useful*.

I recommend using an Affliction for the wound power. Here are some common Afflictions for this kind of emotional wound:

- **[[X] is not supposed to happen.]** (This will protect you from the same thing happening in the future, because you recognize early signs of it and know you need to head it off. Unfortunately, this "sense" will also protect you from unrelated, superficially similar events happening in the future, whether you want it to or not.)
- **[If [X] happens again I need to try to fix it.]** (This means that you will in fact keep stumbling into similar situations, by coincidence and unconscious arrangement. It also means that you're unlikely to *actually* find a way to fix these situations; you're driven to keep trying the same thing in an effort to get it to turn out right, but you get no guarantee that anything will in fact turn out right. I expect most of the actual usefulness to be the MP you get by repeatedly, say, being a terrible judge of character.)
- **[I'm reminded of [X].]** ("VR flashbacks", as I call the kind of auditory-visual flashback that you often see in media, are rare. You are more likely to get single-sense or single-emotion snapshots showing up in your head. *With practice*, you can generally tell them apart from reality. To do so, however, you first must realize that there's a thing to tell apart from reality in the first place.)

On Emotional Defeat

> "But the Empress-Regent has paid a terrible price for this peace," continues Roget. "For when she wears the Crown of Law, it is the crown who speaks; not her. When she must go without the crown, she cannot make even the most trivial of decisions. I think that, by now, she has forgotten how to speak for herself."
>
> *The Woman Who Stared Into Forever*, dryadTornado

Because of the nature of Replay Value AU, emotional damage is far more critical than it would be in most other settings. A Replayer's ability to survive in Sburb is based on their Roleplay Coefficient, and the more damage you accumulate, the more difficult it is to keep your sense of self while threading that needle. Defeat by emotional wound, then, is when you *can't* be both alive and yourself anymore.

Those who choose to be alive will eventually be able to reclaim their character sheets (see next page), although there will be permanent scars. Those who choose to stay themselves… well. I mean, there's an afterlife in the Bubbles, but there you will no longer be able to make a meaningful mark on the world. You will no longer be a Replayer.

Recovering from emotional wounds works like recovering from any other wounds: you can complete a short (15 XP) quest to make them heal faster, or a longer quest to heal them immediately. (In a Fairy Tales game, the HG may also let you spend a Recharge Token for the same effect.)

Quests used to recover from emotional wounds are most often fill-in-the-blank-on-the-card Silver/Setting quests, although Green/Lurid (flipcard) quests and Purple/Work and Study quests are also likely.

On Porting to Other RV Chuubo's Genres, or Other Games

I'm not going to guarantee this can work for any other setting, but I figured I'd jot down some notes anyway.

In a setting that is not Replay Value AU, the damage scale provided is probably excessive. Hell, even in RV Chuubo's played in the other two genre-modes, it is likely to be excessive; in those genre-modes, there are likely to be more things that can cause Deadly wounds, because the characters will be reaching into strange parts of the Game more often.

While the general gist of emotional wounding is probably still usable in any other game, I suspect it will be most useful in Road of Trials/Fairy Tales genre games.

Defeat is not Death

> "You shouldn't cut yourself up to make a map," Oriane says.
>
> The doll looks back at her. The doll's eye is solemn.
>
> "I wouldn't do that," the cut-up doll says. "I only get cut up by other people. But I made it a map, later, so that it would be useful."

> "Oriane", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

One of the odder design choices of Chuubo's is that "health levels" and "wounds" represent plot armor, not HP. They represent how much control your character has over their own destiny. So if you run out of wound levels, that doesn't mean you died. It just means that Sburb has broken your will.

So perhaps you go into a state of catatonia, your coplayers complete the session without you, and one of them shoves your unconscious body through the Door. Or perhaps you completely lose your will to resist, and sleepwalk through the rest of the session, doing only what Sburb tells you to do and nothing else.

And if someone shivved you and it was Heroic? Dying is everyone's favorite hobby; it's not unheard-of for someone to shove a recently-dead, still-cooling body through the Door and have them make it

through. It's *rare*, but it's not impossible; the PC-nature is liable to turn a million-to-one chance into a certainty.

After a while, the HG may let you have your character sheet back; erase all the Wounds, but make one of the Deadly Wound afflictions *permanent*. (You'll be able to adjust it later with quest rewards.)

I'd like you to start a quest about living, too, when you begin to play again. I'd use the A Long Presession quest (below); you're likely to "wake back up" in a hospital, with a presession long enough that you can start putting the pieces back together. If that doesn't work (perhaps because someone Dealt with the Denizen to bring you back to life, rather than making the Time player shove you through the door), you could try a fill-in-the-blank quest (purple or silver) about rediscovering yourself: you start doing something that you used to enjoy, that you used to find important. Over the course of that quest, it'll start feeling important and good again.

When Sburb breaks you – because it will, sooner or later – you can get yourself back. It isn't easy, and some of the effects may linger forever... but you can always, *always* claw your life back.

That isn't just a statement about this game-world. It's something I believe is true.

A Sburban Tale

> The world dies a thousand subtly different times, in light and fire and ash. In its place is a
> story that coerces you to stay on its path, being forced to rely on strangers, a Game that
> threatens you with death by glitches, prophecies, soul-twisting, magic, corruption, and the
> struggle to stay alive and whole – in a multiverse that has made it clear that you are a pawn,
> a piece to tell a story with, and not a person. You pass through the Door, wake up in an
> unfamiliar room, and become just another Replayer, forever barred from the Ultimate
> Reward and replaying Sburb by no fault of your own (except, perhaps, competence).
>
> It becomes clear: Sburb has swallowed you whole.
>
> What do you do?
>
> > preface to *A Collection Of Sburban Legends*, severalEntries

I should note that this is not necessarily an accurate representation of Sburb. This is stylized for best play. Read a comprehensive FAQ for more information.

So… typically, in the usual Replay Value campaign, you'll be using the brief versions of these quests, speeding along through them as Knightlike sidequests on the way to your Miraculous Arc. All the same, I'm going to write up full-size versions anyway, since you'll probably find uses for them. For example, you may want to run a game that takes Sburb sessions at a slower pace. Or your character might actually take Sburb seriously and try to grow from the experience.

I'm providing alternate quest rewards for these quests, because most of the default quest rewards didn't seem right here.

If you are in RV Chuubo's, you will be on one or another of the Sburban Tale quests 80+% of the time.[64]

This is because the Sburban Tale quests *are* the way in which you mechanically track how far along you are in Sburb. Therefore, you will usually scoot pretty quickly through presession and get back onto the quest chain again whenever you finish it. This is why the Sburban Tale quests tend to have a lot of quest flavor options: I don't want them to get too repetitive!

If you want to emphasize how Sburb changes you, you can expand them out into a full-on secondary mundane Knight arc. (Even if the HG has increased the XP target for your miraculous arcs, these arcs should still have a target of 120 XP, to keep from slowing things down *too* much.) This is actually not a bad idea, in that it gets you extra skill points and more inherent Bonds; a lot of Sburb veterans carry two or three inherent Bonds tied to the classpects that they've spent the most time on.

==> 64. OJ: If this were a different setting I'd consider making it a group quest instead of an individual quest, to reduce the
    level of redundancy, but RV's asynchronous sessions kind of prevent that.

Canonically, the arc looks like this:

- **Seven Gates** (20/35)
- **The Beast in the Lair** (25/25/35)
- **Challenging the Throne** (25/35)
- **The Heart of the Land** (20/30)
- **Something You Are** (15+/35)

There are also a number of variant quests that are closely related:

- **A Long Presession** (20/30/40)
- **Seven Gates (Void Session)** (25/35/45)
- **Voyage through the Ring** (25/35/45)

Here's some things you should work out at or near the beginning of this quest set:

Your Sburb Classpect

What will you be, this session?

- the hero of Blood, who must learn that relationships are the strongest weapon of all?
- the hero of Breath, who must learn that the only ties that bind you are the ones you choose to abide by?
- the hero of Mind, who must learn that choices and agency are critically important things?
- the hero of Fate, who must learn to trust gut instincts and act quickly?
- the hero of Life, who must learn how to care for others, even if they cannot care for themselves?
- the hero of Doom, who must learn that sometimes it is a good thing to let things come to an end?
- the hero of Void, who must learn to face the unknown and the nonexistent?
- the hero of Mist, who must learn to celebrate the existence of others?
- the hero of Heart, who must learn to see other people as individuals, with their own lives and feelings?
- the hero of Rage, who must learn to assert the fact that they themselves are an individual with moral worth?
- the hero of Flow, who must learn that there is value in pressing on despite obstacles?
- the hero of Rhyme, who must learn that sometimes one must slow down and enjoy life rather than rushing through it?
- the hero of Might, who must learn the value of meeting challenges head-on, face-to-face, in a fair fight?
- the hero of Sand, who must learn that enemies impossible to meet head-on can still be undermined?

- the hero of Dreams, who must learn that there is value in treating creativity as an orderly, regular process?
- the hero of Rain, who must learn the creativity of not only thinking outside the box, but outside the city the box is sitting in?
- the hero of Law, who must learn that there is power to be found in restrictions of action and knowledge?
- the hero of Light, who must learn that to see the best outcome is to know how to get to it?
- the hero of Time, who must learn that all things must end and that actions have consequence?
- the hero of Space, who must learn to explore the world and birth order from chaos?
- the hero of Stars, who must learn to accept all that comes to them, up to and including the knowledge of death?
- the hero of Hope, who must learn that it is only what they believe that constrains them?
- the hero of Coins, who must learn that things should be valued properly if they are to be valued at all?
- the hero of Dust, who must learn to cultivate what they need out of what they already have?
- the hero of Sight, who must learn that their perception is not and cannot be objective?
- the hero of Sound, who must learn that one does not truly understand until they can communicate what they understand?

And how will you wield your Aspect? Will you be...

- the Page, who learns to fight and win?
- the Knight, who learns that there are things worth fighting for?
- the Ward, who learns to rely on others to become successful in all things?
- the Heir, who learns that relying on others will help them nuture the things they love?
- the Sage, who must be not just smart, but wise?
- the Seer, who learns that they do not have to take center stage for a plan to go well?
- the Witch, who learns that it's okay to be different?
- the Mage, who learns that the world will let them be different?
- the Sylph, who learns that they must champion something they believe in?
- the Bane, who learns that service to a greater cause is the highest calling?
- the Scout, who ventures past the known and brings back treasures?
- the Guide, who escorts events and people to the ends they have chosen?
- the Dame, who learns to survive and protect what they love?
- the Guard, who learns to draw strength from protecting others?
- the Thief, who learns that they deserve to have things that strengthen them?
- the Rogue, who learns to create advantages for their side?

A User's Guide to the Apocalypse

- the Prince, who brings stories to their end?
- the Bard, who pulls strings behind the curtain to bring events to their conclusions?
- the Maid, who learns to help fulfill others' destiny?
- the Smith, who learns to create and complexify the things and situations around them?
- the Muse, who learns to create situations around them that create and complexify things?
- the Waste, who will drastically change the definition of "normal"?
- the Grace, who will cause "normal" to roll over and give up?

More detail on Sburban Classpects is on page ???.

"I don't get it," I said.

"Of course you don't," replied the oracle's attendant. "It is the nature of a prophecy that it will not make sense until you are staring the circumstances right in the face."

Sorcerer's Son, dryadTornado

Several Aspects overlap conceptually! There are nuances to how each Aspect teaches its lesson, though.

For example, while Life and Heart both teach empathy and gentleness, they come at it from different directions. A Life player learns to respect the fact that everything living is engaged in a furious battle against the world just to assert its right to exist. A Heart player, by contrast, learns that everyone around them has their own unique personal experiences, and then to empathize with all these experiences.

Similarly, the difference between a Time player and a Doom player is that a Time player learns that death is inevitable because the arrow of time points in one direction, but a Doom player learns that death should be celebrated because it clears out the old and decays to leave nutrients for the new.

There are many complexities and nuances of this sort that you could find if you examined each Aspect closely enough, and I cannot cover such complexities and nuances in a general reference book. There is a *reason* that every single Class and Aspect has had multiple Guides written by and for players of said Classes and Aspects. Gallons and gallons of metaphorical ink have been spilled on the subject.

(If I had to guess, the aspect of Time probably has the most written on it, because it is both common and specifically gives the recipients more *time* to write guides in. Light, Space, Mind, and Rage also have a lot of wordcount to them. The Aspect that has the *least* written about it is Fate, for the reason that Fate specifically penalizes "overthinking" and "analyzing" things, and apparently "analyzing" includes writing guides.)

Classpect analysis is difficult, inexact, and far more of an art than a science. bladekindEyewear's beautiful aspect wheel was, unfortunately, based on a sample size of five sessions, all of which were highly irregular.[65]

Ultimately, classpects are up to the player/handler's discretion. I strongly recommend sticking to the sets provided, but I suppose if a handler had a strong enough opinion, and if the HG was lenient enough, arrangements could be made…

==> 65. EB: If the rumors are true, two were null, one was null and void, and one was *dead*. But I don't believe that particular rumor. blaEye is too alive to have played through a dead session.

Your Land, Consorts, and Familiars

Your Land will have one adjective related to your Classpect, and one adjective that is evocative of one of your personality traits writ large. For example, in my first session, I as the Guide of Blood was assigned to the Land of Pumps and Magnets – Pumps being the Blood-related adjective, and Magnets being the adjective related to myself. (While I wasn't the session leader, I was the one who helped keep the social relationships from flying apart. Good times, good times.)

Your Consorts are generally anthropomorphized versions of small animals, scaled up or down so that they'll be knee- to waist-height for you – usually half a meter to a meter high. Beavers, dogs, platypi, tortoises, lizards. They are idiots. I am sorry.

Your Land Familiars are very small, flying creatures that will be your Land's conceptual canary-in-the-coal-mine: the state of the Land Familiars is a quick way to get a bead on how much of your plot you've done. They start in a state such as starving, being trapped, or not being able to fly; as you complete various quests they will become free, first a few at a time, then in greater numbers.[66] They are often, but not always, insects. Some examples include butterflies, ladybugs, flying fish (with the laws of physics heavily stretched so that eventually they will be able to maneuver in the air rather than just leap in and out), and hummingbirds.

Your Denizen

This one can wait a little longer, but you will want to know by the time you start The Beast in the Lair.

Pick a name from mythology that is conceptually related to your Aspect. Any mythology will do. Then imagine a very large animal or monster, which may not necessarily be related to the mythological name. Mnemosyne may be a snake, or Sophia a very large red panda. This is normal. I'm not sure where Sburb gets all this stuff. It doesn't make sense to me.

==> 66. EB: Due to a bug, some Space Players' Land Familiars may start already free; they are then useless as this kind of indicator, for obvious reasons.

> I don't know if you're old enough to remember the days when all the Dream players thought making their skin transparent was the hottest shit. I thought that transparent-skin mice for dissection in science class were creepy enough.

> "Get Off My Lawn", algorithmTremulus

1: 🔶 🔷

2: 🔵 🔶 🟢 🔴

3: 🟡

4: 🔴

This quest covers the Entry, the Kernelsprite storyline, and the Maturity Quests.

The quest reward is typically a level 1 (short version) or level 2 (long version) skill perk in the Sburban Magic that you have studied.

What You'll Do

> Sburb seems to understand when you adhere to a set of rules for fighting, and arranges things such that, even if this constrains your ability to fight, it does not decrease your overall effectiveness.

> So long as I adhere scrupulously to the rules of fencing, the Underlings do as well. The Imps even do the service of lining up to fight me in single combat. The moment I pull out a dirty trick, though, they abandon all pretense of fairness and rush me all at once.

> "Observations on Sburb and Formalities", scaleFell

So you'll run a weird game CD, put down a bunch of strange machines, do stranger things with those machines, and get hit by a meteor.

Or your *location* gets hit by a meteor, rather. You get plopped down on a Land of A and B! Your Sprite comes to you, assuming you've prototyped it properly before entry. (Don't leave your kernelsprite unprototyped like a Sboob.) You'll get urged through at least the first few Gates, to explore your Land and the Land of your coplayers.

Your planet is roughly 20 miles in diameter. This means that the surface area of your Planet is a bit more than 300 square miles – the size of a county or parish. Only about one-third to two-thirds of it is usually accessible at all (the rest is generally sea or impassable terrain), and it's almost exclusively rural areas and small villages connected with spindly footpaths so there isn't much to see for most of it, but still, you're going to need to do a *lot* of walking.

Most people do not like this, so you'll probably be making yourself some sort of transportation machine.

If you alchemize a golf cart, the problem with that is that paths in the Game are generally calculated and generated as *footpaths*. They're more often than not wide enough for a golf cart, but the "not" is common enough to make driving difficult. Steps and stairways and narrow switchbacks – and even the occasional flat-out ladder – are reasonably common too. It'll be irritating to have to captcha your ride, walk across the offending terrain, and put it back down again once you've cleared the obstacle.

If you alchemize a jetpack, you get shin burn. Shin burn stops mattering when you're high enough level that the tiny damage-over-time value of your average game-logic jetpack becomes a rounding error, which is roughly halfway through this quest sequence.[67]

Don't alchemize a Segway. It makes you look like an idiot, but more importantly the Consorts will all demand their own and drain your grist taking trips to your Dwelling Spire to make more. It's not unrecoverable (especially if you stop using it so the fad fades away), but I suggest just not going there.

The things that work? Think muscle-powered. Skateboards and roller skates are very popular. Good mountain bicycles can often work, assuming you're willing to go off the road and negotiate the boulders instead of trying to get past stairs. The Consorts ooh and aah at this kind of stuff but don't demand their own.[68]

Getting around in the air becomes plausible, although not mandatory[69], about halfway through this quest. There's a small contingent that swears on hang-gliding instead of jetpacks, helicopters, or personal spaceships, even when the latter two become grist-plausible, post-Denizen. They say it helps you learn the Land because you have to keep an eye out for structures that imply thermals and downdrafts, and that once you've built your Dwelling Spire up high enough you can basically get anywhere in your Land by just jumping off and aiming correctly. It sounds very cool but the process of learning to use a hang glider seems pretty dangerous to me.

Anyway. You'll be taking these spindly little footpaths to villages populated by Consorts – little Game-generated creatures that are, in theory, native to your Land. They will call you the Hero of Whatever. They will probably like you, unless you're a Thief or Rogue, in which case they might not like you until the Consort Elder in charge of that village tells them that you're a ruffian with a heart of gold.

You'll be doing quests for them. Stupid videogame stuff like puzzles that you'll be asked to solve for them that don't seem to have anything to do with anything else, bringing back twenty Basilisk heads from a region that respawns two Basilisks at a time forever and has a 10% Basilisk Head drop rate, escorting some messenger from village A to village B. Assuming you have ever played this kind of ostensible open-world sandbox videogame before, you know the drill.

Each of these quests rewards you with a fragment of music, which will be useful later but which will sound stupid on their own. You'll be piecing them together, like those treasure maps you're supposed to

==> 67. EB: I mean, or you could make fireproof pants, but fireproof pants make you look dumb.
==> 68. CM: As far as I can tell this is because they are coded as [lazy] so that they don't solve their own problems, but that carries over to them being unwilling to so much as pedal a tricycle either.
==> 69. EB: The only mandatory aerial transportation in the game is in the Nightmare Heir sequence and even then you're provided a ride. Everything else you could theoretically transportalize or hoof it to.

collect all the pieces of to find where the treasure's buried, and the full piece of music will wake your Denizen when played in the right place.

You'll learn that the Denizen did something to make your Land sick and torment your Consorts and that you'll be the one destined to fix it. Stupid, the way the Game makes everything dependent on you – Consorts have absolutely no idea how to fix their own problems, apparently – but it's a video game and you're the protagonist.

And somehow completing these seemingly irrelevant quests makes your judgment better. Makes you more mature, by Sburb's… interesting standards of maturity; that's why they're called maturity quests. I shared a session once with a Time player who declared us all "too young to drink" until we had woken our Denizens[70], which was irritating when the Time player in question happened to jump in whenever someone alchemized alcohol.

About halfway through this sequence, you'll find, and breach, something called the Line. Sometimes it's called the Red Line but I don't know why it's called that since it's not even marked on the ground anyway and it's never actually been red in my experience. It's about halfway between your house (at the north pole of your planetoid) and the Denizen's cave (at the south pole). Breaching it involves fighting your way through chokepoints filled with Underlings that spawn in massive numbers, and the other side will be a noticeable spike in difficulty. Although there *is* a corresponding spike in rewards.[71]

Along the way, you might also do some sidequests – helping a Consort farmer in the ass-end of nowhere defend his farm from three waves of Imp rushes, dungeon-diving[72], more dumb puzzles, races on a freerunning course set up by teenaged Consorts, that kind of thing. There are hundreds or thousands of them. You really do not need to do all of them, but you'll want to do some – they'll help you be leveled-enough to breach the Line and face your Denizen. Plus the other reward for completing a dungeon is an official ability, which usually isn't big enough to justify a full Trick Perk but could sometimes be represented as such if the HG wants to be really nice to you.

At the end of this quest sequence, you will go to an awesome-looking cliff with a great view of your Land called the Promontory, and you will play the song you've assembled, and you'll challenge your Denizen for stewardship of the Land because they seem to have done such a terrible job of it. Then you will make a very loud noise using a noisemaker that will appear in front of you (it's usually a gong or something, although I've known it to take the shape of, say, a car horn, or a piano that you push off the cliff).

This all wakes up the Denizen and completes this quest.

Are you thinking of sequence-breaking and taking on the Denizen early? Don't. It will get you killed. Unless your session is sufficiently screwed that deliberately creating a Splinter is a better idea than

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==> 70. EB: To be fair, though, it did prevent us from doing anything truly stupid.

==> 71. EB: Note that there's no shame in running away from encounters you're not high enough level for. Remember that you can actually die in this game.

==> 72. EB: The "reward" you get at the top of a dungeon is generally a cheap piece of shit, although you might have fun with it in alchemy later.

continuing on as you are, in which case I suppose you can try, since your Denizen can help to fix your session if it's really broken. See the flavor text for the next quest for details.

If your session is *heavily* screwed up, see Seven Gates (Void Session) (page ???).

Seven Gates (20/35) (purple card)

Major goals: The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- a Consort Elder tells you the story of how the Land used to be a great place before the Denizen screwed everything up;
- a Consort Elder tells you the story of how you are prophesied to save the Land (on a different occasion than the previous);
- you participate in some sort of Consort celebration or festival.

In the full-sized quest, you can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP. In the simplified version, you can earn two of these bonuses, for up to 10 XP.

Quest flavor: 1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you:

- ◈ ♛ clear out an area of enemies entirely, and then come back to it after a short break and find it is filled again (You can exploit this to level-grind. But the first time this happens it'll probably just frustrate you immensely.)
- ⚡ ◈ do a dungeon (Dungeons are explained on page ???.)
- ♛ ⬡ attempt to eat something that the Consorts think is food
- ◈ ask for advice/tips on completing a quest that's been giving you a hard time
- ⚡ ✦ participate in a Secret Consort cult ritual (The Secret Consort and its cult is a small group loosely based off the first thing thrown out your window when you Enter. For example, if you throw a towel out the window, you get a Secret Hitchhiker. If you don't do this the Imps are going to do it for you and you'll get something lame like the Secret Oral Hygiene Specialist.)
- ◈ ♛ find a Consort stranded somewhere dangerous and return them safely to their home
- ◈ ◊ defend a Consort village from attack
- ♛ express suitable amazement or confusion at the ridiculous contents of Consorts' stores
- ♛ do something ridiculous and then justify it with "because a Consort asked me to"
- ◈ ♛ camp in the wilds
- ◊ regret things the next morning

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

a fragment

(1) I did not see the lights at first
the blinding light of Entry bright;
the sparks scatter across cloudbursts,
shine across the sky –

(2) Snow whirls in the wind
A wisp of smoke curls far away
The Consorts stand tall.

(3) Woven, woven are the branches
woven, woven is the ground;
woven, woven, patchwork ranches
squares of color, fences-bound.

(4) The streambanks are thick with willows and reeds.
The Consorts cross, with handfuls of seeds.

(5) There is only darkness.

(6) Desolate ground, with hexagon cracks
the Consorts done up, in yellows and blacks.

The Beast in the Lair (25/25/35)

> I stood before Iustitia in all my finery, and she did not care, for she was blind as a worm.
>
> "That Time When I Accidentally Fixed A Session", honoraryCorinthian

1: 🙁

2: 🟠 🔶 🔴 🔥

3: 🙁

4: 🟠 🔷

5: ⬡

This quest covers the Denizen Quests and the Slaying of the Beast.

The quest reward is typically a level 1-2 Bond Perk associated with the Sburban Magic that you have studied. Notably, while most people discard their Sburban Magic skill perk outside of the session in which it was used, they often keep this Bond Perk until something more interesting arises to take its place. The past session or two you've played still shows in your actions.

This quest has one option for standard sessions, and two options for broken sessions. As we are playing only the alpha timeline (except in cases like Illusion), it can safely be assumed that any quests involving a Denizen Deal in a broken session will not result in death. This is not a safe assumption to make in Sburb or for NPCs, but given that RV Chuubo's characters are player characters with a certain level of plot armor, I figured it was okay to assume here.

What You'll Do

> Horus made me promise to do something I thought was impossible. He said that the price of his assistance with this session was that I would need to ask one thousand other Players for their advice.
>
> Well, now that I've found Sburb.org, that's suddenly a lot more doable than it seemed at first glance.
>
> "Hello? Anyone Home?", posted in the Introductions subforum by bridleUntangled

The high-level overview: your Denizen is a jerk, and you will grow to care for him anyway, and then he will ask you to kill him.[73] (Or swap out all those pronouns for 'her', as the case may be. Your first-session Denizen will usually match your gender but after that all bets are off.)

==> 73. OJ: As for players causing their *own* deaths... GGTG offhandedly tosses out, at one point, that "suicide is exile-disabled" - you can't kill yourself because your Exile will stop you. To most people, this is a rules plug, explaining why people don't escape the game by killing themselves. But if you know about the functional value of suicidal ideation in abuse (that it's an attempt to preserve a scrap of agency), this is actually one of the most horrifying things In this setting.

So, you enter your Denizen's Lair and present yourself to him. He looks you over, asks you a few questions about how you got here and what you've been doing scurrying around on this Land that's been his since it was created. The Consorts would beg to differ there – they think the Land existed before the Denizen ever did – but Denizens, being omniscient, are entirely aware of their status as game constructs and of the fact that they're technically only one instance of innumerable copies of themselves throughout paradox space. Things sometimes get a little meta.

And the Denizen, being omniscient, will know precisely how to frustrate and anger you, and proceeds to push those buttons. Repeatedly. He'll talk in that tone of voice you hate because it feels condescending. She'll make that annoying chewing noise that you associate with the gum in the mouth of that popular girl you disliked in high school. The Denizen's motives are actually relatively benign – it's a form of exposure therapy, as far as they're concerned – but for at least the first few weeks they will piss you off in some unimportant way, so as to desensitize you to it.

And, while this is happening, he will send you on even more quests. This is a video game, after all – you will do quests for the rest of time. This time it's stuff like, say, wheedling a shopkeeper into selling the sign on their roof, or making sure that all the farmers in an area grow extra-large crops of luminescent mushrooms this season. They will still be dumb quests, but they will be even more obscure than the quests you did for the Consort Elders, and with even less visible payoff. This, too, will serve to frustrate and anger you.

If you actually get angry and act out against the Denizen, he'll swat you out of his lair with one hit point left just like that. It isn't something most people repeat more than once.

And then you will start to get used to it. It'll settle down, and become just something you put up with as part of your day. You'll figure out that technique for centering yourself before you enter so you're harder to annoy. This is exactly what the Denizen wants to do: desensitize you. The fact that it just angered and threatened you the first few weeks is relatively immaterial, in the grand scheme of things.

Note that if your session has gone wrong, your Denizen can help fix it, but will enlist you to do much of the legwork yourself. In these cases, the Denizen will dispense with the pretense of trying to test or frustrate you and get to the point: that you are out of luck, that your session is just as out of luck, and the Denizen can help you with the minimum intervention needed to get it back on track. As far as we know from Denizens who have been relatively open on this front, this is because Denizens want to survive too – they *are* immortal and have their personality reinstantiated from disk in each new session, but sessions that fail to be completed mean that the particular thread of consciousness dedicated to that session "dies".

I should point out that "minimum intervention needed" may be very detrimental to you, such as instantly killing you. You won't know until it happens. All the same, they're safer than Horrorterror deals – they're not a Wicked Action – so if your session is heavily bugged, consider going to your Denizen first, if he still exists, and then to the Space player's Denizen, which is not killed during this quest sequence, and only if neither of these options *exists* are you to go to the Horrorterrors. And even then I don't blame

you if you'd rather die than deal with them. But it's not considered a "last resort", exactly. It's trying to fix the Game from inside the Game. It's *relatively* safe.

And then, assuming you're not a Space player, one day you will come to the point when you can deal with your Denizen smoothly, without losing your temper, getting used to and possibly even *fond* of the process. That is when your Denizen will consider their job done and ask for you to kill them. This is required to advance in the Game; without the Denizen's "grist" hoard (not actual grist, you can't use it for alchemy even if you gamebreak into it ahead of time, it's some sort of weird multicolored liquid) you will not be able to complete the creation of a new universe and finish the game.

If you are a Space player, you have it a little easier; your Denizen will merely dismiss you for the last time and ask you to only come back in the direst of emergencies, turning you away in the event of anything less. Also, if you are a Space player, at some point during this quest you will probably want to start the Frog Breeding chibiquest (detailed further later, but basically a purple or silver anytime quest card).

The Beast in the Lair (Standard) (25) (gold card)

Major goals: The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- you meet your Denizen and establish why they anger you;
- someone (not necessarily a PC) gives you a new perspective on why the Denizen acts as they do.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Quest flavor: 1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you:

- ♛ ◆ do something ridiculous because the Denizen asked you to
- ◈ ♛ relax on your Land while waiting for a quest condition to show up
- ♛ vent your frustration on an inanimate object
- ◈ ✦ talk with a coplayer about the differences between your respective Lands/Consorts/Denizens
- ♛ ◆ play pranks on coplayers
- ◈ ✦ describe something normal you're doing in an incredibly dramatic way
- ◈ ✦ sit down with coplayers and work on a plot chart (a large outline or mindmap detailing everything that has to happen in this session, according to prophecies, clues in ruins, etc.)
- ♛ climb to a high place
- ◆ are involved in stupid romantic shenanigans

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

The Beast in the Lair (Broken Session Version) (35) (red card)

Major goals: The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- you explain to the Denizen why you must petition them for assistance;
- your Denizen assigns you a task that you (at least initially) believe to be impossible;
- three chapters pass without obvious IC progress on this quest.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 20 XP.

Quest flavor: 1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you:

- ◈ ✦ investigate whether other parts of the Game are still intact
- ♛ pass the time by organizing Consorts to do something silly
- ◈ ✦ sit down with coplayers and work on a plot chart (a large outline or mindmap detailing everything that has to happen in this session, according to prophecies, clues in ruins, etc.)

- ♧ ◊ try out some trivial gamebreaking to pass the time (for example, stacking Land Beds to get a multiplier, installing an alchemiter hack, sneaking into the Royal Gardens)
- ◊ are involved in stupid romantic shenanigans
- ◈ explain how broken your session is to people outside that session

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

The Beast in the Lair (Broken Session, Simplified) (25) (silver card)

Major goals: The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- your Denizen tells you what you need to do to fix your session (create a replacement for a plot token, repair something you broke, wait several weeks for Land regrowth to kick in, go to this Veil lab and input this mysterious sequence of commands);
- you acquire some sort of important plot token.

You can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 10 XP.

Quest flavor: 1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you:

- ♧ are caught doing something that you'd rather not show people but that isn't a big deal, like using interpretive dance to work through your feelings or singing in the shower
- ♧ take a trip through the physical space of the Medium (as opposed to going through gates or transportalizers)
- ◈ ◢ explore the mysterious laboratories on the meteors in the Veil
- ◈ ♧ have a picnic

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

The state induced by these involuntarily cast abilities is often flippantly referred to as 'berserk', for example in the slang term 'berserk trigger', as defined in the Gamebreaker's Glossary […]

But something far more damaging is happening here. The state of berserk, as Shay uses it, is not a mere lack of self-control; it is a state where the highest functions of the mind are completely gone. And a Mind player's greatest fear is not of losing control, but of losing the reason and intelligence they so cherish. They identify so strongly with this ego that Climbing feels like losing themselves.

"'Post-Climb Psychosis' and Jonathan Shay's 'Berserk' State", ordinalSpark

Once per Sburb session, every Replayer will have a freakout called a Berserk Trigger. Mechanically, this exaggerates one of the abilities of your Sburban Magic - making it last far longer, be more destructive, or something along those lines. But that isn't the important part.

The important part is that the Berserk Trigger is one of those stupid story beats that Sburb enforces: once per session, you are going to go emotionally out of control, and cast one of these things, and it is going to be destructive and probably heart-wrenching.

So: all characters *who are currently in Sburb sessions* (i.e. on any of the relevant Sburban Tale quests) have access to this Ritual, which they can invoke at most once per Sburb session. (Mind you, I *expect* you to invoke this maybe once every other Sburb session or so.) Because BTs are cathartic emotional moments, they are especially good for Issue resolutions.

What is your BT, anyway?

Before you can use this ritual, you'll need to work out what your Berserk Trigger is. You can use the ones specified in GGTG's Guide, or work out your own with the following algorithm:

Take a magical technique of your current Sburban Magic (or, with HG approval, make up your own). Now apply at least one of these "enhancements":

- have it affect a much larger area than normal, up to Region-size
- make it far more damaging than normal, completely demolishing a neighborhood-size area
- have a buff, enhancement, or other magical effect last far longer and be significantly stronger than normal

In all cases, while this effect is strong, it is unlikely to actually improve your life…

Ritual of the Berserk Trigger

The ritual of the Berserk Trigger begins when you declare something using the following format:

[S][74] [Name]: Lose control to [Ability Title].

This will look something like this:

- [S] Tara: Fall into [Infinite Rage].
- [S] Bob: Be overtaken by [Dance of Thorns].

If for some reason you are playing this at a table, I suggest saying "I lose control to [The Game Has Changed]" (or whatever it is).

In the following, the person who invoked the Berserk Trigger and is casting it will be called the Subject. Everyone else is a Witness.

The sequence of events will go like this:

- The Subject invokes the ritual.
- If the HG gives permission and you have all of the other players' attention, you may then continue.
- The Subject picks one of the Ritual Actions from the Subject list below.
- If applicable, the HG describes any effects of this pose on the world.
- [1] The HG points to any Witness at the table (not necessarily in order, though having an order might help), or says "[Name]. What do you do?"
- A Witness picks one of the Ritual Actions from the Witness list below.
- The Subject responds to this action, with another Ritual Action from the Subject list below.
- If applicable, the HG describes any effects of this pose on the world.
- The subject may choose to end the Ritual at this time, using the specified Ritual Action. If not, return to [1]. (The Subject should probably let this cycle happen three or four times before ending the Ritual.)

Witnesses may choose among any of the following Ritual Actions:

- watching from afar, or across a chat client, in horror
- attempting to talk the Subject down, reassure them, provide physical comfort, etc.
- physically attacking the Subject in an effort to get the pain to bring them back "down" (The traditional method is a kick to the head.)
- running away from the Subject and the BT's effects
- invoking another Ritual and combining the two Rituals thereby[75]

Subject(s) may choose any of the following Ritual Actions:

==> 74. OJ: In case you haven't been following along, [S] is one of the major markers that something is a Ritual or Transition in this game.

==> 75. OJ: This Ritual is unusually likely to be combined with other Rituals. For example, a Berserk Trigger could feed into someone else and cause them to also BT, or a BT could be triggered during the Black King fight (in an effort to direct the sheer magical power of a BT towards the Black King).

- narrating how the power is coursing through you, so strongly that you're carried away by the current of it
- narrating how you are physically using the power
- attempting to talk or communicate, usually in fragmented words and phrases
- narrating a memory that the emotions and magic are making you recall (often, but not always, traumatic)
- directing your power towards someone (or something) you are feeling strongly about
- directing your power away from someone (or something) you are feeling strongly about
- collapsing, spent - or taking a Surface Wound of any type - and thus closing the ritual of the Berserk Trigger. Note that the act of taking a Surface Wound does not *have* to close the Ritual, but I strongly recommend that you do so at the infliction of said Wound, or else one or two turns afterwards.
- invoking another Ritual and combining the two Rituals thereby

Interrupting the Ritual

In some cases, characters - or their handlers - may wish to interrupt this Ritual and resolve the BT using brute force. In such cases, a Berserk Trigger is, mechanically, a level 3 Miraculous Action… with 2 Strike. (This Strike is effectively coming from Region Property-equivalents; a BT is not dangerous in raw power level, it is dangerous because Sburb has decided that it is a thing that Must Happen, and is willing to enforce that.)

The Ritual of the Berserk Trigger has an Auctoritas of 0. It also has an Obstacle of 0. However, this is not to say that you should be interrupting it randomly!

While you are free to break out of the format, and while it is not difficult for you to take Intentions and Actions out of the format, this strips you of your ability to oppose the BT narratively. Instead, you get the full force of the miracle in your face.

I would just like to note that this is unlikely to improve your position.

2: 🔻 🔥 ♨ ⬣

3: ⬡ 🔵 🔮 ♨ ⬡

4: 🔵 🔥 🔮 ⬣

5: ⬡ 🔻 ⬡

This quest covers the Earthsea Borealis/Nightmare Heir. You may skip this quest and go straight to Something You Are if you wish to play a short quest set.

As the process is fundamentally similar regardless of how long it takes, I provide only one version of the quest, just with two different targets for major goals XP. (If for some you want to extend it even further into a 40-45XP quest, feel free to linearly extrapolate. Certainly I've had a session or two where that happened.)

Pick any Knight 3 quest reward.

What You'll Do

/* If this code works, it was written by Myra LeJean. If not, I don't know who wrote it. */

enturbulatedOccupation, stealing a joke from Paul DiLascia

So, from this point on? Technically you're playing bonus content. Replayers have figured out over time that this content is unlockable, playable, and can in fact grant you more time to prepare for the Black King boss fight. (Although the boss fight is scaled up to your echeladder level, to an extent. I provide no mechanical representation of this because that would just be too many moving parts.) You do not have to do this quest, and even if you do this quest you don't have to do The Heart of the Land afterwards: these quests are here for you to keep playing if you'd like.

This quest is about *another* enemy getting in your way before you can inherit the Land. Specifically, the Nightmare Heir. It is your rival that is challenging your fitness to inherit your planet.

After you complete slaying the Denizen, a floating island called the Earthsea Borealis will rumble and rise from your Land. It won't seem to do anything when you go there, if you have a flying machine by that point. Of course it doesn't. You haven't tripped the right event flags yet. You'll need to unlock the proper mode of transportation first.

To unlock transportation, you'll do a couple more dumb land quests themed around your Land Familiars, which are the little flying things around your Land. (Fireflies, hummingbirds, whatever.) Collect a certain number of them, hang up bird feeders, and study where they sleep enough, and you'll get access to the Heirfare, which is a giant aggregate of your Land Familiars flying together in the shape of a giant version of themselves.

Climb aboard your giant mosquito made of tiny mosquitoes, or whatever, and it'll take you to the top of the island, which is nicely cleared as a fighting arena. This is because a fighting arena is exactly what this is.

As soon as you step foot on the island, a shadow will arise from the other side of the giant island and run at you, with a shadow-copy of your weaponkind in hand. This shadow is very real and very tangible and very much *your* shadow. It is the Nightmare Heir, and it will, in a debate-battle, attempt to hit you off-guard in both the physical and emotional senses. It is exactly as good at fighting as you. It is much better at making incisive statements about your psychological hangups.

It tells you that you're not good enough, because you've always feared that you weren't good enough. Block, tell it that you'll do your damnedest to be good enough and that's going to have to be sufficient, jump back from the leg sweep.

It tells you that you regret leaving *him* behind.[76] You hesitate, for a moment. It takes this opportunity to kick you off the island.

You land, on your back, after having fallen from the air for long enough to contemplate why you failed, in a surprisingly soft pile of leaves. And then, ego bruised, you begin making the long trek back to your Heirfare's boarding area, because you're going to need to do this again. And again.

Most Replayers take several weeks to clear this stage; the longer you've been playing, the worse it gets.[77] You have more life experience and more emotional scars. It's perfectly natural. The longer you've played, the longer this sequence gets.

Eventually you'll learn the ripostes and counter-ripostes, and execute them all perfectly; and the Nightmare Heir will hesitate just long enough for you to swing your sword up to its throat. It says "I yield," kneels, and bursts into wisps of smoke. The island rumbles, and begins sinking back into the ground.

You're left standing on a patch of ground that looks exactly the same as all the others, and you, like me, will probably ask: "That's *it*?"

It's kind of a letdown.

The Consorts will love you even more after this, of course, but that's because they're Consorts.

Note

Although this quest is centered around a fight you're rehearsing, this quest isn't actually about that fight. You have to repeat the fight hundreds of times to get it "right", which would get very repetitive.[78] So this quest is about the spaces between those fights, when you're left on your back contemplating what the hell just happened and trying to figure out what you're supposed to do next time.

==> 76. EB: I'm sorry, Cyril. I really am.
==> 77. EB: As opposed to the Maturity Quests, which get easier with experience.
==> 78. EB: And unlike Sburb, this game is actually supposed to be fun to play.

Even for the quest options that say "your Nightmare Heir does this", what that means is that your Nightmare Heir pulls that tactic, kicks you down, and you're trying to process it with a friend afterwards. Or not process it, as it were. ("Please tell me something to distract me from what just happened.")

Challenging the Throne (25/35) (silver card)

Major goals: The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- your Nightmare Heir brings up something you intensely regret from your past;
- your Nightmare Heir brings up something scary or traumatizing from your past;
- you realize that you aren't the same person as you used to be, or that you've forgotten something you used to think was important;
- someone else helps you make a breakthrough about how to respond to the Nightmare Heir;
- you break and try to hide from everything for a while.

For the brief version, you can earn two of these bonuses, for a total of up to 10 XP. For the full version, you can earn three of these bonuses, for a total of up to 15 XP.

Quest flavor: 1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you:

- ♛ play a haunting refrain
- 🔥 lie on the ground for a while, contemplating failure
- 🗡♛ interact with Land Familiars
- 🗡 brainstorm out loud about what you should say to your Nightmare Heir the next time
- ♛ end up wearing some sort of crown or circlet (paper and daisy crowns count)
- 🔥 ⬡ are uncomfortably awake when you'd like to sleep
- ⚡ retell a fond memory
- ♛ 🔥 ponder existential questions
- ⬡ 🔥 pretend not to care about someone else's problems
- ♛ 🔶 really can't muster the energy to care about someone else's problems
- 🗡 free-write about your feelings

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

The only sounds I could hear were the wind, and the Angels' cries.

Scratch that –

The only sounds I could hear were the wind, the Angels' cries, and an increasingly frantic pounding from the other side of the tunnel gate.

"Cataclysm", unidentifiedObject

1: ⬡

2: ⬡ ⬡

3: ⬡ ⬡ ⬡

4: ⬡ ⬡ ⬡ ⬡

5: ⬡

This quest covers the Clockwork Sorrows, the Underworld, and the Taking of the Heart. You may skip this quest and go straight to Something You Are if you wish to play a short quest set.

Pick any Knight 4 quest reward for this one.

What You'll Do

So, the thing you'll be unlocking is the Underworld. You know those dungeons you beat the first time in Seven Gates? You get to go through them a second time (or, if you didn't do them, I guess the first time), and this time they'll be harder; they will let you access an underground system of tunnels close to the bedrock of your Land. (It is called bedrock because it is the same stuff Sburb makes beds out of. Surprisingly comfortable to doze off on. Please don't actually doze off in these tunnels though, it will just get you killed.)

There will be these little closed-off doors at the end of some of these tunnels; they are called the Clockwork Sorrows. There may be as few as three, or as many as two dozen. Think of something that makes you sad, and one bolt will unlock; once you have visited all of the doors and been sad about a different thing at each one, the Underworld will open.

The Underworld is technically the hollow center of your Land – although it's about the same surface area as the outside of your Land, since Sburb doesn't seem to care about material plausibility. *Theoretically*, all you need to do is explore the ruins down here, kill the special enemies, and collect the special grist down here instead. This lets you build up the special house down here. When you have built up the house, you will take the Heart from the "center" of your land, which also happens to be the glowing thing beating in the sky. Simple enough, on paper.

The Angels, however, do not make this easy. They have Laws, and if you transgress the Laws they will swoop down upon you and corrupt you. You may not have any open containers of water, as they are beings of fire.[79] You may not bring any music, or sing, as they take it as an insult to their own song. You may not carry any religious symbols, as they only recognize their own authority. Do not listen to their song, because giving them that much of your attention gives them a way to lever open your mind and pour themselves in. The list goes on, although several of the provisions are obscure – see tenaciousTheseus' *The Sixteen Laws of the Underworld*, or another Underworld FAQ, for details.

(You can't listen to music, and you also can't listen to the Angels. What's the Replayer's solution to this dilemma? Podcasts! With the musical interludes edited out, of course, if there are any. Replayer podcasts don't have any music in them for this reason.)

The Angels will prevent the Underworld's special enemies from spawning until you drive them away. You will be kicking open ruins, desecrating tombs, toppling urns, defiling sacred inscriptions; and they will shriek and their numbers will lessen each time you do these things. When they're gone, then you proceed with what this quest was presumably supposed to be about, with the weird Underlings and such. Since you've had so much practice topside it should go pretty quickly; it'll only take about as long as it took to build to your Second Gate or so.

The thing is: if you are around the Angels at *all*… they will get into you. Even if only a little. Even if you take frequent breaks in between to have heartfelt conversations with your coplayers and participate in "Post-Terraforming Cuddlepile Meetings" (hugs reduce corruption). You have to limit your exposure, you have to make sure you never transgress the Laws[80], you have to make sure you aren't around anything else Corruptive.

So: Drive out the Angels, build your special house, then grab the shiny glowy thing from the center of your land. Simple? Not really. Straightforward? Assuming you don't count the Angels, yeah.

And why do you even need to do this at all? (And, if you are familiar with Chuubo's, you might even be wondering: how is this a Knight 4 quest?)

According to the game lore, you're automatically assumed to have done something wrong with Terraforming, even if you completed everything "correctly", and so there is some terminal fault with your Land's biosphere. In other words: your Land is sick, because you fucked up, and now you need to put it out of its misery.

Have fun with that.

==> 79. EB: One of those backpacks with a pouch and a drinking hose is extremely important to stay hydrated, here.
==> 80. EB: Which is impossible. If you screw up, run straight for an exit and hope.

The Heart of the Land (20/30) (green card)

Major goals: The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- you encounter the "special house" (a copy of your own house, except with all organic matter turned into this waxy… black… stuff) in the Underworld
- you have a harrowing close call with the Angels
- you notice early Corruption in a coplayer and (try to) reach out to them

On the full-size version you can earn each bonus once, for a total of up to 15 XP, and on the simplified version you can earn two of these bonuses, for up to 10 XP.

Quest flavor: 1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you:

- ♛ ⬡ open a Clockwork Sorrow (you'll… probably want to talk to someone else afterwards)
- ◈ ◊ remind yourself of the Angels' Laws and steel yourself before going in
- ☻ ◆ defile the Underworld ruins
- ⚡ ⬡ see something foreboding in the Underworld ruins
- ♛ eat a granola bar or trail mix while on the move instead of stopping for a meal
- ◈ ♛ engage in more mindless imp/ogre/whatever-killing
- ◈ listen to or record a podcast
- ⚡ stagger out of darkness into a place filled with light
- ♛ watch a movie with coplayers, possibly in the Magicant

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

Something You Are (15+/35)

You know, it's always great when someone goes asking me, "How do I become a Something of Other?" Because I don't have an answer. Nobody does. The answer is that they have to listen to what the Game tells them, and they have to keep their heart open to the world.

For some reason, the people who ask that type of question never accept that type of answer.

"There Are No Sburb Walkthroughs", barrenImpertinence

1: ⬢ ♛

2: ⬡ ⚡ 🔥 ⬢

3: ⬢ ⬡ ⚡ ♛ ⬢

4: ⬢ ⬢

5: ⬢ ⬡ ♛

You will most likely want to play this quest as the capstone to your Arc (even if it is a sidequest arc) of becoming a Hero of Skaia; this means that if you're just going to buzz through this arc as three sidequests on the way to your Miraculous Arc, you can just play the 15XP version and have done with it. However, if you intend to make a full-on Knight Arc of this, you'll want to save this for last. If you end up going back and doing the other quests after this one because oops, you'll need to keep this quest open until you complete it: turning in this quest card is how you mechanically mark that you'd like to end a session.

The quest reward typically increases your relevant Sburban Magic skill perk by 1 or 2. You can pick a different quest reward but you really want your Sburban Magic skill to be 2+ by the end of your session.

If you are in a session with other PCs: When you turn in this quest card, the HG should ask for permission to initiate Taking the Scepter, or wait for everyone else in your current Sburb session to turn in their quest cards. Technically you can leave this quest card unfinished, if someone else has turned it in and you don't mind the HG initiating Taking the Scepter prematurely, but you must discard this quest when the Taking the Scepter Ritual ends, redistributing half the XP to your other quests as usual. Also you don't get the Sburban Magic reward, which would have been useful for the battle in Taking the Scepter.

What You'll Do

This quest is the quest in which your title goes from being something you *have*, to something you *are*.

You proceed to the Battlefield. Prospit is losing – but it won't lose quite yet. You pitch in and try to help. It's dangerous! But it's something that you should very much do. It'll get you more echeladder levels, and becoming familiar with carapace fighting styles will be helpful later. You can use either the full or simplified versions of this quest for the Battlefield.

Of course if you insist on not going to the Battlefield, you can take the simplified version of the quest and just hang out on your Land continuing to do consort quests.[81]

So! On to the important parts.

You'll be on the Battlefield, and you'll take the side of Prospit.

You *can*, in theory, win the Black King battle using Prospit's forces instead of fighting yourself. You need to trigger the Black King battle in the traditional way (with a Challenge/Proclamation in front of him and everything) and then scurry. You may then Wage the War, and the Black King will surrender when his forces number one-third of their strength at time of your pronouncing the Challenge. Unfortunately, killing two-thirds of the Derse army *with the Black King alive to provide support* is, to put it gently, a very difficult task. Winning by the Wage the War method is thus only recommended if so many of your coplayers have died that a head-to-head battle is impossible to win.

==> 81. EB: That's perfectly valid; plenty of veterans do that, because they already have plenty of experience with carapace fighting styles and would prefer to spend their time on their Land, which is at least *nominally* less emotionally taxing. But I recommend going through to the Battlefield at least twice before you write it off.

Something You Are (35) (gold card)

Major goals: The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- a carapace (usually an Archagent) attempts to kill you;
- you do a dangerous task that one of the Queens assigned you to do;
- you end up taking command of a carapace unit because the original commander died.

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

Quest flavor: 1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you:

- 🔷 ⬛ use your abilities to support or help with a carapace battle
- ⬡ observe the gory results of a carapace battle (Unlike Consorts and Imps, carapaces bleed. Red. It's kind of horrifying.)
- 🔶 skip self-care because you're too harried and/or because you're camping on the Battlefield and no showers, etc. are available there
- 🔷 🟥 run messages between units
- 🔷 ♟ share food with soldiers because (if you don't have the alimentator hack) their food is better than yours, or (if you do have the alimentator hack) your food is better then theirs (Admittedly, it's packaged, shelf-stable, MRE-type stuff. Still more edible than ramen though.)

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

Something You Are (Simplified) (15+) (orange card)

This is a Struggle, represented with an orange flipcard. You will write something related to your performing your Classpect, on the front, and something about how you're not really feeling it, on the back. Then, when you're doing something relevant, hold up the front side of the flipcard; the back will be what you're really feeling.

Here are some examples:

Titles

- A Guide could do no less. / When can I ditch you? You're just slowing me down.
- A Guard could do no less. / Escort quests suck.
- The Knight will fight by your side for as long as this takes. / when can I stop are we done yet
- I'm the Rogue – I steal from the rich and give to the poor! / Why, Sburb, why? This is just making everyone mad at me.
- (Mage) What do you mean you can't understand the riddle I left you? It's perfectly simple. / when can I start being straightforward again

Aspects

- Never give up and never surrender! The power of Might is behind you! / How the hell am I going to make it out of this alive?
- Chill. Let the Rhyme wash over you and take a break. / I'm going to miss something important at this rate.
- [Sanding] (being deceptive, disruptive, and generally unsavory, as befits the Aspect of Sand) / I miss being able to show my true feelings.

Classpects

- As the Seer of Mind, my judgement is impeccable. / what am I even doing
- I'm the Maid of Time. I will sacrifice everything to make sure you make it through. / I'm going to die a hundred times over before all this is done and I'm scared.
- As the Prince of Flow, you shall all be destroyed before my blade and my soul of fire! / That didn't deserve to be destroyed at all.

This Ritual is for God-Tiering.

You narrate your death on a Quest Bed or Crypt Slab, or your coplayers take you to a Quest Bed or Crypt Slab shortly after you die.

When the first of your blood (if you died in a way that left blood; at the moment when brain-death begins, if there is no blood) touches the crypt slab, you may attempt to invoke this Ritual with the ritual phrase:

"My blood is a sacrifice to (your Land's name / Prospit / Derse); as I die, there is a moment of stillness and then an explosion of light."

This triggers the Ritual; people will pose in turn, narrating what they happen to be doing at the time, and the HG should reply to each pose with a phrase that is a statement about your Classpect, a statement of the role you are God-Tiering into. Some examples:

Seer of Light

- "The Seer of Light, her eyes see through all."
- "The Seer of Light, makes luck her domain." (Restatements of the Class and/or Aspect properties are perfectly legitimate.)
- "The Seer of Light, eyes obscured by a hood." (Technically this is a statement about the God-Tier costume but it still counts!)
- "The Seer of Light, her needles become sunbeams." (About how your Aspect could help you fight.)

Prince of Heart

- "The Prince of Heart, his blade tempered by discipline."
- "The Prince of Heart, the destroyer of identity."
- "The Prince of Heart, eyes hidden by sunglasses." (Eyes being the window to soul, and all. Point is, if you feel like you need to start stretching, go ahead.)

Once the HG is out of ideas, the HG should end the Ritual by replying to the last pose with this phrase:

"The blood is accepted. The _____ of _____ rises anew."

The result of this ritual is that you are not dead. You show up on the Battlefield, and you can fly. You may also have some sort of physical change, such as wings, related to your species' conception of adulthood.

At the HG's option, you may also have your MP and Will refreshed, as if you used a Recharge Token.

A Long Presession (20/30/40 XP)

> The longest verified-known presession is one and a half years... and counting.

> "Seer Network Survey Statistics ts30", lucidChthonia

1: ⬡ ⬡

3: ⬡ ⬡ ⬡

4: ⬡

5: ⬡ ⬡

Presession is usually a matter of hours, days, maybe the occasional two or three weeks. But sometimes – sometimes presession lasts *months*. (The record, as far as I can tell, is a little over two years.)

It seems like such a long presession should be a vacation from the demands of Sburb. But *you cannot ever completely escape the clutches of Sburb*. In presession, Sburb does not consume you physically – but it is very nearly inevitable that it will consume you mentally, instead.

What You'll Know

> If someone starts prying into your PTSD, let them assume you're a combat veteran. After all, you are, right? […]

> A standard deflection for awkward questions about your combat history is "I only tell that story when I'm drinking, and I won't drink with you." Use with caution if you don't drink regularly; while sequestering yourself to talk to other Replayers is usually enough absence for people to assume you're self-medicating, some Replayees' families may attempt to intervene if this goes on too long. It'll be very awkward to explain to an addiction counselor that actually, you don't drink at all.

> *You Wouldn't Believe Me If I Told You: When The Weirdness Filter Fails and Other Presession*

> *Troubles*, originalQuicksilver

Let's start with what you *don't* know: You don't know how long presession lasts. You don't know when Sburb's coming. Skaianet announces a projected release date for Sburb, but they pretty much never hit it properly. Sometimes they are early. More often they are late.

You'll know, or research, which type of planet you're on.[82] Who lives there. At least basic facts about its geography and cultures.

You'll be able to speak and read the language they speak in the place that you live in, at least. It's one of the things Sburb gives you to smooth over the transition. You don't get to keep it; it's more like an

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==> 82. EB: Earth and Beforus/Alternia may be the most common, but you might end up elsewhere.

Affliction that sort of magically changes the words coming into and out of your head so that they match a language that you *do* understand. So you're not actually learning it; it's just something you *know*, and you lose it at the end of the quest.

You'll learn how to get along in your replayee's life... or how to *escape* your replayee's life. You'll learn about who your replayee was, either way. And you'll learn that just because you're outside of Sburb does not mean that you can stop worrying.

What You'll Do

> It's all a gift, an incredible shock of goodness, that instead of emptiness there would be
> *things* and their lightness and their heaviness and their sweetness and their bitterness and
> their luminosity and their saturation and their hue. It is an amazing thing that there should be
> a dawn at all and on that tide of love, Sid cries, "How beautiful."
>
> And then memory, the thief of joy, casts him down into his grief.
>
> "The Isn't (I/I)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

None of these people know they're all going to die, and you get to live with that, day after day after day after day. Most presessions aren't long enough for you to get attached – this one *is*. This planet has so many people and you don't want them to die.

I doubt you'll be able to find a way to save them. Just dragging them into the Game lets them get picked off by nonplayer doom; anything more complex would probably involve a Deal – with the Horrorterrors, since the Denizens (even if you wake them quickly) usually refuse to even consider the notion.[83]

Most Replayers make at least an effort to learn their Replayees' lives, and take their places as best as possible, to ensure that they will have somewhere to live and something to eat in the unlikely event of a long presession. But this doesn't mean you can learn a complex job in a day or two. More likely it'll take weeks just to understand what the routine should be.

And the other thing is that – well, the Somebody Else's Problem field that keeps people from realizing you're not your Replayee is not perfect. It is very good, but it is not perfect: if you have horns, and someone takes a very detailed inventory of your physical appearance from head to toe rather than just going "probably another human", they'll realize you have horns.

The last thing… the last thing is that presession is a place you no longer understand, or belong. You've been in Sburb far, far too long. You've gotten *used* to the idea that you were the only few people left in the world, and so you did not need to hide your feelings. That Sburb will rachet up the difficulty level just when you're starting to get comfortable. That you need to become someone *else*, in order to satisfy the Game.

==> 83. EB: The Denizens say that they wouldn't be able to charge you enough, in exchange; or if they do, it's a life for a life: you or your coplayers dead in exchange for an equal number of nonplayers being given player status. The Horrorterrors are only *slightly* better.

The fact that all of these things are not present now either unnerves you, or makes you terrified of the moment when you'll be subject to them once again.

Quest Cards

A Long Presession (20/30/40 XP) (silver card)

Major goals: The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- someone in presession realizes that you *aren't* your Replayee;
- you try to run away from your Replayee's place in society;
- you confess to a nonplayer that you're a Player, and what you've been through;
- you're mistaken for someone who went through some *other* kind of trauma, such as someone thinking you're a combat veteran;
- you're hospitalized;
- a coplayer, another Replayer, shows up and bails you out of something.

You can earn up to 2/3/4 of these bonuses, for a total of up to 10/15/20 XP.

Quest flavor: 1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you:

- ⬡ 🔶 have nightmares prominently featuring Sburb
- 🔷 ♛ travel an extremely long distance just to see a coplayer
- ⬡ 🟠 break the law (at least, the presession law)
- 🔷 🔶 find yourself, inexplicably, longing to be back in Sburb
- ♛ nod along to someone else's monologue while not having the faintest idea what they're saying
- 🔻 have an interaction with someone in presession and see them as a *person*, not just as background color
- ♛ stand alone in a crowd, completely alienated
- 😑 import something from another universe to this universe to make money off it (usually music or literature, downloaded from Pits, although importing your knowledge of science to this universe is also something that can totally happen)
- ⬡ 🔶 have an out-of-proportion/traumatic reaction to something in presession that reminded you of something in Sburb

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

Keep in mind that while a Replayer might be hospitalized for a mental breakdown or delusional beliefs, a diagnosis of "schizophrenia" requires other features – for example, a "formal thought disorder", where someone cannot even converse coherently because their brain is drawing too many side connections, or "disorganized behavior", where someone acts in ways that are obviously unsuitable to their immediate environment (i.e. wearing jackets on hot summer days). Furthermore, the diagnosis also requires that these things interfere with someone's ability to participate in life, and that they have lasted for a long time.

A *good* hospital/clinician would not diagnose someone with schizophrenia just because they said they came from Sburb. Mind you, not all hospitals or clinicians are competent. But unless it's something from your personal experience, I'd really prefer that you not go the "incompetent stereotypical mental institution" route – many pop-culture representations of what these places are like are deeply inaccurate.

Seven Gates (Void Session) (25/35/45 XP)

> I crested the rise. I saw a field of bones, bleached white in the light of Skaia. They had cleaned up their houses, written their last words, lain down, and waited to die.
>
> *Trouble Is, We're Mortal*, watercolorMixer

1: ⬣ ⬣

2: ⬣ ⬣

3: ⬣ ⬣ ⬣

4: ⬣ ⬣

You showed up in this presession with the Entry Object already ready and waiting in your hand and the Cruxtruder countdown a few seconds to zero. It sucks when that happens, but now there's a complication:

Unlike most sessions, this session did *not* autofill your Sprite with what the Replayee threw in it. This session just left your kernel blank. A blank kernel does not develop the Battlefield or complexify Skaia. A blank kernel does not enter and light a prototyping orb. A blank kernel, in short, means that something has gone horribly wrong with your session's initialization sequence, and Sburb has decided that you are the ones to fix it.

Skaia is dark. There is no War. There are no Consorts. No Land Familiars. No Sprites of any degree of usefulness. You are alone. And you're utterly screwed.

What You'll Do

There are no Consorts, and so there are no Consort Quests. There are still puzzle ruins and dungeons, but they're set to high difficulty, i.e. the difficulty they would be if you decided to complete them after Slaying the Beast, in a normal session. In other words, if you try to get into the dungeons, you had better be a Class that's very good at getting the goods and getting out, or you're dead. Best avoid them unless you have a Displacement class, and even then tread with caution. A similar rule holds for the stat scaling on Underlings in general – they're set to 90% damage reduction, higher than even that of endgame Underlings in normal sessions, and essentially all starting weapons have no penetration. Again, you're going to have a problem there.[84]

There are Whisperings, but they're strangely laid-back. Because Skaia is broken, there is no way for the Reckoning to threaten you, and so there is no drive for you to get Roleplay Coefficient bonuses. If you're going to become an X of Y, it'll be on your own initiative. Many Replayers, if they don't know what's going on, don't even bother going along, because they're comfortable in their identities. This would be fine but for the fact that you might actually *need* those powers later.

==> 84. EB: I'd suggest finding jobs on the Dream Moons and getting enough Boondollars that you can use gristwidgeting to afford something that it is actually possible to kill Imps with.

Void sessions can stretch on for years, and don't require you to build ARC. This would be good, in theory – many of us *want* something like that, it seems like it would be a break in the Game – but there's a catch.

While *Skaia* is not interested in enforcing a deadline –

The *Horrorterrors* are.

See, the Horrorterrors[85] are given the authority, under the Ancient Law, to garbage-collect and eat sessions that have outlived their usefulness. And while the Horrorterrors are willing to let a session stretch on for a few years, they're not willing to wait *forever*.

A bit more than three and a half years in, perhaps, or maybe five years in, or maybe only two[86]... you will begin seeing the stars come out.

The stars that are Horrorterror eyes. The stars that symbolize the end of a Session. The stars that mean that if you do not leave, you will be eaten. If you haven't figured out how to escape or how to fix your session by then, all you can do is make sure that your affairs are in order.

I'm going to assume you're not interested in that kind of thing.

I'm going to assume that you want to live.

Quest Card

Seven Gates (Void Session) (25/35/45 XP) (purple card)

Major goals: The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- you end up in a major interpersonal snarl (traditionally there is a love triangle involved, although other kinds of interpersonal snarls would count too);
- another session's fate interacts somehow with your session, offering a possible way out but also significant danger;
- you try to sell going through the Ring – or going through Skaia – to your coplayers, and they refuse or have reservations;
- you make a Deal with the Horrorterrors;
- you kill something you love so it doesn't have to die a slow death.

You can earn up to 2/3/4 of these bonuses, for a total of up to 10/15/20 XP.

Quest flavor: 1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you:

- ♕ ⬡ come across the remnants of your Consorts

==> 85. OJ: In other words, the Horrorterrors enforce the rules of Sburb. It is things like this that make me wonder: What if it's *us*, the handlers and writers of our Replayers, who are the Horrorterrors, driving our characters to do terrible things and watching the results?

==> 86. EB: The variance is substantial; the minimum time to being eaten is about a year and a half, and the longest I've heard of a Void session lasting is a hair less than seven years.

- 🔥 🟠 get into an argument that escalates to the point of screaming matches or someone being tempbanned
- 🔷 ♨️ celebrate someone's birthday (not necessarily yours)
- ♨️ fail to defeat a single Imp
- ♨️ 🟠 work at a job on the Dream Moons
- 🔻 brace yourself for something that doesn't happen at all
- 🔷 🔵 work on building a Ringship
- 🔥 run from scorpions, poisonous snakes, or other ground-dwelling poisonous creatures, most likely in a dream or imagine spot

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

Voyage through the Ring (25/35/45)

1: 🔥 🏆 🗂️

4: 🏆

5: 😵 ⚡ 🔥

There is a danger, in your session, and you need to get *out*, and you need to get out *now*. Or perhaps your session is Void, or otherwise irretrievably broken, and you have finally managed to convince your coplayers that maybe leaving is for the best.

Either way: I assume that you have built a ship, and that someone has Dealt with the Horrorterrors for your safety. I assume that you have someone who can navigate, or have requested navigational assistance as part of your Deal. I also assume that you have someone who can propel the ship, or you've built engines.

What follows is many, many *years* of absolutely nothing.

A Note On Time

Because of the fact that a Ring voyage tends to have a whole lot of nothing going on, it is generally considered best practice to let your timetrav/network know, so they don't freak out at the fact that your personal timeline is suddenly slipping by them at a much higher rate.

Chapter lengths, while still "1/10 of a timestamp", thus mean weeks or months of subjective time, because it can take that long to accumulate XP actions, ICly.

What You'll Do

You'll be in a ship. It is sealed, all the hatches and airlocks closed tight, against the Ring outside.

This is not because the Ring doesn't have air; it does. This is because the Ring's very *air* contains traces of corruption, and you really do not want to be breathing that stuff any more than you can help it. So you've probably set up some sort of recirculatory air system that can absorb carbon dioxide and output oxygen. You will need food, and you will need water. These also use recirculatory systems like in spaceships. (There are plans for that kind of thing in the Prospit and Derse libraries, although they're usually hard to find. It's probably faster just to look it up on Pits.)

These recirculatory systems are *not* free to maintain. There is usually some loss to the environment, and some loss to things that you can't reclaim. You will probably be fabricating replacement filtration cartridges on the alchemiter (you'll definitely want to lug an appropriately tricked-out alchemiter into your ship with you). You will probably have some sort of garden or algae tank or something from which you get passable but monotonous staple foods, with the alimentator saved for special occasions.

You have *no way to replenish grist*. Between sessions, in the Ring, there is a whole lot of nothing. And while recirculation systems reduce how much you'll be spending, they do not eliminate it. Things wear

out and need to be fixed. Filters need to be replaced. Gardens sometimes need to be restarted from scratch due to blight. Likely as not you could end up eating the same six alimentator potatoes for *months* while the garden gets back up to speed, and the alimentator is not free to use.

Of course, that'll only take up a relatively small part of your time. Most of your time will be spent idle.

Idle time is rare in the Game. But as with people in actual spaceships, you'll be spending that time surrounded by a hostile environment, in a cramped space, with people you didn't necessarily choose to spend all this time with -

And, as it turns out, Ring voyages that fail rarely fail physically. They fail *emotionally*, first.

See, if you're in a ship with three other people, or whatever, you can't get away from them. Little annoyances will blow up. The Seer might get resentful of the fact that you keep having to check them for corruption. The Flow player that's been keeping your engines stoked gets so angry at someone that they try to set something – or someone – on fire. The person with the inapplicable classpect will feel totally useless and probably become depressed and neglect hygiene and such.

There is a *reason* that most Ring voyages that succeed have an onboard Blood, Heart, Mind, or Stars player. It is because you need someone with the explicit duty of keeping everyone else sane.[87]

Sometimes you'll come up on Bubbles, in the Ring; you can enter them and interact with the ghosts inside. They primarily engage in food, sex, and sophomoric social drama. It's a nice change of pace, I guess, but it is also completely frivolous in a way that gets on my nerves.

Sure, the ghosts are rather often people you know, but they've been dead for hundreds or thousands of years and they have *no sense of urgency*. A decade is "short" for them. They don't understand how much we have to scrabble and fight for our lives – oh, they intellectually understand, and they're sympathetic, but they think that they can talk to you about how it all evens out in the end. It's frustrating.

Just as frustrating is that since they're basically capable of dreaming up stuff at any time, they have their needs taken care of, and spend roughly all of their time in convoluted social games that I don't understand.[88]

Occasionally – very occasionally – there'll be a Ringbeast. The Ring contains giant whales, squid, and other such megafauna. These beasts are totally unrelated to the Horrorterrors. The Horrorterrors have no idea how they got there. They just float around, totally immune to corruption for no clear reason.

Usually they're just *there*. But sometimes you'll have to do some tricky maneuvering to make sure you don't crash into them.

==> 87. EB: If you're that player: there is extensive literature on Pits, mostly harvested from presessions, on the psychology of people in small spaces like Antarctic bases and spaceships. Good luck.

==> 88. EB: Well, okay, most of them spend their time in convoluted social games. Some of them are working on something else entirely...

Voyage Through the Ring (25/35/45 XP) (silver card)

Major goals: The HG can award you 5 XP towards this quest when:

- an argument escalates to the point where it threatens the entire group;
- someone gets Corrupted;
- a major life support system fails;
- you encounter a Ringbeast;
- you pick up a distress beacon (probably from a null session, although it's possible someone else's Ring voyage has gone wrong);
- you get closure with the bubbleghost of someone you care about that died.

You can earn up to (2, 3, 4) of these bonuses, for a total of (10, 15, 20) XP.

Quest flavor: 1/chapter, you can earn a bonus XP for this quest when you:

- � 🍲 eat with everyone in your ship at one table
- 🔶 😵 fix something that broke
- ⚡ 🍲 read or write longform fiction
- ⚡ 🍲 stop over in a Bubble and meet people
- 🔥 can't do something because of a grist shortage
- 🔷 🍲 use an Internet-connected device to talk to someone even though they're close enough you could just say things out loud to them
- 🍲 are bored and restless
- ⚡ 🍲 watch a movie or TV show marathon
- 🔷 🍲 walk or run laps down the various corridors of the ship
- 🔷 spar with someone

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

Miscellaneous Quests

> Paula hauled the grill out of her sylladex and dropped it on the ground in front of her. It was followed by a rolling drawer cart full of food, a minifridge, a shade tent, and a gallon of ice cream.
>
> That gallon of ice cream had to be from presession - nobody's found a way to alchemize the stuff and have it still taste adequate. She'd been saving it for weeks, then. This cookout must've been a big deal to her.
>
> "So," she said, plunking herself down on a folding chair. "I want to start experimenting with the flow of the Battlefield. It could buy us months of session time, but it could also trigger the Reckoning prematurely, so I want to make sure I have everyone's permission." She pulled out six clipboards, each with a sheaf of papers and a pen, and started passing them around. "First, look at section 1a…"

<div align="right">

"bellTower", *The Gamebreakers of the Vine*, rhodochrositeMajesty

</div>

These are all anytime quests; most are chibi-quests. If you extend them to 20 or 25 (or relevant fraction thereof), you may be able to use them as quests on an Arc.

These quests give temporary benefits when completed. These benefits disappear if you remove the quest from your quest slots. If you choose to remove the quest card from your quest slots before the Black King fight but after you've finished the quest itself, save it. You can still turn them it during the fight; you just can't get the temporary benefits anymore. (And no, you can't put the quest back in to get the benefits back. Otherwise, someone would be able to muchkin this by hotswapping them.)

All of these quests must be removed from your quest slots when you go through the Door, regardless of how long you've had them or if you ever finished them. This is because they are intrinsically session-bound – work on these quests does not carry over to the next Sburb session. (If a quest was unfinished, distribute half the XP to your other quests as usual for a canceled quest.)

Frog Breeding

Okay, sure, you can have scenes where you hunt down frogs, or where you're hunched over the frog-ectobiology machines trying to get the right combination. But there's only so many of *those* scenes you can do. So, to show that you've been working on frog breeding, let's do something broader: you can get XP by finding a stray frog on yourself, a nearby surface, or your stuff.

Frog breeding is a **Work and Study (purple card) quest**, and usually 15 XP long. Full rules for how this works are in the core, but here's the gist:

XP condition: You can earn a bonus XP at any time (up to once every fifteen minutes) when you find a frog somewhere. (The frog can be out in the world, clinging to you, or in your stuff.)

When you finish this quest, keep it active in your quest slot for a

Unbreakable Unions

In Sburb, you don't merely get to know your coplayers as a matter of course; there's a mechanical benefit to it. But the mechanical benefit's capped, so you'll want to switch around who you do it with.

This is also a **Work and Study (purple card) quest**. It is probably 15 XP long.

So, you'll need a teammate for this one. One of you needs to put this card in your quest slots, and write the other character's name on it.

XP condition: Whenever you appear in a scene with your Teammate, and one of you earns XP (whether through XP action, quest XP, emotion XP, or otherwise), this card also earns XP. *This can be done once a scene.*

When you finish this quest, keep it active in your quest slot for a bilateral level 2 Connection skill (i.e. both of you get this benefit, even if it's in someone else's quest slot and not yours); also, you can turn it in during the Black King fight.

Grinding for Dream Moon Reputation

So, I know I haven't done much with quest stuff on the Dream Moons. I do apologize; it was never one of my interests, so you'll have to fill in many of the details for yourself.

What I do know is that, if you'd like to get yourself an in with the Prospit or Derse court, you'll need to learn and practice the appropriate manners first. That's what this Quest is for.

Dream Moon reputation-grinding is usually a **Paradigmatic (blue card) quest**, although it can also be a **Work and Study (purple card) quest**, especially if you already have a Connection skill with the dream moon in question.. It can be 15 XP long, or 25-35 XP long.

XP condition (blue): Propose a theory for something you can do that would increase your Dream Moon reputation. (This needs to be at least seriously considered ICly - if you're just tossing it off OOCly, that won't count!) You can do this for an XP up to once every fifteen minutes.

XP condition (purple): Come up with a catchphrase that connects what you're doing to the Dream Moons, such as "Yeah, it's for the [Prospitians/Dersites]." You can say this for an XP up to once every fifteen minutes.

This counts as a Quest Miracle: when you're done with this quest, you can ask the Court for a favor, such as a spaceship, assistance with defending a location, or limited access to the spy network on the opposite Dream Moon. This favor will last at least as long as you keep this quest active. (For the purposes of conflict resolution, the existence of the favor, and your access to it, are enforced by a Major Miraculous Action while you have the card active. This fades to mundane-level coincidences and Obstacles if you remove it from a quest slot.)

If you extended this quest to 25-35XP, in addition to the "quest miracle" reward you can take a level 1-2 Connection perk to the Court of your chosen dream moon (i.e. Connection: Prospitian Court; Connection: Dersite Court).

Words have Power (15)

You'll spend a long time poring over lore in the Prospitian libraries, investigating through dusty tomes (and the occasional misfiled book – I saw self-insert pornography in those libraries once; it was really awkward). You'll do a bunch of cross-referencing, and write research papers to present to the Prospitian Research Association. It's all theoretical stuff about how Clases and Aspects work; if you've got someone who actually enjoys this stuff in your session, or Seers and Sages who will get ARC from this, make them do it. Doing enough of this kind of research unlocks a fundamental insight into how Classpects in your session work – the Counter-Edict – that allows you to nullify the most devastating part of the Black King's final attack.

This is a **Paradigmatic (blue card) quest**, usually 15 XP long, where you propose a theory about your Aspect abilities, ostensibly since you read it in a book (although since you don't actually have those books on hand, you'll just be making this up as you go along). Tell us about how you think maybe Mind is an aspect focused around binaries - the side of logical, mathematic, programming stuff and the side of psychological, empathetic stuff. Tell us about why Flow players are so associated with heat, because heat is basically particles jiggling really quickly against each other. Whatever. This kind of stuff brings in a bonus XP for this quest.

It doesn't *have* to be about Classpects inside your session, technically – the books do discuss "theoretical" aspect wheels, talk about how other Classes might affect Aspects, and fill in pairs of aspects with speculation – but it's better if they're relevant to your session, for thematic consistency reasons.

When completed, holding this quest card gives you, and anyone else physically present near you in a scene, 1 Edge when using Sburban Magics. (This is not a Tool, so it does not increase your Intention level. It only makes your action more likely to succeed against opposition.)

In the Black King chapter, turning in this quest lets you declare the Counter-Edict ritual against the Edict ritual, which makes Making Answer a valid ritual action.

Special Defense Quests

These are chibi-quests that each grant you a special way to blunt or defend against attacks during the Black King chapter. They are most likely to be purple. They look something like this:

- **Destroying the Laboratories**: You'll spend time exploring the Veil and blowing up the mysterious laboratories on a lot of those meteors. This means that the Derse army cannot provide ground support to the King. When completed, holding this quest card gives you a level 3 Connection to the Veil, and the card can be turned in for a special defense.

- **Grounding the Fleet**: You'll be sabotaging Derse storehouses and military installations (whether by blowing them up, or by doing something more subtle like pouring sugar into gas tanks), and snooping on the activities of the Derse military hierarchy to give that information to the White Queen. This means that the Derse fleet will be badly supplied and unreliable. When completed, holding this quest card gives you a level 2 Connection to Derse, and the card can be turned in for a special defense.

- **Prospitian Skyguard**: You'll find a bunch of blueprints in various places on Prospit, and piece them together and give them to a high-up Prospitian military advisor. When they are assembled, they will be the plans for single-seat helicopters with guns mounted to them. The Skyguard will use the completed helicopters to run interference against the Derse fleet. When completed, holding this quest card gives you a level 2 Connection to Prospit, and the card can be turned in for a special defense.

Handlers are allowed and encouraged to make up other quests like these. In all cases, the reward for holding the open card is a level 2-3 Connection to a Region (exact strength depends on how important the Region is), and the card can be turned in for a special defense.

The End...?

> If you were feeling nothing, you would be dead. And by that I mean erased-from-the-bubbles permadead, not just our dinky little afterlife.
>
> The things that you feel are information. They may be unpleasant information, but they are still information. So you need to know what they mean before you dismiss them.

> neptunianAnswer

Beginning the fight with the Black King starts a new chapter (with all the effects that starting a chapter usually comes with, including MP/Will refresh and, if the HG wants, Issue point removal). This happens even if your previous chapter isn't finished.

In theory, this is a chapter of Road of Trials. In practice, it is almost a giant ritual: it is several Rituals and Transitions strung together, each of which flows into the next.

THE APPROACH

a Transition, with text branches and variations

[This text will change depending on if everyone ended the session on good terms, if a few people died, if most people died, if someone's the only survivor; if most of them managed to get pretty far in the Sburb storyline, or if most of them didn't and just rushed straight to the Battlefield instead; if the session had at least 12 Prototypes the sheer monstrosity of the King terrifying even his own army; whether the players are completely new, relatively new, veterans, jaded veterans, or a mix of several of these categories...

There will probably be a barebones version of it here, and a more complete version peppered with Elizabeth's remarks as a Twine game.]

[The mood I want to capture is grandeur cut down at the knees by jaded pessimism: this will probably be accomplished by interrupting a baroque-sounding monologue with sudden informality. But I also want to write the full baroque monologue, because even though this game isn't built for first-sessioners someone is going to try to use this for their only-one-session-of-Sburb game anyway.]

The Grand Melee

by Geostatonary

This ritual begins when the players engage the Black King in final battle. To signal its beginning, the HG will say something like,

"And so the heroes engage in the final battle for Skaia."

Going in, it must be known: your skills are not enough. Throughout the fight, Skaia gains the following region property:

`[Mortal skill alone cannot overcome the Black King.]`

What does this mean? Mostly, it's *hard* to hurt the King- they get free Edge on most any defense against mundane attack! The King doesn't even utilize traditional health levels in this fight! He's just not the sort of thing that mundane, unaugmented force is sufficient for. Further, the King has the Affliction (3) `[Mind control and coercion cannot help in fights against me]`. While such actions are sound in theory, in practice they offer little to no recourse.[89]

So how do you defeat the King? As you perform the ritual, certain actions give you "beats"; consider them wounds or narrative mechanisms or what have you, but when you reach (# players x 2) beats, the ritual ends.

Ritual Actions

After each ritual action, the HG says "And so the [N]th hour passes". For example, if it is the third action, the HG will state afterwards "And so the third hour passes." Actions are done round-robin, and they continue until enough beats are hit or everyone dies and/or flees.

Standard ritual actions are as follows:

- You describe the movements of the Dersian army, and how they respond to your assault on the king or try to stop you
- You describe your attacks on the king, and how they are not enough
- You describe the power and majesty of the Black King's attacks on the players, and find hope in how they stand their ground or despair in the immensity of it all.
- You reflect on the events that led you to this point, and why you must succeed

Further, a special set of ritual actions may be takent to accumulate beats.

- In lieu of taking a ritual XP action, a player can opt to take a (Suffer) Adversity, (Suffer) Trauma, or Never Say Die! XP action. They take a relevant Wound, but they also make a meaningful strike against the Black King. Gain a beat.

==> 89. OJ: It's not like Vriska could user her mind powers to force the Black King into submission, after all.

- Invoke the Miraculous in an attack against the King for a tactical, limited goal or to defend a/your friend(s). (That is, you don't aim the attack against "the King". You aim to break his levitation organ, blind him, cripple one of his legs, and so on.) Gain a beat.

- Spend a Recharge Token to invoke your fraymotif, and renew your assault against the Black King. Gain a beat.

- Turn in a miscellaneous anytime quest (except for Words have Power). Narrate how your experience helped you. Gain a beat. (Obviously, you also lose the temporary benefits that the miscellaneous quests gave you when you turn them in.)

- After the twelfth hour has passed, a final action becomes available: Players may take Deadly Wounds in exchange for beats against the Black King; to invoke this option they describe an attack against the King, why they must do it, and how their final struggle against the King hurts them.

When you have accumulated the relevant number of Beats, the HG reads this to close the ritual:

"The battlefield stills. The King kneels. You almost let yourself believe that it's done. But…"

Additional Notes

Throughout this, the HG may have the armies of Derse act as appropriate; assume a level 2 Intention for their actions.

Whenever the players gain a beat, the HG may give the Black King a reaction shot to counterattack the player(s) who harmed it; assume an Intention of 5 for their attacks, but do not forget relevant bonds. It is also not unreasonable to give the Black King 1-3 levels of inherent Edge as appropriate.

"What it comes down to," she said, "is that I'm raising someone's kid for them."

Carl looked her straight in the eye for the first time in a while. "And some heavy shit just went down," he said.

"Some very heavy shit, yes."

Carl nodded.

"It's so heavy," Miranda said, "that I don't even know if this girl is alive or dead."

Carl glanced up at the fancy old clock on the wall, its face yellowed from a century and a half's accumulation of tar and nicotine. "If she's alive," he said, "then she probably needs you."

The Diamond Age, Neal Stephenson

a supplemental Ritual

There is, as always in this game, a fundamental barrier between those outside a session and those inside a session. Because, if you are outside of a session that is going wrong, the only thing you can provide is your words. And if those are not enough...

...well. I have experienced that particular kind of helplessness many, many times; and I would not wish it on anyone.

This is a Ritual designed to be invoked during the Grand Melee, but if you replace "against the Black King" with some other target, you may be able to use it with other Rituals as well.

Characters who are inside the session in which the Grand Melee is happening are referred to as "those present". Characters who are outside of the session in question, and who thus have no method other than their words to help, are referred to as "those not present".

Anyone who is not present during the Grand Melee may invoke this Ritual by saying: "And we watch." This adds everyone to the round-robin order of the Ritual.

Standard ritual actions for those not present are as follows:

- You say "Pass" to skip your turn, if you don't think you can say anything relevant
- You express worry and hope for those present against the Black King
- You reflect on the relationship you have with one of those present in front of the Black King
- You recall a time that you yourself took a Deadly Wound in a fight against a Black King, or (if you're referring to backstory from before the game started) an injury/sacrifice of comparable magnitude from a previous Black King fight

- You encourage those present against the Black King to fight harder
- You speculate about why there must be a Black King fight at all, in the metaphysics of Sburb

As usual for Rituals, a Will surcharge is imposed on trying to do anything other than these specific actions.

The separation between you and those present is the usual Obstacle 2 and Auctoritas 2 imposed by session boundaries. During this ritual, it is also considered a Bleak effect. On your turn during the ritual, you may attempt to Make Answer against it...

...and if anyone present/fighting is Defeated by a Wound directly inflicted during the fight against the Black King, this barrier momentarily falls, allowing one of you to formulate an Intention or miracle that will be able to reach through for as long as you can sustain it. (You are allowed a bit of time to negotiate which one of you is doing it, but you can't take too long or the window closes.)

There will still be an Obstacle to attempting to, say, punch the Black King through your computer monitor. (Because duh.) And you can't gain Beats for those present; it is their fight alone. But you can cast Sburban Magics across the void, or give a helpful Bond to those present, or try to summon some sort of shield to protect them.

The Edict

a ritual

This ritual is begun *immediately* after the Grand Melee is completed, by the HG saying this:

"The King falls.

And then the King rises."

It is at this point that the King's dying final blast is triggered: he shuts down the Whisperings. He cuts you off from the narrator's voice that has guided you to be the best Title of Aspect that you can be. If you have internalized your classpect well enough – if you know how to act like who you are without anything guiding you – then you will get through it. But if you don't...

As previously established, the characters fighting the King are referred to as "those present", and the characters who can only watch are referred to as "those not present". Also, the HG will need a way to "mark" people who have successfully passed this test. (This can be accomplished with an extra set of tokens, or by having someone keep a list of marked people.)

Turning in the Words have Power quest card now will let you invoke The Counter-Edict (instructions follow).

The ritual is thus:

The HG will ask each of those present, one at a time, a question about how they ought to behave, judging by their Classpect. (This will benefit significantly from HG pre-preparation. If you want to be particularly mean, you can pose questions that contradict intuitive morality. For example, Thieves are actually *required* to steal unattended valuable items.) The questions will be something like these:

- Your friend is about to spend the last of their boondollars on something frivolous. What do you do?
- You happen upon a legendary weapon that seems to be abandoned. What do you do?
- You and someone you don't like both need protection from the damaging Starlight, but the jar of Stellarum Salve is almost empty and you won't be able to get any more. What do you do?
- You wake up to find that your server player has built an incredibly ugly fence across your front yard. What do you do?

The handler must then answer the question, starting the answer with "A good [Class] of [Aspect] would..."

It is not very important for the answer to be correct. It is, however, very important that the answer be *prompt*. If your answer is prompt and at least partially on-the-mark, the HG marks you.

This continues round-robin until everyone present has been asked one question each.

Everyone who has *not* been marked after each round is subject to an attack from the Black King, treated as a mundane action with Intention level 5. Affected characters may attempt to defend with whatever powers they can scrounge up. Those who have been marked may choose to narrate narrowly escaping, defending against, or otherwise avoiding danger from this attack, if they would like.

The HG then asks another Classpect question of those present who are unmarked. This allows them another chance to become marked.

This proceeds until all characters have been marked, all unmarked characters have been defeated, or three rounds (and three attacks) have occurred.

a supplemental ritual

This is designed to be invoked as an addition to The Edict. It makes Making Answer to the Bleak a possible response to *every question* asked during the Edict.

(I mean, even without this, you can *try* to Make Answer during the Edict anyway. But this adds it to the standard ritual actions list, making it much more likely to succeed.)

For reference, this allows you to solve Issues, perform most other XP actions if you make them real and desperate enough, and

a Transition

(1) The tadpole, bright, and us before the Pond;
we, children of the Game that birthed us all
share with the Frog a true and timeless bond.
The universe unfolds, and we are small.

(2) The tadpole wriggles, tail stuck fast against
a badly rendered lilypad below
the Door. Why is it here? In its defense,
it still thinks it can find the pond and grow.

(3) The tadpole, shine gone dull, is thrashing still;
we cannot help, the ancient law forbids;
and so we stand and wait out here until
some sign delivers us from limbo's grids.

(5) The pastel's disappeared from tadpole skin;
The magic has gone dark and still and gray.
We know by now that we can never win;
yet cargo-cult continue, still, this way.

(6) The tadpole's dead – so why are we out here?
There's nothing left; from now until we drop
We shout, even though nobody will hear;
we know it's futile, yet we still don't stop.

(7 and all further) [deep sigh] You're done.

A User's Guide to the Apocalypse

The King, for One

In a session with two or more PCs, play The End as usual.

However, in a session with one PC, many of these Rituals make little sense. You therefore have several options:

- You can play all the Rituals and Transitions as usual, but with only one participant;

- you can play all the Rituals and Transitions, allowing other players to temporarily step into the roles of NPCs in the session ("troupe play", as on page ???);

- or you can play an abbreviated version of this ritual designed for singleplayer sessions, which follows.

This last version of the ritual can also be used for "Wage the War", the alternate win condition that involves using the Prospit army to defeat the Derse army.

Micah's life is lived staccato.

There are good hours and good days. There is ice cream and there is running in the park. There is home, complete with Liril's mother Priyanka and her tenuous but loving welcome. There are fish sticks and french fries and cheese which you can divide into arbitrarily many sub-cheese strings. There are times when he can lie on his bed and talk to Liril about the stringencies of their world.

Then between the beats of his life it becomes painful.

It's like Liril and Micah are two rats in a dinosaur's cave. Their lives are interrupted, again and again, by the great blundering atrocities stumbling around them in the darkness. It is an inexpressible condition. He will sit in the corner of their room for hours, trying to find a way to put it into words. Liril doesn't even try.

[...]One day it is raining. It is pouring down through the branches of the trees. She tells him the name of a bead of water on the glass and he watches Vassily the Raindrop slip down to the edge of the window of their room and break.

On another day the monster is choking him with a belt around his neck.

<div style="text-align:center">"The Boundary Between Liril and the World (II/VII)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran</div>

Passing through the Door Beyond the End, to complete a session, is always a critical and transformative moment. Because, no matter how jaded a Replayer is, passing through the Door always ignites a spark of hope – hope that *this time* the Door will work, *this time* they'll truly escape.

Between the rising of this hope and the swift snuffing thereof, several important things happen.

Sburb uses the Door as a cleansing and checking mechanism. Passing through the Door resets your equipment to starting-tier equipment (including Specibi and robotic limbs), clears most of your inventory (you keep only what you had at the beginning of your very first session of Sburb, plus 1-3 relatively useless items with sentimental value), and does some bookkeeping with your shiny.

Practically, this means that passing through the Door does these things:

- You lose access to your Title Issue. All points you have in Title Issues are removed.
- You'll remove point(s) from Issue(s), the same way as the book says you do at the end of a session of play:
  - If you are using the accelerated Issue handling rules, you remove one point from the Issue that seems least relevant.
  - If you are using the full Issue handling rules, you remove one point from *every* Issue.

- All Surface and Serious wounds are healed, unless you choose to keep them. Serious Wounds *do not otherwise heal*, not even at the ends of Books.

- You retain all Perks, but...

  - There is an Obstacle 3 against using any techniques from any Sburban Magic that is not your *current* Aspect, magical or otherwise.

  - Because you will be in presession, you will not have a current Aspect. You will have to Enter Sburb again, and receive a new Title and Aspect.

  - While you can use Sburban magic in presession (there are several instances of people doing so in Homestuck), it's definitely going to be weird by presession standards, and may attract unwanted attention.

- The HG may *occasionally* let you rewrite a Bond or Affliction at this time. Don't count on it.

- You are reset to your "default" appearance, clothing, and inventory. Since we don't keep track of these things, this doesn't mean much. However, default clothing can sometimes be amusing or embarrassing.

  - Would you like to change your default appearance/inventory? Earn a Trick Perk based on your new appearance or loadout. The next time you pass through the Door, it will "fix" this Trick onto your character. Then you can discard the Perk and just assume that your new gear is there afterwards.

- You end up in a new presession. You replace someone in body and soul. Make sure to change your Pesterchum handle...

Classspect Assignment

> Who will you become? Nobody knows, except you, and you won't admit it to yourself until you've spun the Wheel of Fate.
>
> So if you let us bet on your next Classspect, you'll receive a 5% commission!
>
> "Horserace Services", transamphibian.sburb.aspects.light, photoFinish

The "classspect" – that title and Sburban aspect[90], and thus the kind of magic you get assigned – is assigned to you based on what you need. If you do not think of yourself as a person worth moral weight, you will become a Thief, who must learn to demand what they need – and, eventually, just claim it for themselves. If you rush through everything you do, you will become a Hero of Rhyme, which is ice magic, but also the magic of having everything stop for a moment so you can consider things at your leisure – and the Whisperings of Rhyme, that urge you to slow down and live in the moment. Similar rationales hold for all titles and aspects.

I know this is a diceless game, but I am going to make some tables anyway, and even put numbers down them so that if for some reason you want to roll dice you can:

ts40 d100 (frequency)	ts70 d100 (frequency)	Heads	Tails
1-6 (6)	1-6 (6)	Blood	Breath
7-15 (9)	7-13 (7)	Void	Mist
16-23 (8)	14-21 (8)	Heart	Rage
24-30 (7)	22-29 (8)	Flow	Rhyme
31-38 (8)	30-36 (7)	Might	Sand
39-48 (9)	37-45 (9)	Doom	Life
49-55 (7)	46-51 (6)	Dreams	Rain
56-63 (8)	52-58 (7)	Light	Law
64-70 (7)	59-66 (8)	Mind	Fate
71-90 (20)	67-84 (18)	Time	Space
91-96 (6)	85-90 (6)	Hope	Stars
97-99 (3)	91-96 (6)	Sight	Sound
100 (1)	97-100 (4)	Coins	Dust

==> 90. EB: Theorists like skiddingZebra, phosphorescentTrickle, and bladekindEyewear generally capitalize "title" and "aspect", but for this book I will write Sburban title and aspect in lowercase, so as to contrast it with Chuubo's Aspect.

ts40 d100 (frequency)	ts70 d100 (frequency)	Pair Name	Active (Heads)	Passive (Tails)
1-9 (9)	1-10 (10)	Combat	Page	Knight
10-19 (10)	11-19 (9)	Inheritor	Ward	Heir
20-28 (9)	20-27 (8)	Tactician	Sage	Seer
29-38 (10)	28-36 (9)	Cryptic	Witch	Mage
39-46 (8)	37-46 (10)	Champion	Sylph	Bane
47-55 (9)	47-55 (9)	Explorator	Scout	Guide
56-63 (8)	56-63 (8)	Protector	Dame	Guard
64-72 (9)	64-71 (8)	Displacement	Thief	Rogue
73-82 (10)	72-81 (10)	Destroyer	Prince	Bard
83-88 (6)	82-87 (6)	Performer	n/a or Clown[91]	Maid
89-97 (9)	88-96 (9)	Creator	Smith	Muse
98-100 (3)	97-100 (4)	Cataclysm	Waste	Grace

Source: Sburb.org dongle-scrying surveys, native classpect incidence

Use the ts40 set for rolling Age of Replayer Networks characters and NPCs. Currently it is timestamp 75, so the ts70 set is more accurate if you want to set a game "now". Note that the frequencies given in the table are for *native* classspect incidence, which means that while you *can* roll someone's current classpect from this table, and while that's an acceptable fudge for minor NPCs, it isn't suitable for major NPCs or PCs. (You should be picking current classpects from what the character in question needs to learn; see page ???.)

==> 91. CM: Clown is a bugged class. Instead of flipping a coin here, you only get Clown on a natural 1 on a d20. If you do? Good luck. You'll need it.

Titles and Title Issues

Each set of titles in Replay Value is paired with a relevant Issue that comes to a head at some point within the session. You can play through this Issue several times, if you'd like: you only *need* to play it through once, but you can ask your HG to put you on the Issue again at any point when you're still in that session, and I expect that you'll probably do it anywhere from two to five times within any given session.

For example, the Glitch FAQ specifies one by name, and calls it Knight Syndrome. So let us begin there...

Page/Knight: Knight Syndrome

Fuck it. Fuck it all.

"Status", immediateThorium

You will lose the will to fight.

- Knight Syndrome 0: You're either not a Page/Knight or you've already gotten over this issue.
- Knight Syndrome 1: Everything is fine. Your motivation is pretty much the same as it always is.
- Knight Syndrome 2: You *insist* that everything is fine and that your motivation is pretty much the same as it always is.
- Knight Syndrome 3: You're dogged by nagging doubts. What's the point of all this? Why do you fight in an endless game?
- Knight Syndrome 4: It's not worth it. None of this is worth it.
- Knight Syndrome 5: And to make it worth it… you're going to have to find something new to fight for.

And the Issue Cards look something like this:

✇	**Knight Syndrome 1**	**+1 MP**
Everything's fine. You might be a little rootless sometimes, but isn't everybody?		

✇	**Knight Syndrome 2**	
This is worth it… right? Isn't it? Yeah, keep telling yourself that.		

| ✍ | **Knight Syndrome 3** | **+1 MP** |

You're not sure if you're fighting for anything. You're even starting to wonder if there's anything worth fighting for.

You go through the motions, just to see if you can make yourself care.

| ✍ | **Knight Syndrome 4** | |

Going through the motions hasn't done anything. It's all meaningless. You'll just stare at the ceiling and wait for something to come to you. Or, I don't know, maybe the murdergame will take you into its own hands first? Who knows.

When someone or something reminds you of what you fight for, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP – or you'll decide that you don't care about that *anymore, either, and move on to level 5.*

> If there's one thing I'm never quite going to get used to, it's the distinct sensation of realizing I've forgotten to take something into account. The kind of short-sightedness that older Seer Network members used to call "permanent Tactician's Folly". Or "not actually reading all the pages of the book of prophecies". I always preferred to call it like I saw it: "shit people tend to hold against you despite your best intentions".

> *Memoirs of a Seer*, epinephrineElectrified

As there aren't any more called out by name in the FAQ itself, Replay Value AU used another Title Issue to great effect: this one being that, if you are a Tactitian, you will make what seems like a perfectly reasonable assumption to you, but that cascades into a catastrophic error.

So it goes a bit like this:

- Tactician's Folly 0: You're either not a Tactician or you've already gotten over this issue.
- Tactician's Folly 1: You're getting the hang of this "planning ahead" thing, you think.
- Tactician's Folly 2: Your cleverness has gotten you out of a few sticky situations.
- Tactician's Folly 3: Your coplayers would do *so* much better if they just followed your advice, since none of them are as smart as you.
- Tactician's Folly 4: You came up with the most awesome plan! Now to convince anyone else to follow it…
- Tactician's Folly 5: Nobody else wants on your bandwagon. You're going to implement your plan by yourself anyway. That'll show them!

And here's the Issue Cards:

◊	**Tactician's Folly 1**	**+1 MP**

You're learning how things work around here. You're starting to plan your actions around what other people are going to do.

◊	**Tactician's Folly 2**	

Your cleverness is getting you out of a few sticky situations. Who cares that it also got you *into* those sticky situations?

| ⬡ | **Tactician's Folly 3** | **+1 MP** |

They should call you the Chessmaster, because your plans totally always work out. Yeah, you definitely planned for your friend's birthday party to get crashed by an Ogre peeling the ceiling off. That was totally according to plan. They should listen to you when you say that they shouldn't go in that dungeon, because when they did they got critted by that miniboss and you had to haul them out. Your coplayers are *so* stupid sometimes.

| ⬡ | **Tactician's Folly 4** | |

You're a master of this game, and you're going to show everyone by _____ (i.e. stealing the White Queen's Sorbet, sequence-breaking, intentionally glitching a session construct)! You just need some cooperation from the idiots that call themselves your coplayers…

When you implement a plan and have it blow up in your face, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP – or, if it doesn't blow up in your face, or nobody's biting, move on to level 5.

| ⬡ | **Tactician's Folly 5** | **+1 MP** |

They called you mad! You'll show them! You'll show them all!

They'll be sorry that they didn't help you _____!

When you implement a plan and it results in catastrophic, session-damaging effects, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

Ward/Heir: Accepting the Inheritance

He was dead. He was dead, and I never got to say goodbye.

But I received an email from his account, at time of death, thanks to a template ~ATH will.
It was titled, simply, "To Stephanie". It was more than I'd ever hoped for.

comment on "Remembering ventricularPipefitter", licensePerturbed

You are in denial about something, and you will grow when you move past that denial.

- Accepting the Inheritance 0: You're either not a Ward/Heir or you've already gotten over this issue.
- Accepting the Inheritance 1: Your life feels a bit… empty.
- Accepting the Inheritance 2: You feel like you're supposed to have something but you don't.
- Accepting the Inheritance 3: *why is there stuff written all over your walls*
- Accepting the Inheritance 4: You think you might be ready to accept something about your past now.
- Accepting the Inheritance 5: …the part of your past that you must learn to accept is extraordinary and miraculous.

⬢	**Accepting the Inheritance 1**	**+1 MP**
There's something missing from your life.		

⬢	**Accepting the Inheritance 2**	
There's something that you feel like you've forgotten. It's like having a phantom limb – you know there should be something there but you just can't *see* it. You keep reaching out to feel it but your hand passes through space instead.		

⬢	**Accepting the Inheritance 3**	**+1 MP**
There's something you haven't accepted about your life: _____ (Your parentage? A repressed memory? The fact that people aren't always good? That you don't enjoy your hobbies anymore but only go through the motions to kill time? That the world stopped making sense a long time ago but you've clung to the notion that everything can still be explained logically?) The next time you go to your bedroom, there will be something about this fact written on the walls…		

⬡	**Accepting the Inheritance 4**	

You think you might know what to do now. You're going to have to reconcile yourself with _____.

When you accept the thing you've been denying, with a scene that demonstrates how you'll use your newfound knowledge, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

What you thought you had to accept? It's a lot bigger than you thought it was. The father you never reconciled yourself with was secretly a crime-fighting superhero, say. Or your lack of faith in the world was put in your head by a time-traveling adversary…

⬡	**Accepting the Inheritance 5**	**+1 MP**

You have to reconcile yourself, not with the merely ordinary… but with the extraordinary.

When you accept the miracle-touched part of your life you've been denying, with a scene that demonstrates how you'll use your newfound knowledge, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

My attempts at simplicity were about as useful as bringing an alchemization-primitive rubber band to the Black King fight. I slid inexorably towards telling a thousand tales from a thousand maws; and to this day I still can't quite tell you exactly what happened.

Well, I know it involved rainbows. But that's about all I remember.

<div align="right">

"My Title Reroll", dryadTornado

</div>

You really want to be normal… but you aren't, and you're going to have to embrace your weirdness.

- A Cryptic's Tale 0: You're either not a Witch/Mage or you've already gotten over this issue.
- A Cryptic's Tale 1: Time to make a fresh start and play Sburb like a roleplaying game where you're a *perfectly normal* person…
- A Cryptic's Tale 2: Try as you might, you can't quite manage normal. You slip up from time to time.
- A Cryptic's Tale 3: You're lying to your coplayers. You're lying to yourself. Something's got to give.
- A Cryptic's Tale 4: Giving up this precious facade you've made for yourself is hard! But it'll be worth it, I promise.
- A Cryptic's Tale 5: Your extraordinariness will give you the tools to save the day.

⬦	**A Cryptic's Tale 1**	**+1 MP**

Yep. Totally normal here. Absolutely, positively, utterly normal. You are a completely normal person and you do normal things. Definitely.

⬦	**A Cryptic's Tale 2**	

You try your hardest to be normal. There are occasional slips that you think might give you away – trying to use a toilet to dampen a towel, perhaps – but so far they seem to be things you can explain away. And yet you keep wondering what's going to happen when you can't keep it up…

⬦	**A Cryptic's Tale 3**	**+1 MP**

You can't do this. You have to do this. You can't keep up seeming normal. You can't bear to be seen as who you really are.

If you stop, everyone's going to call you a freak. Because that's what you are. Freak.

◈	**A Cryptic's Tale 4**	

You're going to have to come out of the broom closet. You put together your words, rehearse speeches in your head…

and it turns out that everyone knew this whole time and doesn't care.

When you decide to embrace your weirdness, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

◈	**A Cryptic's Tale 5**	**+1 MP**

You didn't manage to work up the courage to do the entire "read aloud a prepared speech in front of a session meeting" thing.

Your uniqueness will come out, almost of its own volition, when you're in a situation that's gotten bad. Really bad. And you'll reach out and fix it and it isn't until you come back to yourself that you realize what you've just done.

When you use an ability that is associated with your unnatural or abnormal side in front of an audience (probably with the 4MP resolving-an-issue discount), you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

It's a question that runs through my mind, again and again, when I'm awake late at night.
"Who am I, to aspire to the title of Sylph of Mind? What am I doing all this *for*?"

I have no answer.

I'm a native Sylph and I have no answer.

"41.21", lucidChthonia

You must learn to stride forward for a cause in your heart.

This one's somewhat similar to the Knight Syndrome issue, except that where Knights must learn to fight for an external cause, Sylphs must learn to fight for an internal one.

- Sylph's Cause 0: You're either not a Sylph/Bane or you've already resolved this issue.
- Sylph's Cause 1: You're… honestly kind of going through life on autopilot.
- Sylph's Cause 2: You might be a bit dissatisfied about why you're doing what you're doing.
- Sylph's Cause 3: You have *no idea* why you're doing what you're doing. What even is the point?
- Sylph's Cause 4: You need to relearn how to be true to yourself.
- Sylph's Cause 5: Maybe you can't be true to yourself because there's nothing there to be true *to*…

♛ **Sylph's Cause 1**   **+1 MP**

Life's just something you do mechanically, between dawn and dusk. You fall into routines. You're not really thinking hard about anything.

♛ **Sylph's Cause 2**

Why are you doing this? Something's missing.

♛ **Sylph's Cause 3**   **+1 MP**

No, seriously. Why are you doing this? You don't know and it bothers you. You stare out at the horizon a lot. You linger on things, trying to figure out if seeing the sights and feeling the feelings will help.

♛ **Sylph's Cause 4**

Remember why you're doing this. Is there someone you cared about that's Loose or gone? Perhaps you'll find them – or find out about their fate – after all. Is there something you swore never to think

about again? You'll find yourself thinking about it anyway. Cathartic emotional breakdowns are good here, as are long conversations about old memories.

When you figure out what you've been hiding from yourself, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP – or you might find out that confessing to yourself is harder than you thought…

♛   **Sylph's Cause 5**   **+1 MP**

Something's wrong. Something's deeply wrong. A miracle estranged you from yourself and it'll take another miracle to bring you back.

When a miracle breaks through your emotional barriers and makes it possible for you to be true to yourself once more, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

Scout/Guide: Completing the Map

> Ever onwards we walk, and ever onwards we fight, and ever onwards we grow.
>
> *Scout's Honor: A Guide to the Explorator Titles*, richlyAccumulated

You must learn to explore – and then figure out what to do when you can no longer explore (at least physically).

Hint: Nothing says you can't move on to mental or emotional exploration!

- Completing the Map 0: You're either not a Scout/Guide or you've already resolved this issue.
- Completing the Map 1: Sburb wants you to explore. You reach a bit out of your comfort zone, unsteadily.
- Completing the Map 2: You're getting used to this exploration thing.
- Completing the Map 3: You find yourself *enjoying* this exploration thing.
- Completing the Map 4: You're running out of places to explore. Figure out what you'll do with yourself once the map is completed.
- Completing the Map 5: You've explored *everything*, and painted yourself into a corner thereby. Oops?

⬡ **Completing the Map 1** +1 MP

You're scared. The world is big. But Sburb wants you to explore past your comfort zone, so that's what you'll (try to) do.

It's just so hard!

⬡ **Completing the Map 2**

You're getting used to exploring. It's all right. It's something you can do. Sure, this is *Sburb*, but it could be worse, right? You know, at least, that the ground isn't *entirely* made of pit traps.

⬡ **Completing the Map 3** +1 MP

You're starting to enjoy exploring, really. There's this little thrill you get when you top a rise and see what's on the other side.

⬡ **Completing the Map 4**

There isn't much of your chosen exploring-area left to explore. You've gotten pretty comfortable with using exploring to fill up your days – what'll you do when you don't have anything new left to explore? Figure that out.

When you decide on what you're going to do next, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP – or ignore the matter entirely and proceed to level 5.

◈ **Completing the Map 5** **+1 MP**

There isn't an inch left of your chosen exploring-area to explore, of this point. If you didn't already figure out what you'll be doing now… well, you're going to have to come up with something quick. Backtracking gets Explorators killed, after all.

When you decide on what you're going to do next, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

> Unused creativity is not benign. It metastasizes into grief, rage, judgement, sorrow, shame. It becomes destructive.
>
> Brene Brown

You need to break your habits of destructiveness and self-destructiveness.

- Embracing Creation 0: You're either not a Smith/Muse or you've already resolved this issue.

- Embracing Creation 1: You're a bit too quick to judge.
- Embracing Creation 2: Your temper is short.
- Embracing Creation 3: Something about you – or the world you happen to be in – is wrong, and you're angry whenever you see it.
- Embracing Creation 4: There are some things that you can't accept; but you know that they can change, and you will change them with your own two hands.
- Embracing Creation 5: Anger doesn't help. Accepting the wrong thing on its own terms is the only thing you can do.

⬡ **Embracing Creation 1** **+1 MP**

Sometimes you look at the world and there's something *wrong* about it. It gets on your nerves. You know you should fix it, but you also suspect that there's no way for you to ever really fix it for good.

⬡ **Embracing Creation 2**

Your role is supposed to be to fix things, to make them last longer; you know that because that's what Sburb tells you. But some things? Some things just can't be fixed, you think.

I mean, maybe that's even justified sometimes, but you're probably just getting frustrated because your nerves are raw, rather than because something is genuinely wrong. Even then, if you're angry with something that *is* wrong, right now it isn't leading to any meaningful change; it just kind of… sits there.

⬡ **Embracing Creation 3** **+1 MP**

There is something fundamentally wrong with the universe, something that looks unfixable, something that angers you whenever you're reminded of it.

Name it: _____ (Something aesthetically wrong with a creation of yours? A "feature" of Sburb? A problem of morality? Someone else's attitude towards you? Something about *yourself*?)

It preoccupies you. You find yourself thinking about it even when you're not in its presence. Its unfixability, its *wrongness*, just sticks in your mind and won't go away.

You hate it, and you kind of hate yourself for hating it.

🔶 **Embracing Creation 4**

No. You were right to be angry about _____, because it really was *wrong*. But the time you've spent mulling about the issue? It's given you a way that you think you might genuinely be able to change it.

You think you might know how to fix it, or at least how to make a good dent in it. See, you have this idea, that might just work…

When you implement this constructive idea in the real world, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP – or it won't work, in which case you'll proceed to level 5.

🔶 **Embracing Creation 5**   **+1 MP**

The thing you've been thinking about, _____…

You're not sure you can change it. Maybe it's a universal law. Maybe it's just being kept in place by forces stronger than you. Either way, if you throw yourself against this problem, you are going to *lose*.

In which case being angry about it only makes your life *worse*. There are some things that you can't change. There are some things you just need to live with, and all you are doing by holding onto this anger is making yourself miserable.

When you change your own perspective and become okay with the existence of the unsolved problem, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

Maid: It's All A Performance

> We did an observational study and it turns out Maids are the class Sburb is most likely to
> kill off as part of another player's development. It's not a role that teaches you anything, it's
> a roll that sacrifices you to educate other people. You might as well be an NPC.
>
> orangutanFingernails

Technically, Maid is paired with Clown; they are called the "Performer" classes. However, I provide no Title Issue for the Clown, because it's a heavily bugged class that is not generally appropriate for PCs.

If you need a title issue for a PC or major NPC Clown, I suggest using The Cataclysm (page ???). On the other hand, if you are absolutely insistent on having an Active Performer-class that isn't bugged, I suppose you could use this Title Issue, and call it Faun – that's what the Active Performer title used to be before it was replaced with the broken Clown.

You have to learn to look beyond yourself and facilitate the stories that are always unfolding around you.

- It's All A Performance 0: You're either not a Maid or you've already resolved this issue.
- It's All A Performance 1: The only story that matters to you is your own.
- It's All A Performance 2: Though no man is an island, you're certainly trying to be.
- It's All A Performance 3: You're drifting away from everyone. But there's something or someone you still care about.
- It's All A Performance 4: You have to grab hold of what you care about, and use it to boost yourself back into the fray.
- It's All A Performance 5: It all comes together in the great dance of life, and there is a part in it that only you can play.

✉ **It's All A Performance 1** **+1 MP**

You find it vaguely hard to care about other people's problems. Shouldn't they be fixing their own lives? It's not your responsibility.

✉ **It's All A Performance 2**

Whenever you're around people and places, even NPCs, they always try to foist responsibilities on you. "Maid of Prospit/Derse," they say, "would you be able to do this stupid thing for me? You should be happy to do it, since you're a Maid."

No. You're not happy to do it. In fact, you've started avoiding most social situations entirely, because if you don't talk to anyone then they can't tell you to do stuff.

✇ **It's All A Performance 3**   **+1 MP**

It's so tempting to just… stop interacting with people.

But there's still something that draws you in about them, something you still care about, despite yourself. Maybe you really want to see that play the Consorts have been putting on. Maybe you have a crush on a coplayer. Maybe you want to finish a project you're working on with someone.

You have to at least see it through.

✇ **It's All A Performance 4**

There's something you still care about. But to stay involved in it, you have to remain involved in all the other things people do. You guess it isn't so bad, if it means you get to stay in contact.

You accept the role you've been given, symbolically, somehow. You have to do something for someone. This time, you'll do it gladly.

When you help someone else do their duty, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP – or it won't be enough to connect you with the world, in which case you'll proceed to level 5.

✇ **It's All A Performance 5**   **+1 MP**

It's not enough for you to just reconnect with the world, in those limited and symbolic ways. There's something that only you can do. There is a part that only you can play.

You might have to make a thousand copies of yourself, to hold together as a barrier against the Vast Glub. You might have to go up to the Black Queen and ask her for something audacious. You might have to bargain with the Horrorterrors. You might have to deliberately Angel-corrupt yourself, so that you can guide your coplayers through Skaia.

Whatever it is… you'll do it. Without regrets.

When you do your duty, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

Thief/Rogue: Your Crowning Desire

> You have to take care of yourself. Nobody else is going to do it for you, after all.
>
> tawnyRocks

You have to learn that you deserve to have a place in the world, and the things you need and want to go with it.

- Your Crowning Desire 0: You're either not a Thief/Rogue or you've already gotten over this issue.
- Your Crowning Desire 1: There's a distinct sense of lack in your life. Something is missing.
- Your Crowning Desire 2: There's something you want. You don't think you can have it, though.
- Your Crowning Desire 3: You don't even deserve to take up space, much less have what you want.
- Your Crowning Desire 4: You have to look out for your own happiness.
- Your Crowning Desire 5: This isn't just a matter of happiness. This is a matter of survival.

♛   **Your Crowning Desire 1**   **+1 MP**

It feels a bit like a missing tooth. Your life doesn't feel complete. There's something you want, but you don't know what it is and you probably couldn't get it anyway.

♛   **Your Crowning Desire 2**

What is it that you want? Name it; but for now, you cannot have it.

Why? Because… just taking it for yourself would impact other people in ways that you can't forecast. You'd be taking attention, or love, or whatever, away from someone who probably deserves it more and would miss it more.

♛   **Your Crowning Desire 3**   **+1 MP**

You…

You don't deserve to have that thing you want, anyway. You feel like you don't deserve *anything*.

♛   **Your Crowning Desire 4**

Something's got to give. Nobody else will look out for your own happiness. So you're going to have to do it for yourself.

When you decide that you deserve the thing you want, and take steps towards seizing it for yourself, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP – or you might shy away from actually trying to take it, in which case you'll proceed to level 5.

⬡ **Your Crowning Desire 5** **+1 MP**

You realize that this isn't just a thing you want. It's a thing you *need*. If you don't have the thing that you desire, you will *die*, as surely as someone would die from lack of water - because, as a Replayer, you will only survive if you take care of your mental state.

So you may as well take it; otherwise, well… let's not think about otherwise, for now?

When you take what you need (damn the consequences), you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

Dame/Guard: Something To Protect

> The major difference between the Protector Class and the Combat class is in the way that Sburb concludes their fights. The Combat Class drifts toward VICTORIOUS combat while the Protector Class drifts toward SURVIVING. This is an important distinction. That is because in Sburb, you can lose and yet survive and you can have victory at the cost of Oblivion. Personally, I don't mind trading an heroic death to living another day.

<div align="right">

Sburb Glitch FAQ, godsgifttoGrinds

</div>

You have to learn to become someone people can rely on.

It goes something like this:

- Something to Protect 0: You're either not a Dame/Guard or you've already gotten over this issue.
- Something to Protect 1: You keep to yourself, mostly. It's fine, right?
- Something to Protect 2: Your coplayers avoid you. Which is fine with you, as you'd rather they avoid you anyway.
- Something to Protect 3: Everyone needs to get ahead somehow. Stepping on a few heads just gets things done faster.
- Something to Protect 4: Your selfishness is isolating you. You're going to have to give back.
- Something to Protect 5: An unexpected grace reaches into your life, and transforms your perspective.

Something to Protect 1

People are thoughtless. Mean. Selfish. If you let yourself out there you'll get torn apart like a cow in a shark tank. So you keep to yourself. It's better this way.

Something to Protect 2

You avoid your coplayers. Your coplayers avoid you. It's fine. If they don't know you they won't know where to hurt you.

They're only going to hurt you. So you need to hurt them first.

Something to Protect 3

You're rather more forceful than you might "need" to be, to get the job done. You might guard someone or something, sure, but you'll be complaining about it the entire time, and you're almost certainly not devoting yourself to the task. Your coplayers notice it, and you're beginning to sense that they're scared of entrusting anything to you.

You're… okay with this, you think. If they're scared of you that means they won't hurt you. Sure, they'll never like you, but it's not like they liked you in the beginning, either.

At this level of the Issue, you're going to be put into a situation in which you're given the opportunity to help someone else, and they react with real gratitude and generosity. Make sure the HG arranges an opportunity for you to do that.

Something to Protect 4

Someone's vulnerable. Hurt. You really should be thorough, and keep them from hurting you again.

And yet…

When you help someone when given the opportunity, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

But if you hurt them? If you walk away? If something else happens to escalate this Issue? Well… this time it'll be you that's put into a position of having to accept help.

Something to Protect 5

You have no reason to help anyone. Nobody has any reason to help you. You resign yourself, you suppose, to dying alone.

When someone else helps you while you're in a position of vulnerability and it opens your mind to the notion of people being worth connecting to, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

You have to learn to bring things to an end. But first you have to learn to stop doing things when they're no longer helping you.

- Let the Curtain Fall 0: You're either not a Prince/Bard or you've already gotten over this issue.
- Let the Curtain Fall 1: Your life is okay right now. You wish you could keep things like this.
- Let the Curtain Fall 2: You're attached to something, or someone. You don't want them to change.
- Let the Curtain Fall 3: The thing you're attached to is holding you back.
- Let the Curtain Fall 4: It's time to let go. It's time to move on.
- Let the Curtain Fall 5: If you truly cannot let go, the world will find a way to force you to live without it anyway.

Let the Curtain Fall 1

This life isn't perfect, but what you have now is good enough.

For this card you need to identify something that you're attached to, and that you want to keep the way it is (even though that's impossible, and even though it hurts).

Something like this:

- *a memory that you keep thinking over, wondering if you could've done it better*
- *old love letters or similar mementos of someone long gone*
- *a friendship with someone that you're only sticking to out of loyalty – you've changed and they've changed, but you're scared that if you leave you won't find anyone else*
- *a relationship with someone you don't love anymore, for similar reasons*
- *a worldview that assumes certain things about the world to be true, and can't accept when things don't follow*
- *a specific procedure/routine that you stick to rigidly – if it fails, you blame the world for not being right*

Let the Curtain Fall 2

There's something in your life that you don't want to change. What is it?

Let the Curtain Fall 3

How is your attachment holding you back? And why are you still holding onto it anyway?

Let the Curtain Fall 4

The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

You've seen the pattern, and you know how it's hurting you.

It's time to make a clean break. It's time to let the curtain fall.

When you bring things to an end, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP. Or you could continue insisting on attachment, and proceed to level 5…

Let the Curtain Fall 5

You've had a chance to resolve things on your own terms, and you've turned it down. Within the velvet glove, though, there is a threat:

Few things are constant about Sburb. But one of those things is that it will take away what you think you need, and force you to figure out how to live without it.

When you're forced away from what you've tried to keep, or it hurts you so badly that you have no choice but to drop it, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP.

Waste/Grace: The Cataclysm

I'll never understand why they're called 'Cataclysm' classes. The big change they create doesn't have to be catastrophic, after all! I think a better term would be 'Catalyst', but there's no way I'm going to change the entire Replayernet's mind.

chronologicalDiscernment

"Cataclysm" was a term created waaaaay back. It shows up in the *Gamebreaker's Glossary*, albeit only as an urban legend at first. Yeah, it sucks, but it's like the term "dongle scrying" or "consensus presession" - nothing we can do.

eternityBraid

They're called Cataclysms because the changes they cause are major and game-changing (in ~90% of known cases). 'Catalyst' doesn't imply that as well, and it also doesn't convey the problems that Cataclysms come tangled with: that is (through no fault of their own), the changes they wreak have a distressingly high chance of causing maimery, death, or perma-death in the process.

stanzicApparati

I wanted to save the Cataclysm for last. This is because a Waste or Grace is *required* to resolve a Cataclysm in dramatic and session-transforming ways. This is because a Cataclysm *changes one of the fundamental rules of Sburb*. You are still playing Sburb, sure. But one of the rules has changed, and changed utterly.[92]

- The Cataclysm 0: You're either not a Waste/Grace or you've already gotten over this issue.
- The Cataclysm 1: You're scared of your power.
- The Cataclysm 2: You're scared of the catastrophe that you must inevitably cause.
- The Cataclysm 3: There's something… wrong. Something poking at the corners of your mind. Something that means everything is going to change.
- The Cataclysm 4: Everyone knows that a Cataclysm must fundamentally change your session… and it is required that you have one.
- The Cataclysm 5: The game twists and transforms around you.

Note that after the Cataclysm happens, this Issue will no longer make sense. You could *try* to use it anyway, but it's probably better to take **It Never Stops!** or **(In) Over Your Head**, to explore the consequences of your Cataclysm.

A note: If you are a Cataclysm class, and you don't *have* a Cataclysm using this issue by the time the Black King fight starts, the HG is expected to make up one for you, and it will be significantly worse than if you determined it using this Issue. As partial compensation, if/when that happens, you will still receive 4XP+1MP, as if it came from this Issue.

==> 92. OJ: It was difficult to figure out how to model this. I had to ask for a clarification on just how much I could load, mechanically, onto a level 5 Issue closing. (For what it's worth, the answer is "pretty much anything you like".)

The Cataclysm 1

There's something *off* about your Classpect magic. It comes easily, and it is spectacular when it comes.

The world is not nice to people: least of all, not nice to *you*. Something's going to happen. It's only a question of when.

At this point, you should probably start thinking about what your Cataclysm is. After this Issue I'm posting a list of Cataclysm ideas for you to start with. You don't have to decide now, but you should probably figure it out by the time you reach level 3 of this Issue.

The Cataclysm 2

By now you've heard the rumors and legends. Cataclysms are ticking time bombs, they say. Sessions with Cataclysms have horrifyingly low survival rates. Cataclysms mean that you are going to break reality.

Your coplayers look at you with… something, in their eyes. Anger? Defiance? Pity?

You don't look back at them.

If it is at all possible to talk to your HG privately, you will want to pull them aside and explain what you want out of your Cataclysm, so they have some time to prepare.

The Cataclysm 3

There's a… rupture, in the libraries of prophecy of your session. The books describe the events of the first part of your session… and then they just stop. Sometimes in the middle of a sentence. You flip forwards, and see only blank pages.

And sometimes you just find completely blank books. The titles of these books look like inkblots; nobody can read them, and the dream moon librarians shrug and say "It's always been like this."

The Cataclysm 4

They say that the most effective way of writing horror is to hold off on describing the monster, as long as possible, so that your brain will fill in the details with your own private idea of horror.

You *will* have a Cataclysm, and it *will* transform your session…

but will you have it now?

When you decide that now is not the time, you'll close out the issue and receive 4XP+1MP. Or you could continue on, and proceed to level 5…

The Cataclysm 5

This is not the world you wanted. This is not the way things should be. You reject this reality —

And Sburb replaces it with something *else*.

This creates a new Convention (level 2 Affliction), applying to your entire Sburb session. This Convention lasts until the end of the Sburb session.

When the first effects of this new Convention make themselves known, you will receive 4XP+1MP.

with compliments to the other RV AU people for helping me with this

This list is to give you a place to start. Not all Cataclysms are suitable for your game or session.

1. The frogs get fused together into a huge lump of glitchy flesh.
2. Time clones start to develop personality glitches, as if there were few hundred apocryphal antitheses running around at the same time.
3. The Skaian Magicant is *growing*, with obvious visible chunks showing up and overwriting other stuff like spatial cut-and-paste.
4. Bedrock is destructible now.
5. Everything is lucky. Even an imp can score a crit that takes out half your health gel.
6. The Cataclysm goes on a rampage on the Battlefield, totally wiping out the entire Derse army.
7. Suddenly none of you has the concept of "frog" anymore, so there is no way for the Space player to complete the [redacted] breeding and create the Genesis [redacted].
8. The entire session is enveloped in an [Aspect]storm that destroys every Land, Prospit, Derse, and the Battlefield all the way down to bedrock. Most landmarks in the Game do regenerate, but it takes weeks, and in the meantime you have no quests to do, no enemies to fight, and Sburb *still* ticking down towards a Reckoning…
9. The Waste of Heart bodyswaps your entire session; now you have to play a new Role.
10. All lands are overgrown with the Waste's lifeplant, and it's choked out any consorts, frogs, and underlings. There's plenty of free grist, sure, but there's no way to progress.
11. Every word you say is binding, with a maximum-force Law chain threatening to snap off your limbs or neck. For the rest of your session, you can't lie, and you *really* shouldn't promise to do things you don't follow through on.
12. The orbital mechanics of the Medium get messed up and the planets are now rotating in the wrong direction, slamming into each other, etc.
13. Your Black Queen can get out of her throne room and the programming that prevents her from killing the players unprovoked stopped working.
14. Everyone has rainclones. EVERYONE.
15. The Battlefield is now a game of Mao.
16. Players emit no qualia.
17. Now Prospit needs to win for success, despite the rest of the game mechanics still treating them as doomed.
18. The Queen's ring and King's scepter are duplicated once per player in the session. Ringwraiths for everyone!
19. The Pulse has been invested into *everything* in the session. Everything is alive.
20. Nothing can die… except for you, the Players. Have fun with your pacifist run. Too bad Sburb wasn't designed for one.

21. The chirality of all the food (and food-generators, such as alimentators and edible plants) in your session has been reversed. Now the only thing that you can eat is Crystalanth light; everything else goes in one end and out the other. (Optionally: For some reason, this also means that most Consort remedies and alchemized healing items no longer work.)

22. Your session's topology has been inverted. Now the Others are inside your planets, the Angels are outside of your session, the Planets are suspended inside a hollow Battlefield, etc.

23. Your Prospitians and Dersites have been swapped with those of a completely different, alien session. Now none of the prophecies are correct, and the Aspects that the Black King was designed to be defeated with are nowhere to be found.

24. All timelines are perceived as Alpha by the Game. The players need to figure out which one will actually let them get through the Door alive.

25. There is now more than one Alpha timeline. (Maybe four?) Unfortunately, only the first instance of each of you to go through the Door will live.

26. Prospit and Derse worked out a truce (somehow) and now you need to find another way to start up the Battlefield.

27. The Consorts are now as smart as Carapaces, and start massing up armies to go fight the Denizens themselves.

28. The Carapaces are now as smart as Consorts, and spend their time shouting playground insults at each other on the Battlefield instead of actually fighting each other.

29. The Veil Labs are malfunctioning, and spewing out so many new Carapaces that Prospit and Derse no longer have anywhere to put them. Prospit and Derse are hastily fabricating orbital habitats. Carapaces are now moving onto your Lands, displacing the Consorts. Nobody is happy with this.

30. You're all stuck in a Groundhog Day-style time loop.

31. The surfaces of everything in the Medium have been topologically stitched together somehow. You can travel from Prospit to every Land to the Battlefield to Derse without ever leaving the ground. Unfortunately, so can Prospit and Derse's armies.

32. Someone dumped the Black King's Scepter into the Royal Vault, erasing it. The win condition is now randomly switched to killing the bearer of one of the three other royal artifacts. Unfortunately, you have no way to know which one.

33. The HP of all royalty is set to 1. This means that you are ridiculously fragile. On the other hand, so are the Kings and Queens.

34. Mist player-identification glitches now extend to *everyone*.

35. The Underlings can now talk. Have fun with trying to kill them while they beg for their lives!

36. Instead of asteroids falling during the reckoning, it's chunks of horrorterrors.

37. You break the King's Scepter after defeating him. Nothing happens.

38. Every Underling now gives exactly 1 unit of grist when it dies. The grist type is determined randomly. You're going to be horrifically short on build grist, but you can make twenty-seven copies of your ultimate weapon…

39. Whenever anyone puts an item in their sylladex, it is replaced by a different item of the same type. Your spare shirt will be randomly swapped with the space of all possible graphic t-shirts. You could put energy bars into your Sylladex and get jerky – or food pills. A tent may be replaced by a hammock.

40. Everyone has gone deaf.

41. Everyone has gone blind.

42. Any speculation you may voice (or write) about your session has a chance of being turned into a prophecy, and thus enforced by Sburb.

43. The dead from a random dreambubble come back to life. In your session. Marked as both alive and doomed.

44. You no longer need to fight things. Instead, you need to win at some other kind of ritualized combat or sport to defeat them. Something like… rap battles, or dominance displays, or lawn darts.

45. The only things anyone can see in the Skaian Clouds now are your eyes, with falling meteors flashing through your pupils…

46. Game abstractions still talk in a recognizable grammar, but all the words and concepts have been replaced with what seems like gibberish. (See: The Gostak.)

47. The important Beds – Land Beds, Quest Beds, and Crypt Beds – all look the same, and have been randomly shuffled in location. Good luck trying to figure out which one is the Quest Bed without the help of game abstractions.

48. Every player is forced to perfectly play their role, effectively TRULY becoming an X of Y. This skyrockets everyone's ARC but leaves everyone a puppet within their bodies, and thus creates lasting psychological scars.

49. You set everyone else's Aspect to yours. (If you weren't the Space player, there is now no Space player in your session. Have fun.)

50. The Game now believes the Royals are also Players and has assigned them suitable Classpects. The end conditions have not changed.

> They say the Gatling gun was invented by a pacifist who wanted to "reduce the size of armies". Yes. Yes, that's clearly what happened there.
>
> erythralTimepiece

I don't think Sburb is vengeful, or that it's *trying* to break people. I think Sburb, such as you can anthropomorphize it, truly believes that its approach is correct. Breaking people is merely the easiest and fastest way to shape the way its players act.

There is no deception here, only inherently flawed priorities. Sburb is designed to mold its players to Title and Aspect, and judges its success by how well the *living* Players act. Defiance is an inefficiency. People who do not adhere, people who cannot Roleplay flawlessly, drag down the average. So Sburb writes them off as failures and tosses them away to the Bubbles.

Do not be deceived by the fact that Aspects and Classes are tied to generally-good character traits. Sburb improves people, and breaks people, entirely by accident. The things it values have very little to do with a happy and fulfilling life.

To call Sburb evil is a classification of convenience. It is the antagonistic force, yes. But its intentions are not good or bad. Its intentions are alien.

If calling it evil helps Replayers cope, I have nothing against them calling it evil. Hell, I've done the same in my own life, because it was the only thing that could break through the conditioning of abusers who were always doing things "for my own good".[93]

While we're here, I'll point out that one of the things someone's manipulative tactics can do is make moral rules apply to *you*, but not to *them*. If you're worried about manipulating people, if you know that this is a possibility, you probably aren't. And to the extent that you are, if you are paying attention, *you can fix it*.

But remember, someone doesn't have to *intend* to break you for it to work. Good intentions exercised through flawed tactics work just as well.

==> 93. OJ: My response to that argument: Those in positions of leadership and responsibility, such as parents, have an increased moral responsibility to make sure they are doing good. As they say, the road to Hell is paved with good intentions. You can't just *intend* to do good and release yourself from all responsibility. You have to actually pay attention to the results. After you have been given ample opportunity to notice what you've done, if you continue doing harm, you are responsible for any ill that comes of it. And if you are dependent, child, or subject, *it is within your rights* to judge based on the results and not the intentions.

by foolsGold

eternityBraid: Sure. She's a pushover. Hell, you don't even need to fight her. She's a sucker for tales of woe.

cogitativeMistake: It's a coinflip. Do you have enough faith in your sharpshooting abilities to win against a sniper in a tree at two hundred yards? Samantha could duel short-range, sure, but if you're intent on actually causing a problem for her, she will probably have gotten rid of you already.

gentlemanMannerism: You could try, but it wouldn't do any good. She would gently suggest that you do something more polite than whacking her in the face, give you five seconds to stop, and then drop her Etiquette Guide on you. For reference, the Etiquette Guide could probably kill a cat if you dropped it on one.

genesisArtificer: No. For the love of Skaia, no. Either you are going to get whacked in the face with a nuclear bomb, or you are going to get whacked in the face with a fancy santa so ridiculous-looking that the expression on its face could probably count as a controlled munition in and of itself.

enlighteningFont: Bad idea. I'm pretty sure the woman could literally reconstitute jiu-jitsu just from reading all the Pitspedia articles about it.

ventricularPipefitter: He answered this question already, and I'm actually for once inclined to agree: Heart players are very, very useful. Do not fuck with them.

auctoritasAuspex: Like with gentlemanMannerism, it wouldn't do any good, but unlike with gentlemanMannerism, you have an airtight justification for wanting to punt her out of the Incipisphere, so good luck!

godsgifttoGrinds: Fighting him hand to hand is no good. Challenge him to a bike stunts duel instead.

azure[Madlibs]: Go ahead! Everyone with that name is a death cultist anyway.[94]

epinephrineElectrified: You could *try*. Seers are notoriously squishy. But the man's got spin and public opinion on his side. Every blow you strike will attract a hundred fanboys to defend him on the Internet. So I guess it depends on whether you care about your reputation!

internalTriad: Your chances are slim. This guy has survived *three consecutive TPKs*, and we're not sure it isn't because he was the one who went around killing everyone.

lucidChthonia: An even more terrible idea than the previous. Unlike with intTri, we actually know she killed people, so we know she *has* the killer instinct.

==> 94. EB: I do not endorse actually doing this. What if it's a second-sessioner with that name by accident?

orderlyDiphthong: Do it. It'll be funny to watch you staggering around clutching your head and yelling about how the voices won't leave, afterwards.

rudimentaryCipher: You could probably take him on, but good luck finding him. I'm half convinced he can go invisible.

stupidityTolerated: I would suggest that you not. Surprisingly given the username, he does not tolerate people stupidly attacking him. If you try your body parts will probably end up scattered across two or three square miles.

dryadTornado: Sure, you could fight her, but then we'd never know how the *Sorcerer's Son* ~~trilogy~~ series finishes. You wouldn't do that to us, would you?

balkanizedKelp: Easy. This being said, I swear that guy is like the narrators in Lovecraft stories: he keeps writing even as he sees his doom coming for him. If you'd be nice enough to upload his dying words to his blog, we'd appreciate it.

vermilionSparkle: No. Have you seen how elaborate his Rube Goldberg machines are? Chances are, when you land the first hit, an elaborate series of events will be set into motion that will eventually lead to your death, even if you manage to kill him.

wedgeIssue: Just because she's "past her prime" writing-wise doesn't mean she's not still dangerous. I'm sure you've read her Guide. At the very least acknowledge just how dirty she says she fights.

skiddingZebra: I mean, sure, if you can catch him. But that man has trained *hard* to be one of the best gamebreakers in his generation. He can execute frame-perfect noclips with his eyes closed. You probably can't.

venetianManufacture: I would like to personally request that you beat him up. He said he'd collab with me on a writing project and then left me hanging.

Aspects and Sburban Magics

The way I handle Aspects, by contrast, isn't by Issues – they're magical skills[95]. These skills are based upon the writeups from the Sburb Glitch FAQ, as well as miscellaneous other sources.

There are three main parts to a Sburban Magic writeup:

- a preface, where I explain things about what the aspect is and design choices related to the Sburban Magic;
- a list of techniques available using the Sburban Magic;
- and a list of common Bonds – things that people with that Sburban Magic often do.

Again: This is not a comprehensive FAQ. *Please* don't rely on these in the Game.

Why are these magical skills?

> No voice came out of the darkness. No shaft of light pierced the barred window high up on the wall. There was only the faint chitter-chitter-chitter of the rock-birds in the highest of the eaves.
>
> I thought back to what Messor had told me: if I thought of it like becoming an anchoress – like walling myself away, the better to contemplate the secrets of the universe – it would be easier.
>
> So I emptied my mind as Messor had taught me to, and I paced the length of my cell, and I waited.
>
> *The Woman Who Stared Into Forever*, dryadTornado

What magical-skill-ness represents is that you need to *arrange the circumstances* so that use of your aspect abilities is any good. For example, a Dame of Rage may have an ability that lets her yell Underlings into submission. However, just using it on a random Underling is hard and takes a lot of Pluck; if the Dame wants to use it without becoming quite so drained, she can arrange things such that she's using it to *protect* someone. Then it is significantly easier to use. Compare this with how Bonds interact with Magical Skills in Chuubo's; you can use Bonds to overcome Obstacles, so it is easier to use a thing.

You can also "store up" roleplaying coefficient for later – voluntarily live according to your classpect and collect the extra pluck, so you can use it on less-than-efficient uses of your aspect abilities.[96] Again, this is something Chuubo's represents, if you replace "classpect" with "Bond" and "pluck" with "Will".

==> 95. OJ: You may have seen earlier that in IF/Techno games I suggest using Superior Affinity to X skills instead; use the same general theming from these for Superior Affinity to Life, Superior Affinity to the Mind, etc.

==> 96. EB: Technically, this is an oversimplification. See "Advanced Roleplaying" by rimshotRegularized for all the gory details.

So, one of the things that's a feature of Chuubo's is the Intention Ladder - that you add 1, 2, 4, or 8 points of Will to your Skill level, and then take as many results as you want that are less than or equal to the resulting number. The results are guaranteed, since the Chuubo's system is diceless, but the actual description of the results is still up to the HG.

(There's an amusing and interesting diversion in the Chuubo's book, explaining what to do with intentions like "I blow up the world with my mind, cooking skill 3 + 8 Will"; the discussion concludes that you're probably not gonna actually blow up the world that way, but you could certainly cook something explosive enough to intimidate everyone around you.)

The thing is, the original Intention Ladder from Chuubo's is tuned for a setting rather *less* bleak than this one. The Chuubo's intention ladder is therefore inappropriate for settings like this.

So here's an alternate intention ladder I'd strongly recommend using for RV Chuubo's:

- 0 or less: attempt to do things, but only make things worse
- 1: use your skill in such a fashion as to make you less unhappy/afraid
- 2: patch holes in your world well enough to let you live another day
- 3: do something "correctly"; do it well enough to impress people around you
- 4: do something effective enough to *actually* give you less to be unhappy/afraid about
- 5: gain a foothold against entropy, live your life despite the terrors of the world
- 6: do something that looks very impressive and dramatic
- 7: do something really effective, bringing you much closer to actually doing the thing you tried to do
- 8: actually manage to make a permanent change for the better in your life as opposed to a temporary one
- 9: do the right thing – but it costs you

The reasoning here is that "effective" and "impressive" mean mostly the same things in the RV setting as they do in Chuubo's, but "productive" is much harder-won: results 2, 5, and 8 are the "productive" results, and they're phrased much more carefully than the equivalents on the standard Chuubo's intention ladder. It isn't until 8 that you're actually guaranteed a permanent change for the better! And you're never given something that makes you *happy*, only things that make you *less afraid*. It seems about right, when I measure it up against several of the existing skills in the RV setting.

It also feels like a lot of people, rather than shoot for high-number results, try to reach those kinds of results via quests - an 8 Intention is guaranteed to make your life better permanently, but doesn't necessarily mean that you get control over exactly how your life gets better - it's possible that you end up getting the favor of the Game by yourself, in a way that doesn't let you replicate the feat. Of course, quests take a lot longer, but that seems to be an acceptable tradeoff…

Blood

> It runs within the veins of all of us, no matter how alien. It is the thing that brings us life. It is the thing that binds us together.
>
> We are born outside the womb, we are born children of Skaia, but even the ectobiology equipment recognizes that inherent truth: the bonds of blood are the strongest of all.
>
> <div align="right">"Blood Is In The Center Of All Things", eternityBraid</div>

Blood in Sburb represents social strength. It is focused around buffing others and having connections to them.

In Sburb, the primary way you buff people using Blood is by lending them some of your Health. However, health levels in Sburb are largely unrelated to health levels in Chuubo's, so (to provide a break from some of the other magics that directly manipulate health levels, as well as to better represent the video-game nature of this lending) it'll instead manifest as giving yourself an Obstacle to defense to give someone else an Edge to defense. You are literally giving them your own vitality.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] knowledge about blood and circulatory systems[97]

[Obstacle 1] make other people instinctively comfortable with revealing things to you, depending on you, etc. (This mostly just modifies your body language and presentation. Your actions are still judged on their own merits, so don't be rash.)

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] stem bleeding

[Obstacle 0] Pick one other person or single object. While you sustain this Intention, you may act as if you have a level 1 connection to them.[98]

[Obstacle 1] Give someone else an Edge to defense by also giving yourself an Obstacle of the same size and type (for example, giving someone else 1 Edge to defending against magic gives you an Obstacle 1 to defending against magic; giving someone else 3 edge to defending against anything gives you obstacle 3 to defend against anything!). Specify what you want the defense bonus/penalty to be when you invoke this.

==> 97. EB: Need to know where to apply pressure to stop bleeding? Need to know how to get blood out of fabric? Need to know whether a particular blood transfusion will work? Bam.

==> 98. EB: You can, optionally, combine this with the actual use of said connection: for example, "make a temporary connection with Klaus and work well with him" is a valid Intention; so is invoking "make a temporary connection with Klaus" and "work well with Klaus" as two separate Intentions. Which one you use will depend on whether you intend on using the temporary connection for a while, and whether you can afford to take up an Intention slot.

[Obstacle 1] make a level 1 connection to a group of people/objects ("all violins", "anyone who was a native Time player", "everyone who belongs to the same Sburb.org IRC channel as I do") or a Region ("Prospit"), as with the equivalent obstacle-0 entry.[99]

[Obstacle 2] attack using bloodbending (Yes, this is exactly as scary as it seems.)

[Obstacle 2] summon a reasonable amount of blood[100] from thin air (up to a bathtub's worth of blood, any kind you like; note that nonhuman blood is fair game, so you can summon any color or multiple colors thereof) and then control/"bloodbend" to use it for various purposes (dispersing a fine mist thereof to block vision, making a shield out of it, etc.)

[Obstacle 2] act as if you have a level 1 connection to *everything*, as with the equivalent obstacle-0 and obstacle-1 entries

[Obstacle 3] summon a frankly unreasonable amount of blood from thin air (significantly more than a bathtub's worth) and control it. See caveats under the equivalent obstacle-2 entry.

Common bonds:

- [I act "hot-blooded".]
- [I can control my circulatory system consciously.] (As a safeguard, it will revert to normal if you become unconscious. Seriously, though, don't be stupid with this. If you try to stop your heart it actually will stop and you will fall down. If you pinch off a vessel inside your brain you will make yourself have a stroke. WTF, Sburb, why is this even a thing?)[101]
- [I'm fascinated by pumps, circuits, tubes of liquid, and things that pulse.]
- [I feel emotions strongly.]
- [I never leave someone behind.]
- [I think my friends are the most important thing in the universe.]
- [I fall in love too easily.]
- [I am extremely physically affectionate.] (Hugs and slaps on the back for friends count, too.)

==> 99. OJ: The Become Somebody arc's *Adaptable* power does partially supersede the latter, but can't be used for objects or people.
==> 100. EB: Yes, it will be obvious to all onlookers that you're working with blood and not just water, even if you summon "a nearly-clear blood with unusually low viscosity".
==> 101. EB: You'd think this would be an appropriate candidate for an Affliction, but I don't want characters doing things like accidentally making themselves permanently blind when they express a wish for brain bleach. It's just too dangerous, IMO, to not be under handler control.

> Q: I was trying to do something for my coplayers, like open a pickle jar, and then Breath happened and now there's no more pickles!

> A: I won't say I'm sorry, because I'm not. Don't use [EYE OF THE STORM] [WRATH OF THE STORM GOD] on things you want to survive.

> *An Idiot's Guide to Breath,* stupidityTolerated

Sburban Breath is freedom from restrictions – and destruction.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] hold your breath for an unusually (but plausibly) long time, i.e. 5 minutes

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0+] summon wind/manipulate air pressure, up to about hurricane-force winds (obstacle increases for affecting larger areas; i.e. Region-sized wind would have Obstacle 1)

[Obstacle 1] destroy your own feelings

[Obstacle 1] blow something apart by creating wind emanating from "inside" the object, even if the inside of the object has no air pockets

[Obstacle 2] weather manipulation with careful use of air pressure[102]

[Obstacle 2] free someone from some sort of restriction or chain

[Obstacle 3] utterly destroy any object. This attack is obvious enough that anyone in the vicinity can try to stop you.[103]

Common bonds:

- [I haven't a care in the world!]
- [The Breeze looks out for me.]
- [I have suddenly discovered that I hate a particular type of food.]
- [Freedom is the first and foremost of the natural rights.]
- [I can act in extremely windy conditions as if the air was perfectly still.]
- [I like to sleep outside, where the wind can reach me.]

==> 102. EB: While Breath players get some instinctive understanding for free, if you are not a native Breath player, you may want to read up on weather patterns.
==> 103. EB: On the other hand, they might *want* you to do the destroying...

Void

I'm sorr if his isn't r adabl . The Nu l likes taki g bites ou of text abo t its lf.

<div align="right">"V id", Sarai's Sburban Guide, wedgeIssue</div>

Sburb's Void bears a great deal of resemblance to the metaphysical properties of the Outside. The resemblance to Accursed in this technique list is thus intentional.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] walk without making a sound

[Obstacle 1] remain sane and relatively stable despite isolation or sensory deprivation

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] detect when "lack", "nothingness" or "void" has a supernatural cause

[Obstacle 1] create a sense of longing and inadequacy

[Obstacle 1] survive in vacuum

[Obstacle 1+] prevent people from perceiving certain objects or qualities (for example, preventing someone from seeing the color red would be Obstacle 1, preventing someone from seeing color so that they can only see in grayscale would be Obstacle 2, and blinding someone outright would be obstacle 3)

[Obstacle 1+] make something not exist (removing a fork from a drawer or someone's bellybutton would be Obstacle 1, removing all the lights from a house or someone's hands would be obstacle 2, removing the inhabitable space from a house/destroying the house outright or removing someone's heart would be obstacle 3)

[Obstacle 2+] create things by removing the fact that they don't exist (higher obstacles for more specific objects) (Thieves and Rogues may reduce this obstacle by one point.)

[Obstacle 3+] make something retroactively never have existed

Common bonds:

- [I often hide things where they can't be found.]
- [I often hide where I can't be found.]
- [I drop letters from words and sentences sometimes.]
- [I'm very good at pretending nothing happened.]
- [I don't like being around people.]
- [Space players confuse me.]
- [My eyes are black. My soul is… actually very much not black at all, I don't know where you got that idea.]

Mist

> In short, the game can haphazardly believe two things: that every Player is the Mist Player and that the Mist Player is every Player. This randomly messes up a majority of Sburb scripts and even abilities.
>
> For example if you use an ability on a Player who stands next to a Mist Player, your ability might benefit your original target, or both the target and the Mist Player, or it might misfire completely and only lock unto the Mist Player. Heck, if you try to target an ability on a Mist player, it might loop around and target YOURSELF. There's no limit to how confused things can get in Sburb.

> *Sburb Glitch FAQ*, godsgifttoGrinds

Mist is the aspect of *essence* – of what makes something real. A Mist player is a thing of substance – they are, in fact, *so* real that they cause all sorts of problems, because the Game thinks that they are everyone and everyone is them.

This is not actually helped by the fact that they can *become* anyone they like.

Non-magical techniques:

[Obstacle 0] sketch from life; replicate a drawing given the correct tools and enough time

[Obstacle 0] imitate the voice and mannerisms of someone you know well

[Obstacle 1] imitate the voice and mannerisms of someone you have observed for several minutes

Magical techniques:

[Obstacle 0] create fog/mist/smoke pretty much at will, even with no equipment

[Obstacle 1] absorb an attack by turning oneself into a cloud of small objects (called Reverberata) and then reforming once the attack has passed

[Obstacle 1+] Fogging (see Mist and Fogging, below)

[Obstacle 2] turn into a cloud of small objects (Reverberata), which then pelt a target as a physical attack

[Obstacle 2] use a game construct that normally only someone else can use (i.e. use the Ectobiology machine if you're not the session leader; doing a Dungeon that's marked as being for someone else)

Note that Mist magic is *especially* suited to borrowing magical techniques from other types of magic; while the usual level 2 obstacle still applies, the HG should be extremely lenient in letting someone reduce the Obstacle with practice, and a common Bond (below) is the reduction or elimination of that Obstacle.

Common bonds:

- [I don't respond to my name. I respond to Lord/Lady of the (Reverberata type).]

- [I find it unusually easy to copy other people's abilities.] (This can then be applied to reduce or remove the usual obstacle to copying abilities!)
- [I have a knack for breaking game constructs in my favor.]
- [I can see through fog/mist/smoke easily, no matter how thick it is.]
- [I find it easier to copy other people's voices, mannerisms, and phrasing than come up with my own.]
- [I give nicknames to everyone I know.]

Note that current Mist players commonly have an Affliction, [The Game glitches heavily if people try to use other kinds of Game magics on me], instead of or in addition to the Bond. This can be earned normally as a quest reward perk.

Isn't mangled body image bread and butter for Mist players, though? Granted I wouldn't expect permanent damage to be as frequent or severe as with Heart Surgery, but we're talking about people who usually have trouble controlling the transformations on good days. That plus the aspect essentially teaches them they should be constructing their identity from the bits and pieces other people leave lying around.

enthusiasticSplitter

I fail to see how constructing your identity from the bits and pieces other people leave lying around is a bad thing…?

eternityBraid

Fogging is one of the signature abilities of Mist players. It's a magical ability for them – not miraculous – so it's an application of Sburban Mist Magic. (This is not the *only* application of Sburban Mist Magic but it is important enough to require its own article.)

It's *kind* of like Second Skins' baby sister. It also… kind of isn't. So let me clarify a bit:

Fogging turns the Mist player, *mentally and physically*, into a coplayer. (Overcoming an extra Obstacle may be required to impersonate someone from a previous session, someone from a different session, or someone who is dead.) When a Mist player fogs someone, for all Game purposes, *they are that person*. The Mist player can use this to access Game stuff as that person. Impersonate that person. The Mist player *replaces* their own Skills, Bonds, and XP emotion with their coplayer's for the duration of their Intention being active. They will act like the coplayer for all important ways and most of the unimportant ones.

This lasts until either 1) the pluck (magical but not necessarily miraculous energy) runs out (we're just going to completely ignore trying to model that, the clearing out of Intentions across chapter borders should take care of this by itself), 2) they finish doing what they wanted to do, or 3) you go up to the Mist player and deliberately induce them into realizing they're Fogging.

The main thing that the Mist player lacks, when Fogging, is their coplayer's *goals*, *memories*, and *miraculous abilities*.

- Goals: The Mist player retains what goals they had in mind to accomplish across Fogging and unFogging. If your coplayer usually works on frog breeding but is currently doing some sort of weird gamebreaking research project, it's possible that might actually be the Mist player, especially if it seems out-of-character for them.
- Memories: The Mist player does *not* have the memories of the person they Fog. They retain their own memories. If you induce them to try to recall a memory they do not in fact have, this can jar them out of it.

- Miraculous abilities: The Mist player retains any and all miraculous arcs of their own and does not have access to their foggee's miraculous abilities, if any.

As a Magical Skill, you can thus use this for the following:

- A general Intention to turn into someone else, and then use your other Intention slot to do stuff. OOCly you can drop this Intention to return to yourself at any time; ICly you turn back when the plot requires it.
- An Intention to turn into someone else long enough to do a specific thing and then automatically unFog.

To directly knock you out of your state of Fog is generally a case of straightforward competing intentions; people may use Connection skills to either you or the coplayer you're Fogging for the duration as base skills for this. Using Sburban Survival as your base skill for this is also possible, although technically this isn't what Sburban Survival is *for*, so the HG may want to put an Obstacle in front of you until you've practiced it enough for it to become an established way you can use it.

High-level Mist players may eventually be able to unlock full Second Skins power. This is rare, but possible (like a lot of things in the Game are); if you're pursuing the Reality Syndrome arc to do so, Childish Dreams and A Little Push will generally mean that you Fog someone to do a specific thing the way they'd do it (although not necessarily well or correctly).

Heart

> I am certain – dead certain – that whatever you say, whatever you feel, whatever you are? It's all written down in your Shiny. It's all there. Everything that is *you* is there.
>
> It's comforting, to me at least. Your body can get beat up, you can get resurrected, you can pass through strange gateways, but the thing that is *you* is preserved through all these transformations, and it will never disappear.
>
> inherentLyre

In most cases, these Obstacles assume your target is willing to make the changes stick. If your target is unwilling, you should add 1 to the obstacle, unless it is specifically noted that the technique can be used on unwilling targets.

Non-magical techniques:

[Obstacle 0] tell how someone is feeling by relying on cues other than obvious facial expressions – i.e. body language, microexpressions, fluctuations in aura (even on unwilling targets and targets that are actively concealing their emotions)

[Obstacle 0] foster trust and emotional openness in conversation

[Obstacle 1] find someone's routine patterns of thought to predict their future behavior (even on unwilling targets)

Magical techniques:

[Obstacle 0] read the properties of a Shiny that you or someone else is holding, or that is in a picture from a specialized camera that captures shinies (normal cameras won't work) (even on unwilling targets)

[Obstacle 0] remove a Shiny from someone's chest (as Shinies return to place as soon as you stop actively holding them, there is not a separate technique for returning Shinies)

[Obstacle 1] adjust a Shiny to turn up or tone down an emotion

[Obstacle 1] adjust a Shiny to uncover or suppress memories (erasing them is a higher-Obstacle technique)

[Obstacle 1] "copy and paste" simple emotional or physical characteristics from one person to another temporarily (can add a temporary Skill Perk at level 1, including Superior or Magical skills; cannot be applied to Bonds, Afflictions, or miraculous powers; it dissipates at the end of the Chapter)

[Obstacle 2] destroy something specific in a Shiny – i.e. a specific important memory, a specific thought-pattern (destroying someone's "This is stupid why am I doing this" reflexive thought so that they can enter flow more easily, for example)

[Obstacle 2] "copy and paste" simple emotional or physical characteristics from one person to another and smooth out the resulting inconsistencies so that the change is more likely to stick (can add a temporary Skill Perk at level 1, including Superior or Magical skills; cannot be applied to Bonds, Afflictions, or miraculous powers; it dissipates at the end of the book, or stays permanently at the HG's option)

[Obstacle 3] destroy something large in a Shiny – i.e. someone's ability to feel an emotion, all memories associated with a specific person

[Obstacle 3] rewrite large parts of someone's personality to make them effectively a different person

Common bonds:

- [I love to have conversations about your feelings.]
- [I try to sympathize with everyone, even people who really shouldn't be sympathized with.]
- [I am a good listener.]
- [I want people to understand my perspective.]
- [Integrity is important to me.]

To: eternityBraid@prototypetowers.net
From: catalogTruisms@prototypetowers.net
Subject: re: heart magic (interuniversal correspondences)

Ms. Bunker,

Thank you for sending me a pointer to the appearance of certain extraordinarily Sburb-like concepts in the works of one Ms. Moran. I will certainly add them to the automated interuniversal-correspondences checker.

I do, however, wish to nitpick:

At timestamp 73-21.04130 eternityBraid wrote:

> their Heart magic works EXACTLY like Heart players do

It does not. It's surprisingly close – there are few enough works that contain the "take someone's heart out of their chest" motif. However, in general there are significantly more safeguards on Sburban Heart magic than there are on Chuubo's Heart magic, and Sburban Heart magic focuses on more detailed and subtle modifications, rather than moments of catharsis.

I will excerpt from the description of Heart Magic in the 'Halloween'-themed supplement you sent me:

> The more their heart cries out to you […] the easier it is for you to just reach in and… take it.

Heart players in Sburb shed this particular restriction fairly early, assuming their ARC is proceeding apace. There are no hooks involved. Neither are Shinies liable to injure those who grab onto them. They are balls of light only.

> 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.

No. Heart players in Sburb do not turn people into giant monsters.

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

Reshaping flesh in Sburb is *much* more difficult than it seems to be in this system. Their system appears to assume that once you have removed someone's Heart their flesh becomes pliable.

In Sburb the shape of someone's flesh is a property of their Heart. Reach into and expand their Physical node and you can see the systems in a Player's body pumping away. Some Heart players find that their abstraction makes it unusually simple or difficult to modify the body – in principle it is possible, but there is significantly less margin for error in physical modifications than there is in mental

modifications, it is inherently much more difficult than if a Life player would try to do the same modification, and shiny regrowth will overwrite anything that doesn't work with the rest of the body; a metaphysical version of transplant rejection.

In no cases can Sburban Heart magic turn a person into a sword. You can use [Rose of the Noble Castle] to turn emotions into wieldable weapons of shiny pink soulstuff, but that's different in that it is nondestructive and has nothing to do with the flesh of the contributor.

If anything Sburban Heart magic is closer to the functions served by identity discs in the *Tron* metacontinuity.

> [Obstacle 1] control someone whose heart you hold.

In theory, Sburban heart magic can do this. It is part and parcel of Heart being the inverse of Rage; they can emulate each other. For example, Mr. Heimdall of the Heart forum has done some research on the mechanisms used by some Heart players to disable someone by stilling their Heart, a technique which can be used offensively.

In practice… Heart is not Rage. Heart players do not control people. The entire philosophy of the Aspect is based off of not controlling people, but making each person the best version of themselves that they can become. You can, perhaps, if you're careful, make someone want to align their interests with you. You cannot flat-out command them.

You can't hand over Hearts to someone else, either. Maintaining the construct of a Shiny outside of a body requires a constant expenditure of *pluck (or mana, or whatever you want to call that resource), and if you put it down for a moment or try to give it to someone else, it'll zip back into the body it belongs to. Neither does removing a Shiny from someone cause them to become soulless; although their soul is outside of their body it is still connected in many ways.

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

I suppose this is theoretically possible. However, as noted previously, maintaining Shinies costs *pluck and as such people do not tend to leave them manifested any longer than necessary.

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

If someone's repressing things they are doing it for a reason. Pulling out repressed memories and emotions without also giving the subject the tools to deal with them is liable to merely lead to a mental breakdown.

In theory Chuubo's Heart Magic may also also automatically grant these tools, but given the thematics I find that unlikely.

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

For what it's worth, there has never been a case of the entrance of a dungeon being locked and requiring the input of anything other than cruxite totems to unlock. I suppose there could be a bug that required the input of a Shiny to unlock a dungeon but most Heart players would not try for fear the Shiny would be sucked in permanently.

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

This does not work in Sburb.

I think the fundamental difference here, however, is that Chuubo's Heart Magic uses fundamentally different premises – in that Heart Magic in their system is not well-suited for fine adjustments. I suspect nobody with this power has tried unscrewing the cover of a Chuubo's Heart and lubricating the gears, or re-attaching a hairspring, or replacing a worn-down rack and pinion; because their Heart Magic can produce spectacular but unfocused results by default.

The best treatment in Sburban Heart Magic is not to grant emotional catharsis of any sort. It is to do subtle fine adjustments, to make people the best version of themselves they can be. This is achieved through various mechanisms – [A Rosy Conceit] manifests the Shiny as a hard-light version of any of a variety of analogies, often mechanical, that the Heart player understands intuitively – but in theory the organizational structure is the same and therefore the principles of the mechanisms are also the same. The Soul node defines what part of a Player's mind is understood to be the ego by Game constructs. The Emotion node is the clearinghouse for connections between things that cause emotions and things that are affected by them.

If – and I use the Emotion node merely as an example here – you then expand the Emotion node, you may then see your preferred representation of fine details, most of which may be further expanded into a panoply of even finer details. This is the coarsest level at which most Heart players are willing to do adjustments; Heart players generally prefer being "zoomed in" twice or thrice – rewiring and adjusting levels at the level of individual thought processes rather than on the gestalt level – to do their work.

Nevertheless – I do thank you for the pointer. You'll receive a hat-tip in the next roundup I compile. Which name should I use to credit you?

Josh B. Alderman
catalogTruisms

Rage

> It's one of those Replayer experiences, really, seeing an entire group trying to get their Rage player to raise her voice – for it is usually a her – for the first time in her life.
>
> "Inheritor of Time", licensePerturbed

This is a kind of magic centered on imposing your will on other people. While in no cases is yelling strictly required to do these kinds of magic, most practitioners of the Rage Magic yell anyway.[104]

Note that these powers are not likely to stick on Main Characters; if Rage Magic is not averted by Bonds, Afflictions, or other sources of Auctoritas, a Serious Wound should be enough to avert even the most serious effects (and for the emotion and strong urge techniques, a Surface Wound should be enough), and the resulting wound power will often be resistance to further uses of this skill.

Non-magical techniques:

[Obstacle 0] yell loudly enough to carry across a large auditorium without amplification

[Obstacle 0] stand your ground in an argument or confrontation

[Obstacle 1] modify your self-presentation to look like you are the authority in any situation, regardless of whether you are or not

Magical techniques:

[Obstacle 0+] encourage or discourage an emotion in someone by talking to or yelling at them (i.e. encouraging or discouraging bravery)

[Obstacle 1] make animals follow simple commands without training (i.e. telling birds to go away, telling a cat to come inside)

[Obstacle 1+] make someone feel a strong urge to start or stop doing something by talking to or yelling at them (i.e. 'don't try to collect payment from me', 'stay here while I go on ahead')

[Obstacle 2] make inanimate objects follow simple commands (i.e. yelling at a door until it unlocks, making the corner of a table shrink back so it doesn't get in your way)

[Obstacle 2] break someone's will by yelling at them over several days or weeks, reducing the obstacle for other uses of Rage Magic on them by 1 (this does not stack with anything else)

[Obstacle 2] make animals follow more complex commands without training (i.e. telling roaches that they should watch for movement in that window and crawl back to report if they see any)

[Obstacle 3] break someone's will instantly with a single overpowering roar, reducing the obstacle for other uses of Rage Magic on them by 1 (this does not stack with anything else)

==> 104. EB: I think it's psychological?

Common bonds

- [I yell a lot.]
- [I want the world to know I'm here.]
- [Do not get into an argument with me. I will win.]
- [I have a well-defined and crisp vision of what I want things to be like.]
- [I will not be persuaded to go against my own best interests.]
- [I hold onto grudges far longer than I should.]

Flow

Go with the flow, man. Go with the flow. That's all you'll ever need to do.

<div align="right">"Re: Now What?", greenTracksuit</div>

This magic is about fire, heat, and momentum.

While there are techniques here that allow you to simply ignore things like "being tired" or "needing to eat", they're Will-intensive (this being a magical skill) and need to be sustained for the entire time you're using them. Also, I would suggest at least positioning yourself above a bed before you discontinue this kind of intention. While you don't get physical "rebound" tiredness/thirst/etc., the magic has been propping you up emotionally and stopping using it is going to suck.

All in all, it's just easier to sleep and eat properly in the first place. Unfortunately, Sburb doesn't always allow us that luxury.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] stay awake for up to 36 hours without losing coherency or focus

[Obstacle 1] "firewalking" (which is mostly just walking across coals quickly enough that your own sweat is sufficient protection)

[Special] Your level of Sburban Flow Magic can be used as if it was (Superior) Freestyle Rap/Slam Poetry, Edge and all. I don't expect this to come up much but it's there if you want to use it.

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] look at anything and know exactly how flammable it is and how fast/how long it'd burn if you set it on fire

[Obstacle 0] magically enhanced endurance, enough that an (otherwise) couch potato could run a marathon. You can apply this to someone else instead of yourself, although only one person. This primarily works by reducing Obstacles for as long as you've got this intention on, although at the HG's option it may give you a small amount of Edge.

[Obstacle 1] remain comfortable regardless of the external temperature, assuming you are not actually on fire or encased in a block of ice or something

[Obstacle 1] magically enhanced endurance, enough that an (otherwise) couch potato could do a 100-mile run (which is a thing some people actually do). You can apply this to someone else instead of yourself, although only one person. This primarily works by reducing Obstacles for as long as you've got this intention on, although at the HG's option it may give you a small amount of Edge.

[Obstacle 1] enchant an object (up to about the size of a toaster) to completely ignore friction for as long as you sustain this intention (It can still come to a stop if it crashes into something, and it'll still be

subject to gravity, but it'll slide along rough ground indefinitely if you push it and it won't be subject to air resistance at all.)

[Obstacle 2] walk through actual flames unharmed

[Obstacle 2] enchant an object (up to about the size of a house) or a fleet of smaller objects (maybe two dozen, tops) to completely ignore friction for as long as you sustain this intention (Works like the similar Obstacle 1 technique. Using this on a meteor is a BAD IDEA.)

[Obstacle 2] magically enhanced endurance, so you could run for *days* if you needed to, fight until you're physically too wounded to continue, etc. You can apply this to someone else instead of yourself, although only one person. Again, this primarily works by reducing Obstacles for as long as you've got this intention on, although at the HG's option it may give you a small amount of Edge.

[Obstacle 3] grant everyone else in your vicinity that kind of magically enhanced endurance for as long as you sustain this intention

[Obstacle 3] temporary Cool for as long as you sustain this intention

Common bonds

- [I can't stop moving.]
- [I really like staring at fires. They're pretty!]
- [I perform best when the heat's turned up – when things get dangerous and the pressure's on.]
- [I love to run.]
- [I set my physical movements to the beat of the music I'm playing.]
- [Nothing can stop me. Nothing. Not even people telling me to consider what I'm doing first.]

> Frost grew around his fingers and down his legs and through his hair; and he sat and left it there, not even reaching up to dust the snowflakes off his shoulders.
>
> And there he sat as the frost deepened. The river froze. The trees froze. The people huddled around their fires, cursing his name.
>
> "Be patient," he would say, to petitioners. "Spring will come eventually. It is of no use to try to bring it on, for that will only make it weaker."

Sorcerer's Son, dryadTornado

A lot of this will probably look familiar from Sburban Flow Magic. The two Aspects are very closely related. Of course, some of the Obstacles are different. Some things are easier for Flow players than Rhyme players and vice versa.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] know when it's safe to take breaks from doing something

[Obstacle 1] having the will to jump into ice-cold water, at least briefly[105]

[Special] Your level of Sburban Rhyme Magic can be used as if it was (Superior) Freestyle Rap/Slam Poetry, Edge and all. I don't expect this to come up much but it's there if you want to use it.

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] look at anything and know its temperature

[Obstacle 0] change your perception of time so that you can't be "too late" to react to any other mundane action and most miraculous actions that aren't instantaneous-evoke

[Obstacle 1] remain comfortable regardless of the external temperature, assuming you are not actually on fire or encased in a block of ice or something

[Obstacle 1] stop something relatively small and slow-moving (something that you could physically have caught, even if you're not anywhere near it to physically catching it). Yes, this works on the business end of a blade. Yes, you can stop things in midair. No, the physics doesn't make sense.

[Obstacle 2] remain in actual ice/icy water indefinitely without ill effect

[Obstacle 2] temporary Cool for as long as you sustain this intention

[Obstacle 2] stop something larger or faster (that you couldn't've physically caught).[106]

==> 105. EB: Unfortunately, it does not actually make it feel less cold. Does seem to release some endorphins though.
==> 106. EB: This is actually a pretty good defense ability. Or would be if it wasn't so difficult.

[Obstacle 3] plunge a Region-sized area, such as an entire Land, into winter for a season's/book's worth of time[107]

Common bonds

- [I'm always calm and collected, no matter the situation.]
- [I do everything to my own rhythm. Nobody can rush me.]
- [I'm fascinated by ice and snow.]
- [I eat all my food cold, even if it's food that could only be improved by heating it.]
- [I always have a cooler of drinks stashed somewhere nearby.]
- [I don't do anything until I've taken the time to figure out what's going on.]

==> 107. EB: Unless it's someone's Garden and they take a wound for it.

A User's Guide to the Apocalypse

Might

> Might will always answer those who ask. So call it. Always face the music. Always pool your efforts with others. Never question challenges. The higher a mountain is in front of you, the more the Might will flow.

> *Sburb Glitch FAQ*, godsgifttoGrinds

Might is the aspect of collective strength, honor, and the ocean.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] surfing![108]

[Obstacle 0] the best bro hugs *ever*

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] give yourself, or someone else, a pep talk or shot of courage (exact effects are up to recipient discretion; at *worst* it could be resisted with a Surface Wound, though most people won't want to resist it anyway)

[Obstacle 1+] inspire people to follow your example, as a wound-like effect similar to that of Become Somebody's Commanding Aura (although it takes significantly longer; for example, you'd have to keep it up for a day or so to make a "surface wound" size effect)

[Obstacle 1] summon and manipulate reasonable amounts (up to bathtub size) of water, usually salt water unless you practice with fresh water

[Obstacle 2] summon and manipulate frankly unreasonable amounts (larger than bathtub size) of water, usually salt water unless you practice with fresh water

[Obstacle 2] practice an "immovable stance" that completely prevents an opponent from knocking you over

[Obstacle 3] force someone who usually fights with underhanded means (i.e. DD) into at least giving you a fair fight, by setting up the environment so that underhanded means would cost them more than they would otherwise gain

Common bonds

- [I fight with honor.]
- [I'm always carrying water.]
- [Believe in the me that believes in you!]
- [Might is the best aspect ever. Fight me.]
- [I am a large ham.]

==> 108. EB: Seriously, every Might player is a natural. Now if only the oceans on the Lands had any waves...

Sand

> Remember that "penetration value" is *not* the only way around an Auctoritas. For example, if the Power of the Ground attacks a PC and doesn't know what kind of Auctoritas the PC has, they can destroy a million cubic feet of dirt (a hundred feet in each direction) around the PC. The ground immediately beneath the PC's feet will be unaffected, but when the miracle becomes a part of normal reality a few seconds later, the PC and that bit of ground within a few feet of them will fall. Thump.

> *Nobilis* 2nd edition, R. Sean Borgstrom/Jenna Moran

Sand is the aspect of dirty tactics, weakness, technicalities, and division.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] keeping one's footing on unstable surfaces

[Obstacle 1] find loopholes in a well-defined system of rules (This is a theoretical understanding only; exploiting these loopholes is a separate action!)

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] weaken a structure, making it so that one or two well-placed blows or loud sounds can collapse it

[Obstacle 1] get someone alone, isolated, and/or separated from "the herd"

[Obstacle 1] given knowledge of someone's "plan", find a possibly-exploitable weakness in it

[Obstacle 1] summon and manipulate dirt, gravel, or sand on a small scale (up to about a bathtub's worth)

[Obstacle 2] find something blackmail-worthy, or otherwise weak, about someone (phobias, dirty laundry, etc.)

[Obstacle 2] summon and manipulate dirt, gravel, or sand on a larger scale (more than a bathtub's worth)

[Obstacle 3] find a weakness in someone's "plan" by observation and thinking alone

Common bonds

- [I've got sand in my pockets. And in my shoes. And in my bags.]
- [Well, you didn't *say* I wasn't allowed to do that!]
- [If you aren't making me do it, I'm not doing it. And how are you going to make me?]
- [I amuse myself by pointing out how this whole thing could've been avoided... after the fact.]
- [If you present me with a story, or a plan, instead of enjoying or committing to it I'm going to poke the premise full of holes.]

- [Honor? What honor?]

a rules clarification

Sand, in GGTG's *Glitch FAQ*, is an Aspect about lying and deception. However, forcing a PC to lie and deceive is bad for cooperation. Therefore, to make it realistically playable, *A User's Guide*'s aspect of Sand is about rules-lawyering and cheating.

Sand, as an Aspect of rules lawyering and cheating, does still include lying and deception, but in a much smaller role. They are not actually required. It is sufficient for a Sand player to pick at the holes in rules until they bleed.

Incidentally, this also makes Sand players excellent gamebreakers. Make of this what you will.

Doom

These powers, the powers of Doom, may terrify you. But know that all things will come to an end, eventually, inevitably. People die. Planets die. Universes die.

This is not because of a fault in our construction. This is the natural order of things.

Some things deserve to live a full and natural lifespan. Some things don't. If you are at all wise with your power, you will be able to figure out which is which.

Doom for the Doomed, sugarSkull

Doom is the aspect of death, decay, and – just as importantly – the fact that things must die for other things to replace them. It's not inherently bleak; it is the kind of death that is necessary for renewal. Think the Death card from the Tarot. Or of the kind of ecosystem where a tree's seedpods can't open without the heat of a forest fire rising through the branches.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] knowledge of what flora and fauna is, or isn't, poisonous

[Obstacle 1] suppress gag reflex, nausea, and other physical indicators of disgust

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] metabolize any poison, letting you drink/absorb/breathe/use it without any ill effect

[Obstacle 1] conjure a poison gas in your immediate area that is toxic to all living beings, non-selective (it will affect everyone and everything in the area)

[Obstacle 1] touch anything and accelerate its aging by about five years (organic materials will decompose, buildings will weather, most Underlings will be killed, etc.); you can leave it on as a touch attack, but there is no protection against friendly fire

[Obstacle 2] conjure a poison gas in your immediate area, selective (you can choose who or what is affected by the poison – including specifying that it might eat away at non-living objects, if you like)

[Obstacle 2] touch something and accelerate its aging by about fifty years (this will collapse most buildings)

[Obstacle 3] touch something and accelerate its aging to the point where it falls into dust

[Obstacle 3] spread a poisonous gas over an entire Region

Common bonds

- [I have a fondness for mixed drinks that contain highly toxic ingredients.]
- [I am fascinated by decay and rot, rather than repulsed by it.]

- [I still continue to age normally, rather than being "restored" to an age-20 body, every time I have to use a dreamself backup.]
- [It's the dose that makes the poison.] (And so you can use small amounts of otherwise poisonous stuff to do useful things. Like homeopathy that might actually work.)
- [I will never need a gas mask.]

Jack climbed down the beanstalk, and in his satchel he carried two sets of Sburb discs.

A Collection of Sburban Legends, severalEntries

The aspect of Life in Sburb is *mostly* what it looks like. Except for the landshark. See, Life players also have control over soil. They also tend to have to take on some sort of empathy as their Bond, which is Sburb's way of making sure that healers aren't jerkasses in this game.

If you have rolled Life, you will acquire or choose a plant (or fungus, I've seen a couple mushroom Life players in my time) that is symbolic of you; this will be known as your Lifeplant. For example, I (Elizabeth) have alfalfa as my Lifeplant, and Samantha's is blackberry brambles.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] have a "green thumb" (to be able to grow plants in the ordinary way without any of them dying on you)

[Obstacle 0+] practice herbal medicine/herbalism

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] sense how the life flows in a living being, to see if it's sick or needs water or food

[Obstacle 1] given seeds and soil, make plants grow much faster (come to maturity in hours or days instead of weeks or years)

[Obstacle 1] create a small clump of your Lifeplant in a patch of ground/soil, even if you don't have any seeds, and make it grow to maturity by concentrating for a few minutes

[Obstacle 1+] release a burst of energy into someone to make them heal faster from wounds or physical illness (The HG should decide how effective this is and adjust the Obstacle accordingly.)

[Obstacle 1+] earthbend (obstacle depends on size of effect)

[Obstacle 2] grow a plant fast enough that you can use it for attacks

[Obstacle 2] suck the life energy out of an enemy, which unfortunately doesn't give *you* anything but functions as an attack (This entry is mechanically equivalent to the previous entry; the main difference is in the special effects.)

[Obstacle 2] release a burst of energy into someone to make them stronger and more vital than normal, giving them a +1 tool to physical stuff while you sustain this intention

[Obstacle 3] grow a great hedge, bramble, and/or belt of your Lifeplant that shimmers with Life energy and can ensnare enemies that try to get across or through

[Obstacle 3] summon and ride a sandworm/landshark

Common bonds

- [I feel the pain of others as acutely as if it were inflicted on me.]
- [I must put others' needs above my own.]
- [I cannot handle people or plants roughly.]
- [I must never kill, not even inhale a gnat or step on a blade of grass.]
- [I feel an overwhelming love for all things.]

Dreams

> Dreams abilities are going to hand you the blank page of paper. Your job is to figure out how you're going to specialize in using it.
>
> "Living the Dream", existentialExternality

Dreams is the aspect of ordered creativity by glass. It has one primary technique, creating glass objects, but that's pretty flexible! The only problem is its limitation: if the Game thinks you aren't being "creative", if you're repeating yourself, it'll become less and less effective...

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] actually come out with some cool art, once you actually clear out your schedule and sit down

[Obstacle 1] use basically anything to make art (Well... art by *some* yardstick, at least. No guarantees it'll have anything to do with the art conventions most people are familiar with.)

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0+] create fist-sized lumps of glass for stuff like paperweights. With practice they can be turned into glass sculptures. Obstacle increases for larger pieces of glass. The process of conjuring this glass usually takes too long to be effective in combat, but I suppose you could plan for that kind of thing.

[Obstacle 1] come up with a non-obvious alternate solution to a problem. If the handler can't think of one the HG and other players should suggest cool alternate solutions until one sounds good.

[Obstacle 1] create a "glass" object as an attack (it'll vanish as soon as the attack is complete) – but how effective it is as an attack depends on how creative it is. For example, dropping an anvil on someone's head would be easy to shrug off, since dropping anvils on heads is everywhere in the cartoons, but dropping a bushel of (glass) pickles on someone would create a rather larger dent, and throwing coffee mugs would be pretty effective too. Note that if you repeat yourself (and the HG can remember you did so), the effectiveness of this will rapidly drop.

[Obstacle 2] supernaturally aid yours, or someone else's, focus and determination

[Obstacle 3] look into someone's creative work and get a good look at their heart (i.e. looking at the way someone else draws people and deducing how they feel about certain people, or people in general). You might just want to ask for the "look at their heart" OOCly, and then make up the way that their art represents it yourself.

Common bonds

- [I need to practice my art every day.]
- [Don't interrupt me.] (Dreams players are known to react to interruptions... violently.)

- [You can't knock me out by force.]
- [I insist on always getting my sleep.]
- [My dreams are always lucid.] (Not that this is much help in Sburb proper. But it does mean that you'll always know if you're in a dreambubble.)
- [I get angry when asked to repeat things.]

Rain

> The flats of Death Valley are dry, deathly dry, for decades at a time, and so they hold little in the way of life. But this dryness can last only decades. Eventually, a storm blows in from the sea to the west.
>
> When the rain blows in, and for a very little while afterwards, Death Valley is a beautiful lake surrounded by tiny, fast-growing wildflowers.
>
> The wildflowers know, I think, that their time is limited: and so, when they bloom, they bloom for all their lives are worth: a carpet of color, growing in defiance, all along the shores of the transient lake.
>
> "The Desert", vermilionSparkle

Rain is an Aspect of freedom, illogic, and the Unnamed Third Thing:

Some people call the third thing "dementia". Other people call it "a child's eyes". A Rain player does not see a pair of shoes as a pair of shoes. When he looks at them, he sees oddly shaped pieces of leather sewn together, which can be used in a variety of ways (only one of which is wearing them). To a Rain player, reality is always fascinatingly new, often funny, and has very little to do with what everyone else calls "reality".

One of the primary techniques of Rain is that a Rain player can exist in several places at once, by splitting and fusing. The results are called "Rainclones"; none of them counts as the "original", and you have to kill all of them to kill the Rain player. The same Rain player shares one mind throughout the splitting and fusing process. If you are a Rain player (and have this), you can thus use the relevant magical technique to split a small set of Rainclones to do the relevant task, and then merge back afterwards.

If you want to have multiple Rainclones just sitting around (and if you want to take advantage of said rainclones freely, rather than through this magic specifically), you'll need to take the Bond.[109]

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] puns, wordplay

[Obstacle 1] understand the speech of someone at high corruption (Note: This gives you no actual shield against said corruption!)

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] pull umbrellas, stuffed animals, and/or small plastic toys out of... *somewhere*, we're not sure where

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==> 109. EB: Note that the rainclone bond is semantically invalid if you don't have the Rain powers. If you insist, you *can* have it on your character sheet as an inherent bond, but you won't be able to use it if you aren't a current Rain player.

[Obstacle 0+] make yourself follow [cartoon physics](#) instead of real physics (if you walk off a cliff, you don't fall until you look down; injuries that should be serious just cause you to squish out around them; you can enter a "hole" you painted onto a wall, but nobody else can; and so on.)

[Obstacle 1] split off a "Rainclone" (or handful thereof), and do something that takes advantage of you being in two places at once

[Obstacle 1] throw around rainbow goo that corrodes the *concept* of solidity, making everything run and melt together

[Obstacle 2] make something fun enough (to you, subjectively) that you can do it for hours (and hours and hours)

[Obstacle 2] make yourself (or someone else) completely forget something, allowing you to see it again for the first time

[Obstacle 3] interact with game abstractions in a literal manner

Common bonds

- [I'm laughing. Always. Even when it isn't funny. Especially when it isn't funny.]
- [I'm habitually split into a handful of rainclones.]
- [I always have a fresh new perspective on the situation.]
- [Everything's better when it's as colorful as possible!]
- [I'm always using something really weird (yet useful) as a fashion accessory.] (For example: wearing a traffic cone as a hat, carrying a big fistful of eating utensils when you *don't* have utensilkind, always keeping two extra tent poles strapped to your forearms, folding a tarp into a paper crane shape and wearing it like a backpack, slinging a hot pink extension cord over one shoulder...)

> Light players are the worst know-it-alls because, unlike most know-it-alls who can only content themselves with the delusion that they *think* they are always right, the Light player *knows* they are always right.

> *A Dumbass's Guide to Light*, stupidityTolerated

Technically all the "enhance luck" and "decrease luck" techniques listed below are just special cases of single techniques of obstacle 1+ and 2+ respectively, but I broke them out by obstacle to provide suitable examples.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] calculate probabilities in your head for dice/roulette wheels, count cards, etc.

[Obstacle 0] position yourself to see and take advantage of lucky breaks and minimize losses

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] divine the likelihood of an event

[Obstacle 0] influence the outcome of a simple randomizer (such as dice, a dreidel, or someone throwing darts while blindfolded)

[Obstacle 1] know things you have a reasonable way of finding out about, but haven't specifically investigated

[Obstacle 1] enhance your luck in realistic ways (for example, if you are trying to throw off someone that's chasing you, you just happen to pick the alley that isn't a dead end to turn into; you find a coin in the coin return chute of a vending machine; the teacher doesn't call on you in class.)

[Obstacle 2] know things you have no reasonable way of finding out about

[Obstacle 2] decrease someone else's luck in realistic ways (for example, someone *else* you're chasing tries to throw you off and just *happens* to turn into a blind alley; your rival at school arrives at the store just in time for the last copy of the new manga to have already sold out; a gun pointed at you jams)

[Obstacle 2] enhance your luck in slightly unrealistic ways (a plumber's next appointment cancels just in time for you to get your pipes serviced; the last rare trading card you need to complete your collection was left in a disused room at your school; rain stops just in time for the wedding even though it was forecast to last through the next two hours)

[Obstacle 3] enhance your luck in greatly unrealistic ways (a new sword you can use just *happens* to have been dropped in the street by someone in a hurry; you find a full scuba tank on the seafloor before you run out of air; you actually find a wifi hotspot in Fortitude)

[Obstacle 3] decrease someone's luck in unrealistic ways (the cliff they're standing on happens to crumble right then; their gun backfires and explodes in their face)

Common bonds

- [The places where I live tend to be cluttered with stuff. Everywhere.]
- [If it has print on it, I've already read it all before you can blink.]
- [My vision is incredibly sharp.]
- [My eyes reflect light, like a cat's, so I can see in the dark.]
- [I hate losing, and would rather cheat than fail honestly.]

Law

> Batman, I think, was a Law player. Enforcing the rules that hold society to a higher standard – but enforcing them from the shadows:
>
> For you can hide from the light, if you have enough darkness, but there is no place that does not have a shadow.

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Fictional Classpects, skiddingZebra

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The aspect of Law is based upon the limits of possibilities, hiding knowledge, and enforcing promises on you via magical chains that give you bonuses while you're following them and start getting uncomfortably tight if you're not. If you flagrantly defy them and can't argue your way out of it, they tighten to zero and tend to injure you in the process.

These chains will generally be treated as Wound Powers – so, if the Law player is applying them to your character, the Law player can only define, in *general*, what's going to happen, and you'll have control over the shape of the end result. (Law player handlers: negotiating with people OOCly – and maybe even ICly – and coming to a consensus about what the Wounds might do before you place them would be a good idea.) Mitigate the wound as usual, even if it is a Surface Wound.

Of course, the Law player can pretty much completely define what the chain is doing if it's on an unimportant NPC, as they don't have health levels.

Because this is only a magical skill and not anything miraculous, a Serious Wound will generally be the highest these things go… unless you *want* to put it in a Divine Health Level, in which case the restriction might well last past the end of your Sburb session! (This is rare, and I'm not sure anyone would be foolhardy enough to do this, but it's definitely possible.)

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] an instinctual understanding of contract language, logic, etc. (This does not make you able to write it, necessarily, but it makes reading it nearly as easy as reading prose.)

[Obstacle 1] Knowledge of ciphers, steganography, and other such ways of hiding secret messages.

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0+] Being able to manipulate physical actual chains with preternatural skill, including "chainbending"-like feats. Your nunchucks will never hit you in the face again.

[Obstacle 1+] Find a deliberately hidden message. The HG should up the obstacle for things where you don't even know if there *is* a message or not, not having the decryption key or table, or the sophistication of the way it's hidden.

[Obstacle 1+] Perceive what you *shouldn't* do in a situation, so you know how to act correctly/effectively/productively/etc. at letting other people think you know what you're doing and/or

not getting killed. Higher obstacles are involved in situations where someone is actively trying to obfuscate these things. This does not mean that you actually know what you're doing – you won't be able to replicate it later without using this magic again.

[Obstacle 1] Place a chain around someone that inflicts a Surface Wound, or Surface Wound-like effect. People are allowed to Mitigate this wound, such that the chain may not necessarily enforce exactly what you wanted, be where you expected it to be, or do what you want it to do. You can totally also use this as a straightforward attack – say, if you want to take out a small clump of enemies, ring a chain with the concept "stop attacking me" around them and watch the gibs fly.

[Obstacle 2] Place a chain around someone that inflicts a Serious Wound, or Serious Wound-like effect. See all previous disclaimers.

[Obstacle 2] Hide a message so well that only the intended recipient will ever find it, even without exchanging any prior communications with them, so long as you know at least a little bit about them. (For example, as long as you've *met* the Shy Baker on Derse, even if it was in a previous session, you'll be able to know that you should leave the message in the hollow brick in the wall where he checks for messages from his black-market cheese supplier.)

[Obstacle 2] Remove a piece of knowledge from someone's head. (If you keep this Intention going you can constantly be removing, say, the fact that you aren't supposed to be in a secure facility! Changing the target of what you're removing requires a new Intention though.)

[Obstacle 3] Retroactively destroy some knowledge, including removing it from everyone's head.

Common bonds

- [I must always follow the rules.]
- [I'm secretive with my knowledge.]
- [I keep getting into arguments about technicalities and loopholes in the things other people say.]
- [I love hiding things where nobody else will find them, even if I can't find them again.]
- [My security precautions are rather paranoid.]

Mind

> The Outside has roads "like veins on a leaf", which is to say that I'm not talking about two roads diverging in a yellow wood. I'm talking about thousands upon thousands of roads, all pointing crazily in every possible direction that you could travel and some that you couldn't.
>
> The crossings between these roads are marked with signs. The signs are unreadable.
>
> Of course the signs are unreadable. It wouldn't be the Outside if you could decipher them.
>
> <div align="right">"Chuubo's in a Nutshell: Part 3", eternityBraid</div>

The Aspect of Mind is associated with choice; and so the Mind magic is about choices.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] notice when a choice is going to be especially important

[Obstacle 0] get a "hunch" as to the "best" course of action when faced with a decision (The actual value of your hunch depends entirely on the strength of the backing Intention!)

[Obstacle 1] clear your, or someone else's, mind of distractions; enter into a mindful state

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0+] forecast the possible results of a decision (obstacle 0 for trivial decisions, 1 for most meaningful decisions, and 2 for big, life-altering decisions)

[Obstacle 1] Lightning! Neural impulses are just tiny amounts of electricity, after all.

[Obstacle 1+] apply your Theory of Everything to something, and then have it *actually work* like your Theory of Everything says. This is explicitly designed for psychological theories so you can give people therapy, but you could apply it to *other* things with a higher obstacle.

[Obstacle 2] combat precognition (+tool, at HG discretion, to a fighting action – by you or by someone else – while this action is sustained)

[Obstacle 2+] clear away a natural status effect like fear, or a supernatural status effect (i.e. from someone using Sburban Rage magic) that is preventing someone from having free will.

[Obstacle 3] forecast possible futures stemming from any set of decisions, arbitrarily far into the future (Be careful just how much information you try to get this way! Your head might explode. *Usually* metaphorically.)

Common bonds

- [I always think things through carefully.]
- [I believe in free will.] / [I don't believe in free will.]
- [Take a third option.]

- [If something bad happens it's my fault.] / [If something bad happens I will believe it's my fault.]
- [My aspect pledges me to defending people's free will from whatever might threaten it.]
- [My aspect pledges me to defending the value of logic and thought.]
- [If I understand how systems work, I can exploit them.]

Fate

Sburban Fate magic is associated with instinct, prophecy, and inevitability.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] reduce a choice to a list of pros and cons; use this technique to make any given decision "obvious"

[Obstacle 0] seek, or create, a situation in which you have the objective tactical advantage

[Obstacle 1] find information about the prophecies in effect in your session of Sburb (The HG may ask you to describe what you found, so they don't have to make it all up themselves.)

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] figure out what Sburb "wants" you to do in any given situation (While most Sburb players' Whisperings give hints on good Classpect-based behavior, yours will also advise you on unrelated things like puzzle solutions and quest continuations.)

[Obstacle 1+] win any game of perfect information (in which you can see everything about the situation).[110] If you combine it with scrying abilities (from yourself or someone else) it may become very useful...

[Obstacle 1] make a few arrows show up on the ground: these arrows will accelerate you in the direction they point, so you can use them to help funnel enemies into a natural chokepoint, make yourself hit harder, or change direction quickly

[Obstacle 2] cover the ground with arrows, to confuse an opponent, create a terrain advantage where none would otherwise exist, or make it impossible for someone to follow you; you can also use these as an attack, as with the obstacle-1 option

[Obstacle 2] given inadequate information about a situation, figure out what the "obvious" solution would be *anyway* (Tip: You can use this from an enemy's point of view, as a scry.)

[Obstacle 3] Prophecy-forging[111]: Dig deep enough and you can write your own prophecy, which Sburb will then treat as if it were a pre-generated prophecy, up to and including trying to enforce it (albeit at the mundane level with coincidences and Obstacles). Be careful how you phrase it, though...

Common bonds

- [I avoid situations in which I'd have to make choices.]
- [I have a "danger sense".] (This is actually extremely useful...)
- [I will do what must be done.]

==> 110. EB: Compare/contrast with Light's equivalent, which works better in games of chance.

==> 111. EB: This technique can be "borrowed" by extremely good Gamebreakers, even if the Gamebreaker only has a mundane skill to base it off of; the technique is still borrowed at the usual +2 Obstacle penalty for incompatible magic. A Gamebreaker can permanently add this to their skillset using a Trick Perk.

- [Insofar as I do anything, it's not because I want to. It's because I have to.]
- [Nobody is responsible for anything. We're all pushed around by the whims of Sburb.]

> Losing Micah brings her the gift of timelessness. It's not just the thing with Proteus. It's the fact that once you lose your volition there isn't really any *need* to force time into order.
>
> "I can't actually tell the future," she explains, feverishly, to the monster. He's not there, of course. She doesn't try to talk to him when he's actually there. She's responding belatedly to the pressure he'd put on her to soothsay for him three weeks ago, or tomorrow, or at some other time. "It's just that once I give up the notion of being able to affect things causality devolves to space."

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"Anthropomorphizing the Crucible (I/VII)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

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Time is about temporal manipulation, stoicism, and the preservation of the Alpha timeline.

Time travel plots that play out on-screen are handled using the Chuubo's concept of Issues. I cover these in Issues and Time Travel [below].

Note that going "wait, I don't want that to happen to my character unilaterally, can we rewind a little" and invoking a Flurry instead is something *any* player can do, not just something exclusive to Time players; but Time players are more likely to do so, and have more excuses.[112]

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] tell the time, down to the second, without a timepiece

[Obstacle 0] get somewhere on time, so long as it is notionally possible if you hurry and you show up out-of-breath

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] all other functions of an alarm clock, timer, and stopwatch

[Obstacle 0] happen to have something small or easily available on you that's applicable to this situation (matches in a waterproof container, a healing potion) as a result of "prior preparation" or "retroactive preparation"

[Obstacle 1] slow down your perception of time, thus making it easier for you to do purely mental actions. You can use this directly to boost purely mental things like scanning book titles or giving answers on a quiz show, or to grant a bit of Edge to your group in situations that require tactical or situational awareness.

[Obstacle 1] bolster yourself in a fight with 1-2 future selves (The higher the Intention level, the more likely it is that this is a stable time loop. Otherwise, you're liable to end up with doomedselves.)

==> 112. EB: This is kind of like Wounded Angel's Dramatic power - having this be a property of Time Magic doesn't have any actual IC or mechanical purpose, but it establishes that you're the kind of person that does this kind of thing.

[Obstacle 1] use a prophecy to make certain that a certain event is part of the alpha timeline, and not an offshoot. (Be careful – this might net you a doomed timeline or a dead timeclone.)

[Obstacle 2] slow down your actions through time, thus making it easier for you to do actions requiring coordination. You can use this for combat, getting places on time, juggling, and so on.

[Obstacle 2] bolster yourself in a fight with a large handful of future selves (The higher the Intention level, the more likely it is that this is a stable time loop. Otherwise, you're liable to end up with doomedselves.)

[Obstacle 3] rewind and redo anything as long as it was during your current Session... at the cost of the previous timeline, and the iteration of you that casts this, becoming Doomed

[Obstacle 3] declare that your future self has prepared for an arbitrarily complex situation - for example, setting traps, bribing or sweet-talking guards, prototyping something less destructive than the alternative...

Common bonds

- [Past Me/Future Me is my own worst enemy.]
- [I'm not lazy, I just don't waste energy if I don't have to.]
- [I like making diagrams, flipcharts, timelines, and so on.]
- [I've seen many people die many times.]
- [I often try to take control and leadership.] / [I *hate* taking control and leadership.]
- [I instinctively understand time shenanigans.] (Watching *Primer*, or other movies involving similar types of time shenanigans, with a Time player is fun. They'll pull up a big piece of paper after the movie and make a plot of what happened in the movie in actual chronological order, with a bunch of lines leading down to a second timeline below explaining what order things happened in the movie.)

They say the Time Players are the ones who die a Thousand Deaths, but hadn't we all died at least once? Hadn't we all Ascended to Godhood, or died from Game's myriad hazards, or at the hand of the traitor within our session? The Game forces us to make choices that we would force the characters from our video games to make, except it's terrifyingly real, and often, this choice is to sacrifice yourself, for greater power or greater good.

Dark Souls was for Pansies: A Guide to Time, emberSeeker

Chuubo's uses the mechanic of *Issues* to handle (among other things) time loops. Issues are a set of cards that are given to you in order, whenever you do something that particularly suits them. These cards have advice on how to set up and play out a mini-arc, and reward you with MP and XP.

A Straightforward Example

So if you decide "my future self has done some lowkey grinding to get me Cool Stuff", you could take the first point of an Issue called "Calling". That issue's first point starts with the uneasy feeling that a loop's been left open; you get an Issue card saying as much. Then if you take advantage of this future self again (or you get into another situation that increases the weight of the foreshadowing, such as seeing it in the Skaian Clouds), you earn more points of Calling, and the feeling gets stronger.

Eventually the level-4 Issue card says that you have to actually *do* the thing you've been leaving undone. In this case, now you need to gather the grist, alchemize the cool stuff, and send it back to your past self.

If you somehow manage to get to the level 5 Issue card here, it means that there are circumstances that make your duty unusually scary or difficult, but it's still straightforward.

A More Complex Example

A less upbeat situation - for example, if a doomedself steps in the way of a sword, taking the blow for you - might earn you an Issue called "Illusion". Illusion is the Issue that means that something's wrong with the picture being shown in play - especially in the Fairy Tales genre, it means that things are looking too perfect, too easy. This Issue's first point starts with a sort of feeling that "wow, some improbable things sure have happened". The more improbably-good or improbably-weird things that happen, the higher this Issue gets.

Now, Illusion's weird in that the Issue gives you Wounds. But remember what Wounds are in Chuubo's. They're bounds set on your *agency* - they make you less able to wriggle out of the punishment the world might have in store for you. Illusion 3 gives you a Serious wound, which will probably just crimp your style - in this case, it's likely to mean that the weird time shit has been seriously weighing on your mind, and you *know* that something's got to give.

Proceeding to Illusion 4 turns that into a Deadly wound - the burden of the Beat upon you grows as time goes on, and your actions are constrained more and more. This is usually when you discover the

situation that's been causing all these doomed timelines and doomed timeclones. In this case, the reveal might be that you've been trying and failing to avert some terrible fate, and versions of yourself are coming back from the future because they *couldn't* fix it with the resources they had. Play out the realization of how bad things have gotten. Then rewind, and tell your alpha timeline self how to fix it. Your alpha-timeline self is left with the XP from this completed Issue... and the lingering, nagging knowledge that they've only narrowly escaped this fate.

If you somehow manage never to resolve Illusion 4, you'll end up at Illusion 5. Illusion 5 autodefeats your character. You have to give them up to HG control. Your character is at the mercy of predestination and paradox space - and if there is a terrible fate waiting, it's going to be a lot bigger now. This is about when you might figure out that there are *thousands* of doomed versions of yourself, and that they are all needed because the Black King acquired the Vast Glub and is going to use it. Or when you realize that you've been roped in by the machinations of an Installation/Debug NPC (First Guardian)...

> Q: I have found a corpse that looks like me.
>
> A: [WARNING] It is a version of you from a doomed timeline. They most likely traveled back in time to prevent a critical event. If you touch them, this will auto-activate the ability [Heir of Grief], which dumps the memories of that doomed timeline directly into your head. Usually, a dead timeclone has already fixed the timeline (and dies because their job is done), but this isn't worth counting on; make sure you do the job properly, or you may follow them into the Bubbles.
>
> Q: I am looking at a version of myself. They are shaking me and insisting that I do or not do something very specific and dumb-sounding right the fuck now.
>
> A: [WARNING] Do exactly what they say. You can ask questions *later*, once you've ensured you are not also part of the doomed timeline.
>
> Q: I think I'm in a doomed timeline.
>
> A: [CAUTION] The ability [Another Chance] will let you rewind to the point of divergence. DO NOT USE IT YET. You need to figure out what your point of divergence is (the Prospitian prophecy libraries will be helpful here) and plot out how you will reverse the change first. Hasty rewinds have killed more sessions than I'd care to mention.
>
> "FAQuickref: Time", *Sarai's Sburban Guide*, wedgeIssue

Other Issues

Let's briefly swing through some other Issues that might be good for weird time shit:

Mystery: This is for foreboding foreshadowing, such as when your future self keeps coming back to tell you to do things without explaining why. It resolves when you understand the shape of what you've been doing all this time.

It Never Stops: This is for when you end up in a tangle of prophecies, time loops that have to be stabilized, and so on. In this case, you just have to grit your teeth and bear it until most of it disappears. This is sillier than the next one -

(in) Over Your Head: This is for when the tangle of prophecies and stable time loops is something that you might eventually be able to understand. In this case, you have to come up with an idea to solve it all - pull out an underlying pattern from that tangle and realize what it's *for*.

Vice: This is for when you're trying to use time travel to fix things that fundamentally can't, or shouldn't, be fixed.

Something To Deal With: This is usually not a timeloop, but when it is, it means that the "unsettling" and "nagging" feeling is actually you being in a doomed timeline. (Or something like that, if you're not in a Homestuck-based game.)

Space

by viridianSun

> The broken Reward quite probably hits Space natives the hardest; they were the ones who personally shepherded that little universe-frog to its birth, and their grief at never being able to see it grow up is a parent's grief.
>
> Some manage to shift their worldview to the belief that it is the work of creating universes that is the highest good, and that entering any of the frogs would prevent them from continuing their life's work. Others turn to addictions.
>
> Space natives are not overwhelmingly represented in Replayerdom, despite the fact that an estimated 15-20% of all new Sburb entrants roll Space. Due to the damaging effects of emotional turmoil, it is quite possible that these circumstances are the reason why the vast majority of Space natives never make it past their second session.
>
> <div align="right">"Sburb's Great Filter", orangutanFingernails</div>

Sburban space magic is related to knowledge and manipulation of the physical universe. At the lower end, it is a knowledge of locations and forces of physics. At the higher end, it's the art of warping reality with the practical applications of that knowledge.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] Know your approximate location in relation to a specified place, such as your home, and the fastest route to it

[Obstacle 0] Enhance your aim by calculating the most probable location of moving targets within the space of few seconds

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] Scry on a location, an item or a person you are familiar with (such as your home, your toothbrush or your friend)

[Obstacle 0] Enhance your weapon damage by magnifying the force of a swing or manipulating the speed of bullets

[Obstacle 1+] Create a portal to a location you can perceive or are familiar with. You can use this to appear next to your friend, or to grab a toothbrush you forgot to take with you on a camping trip. The less familiar you are with the location, object or a person, the harder is to open a portal.

[Obstacle 1] Ward an area while this action is sustained, preventing remote viewing and manipulation within that area

[Obstacle 2] View large swaths of terrain as if from a satellite or drone perspective, enabling you to spy on the locations of your enemies and valuables. Zooming in and out is a free action. Unlike a satellite, this power can perceive things through ceilings, should you so desire.

[Obstacle 2] Protect yourself from harm by decreasing the force of its impact with your body. (In case of "energy" attacks, like fireballs or lasers, you can open a portal that swallows the attack and dissipates it harmlessly in the cosmos.)

[Obstacle 3] Chain portals and change the position of their exit point, allowing you to create and maintain complicated networks, control the way you fall, or create devastating kinetic weapons (for example by making a steel ball fall between two portals for an extended amount of time before changing the exit point of the lower portal to a space inches away from your opponent's body).

[Obstacle 3] Warp space around physical objects, allowing crude telekinesis by changing their location relative to you. This doesn't necessarily make it possible for you to remotely activate the object (for example, you cannot fire a gun you are warping), nor can you drag things through obstacles like solid walls.

Common bonds

- [I love frogs. Love love love 'em.]
- [I am very familliar with Prospit and its inhabitants.]
- [I view carapacians as people rather than game abstractions.]
- [I have a very good sense of direction and never get lost.]
- [I love to create things of beauty.]
- [I still want to trust Skaia, despite the broken promise that was the Reward.]

Hope

> Cynicism is not realistic and tough. It's unrealistic and kind of cowardly because it means you don't have to try.

<div align="right">

editor's note in *Good Housekeeping*, Peggy Noonan

</div>

Sburban Hope Magic is based on rejection and antigravity.

The most notable feature of Hope players is that, using the ability [Hope Rides Alone], they are capable of earning "performance" ARC by themselves. That means that they don't need to team up with other people when level-grinding. I would recommend teaming up anyway – your coplayer needs the audience bonus, even if you don't, and it's always good to have someone keeping an eye on you.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] believe in something that isn't real

[Obstacle 1] invent elaborate fantasy worlds

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] float and fly

[Obstacle 1] get yourself out of grapple/melee range of all relevant combatants

[Obstacle 1] repel physical objects being thrown at you, so long as they are slower than a fastball (while this is not mutually exclusive with previous techniques, you would need to use two separate Intentions to do so.[113])

[Obstacle 2] "hopesplosion" – everything within about 500 feet gets flung outwards at great force

[Obstacle 2] convince someone of something despite evidence to the contrary right in front of their eyes

[Obstacle 2] repel bullets, or other objects coming at you with equivalent force (while this is not mutually exclusive with previous techniques, you would need to use two separate Intentions to do so.)

[Obstacle 3] repel something nonphysical or metaphorical, such as sunlight, Red Miles, or someone's affections

[Obstacle 3] believe in something that doesn't exist hard enough to make it real

Common bonds

- [I work alone.]
- [Dirt does not stick to me, my clothes, or anything else I carry.]
- [I can't hold onto anything – as soon as I'm not looking, it flies away from me.]
- [You have to disagree with the state of the world in order to improve it!]

==> 113. EB: Try using a Surface Wound reaction shot.

Stars

> If you try your best to stay alive, you'll probably make it through the session. If you want to end your life, the game won't let you. It's people in the middle, the ones who don't care enough either way, who die in droves.
>
> That's why Stars natives are the rarest of the 'standard' aspects after the first session.
>
> In other words, the game teaches us not to give a fuck and then kills us for it.
>
> <div align="right">"Giving A Fuck", corbinaOpaleye</div>

Stars is the Aspect of acceptance, gravity, and magnetism.

Note that some Space players in Homestuck canon seem to have this powerset instead of, or in addition to, [Sburban Space Magic](). If you are playing a non-Replay Value game, feel free to mix and match the technique lists.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] know where (magnetic) north is

[Obstacle 0] Assuming you know where you are, correct for the difference between magnetic north and geographic north. You will usually need either a suitably marked map or a very good memory, but people with Sburban Stars Magic proper can do this without either.[114]

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] Sense magnetism with your fingers, as if you had an [implanted magnet](). Among other things, hidden entrances can show up as anomalies if you "listen" to the magnetism carefully enough.

[Obstacle 0] Attract nearby light objects towards you, as if you were a magnet or a small gravitational center. This works even if the relevant objects are not actually magnetic. Extremely light things such as Styrofoam, pencils, grist, and t-shirts will rise into the air to meet your hand; things such as jeans, full water bottles, and folding chairs will merely roll or drag across the floor towards you. If it is too heavy to pick up with one hand, it will not move.

[Obstacle 1] Attract nearby objects, as if you were a moderately powerful magnet or gravitational center. Things heavy enough to pick up with one hand will rise into the air to meet your hand. Furniture will slide across the floor to you.[115]

==> 114. EB: On a Sburb Land, magnetic north is the same as geographic north. Both of these, incidentally, point towards your Dwelling Spire. So even if you aren't a Stars player, you could theoretically use a compass to make your way home. However, nobody actually does this, because playing the command song [Homestuck] will make a return node (temporary Gate) that returns you to your Spire.

==> 115. EB: Be careful to not accidentally reverse-stub your toe. Even if it's the dresser that's moving, not your foot, it still hurts just as much.

[Obstacle 1] Walk on walls, ceilings, and natural equivalents (such as tree trunks). This is actually rather useful for getting away from enemies who *can't* do that.

[Obstacle 1] roll up a katamari ball (make things stick together into a ball, and then as the ball gets larger, it can pick up larger things)

[Obstacle 2] Attract nearby objects, as if you were an extremely powerful magnet or gravitational center; furniture will rise towards you, and you could probably slide a house if it weren't for the foundation. While this is difficult to use in practice, it can be used to shift and move objects that you ordinarily couldn't pick up.

[Obstacle 2] Change the direction of gravity for everyone in the vicinity: suddenly, everyone and everything slams into a wall or ceiling, rather than the floor…

[Obstacle 2] Drastically increase the gravity (to 50-100G) in a local area that is *not* centered on you.[116] Often maintained as an intention, so you can move around the gravity-beam and use it to squash enemies flat.

[Obstacle 2] Rip a chunk of ground out, and surf it to another location.[117]

[Obstacle 3] Arbitrary gravity manipulation, up to 50-100G. Make gravity point anywhere you like, even if there isn't a wall or ceiling for things to fall towards! Massively increase the gravity on an entire army!

[Obstacle 3] Use gravity in a metaphorical way – attract everyone's stats and add them to yours, for example, or attract a person's attention…

Common bonds

- [I am Okay with things.]
- [I accept the existence of horrible things, such as a nihilistic worldview or abuse. Better acceptance than defiance.]
- [I am a harbinger of my Title, and show up whenever title-appropriate things are happening.]
- [Once I've done what I need to do somewhere, I will drift away as if I was never there in the first place.]
- [I have accepted that I will die.][118]
- [Magnetic objects stick to me, so other people can use me like a refrigerator door.][119]

==> 116. EB: Okay, *technically* you could center this on yourself. But then you would die.
==> 117. EB: The normal failure mode of this ability is that you crush whatever you were aiming at with your improptu meteor. You're still going to get there in about the same amount of time.
==> 118. EB: This is often used as a Bond to stay alive. *Because* you accept your death, you can defy it. The ability name for this in Sburb is [Ocean Star Falling]; the *Glitch FAQ* provides more details on how it works.
==> 119. EB: ...I guess this makes a better Affliction than a Bond. Hm.

Sight

> If the fish anthropologist must strain to recognize water as the substrate for all life she knows, let her create an installation with dye billowing from vents in the seafloor, so that others may watch and understand.

> "In Defense of the Perceptions", earLender

Sight is subjectivity, perception, and diversity of approaches. Metaphorical reality (the Fuckoff Symbolism Zone) is a centerpiece of many of the Sight techniques. You can find more information about it here.[120]

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] stay alert while watching for something to happen

[Obstacle 0] see unusually well in near-total darkness (so long as there's at least a tiny bit of light), or through fog

[Obstacle 0] skill in sleight-of-hand/magic tricks, puns, and other such japes that rely on initial misdirection and multiple meanings

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0+] read something and learn of all the different ways it could be interpreted. (Whether you use this to make your writing clearer, or make misdirections and jokes, is up to you.)

[Obstacle 0+] sink into metaphorical reality (Fuckoff Symbolism Zone), and observe metaphorical representations of people's mental states and relationships

[Obstacle 1] communicate with someone through an art, craft, and/or sport you both know - even if you do not speak the same language, have no other means of communication, or are being watched. This means that a single meal is as good as a note or letter, and that you can hold a conversation through a game of chess or a spar. This works even if the other person doesn't have this Magical Skill or technique available; all they need to receive the message is an ordinary intention with an ordinary skill.

[Obstacle 1+] sink into metaphorical reality (Fuckoff Symbolism Zone), and manipulate metaphorical representations of people's mental states and relationships. You'll face higher Obstacles if you're trying to affect multiple people, or if you're stretching the metaphor too far. This is often resisted with an Intention on the target's part, or a Wound.

[Obstacle 2] make people more themselves, set in their ways and roles, resistant to change, and (when applied to an extreme) eventually caricatured. This also works on groups and situations. (Technically, it's easy to do this. It's just hard to do it *productively*.)

==> 120. OJ: The aesthetics of Sight will be extremely familiar to those of you who consume lots of Jenna Moran.

[Obstacle 3] take an object from metaphorical reality (Fuckoff Symbolism Zone) and use it in the real world. For example, Jack Noir's murderous intents can be pulled out as a machine that is surrounded by a wheel of knives, which is very useful for disposing of large numbers of mooks.

[Obstacle 3] extract someone or something's dharma; make them unable to change the world, and at the mercy of the story that is being told around them. (This is most often resisted with a Back-And-Forth wound.)

Common bonds

- [I have a thing for mirrors - I want to be near them, carry some around, and even wear them.]
- [Everything is a metaphor, if you look at it the right way.]
- [Everything is art, if you look at it the right way.]
- [I'm not going to use just any metaphor. I'm going to use a metaphor nobody has ever used before.]
- [My art is… idiosyncratic. But not in a bad way!]
- [I shroud my advice and opinions in allegories, parables, and fairy tales.]

Sound

> Of course this is a pipe. Nobody really thinks that artistic portrayals of certain objects are literally the objects themselves. Referring to symbols as what they are understood to represent is merely a universally employed linguistic convenience. Saying "this is a portrayal of a pipe" would be too tiring. So, yes, this is a pipe, because the word pipe is understood by everyone to refer to portrayals of pipes as well as actual pipes. This is how language works. Stop being pedantic you post-modernist bore.

<div align="right">

graphic by wtf-post-modernism.tumblr.com

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Sound is the Aspect which rules communication, objective reality, and common goals.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] enhanced hearing, to the point where you can hear if a TV is plugged in (even if it is turned off), hear certain fluorescent tube lights whine, or hear a tap dripping from several rooms away. Note that sufficient background noise can still drown these things out.

[Obstacle 0] find a way to put your thoughts into words, as long it is notionally possible to do so

[Obstacle 1] read lips, gestures, and body language to understand someone's general intentions even if you can't hear what they're saying

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] hear other people's thoughts; you can either focus on a specific person or leave it on as a continuous area effect (which will pipe everyone's thoughts in as whispering; someone's thoughts will become louder the closer they come)[121]

[Obstacle 0] make a loud cracking/thunderclap-like noise, which can be heard from about half a mile away/within your neighborhood

[Obstacle 0+] make sure that everyone understands your words in exactly the way you intended them (obstacle increases depending on whether what you're saying has ambiguous meanings, connotations you're trying not to activate, number of people you're trying to affect, etc.)

[Obstacle 1] talk, carefully shaping the sound waves so that only your desired target will hear you

[Obstacle 1] make a loud cracking/thunderclap-like noise, which can be heard throughout the entire Region (i.e. at *least* throughout your Land)

[Obstacle 1] distinguish a whisper (or equivalent) from background noise equivalent to a cheering crowd or large battle

[Obstacle 2] telepathically transfer a concept directly from your head to someone else's

[Obstacle 2] distinguish a whisper (or equivalent) from background noise equivalent to a rock concert or jet engine

[Obstacle 3] "mind-meld" with someone else, giving the other person a deep understanding of anything you want to convey

Common bonds

- [I hear other people's thoughts all the time, whether I want to or not.]
- [I broadcast my thoughts into other people's heads all the time, whether I want to or not.]
- [I am deaf.]
- [My ears can handle arbitrarily loud sounds, without overloading or temporarily deafening me.]

Coins

> A word about how the replaying community generally treats people on the left side of the bell curve. Sburb tends to generate players of "above average" intelligence generally, so the few that aren't so lucky are even worse off than in real life. With rare exception, they're surrounded by people who are several standard deviations above them, have never interacted with someone like them, and have no sympathy for them. I myself have been guilty of this on more than one occasion.
>
> skinnerBox

==> 121. EB: Among other things, you can leave this on to get advance warning whenever someone approaches you.

Coins is the aspect of assessing value, in yourself or others.

One of the special effects of this magic is that any use of the magical techniques will be accompanied by a wash of intangible sparkles in a color; though properly speaking it's based on ARC I'm gonna base it off intention strength to make it easier for everyone:

- Black: Intention 0-1
- Silver: Intention 2-3
- Gold: Intention 4-6
- Red: Intention 7+

Note that many of the techniques of Coins are magical-skill attacks, and PCs and important NPCs can take Wounds against them, up to and including rejecting them entirely!

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] assess the value of anything with which you might have at least a passing familiarity (Usually this is possible for anything you have a Skill for, as if this skill was not "Sburban Coins Magic" but "Selling [other skill]-Related Paraphernalia on eBay". However, it is unrelated to the other skill's rating, only this skill's. Being good at washing dishes does not make you a good collectible-dish-auctioneer and vice versa.)

[Obstacle 0] drive a hard bargain even in places where most people wouldn't think to bargain at all ("Yes, manager, I know this is Walmart, but you have literally had this bicycle here for a year and there's a dent and this part doesn't screw in properly. My final offer is half price.")

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0+] assess the value of *anything* given a few minutes to look it over, touch it, observe maker's marks, etc. (Obstacle increases if you can't touch it, if it's explicitly a good fake, and/or if you don't have that much time.)

[Obstacle 1] cosmetically change something so it *looks* like its value changes significantly, with a wave of the hand: i.e. plating a brick of metal with gold so it'll look/act like gold enough to pass casual inspection, or touching your bike to make it look like it's horribly rusted and worthless (when in fact it still functions just fine)

[Obstacle 1] alchemic transformations (simple transformations of a substance into a different substance, without any complex or moving parts involved) that transform something into something of equal or lesser value; i.e. gold into lead, or acid into brine: while it's best to do this over a bunch of equipment you can fuss over, like bubbling flasks and such, you could do this with a touch if pressed for

time/resources. Note that Game-generated enemies (imps, ogres, etc.) are considered "simple" for the purposes of this skill.

[Obstacle 2] alchemic transformations that transform something uniform and simple into something of greater value, i.e. lead into gold; see above

[Obstacle 3] change something more complex so its value *actually* changes significantly, i.e. turning a terrible student violin into a Stradivarius with a touch, or glaring at your boss's car until it breaks down and needs extremely expensive engine repairs

Bonds

- [I speak honestly about how useful you are.] ("With all due respect, you just completely fucked things up for me.")
- [I'm really good at handling my own finances and giving advice to others about money.]
- [I'm really good at predicting stock markets.]
- [I'm really good at finding cool cheap stuff at flea markets, thrift stores, and bargain bins.] (There's a *lovely* secondhand store on Prospit – about half of what they have is junk, but people dive in and occasionally come up with awesome armor, cool legendary weapons, and – if you believe the rumors – secondhand fraymotifs.)
- [I love auctions!]
- [I'm miserly with money.]
- [I hoard stuff.]

Dust

> "I will spare you, on one condition. You will raise no hand against me, and the same for any child of your blood. Promise me this."
>
> "You know I cannot promise that."
>
> The Deathless Queen's expression twisted up into either a smile or a snarl, I couldn't tell which. "Then I will have to kill you."
>
> I looked her in the eyes. "The prophecy will not help you. I would like to see you try."
>
> *The Infinite Castle*, dryadTornado

Dust is an Aspect about the fact that, if you invest time into something, you'll get *something* in return. Mind you, the return might not be worth your time... but even something frivolous like thinking about a fantasy world all the time can pay real-life dividends like "actually you turn out to have an interesting and well-written fantasy series".

If you invest your time and your effort and your love, you will get *something* back. To quote Scott Alexander quoting proverbs from time immemorial, "if the fool persists in his folly, he will become

wise." You may not get what you expected, and if you were of a more calculating bent you could certainly use Dust's abilities to figure out what activities give you the highest rate of return, but that's not the point:

The point is that Dust is about value in the opposite way that Coins was. Coins is about the flash, about what something can give you *now*. Dust is about what something could give you, in the future, if you worked for it.

Non-magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] knowing how to clean things up and make them more attractive/presentable, even with minimal supplies ("You already have vinegar and newspaper! You don't need to buy window cleaner.")

[Obstacle 0] arrange things so as to facilitate a state of "flow", that feeling that you would happily do what you're doing forever (Within reason, since this isn't magical. You still need to eat, and go to the bathroom, and such.)

Magical techniques

[Obstacle 0] look at something, and assess whether someone values and takes care of it, and if so, how much

[Obstacle 1] look at something, and assess how much value it *could* have if you fixed it up (Mind you, this doesn't seem to take difficulty or time into account. If something would be slightly more valuable after a hundred hours of scrubbing and detailing, you won't be able to tell that apart from "trivially cleanable with a soak in lemon juice".)

[Obstacle 1] understand and repair mechanical machinery (It has to be *purely* mechanical; for this Aspect, electronics don't make sense. So a Dust player would be able to tear down and rebuild a ~1950s car, but wouldn't be able to do more than basic maintenance on a modern car.)

[Obstacle 2] look at something, and from there gain a sense of its caretaker, such that you could recognize them even if you've never seen them before

[Obstacle 2] figure out what return on investment you might *actually* get from something you're doing

[Obstacle 3] help someone else perceive who they are and what weaknesses they have, but in such a way that it *strengthens* them to work on those weaknesses rather than making them afraid

[Obstacle 3] "find"/create an unexpected new function/talent of something or someone you already know

Common bonds

- [I tend to hang on to empty bottles, boxes, jars, and suchlike - and I'll *use* them, too.]
- [A little TLC, and everything will be as good as new!]
- [I dress formally all the time. And will dress you formally, too, if you let me.]

- [Long hours of work on [hobby] have taught me many things about the world.]
- [I have a tendency to commit myself to what everyone else says are "lost causes".]

A User's Guide to the Apocalypse

Rerolls, Miraculous Arcs, and the Awesometier

The previous few sections have been about how rolling any given Class or Aspect *once* is like. Now I need to talk about what happens when you Replay and Replay and Replay them...

Rerolls and Internalization

> Who are you? Who are you but that thing the Game has made out of you?
>
> *Despair Is The Color Burgundy*, watercolorMixer

"Rerolling" is the term that we use for when you are assigned a Title or Aspect that you have already used previously. Rerolling of a Title or Aspect occurs when you are judged to need the lesson of that Title or Aspect again. While, in principle, you can reroll any Title or Aspect, the most common thing to Reroll is your *native* title and/or aspect, because people's personalities tend to slide back towards their original states if the pressure isn't kept up. As such, "rerolling" is often used to refer to "native rerolling", which is when you are assigned your native Title or Aspect.

While your character's reroll frequency is entirely up to handler discretion (as, is, indeed, the choice of Title and Aspect for characters in general), we tend to measure reroll frequency by an informal measure called *internalization*:

The average Replayer rerolls their Title or Aspect once every six sessions, although with large variance. Full native-Classpect rerolls are rare, happening at a rate like once in twenty sessions.

Someone who is said to have a "well-internalized" native Classpect (or, less often, just a title or aspect) has acknowledged and acquired the knowledge of their Classpect so well that they average 8-10 sessions between rerolls. (For example, Aelfrida Smithson went until session 10 before rerolling Mind for the first time, but rerolled Sylph in her sixth. This means that she had Mind well-internalized. Less so for Sylph.) I have never heard of anyone well-internalized having a full native-Classpect reroll.

Someone who is said to have a "poorly-internalized" native Classpect has not learnt the lesson of that Classpect, and thus can average as few as 3 sessions between rerolls. This can be due to preexisting personality damage, outside influences (such as the Seer Network), or just a matter of stubbornness. Full native-Classpect rerolls can happen as often as once every eight sessions.

These are *not* fixed categories! Someone who rerolls, and then seriously works to make themselves fit to the reroll title, can make themselves much less liable to reroll again.

This is a narrative concept and in-character slang, so I don't have much to say about mechanics here. A lengthy (45-60XP) orange anytime quest can be used to make yourself better-internalized, I suppose, if you insist on mechanical representation.

> It was simple enough for Vitt to turn into a cloud. It was a lot more difficult for him to turn *out* of a cloud.
>
> *Tales of the Founders*, balletMarginalia

Sburb players generally earn Sburban Magics as Skill Perks, and tend to discard the perks once they leave the session in which the perks were relevant. This is because you face a level 3 obstacle to using a Sburban magic if you are not a current Hero of X. (For comparison, you "only" face a level 2 obstacle to using a technique with a different Sburban magic.) Thus, there is usually no point maintaining irrelevant Sburban Magics since they're easy enough to pick up in new sessions.

However, there is the occasional Replayer that finds it worthwhile to maintain the Sburban Magic perk or even commit it to a permanent skill slot. They tend to have high reroll rates (meaning that investing extra time into learning the Sburban Magic innately is not wasted). A few also have a bonus, like Wounded Angel's Devices, specific to their native-type magic.

This is not typically something you have to worry about as a PC. In some cases, however, you will establish that your 8+ session Replayer already has the personality tendency for frequent rerolls (one in six, or even in extreme cases one in four, rather than the healthier rate of one in eight or so) and thus, when it is appropriate as a quest reward, you may begin shifting points into your native-type Sburban magic.

Replayers who can consistently and reflexively (i.e. without Will expenditure) use abilities of their native-type Sburban magic *even when they are not a current hero of X* are very rare, have had 5+ rerolls of their native Sburban aspect (and are thus generally 30+ session veterans, with cases at lower session numbers being rare and only ever due to external influences such as the Seer Network), and are referred to by the Replayer community as "Awesometier".

The number of Awesometier-level veterans confirmed to exist is in the single digits, and most of them are ex-Seer Network members. My distaste for the Seer Network burns with the fire of a thousand incoming meteors, and so it is probably best for all involved that I not list any of them here. There are urban legends about several others who have achieved this level of competence, but the obvious problem with believing urban legends is, presumably, obvious.

A4 (Greetings and Small Talk: Age). When you are asked "how old are you", it is generally assumed by the Replayer community that you are referring to your session count. Only Time natives will answer this question with their chronological ages (generally denominated in 365 ¼-day years), and the general response to providing one's chronological age tends to be "No, I mean how old has Sburb made you?"

I would like to suggest an improvement on this state of affairs. If you are requesting someone's session count, ask for their Sburb age or session count rather than their "age" or "how old" they might be.

Here is an example dialogue:

A: "How old are you, in sessions?"
B: "18 and counting."

B may then elaborate on this answer further, if A is not making a move to continue talking or sharing their own session count.

Book III, *Etiquette Guide*, gentlemanMannerism

Miraculous Arcs and the Replayer

This is a miraculous-level Chuubo's setting, and as such it uses a variety of miraculous arcs.

Technically any miraculous arc is open to any character, classpect (and other backstory events) be damned! But this is a table of the ones I think work *best*. The lists of arcs are not in any particular order.

† denotes that the arc is currently available [in draft form on Jenna's blog](#).

Aspects

Aspect	Miraculous Arcs
Blood	Spiritual (Friendship), Gatekeeper† (The Other PCs), Self-Made†
Breath	Spiritual (Wind), Spiritual (Freedom), Knave of Hearts† (Freedom of the Wind), Accursed
Mind	Spiritual (Choices), Specialist†, Of A Certain Place‡
Fate	Allegory†, Creature of the Light, The Ace (slightly reflavored)
Life	Spiritual (Living Things), Knave of Hearts† (All The Life In The World)
Doom	Spiritual (Death/Decay), Knave of Hearts† (The End of All Things), Visionary†
Void	Accursed, Visionary†, Primordial, Indomitable†
Mist	Reality Syndrome (Second Skins), Creature of Fable, Visionary†, Child of the Ash
Heart	Alchemist† ("Shinies"), Spiritual (Souls/Identities), Sentimental, Of A Certain Place‡
Rage	Creature of Fable, Become Somebody, Knave of Hearts† (You Will Obey Me), Self-Made†, Of A Certain Place‡
Flow	Spiritual (Fire), Spiritual (Momentum), Knave of Hearts† (The Momentum of Fire)
Rhyme	Spiritual (Ice), Spiritual (Inertia), Knave of Hearts† (Inertial Ice)
Might	Become Somebody, Indomitable†, Spiritual (Water), Self-Made†
Sand	Creature of Fable, Knave of Hearts† (You Can't Trust Anyone), Alchemist† (Trust), Gatekeeper† (Secret Weaknesses)
Dreams	A Keeper of Gardens, Magical Hero†, Called Away† (Creativity With Constraints/The Realm of Glass)
Rain	Called Away† (Disordered Creativity/The Place at the End of the Rainbow), Knave of Hearts† (Disordered Creativity)
Law	Spiritual (Bad Luck), A Keeper of Gardens, Gatekeeper†, Self-Made†, Of A Certain Place†

Light	Spiritual (Good Luck), Creature of the Light, The Ace (slightly reflavored), Renegade† (slightly reflavored)
Time	Renegade†, Primordial, Called Away† (Doomed Timelines), Visionary†
Space	Spiritual (Sizes and Distances), Primordial, Allegory†, A Keeper of Gardens, Magical Hero†
Stars	Spiritual (Gravity), Knave of Hearts† (The Gravity of Stars), Wounded Angel
Hope	Become Somebody, Spiritual (Rejection/Antigravity), Knave of Hearts† (Impossible Hopes), Renegade† (slightly reflavored)
Coins	Spiritual (Value), The Ace, Sentimental
Dust	Specialist†, Gatekeeper†, Renegade†
Sight	Called Away† (Perception/FSZ), Of A Certain Place‡, Reality Syndrome
Sound	Spiritual (Communication), Visionary†

Classes

Title Pair	Active | Passive	Arc
Performer	Clown	Sentimental, Gatekeeper†, A Keeper of Gardens
	Maid	
Protector	Dame	Gatekeeper†, Indomitable†,
	Guard	
Combat	Page	Magical Hero†, Specialist†, Indomitable†
	Knight	
Destroyer	Prince	Creature of Fable, Allegory†, Of A Certain Place†
	Bard	
Tactician	Sage	Gatekeeper†, Renegade†, Wounded Angel, Specialist†
	Seer	
Explorator	Scout	Creature of Fable, Called Away†
	Guide	
Creative	Smith	A Keeper of Gardens, Sentimental, Allegory†
	Muse	
Champion	Sylph	Allegory†, Become Somebody, Visionary†, Knave of Hearts
	Bane	
Displacement	Thief	Creature of the Light, Creature of Fable, Alchemist†
	Rogue	
Inheritor	Ward	Become Somebody, Sentimental, Self-Made

Cataclysm	Heir	
	Waste	Accursed, Reality Syndrome, Wounded Angel
	Grace	
Cryptic	Witch	Child of the Ash, Spiritual, Called Away†, Sentimental
	Mage	

Misc.

> Jalinn plucked the apple from the tree, stared at it for a moment, and then took a decisive bite.
>
> "Tastes like his magic," he declared. "We're very close."

<div align="right">

Sorcerer's Son, dryadTornado

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One would think Wounded Angel would be more common among Sburbanites, but the thing about WA is that you *need* to identify a Blasphemy, and there's less of those floating around than you'd think. ("Instant speakerfication", "Cataclysm-style session fuckery", and "tearing apart the social networks we so carefully put together" are the most common Blasphemies.) The entire "awesome powers from wounds" thing would be more tempting if not for that.

Gamebreakers: Most of them have Specialist, Gatekeeper, or Renegade. Wounded Angel is rarer (although not entirely unheard-of).

People from postscratch natives: Unusually likely to have The Ace. A couple might have Allegory.

People in leadership/moderator positions: Most commonly Sentimental, although A Keeper of Gardens, Become Somebody, and Self-Made are also possible.

Poorly-internalized (high-reroll) veterans: Are more likely to have Classpect-related arcs earned up to a relatively high level, but are also likely to have some sort of Bondfliction about the fact that they can't seem to learn their lesson. A couple of them are to the point where they have Reality Syndrome based upon their native aspect powers, even if that aspect isn't usually one that has Reality Syndrome associated with it (cf. Ross Eberhardt and Heart Magic; gentlemanMannerism and Rage Magic).

Well-internalized (low-reroll) veterans: Are less likely to have high-level Classpect arcs, but more likely to have some other arc pretty high: Creature of Fable is more common than you'd otherwise expect. Also more likely than usual to be on an Immortality arc.

PKs: The ones that stick around for a while tend to have Self-Made, Knave of Hearts, or something else that'd let them forcibly remain in contact with a social group that'd otherwise long since have rejected them. Many of them also have Creature of Fable.

Corruption arcs are discussed on page ???.

by skinnerBox

A recent survey of Prototype Towers users[1] was the first to include a number of interesting questions by popular demand. A number caused quite a stir upon release of the results, particularly given the breakdown by native roles of the respondents.

39.VII.e: If you had to eliminate the native players of one Aspect, which would you select?

The majority of roles answering did not cluster around any specific answers. Notably, however, 63 percent of Mind players answered "Light." If you, the reader, have not read the survey results I encourage you to do so. I would have been totally content not to write this piece, preferring to live and let live after a fashion, but a number of users have been cluttering up the subforum regarding Mind natives and our "irrational hatred" of Light players. Either you, the reader, are already familiar with the posts in question, or are at least willing to believe me when I characterize them as such, or you refuse this classification, in which case I have nothing to offer you here.

If you accept it, the following will offer some explanation as to why the stereotypical hatred, or more accurately distrust or dislike, of Light players by Mind players is in no way "irrational." If you yourself have ever been a Mind player you may recognize some of the tendencies described here. If you have ever been a Light player, again some of the material may sound familiar.

Epistemology

"Light is like Mind without the autism." [2]

wagglanGimmicks, native Prince of Light

I feel that under the circumstances it is hardly necessary to outline the differences in, say, the way a Seer of Mind versus a Seer of Light would arrive at a piece of knowledge about their respective sessions. In brief, for anyone who refuses to consult the voluminous body of guides and other writings, the Aspect Mind encourages players to employ game abilities and a rigorous analytic framework to sort and categorize information. Compare the Mind player to the "mentats" of the Dune universe, human computers who make predictions about the present and future by sifting through reams of data.

Inversely, the Aspect Light gifts its devotees with enlightenment in proportion to attunement to their whisperings, gifting information about the game world in a fashion that is automatically intelligible to the player. Compare the Light player to Dune's Kwisatz Haderach, who is able to predict the present and future through quasi-magic powers, which by his own admission do not function in a fashion comprehensible via mundane logic. The divide has been compared to the split between analytic and continental philosophy, or to the "thinking" versus "feeling" archetypes, although the latter may be more characteristic of Mind's twin Aspect, Fate.

Granted, according to Autogenesists/Skaian Non-Cognitivists (a clade in which I count myself a member), both are in actuality insight presented by the game through various tricks played on the senses or on the brain, and therefore the supposed differences are merely aesthetic in nature.[3] While obviously true, it is important to remember that while their substance is ultimately the same, the way in which each Aspect deposits information has a profound impact on the worldview of its victims, specifically in the native session.[4] It is difficult to articulate, for anyone who has not experienced it, why a Mind native would react so strongly to someone who reflexively does not think about the world in the empirical or rationalistic fashion they themselves were conditioned to employ. In truth this may purely be an academic distinction that does not explain the feelings of most Mind players. It does, however, feed into the next category where the two come into conflict.

Attitude

> "Nobody wants to ask how's everything and hear; 'fabulous! Things are fantastic! I feel
> great!' No. You want to hear – 'ehhhh, you know."

Larry David

To summarize the attitudinal differences between the two, Mind players tend more towards higher neuroticism and conscientiousness, while Light players score higher on agreeableness and openness to experience.[5] While a surfeit of one does not necessarily imply a dearth of the other, it is unfortunately often the case. These differences are partly the result of the diametrically opposed epistemologies embodied by the two Aspects, but are also explained in part by the way each one rewards or punishes certain behavior to sculpt their victims' personalities, again with the effect magnified many times in the native session.

In truth I hardly think I need convince the reader that these differences are at least in part factual. Anyone having a passing familiarity will by default be familiar with the stereotypes of the dour, withdrawn Mind native and the exultant, freewheeling Light player, both firmly embedded in replayer culture. To a great extent both these are borne out by a sizable body of evidence, with Mind natives consistently self reporting lower levels of life satisfaction by various measures when compared Light natives, the effect being much greater in players currently rolling the Aspects.[6]

Where I was from, conventional wisdom and a limited body of research separated human beings into two groups, "morning people" and "night people."[7] The morning people were more alert, active and happy when they were active during the early to middle hours of the day. The night people fared better when they were active in the later hours, or as nomenclature suggests, at night.

Due to the fact that the majority of economic activity took place during the day, the night people and morning people tended to wake up, and to be active, around the same time. The morning people awoke every day feeling well rested, cheerful and ready to engage in productive labor. The night people woke up miserable, and all told would not have lost much sleep if some monstrous genocide were to sweep the planet clean of the morning people, who they found insufferable. The conflict between the two was

essentially zero sum. If working hours were to shift to a time the night people found more reasonable, the morning people would most likely have found themselves in the same position.

While Mind and Light natives are not forced to participate in the labor force together, they are forced to participate in the same sessions of Sburb.

Damage

"LOOK UPON ME! I'LL SHOW YOU THE LIFE OF THE MIND!" [8]

John Goodman

It is common knowledge that accidental use of the ability [Endless Climb] is a formative experience for Mind natives.[9] It is easily intuited, and moreover supported by sound statistical evidence, that most players go through their first session without any sort of contact with replayer support Networks.[10] It is not too bold to suggest that Mind players therefore pay a high price for the lessons they acquire. Natives are often called out for acting unnecessarily skittish, gloomy, paranoid, or for having various personality artifacts that seem silly to Light players. It is particularly galling to hear this from someone whose formative sburb experience imparted them with the instructive moral lesson that there is no need to worry, and who were rendered basically immune to harm by their whisperings.[11]

This is obviously no excuse for a priori hostility on the part of Mind natives, especially given that there is good evidence role assignments in the native session are for the most part purely random, or at a bare minimum do not correlate to any known human personality typologies.[12]

The purpose of this piece is not grievance mongering, nor is it to offer a solution to the dilemma, which must be left as an exercise for the reader. It is supremely unlikely that, upon reading this piece, any Mind players will find themselves overcome with love and understanding for their sister Aspect. Writing it has certainly not had this effect on me. If it in fact has the opposite effect, increasing animosity between the two, or has no effect at all, so be it. If I have been unfair to my counterparts, or to my fellow natives, I am sure there are plenty of sources that provide a more balanced approach, and I would highly encourage a dissatisfied reader to seek them out instead.

Notes

[1] paraphrasedStygian et al. "Prototype Towers Quasi-Annual Survey" Timestamp 40

[2] wagglanGimmicks. "Silver Lights: Understanding the King of Aspects"

[3] skinnerBox. "'Knight Syndrome' Versus Baseline Levels of Replayer Mental Health"

[4] guidedMeditation. "The First Session: Influence of Native Classpect on Life Outcomes"

[5] heteronymousConstraint. "Native Aspects by Big Five Traits"

[6] heteronymousConstraint. "Native Aspects by Self Reported Life Satisfaction"

[7] Horne JA, Östberg O. "A self-assessment questionnaire to determine morningness-eveningness in human circadian rhythms". Consensus prescratch, reference version from presession designation PTe6bd8 (PrototypeTowers).

[8] Joel and Ethan Coen. "Barton Fink". Presession designation PT944f5d (PrototypeTowers).

[9] tacitMechanism. "Endless Skies"

[10] thomasHobbs. "Errant Signals: First Sessioners in the Replayer Community"

[11] godsgifttoGrinds. "Sburb Glitch FAQ"

[12] guidedMeditation et al. "The First Session: Personality Typologies & Native Classpect"

Portrait of a Sburbanite

by eternityBraid

> "If you fight a monster," Ben says, "your goal is to win as a normal person, with normal limits. You'll feel the wind blowing in your soul, trying to change you into something better, more powerful, more absolute. You'll look at your enemy and think, 'This could be so easy.' Don't. Live in the world of fumbling and stumbling and failure and folly. Live in the world of screaming in hopeless panic and wounding yourself with your own sword. People can live. People can win. Heroes can't."

> "Tunnel Rat (I/IV)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

The thing about Sburb is: Most of the time it isn't about the dying. I mean, yeah, okay, dying's everyone's favorite hobby, but here's the real question:

How do you *live*?

Between those moments of terror, there is time. And if you expect to survive longer than a few sessions, you need to figure out how to fill the rest of your life with something that you can live for. Because otherwise, you will become a smear on the pavement between here and the door. People who just survive for the sake of surviving, who don't have anything to pledge their life to, get ground to bits.

It isn't just about surviving. It's about using those stolen moments in between to cobble together a full and vibrant life, Sburb be damned.

Accumulated Roleplay Coefficient and the Knife's Edge

> You could say that the point of the roleplay system is to provide subtle conditioning to allow you to survive the endgame. Some people refer to this as the [Knife's Edge]. Your path toward the fabled Ultimate Reward is like a bridge that becomes narrower as you go on. Like walking on the edge of a knife. Actually no, screw walking. Roleplaying is like learning to dance on that sharp, deadly bridge. And everybody has to do it: the session slowly turns into a perfect choreography whereas a single misstep will spell everybody's death.

> *Sburb Glitch FAQ*, godsgifttoGrinds

So, remember that bit at the beginning where we were discussing roleplay coefficient?

The better you act like your Role, the closer you are to the Platonic ideal of your classpect, the more benefits the Game gives you to your progression, the better your effectiveness when you cast, and the more likely you are to land solid hits when you fight.

At first this is all upside: you get better at fighting, you down your first Ogre, you dust off your hands when you finish defending your first Consort village. Really, the beginning of the Game doesn't *care* if

you're an X of Y yet, since you undoubtedly start out absolutely terrible at it, so it's easy to coast along and just play the video game as if it was an actual video game.

Then it gets harder.

It's the Red Line, really, where the "tutorial" stage ends. That's when it becomes clear that the Game does not fuck around. You have to breach fortifications at the equator of your planet to unlock the areas beyond, which is difficult with early-game equipment. On the far side there is a noticeable spike in difficulty.

Assuming you have realized that this is not, in fact, a fucking game, and assuming you understand that being a good model of your Classpect will help you fight, that's when you have to start acting.

You don't necessarily need to act *all* the time. But you have to act like an X of Y in front of other people.[122] Because if you let other people see, you get more ARC.

This may involve alienating people who thought they were your friends.

This may involve getting close to people who you thought you could get away with avoiding forever.

This may involve opening up to people who will do nothing but stab you in the soft, tender, fleshy bits in return.

But if you don't do that – well. The one-way ticket to bubbledeath city is always free.

For Those Of You Watching At Home

> The king asks Odysseus why he grieves, but then doesn't give him even a moment to answer before he negates Odysseus' grief by explaining that the "big picture" justifies the suffering -- as entertainment!
>
> *Odysseus in America*, Jonathan Shay

by eternityBraid

Fundamentally, what the Game seems to want from us is a good show.

The Negastrife would look fantastic on TV; cutting down a representation of your shadow self while parrying its emotional arguments is the kind of thing you could see a hero doing. And yet TV never shows the weeks and weeks we spend trying, failing, and being punted off the island. By the time we're finished, what we feel is not accomplishment, but relief. And even that relief tastes bitter.

Fraymotifs are just as theatrical; timing your attacks for bonus damage, rhythm-game-style, is the kind of thing you'd see in an animated movie. Lining up with the soundrack perfectly has little to do with real

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==> 122. EB: Except for Hope players, for some bizarre reason, who get this ability that lets them earn "performance" ARC all by themselves via [Hope Rides Alone].

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fights, though. We're used to leaving openings and readying attacks between beats, as if in turn-based combat, and those openings can be exploited by attackers that are not of the Game.

(Many a Replayer has accidentally killed a mugger by misjudging how durable nonplayers are. And many a Replayer has been seriously injured by an attacker in presession who doesn't play by our rules.)

And, of course, roleplay coefficient is earned by acting "in-character" for your Role... especially in front of an audience.

It is a show. It is all a show.

This wondrous fantasy world, this show that is Sburb, is built upon our suffering. To survive, we pretend as if our lives were at stake... because they are.

I can't read stories about chosen-ones prancing about in candy-bowl fantasies anymore; I find myself reflexively assuming that there is a curtain in their world, just like ours, and that behind it lies only suffering. But stories about fantasy worlds that are shadowed and traumatizing make me cry, because when I see others suffering it reminds me too vividly of Sburb.

I read them anyway.

Because sometimes there are clues, in their stories, about how to survive our own.

The Lifeline Skill

> If I can stop one heart from breaking, I shall not live in vain.
>
> Emily Dickinson

I think that one of the things that makes a real veteran is some level of hopeless, impossible idealism.

Now, that's a highly controversial statement, to say the least. But, see: If thrown into Replaying, most people would run out of fucks within the first month, go desperately into fuck debt at the local payday loan center, and die from being eaten by loan sharks. So veterans, people who survive Sburb, are people who can defy that... somehow.

Veterans of Sburb are people who can still care about *something*.

Sburb can prove it false when you think that you are safe. Sburb can prove it false when you think that you are competent. Sburb can prove it false when you think that you are not alone. But Sburb cannot take the higher purpose of your life away from you.

It isn't the choice between life without integrity and integrity without life, as epinephrineElectrified once put it. You need to believe *in* something to be able to go on. You need to be able to have some sort of faith that your life means more than a whole lot of nothing screaming into the void.

A Personal Note

> "War," I said. "War never changes."
>
> "You get better loot when you're higher level," Paul pointed out. "And you get to fight tougher aliens back at their landing point."
>
> "Yeah," I said. "But other than that."
>
> "Yeah," he agreed. "Other than that."
>
> "Respawn Star", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

If you're a Replayer, if you're reading this because it's an introduction to our culture... this is the most important part of the book, in my opinion. Anyone can write a FAQ about Sburb itself. But survival isn't a mechanical problem. "Do all these things and you might live" just isn't going to cut it, not when the thing that ultimately brings us down is almost always unhealed emotional wounds.

You have to have something to survive *for*.

It's... it was in my fifth session that I remember figuring it out. I was in a session with a bunch of second- and third-sessioners – kids, really, even by pre-Sburb standards – and they were scared and disorganized and barely knew what they were doing.

I mean, I barely knew what *I* was doing, myself, then, but I tried to teach them how to survive the Game. What parts of it might kill them. What parts of it they could exploit to get a breather. What parts were sensitive to order, and what parts had to be thrown into chaos, to proceed. But that didn't really help, not after people started dying anyway.

It was me and two of the kids, in the end. A Mannerist, a teenage boy who knew down to his bones that there was always a "right thing" to do, and acted as best he could to approximate it. And a budding gamebreaker, barely thirteen years old and already three sessions, digging into how sentient the Carapaces really were.

Nobody else had anything to live for, not after their lives and their friends had been ripped away from them by the Door. And so they died.

> **Ruins Rising**, n.: a type of midlife crisis common to gamebreakers, usually brought on by the perception that, despite all the work one has invested into researching the Game, things have not gotten any better. Usually brought on by (perceived) failure to live up to others' hopes and expectations.
>
> I was hit by Ruins Rising halfway through my twelfth session, and almost didn't make it out alive.
>
> **Editor's note**: Judge yourself by the things you can control. If you have made a thousand hypotheses and none of them have panned out, yes, adjust your method of making hypotheses... but don't beat yourself up about the ones that have already passed.
>
> *The Gamebreaker's Glossary*, 21st edition

They say gamebreaking is a way of life.

It takes years of practice to spot glitches and bugs, and years more (supplemented with knowledge hard-won from the corpses of your predecessors) to exploit them. And sometimes you get something awesome, like alimentator hacking. But sometimes you find out that you've been chasing a dead end for the last ten years.

The thing is, even things you might write off as dead ends might actually end up useful someday.

Even the frivolous stuff, like Moonjacking, or the theoretical stuff, like the code in the libraries of the Magicant, might one day have application. For example, thoracicGlint recently found out that Moonjacking Derse and piloting it at least a certain distance away can drop Dersite morale substantially. (Apparently it shows Derse that they don't have as much control over circumstances as they think they have.) And then there's the story of how aeolianTrimmings ended up cribbing from the libraries of the Magicant while patching his session back together, after a Waste had erased important sections of code.[123]

Gamebreaking is a beautiful thing to do, if you can stomach the risk.

Because the thing is: I can't. Most people can't. #ultimatereward was infamous for being hostile towards newbies that were attempting to become gamebreakers. As far as I can tell, they were scared that anything but the utmost of conservatism would get you killed. This is a reasonable fear, but...

Better to face Sburb head-on, the gamebreakers say. Because if you die that way, at least you die trying to make the world better, and your death will not be in vain.

It's a beautiful philosophy. I just... can't bring myself to follow it. There are some people who survive being scared to within an inch of their lives, and from there gain the strength that if they could survive *that* they can survive anything.

==> 123. EB: You should read technicolorOracle's novelization of the entire affair. It's incredible.

I drew the opposite conclusion. I decided that my life was too fragile to be tossed around like that.

But I'm glad there are people who face the world like that. They're the ones that make things safer for all the rest of us, in the end.

> ok so
> you're telling me that you would rather die than face your nightmare heir
> because you don't think you can survive seeing your subconscious held up to you like a mirror?
> let me borrow something carina says when she gets mad:
> bull-fucking-shit
>
> charmedMittens

Sburb's learning curve is murderous. Game researchers try their best to help cushion it with FAQs, but sometimes a second-sessioner needs help *now*, and can't comprehend a wall of text the size of the entire Harry Potter series.

One of the things that you can do to keep yourself together is to help other people. Sometimes all you need to do is give someone a hint and they light up with comprehension. Sometimes you have to walk someone through a long quest sequence, giving them the answers they can't find, and the only reward you get is the fact that they make it through alive.

Or you can help people escape – help them forget their lives, if only for a moment, by making it possible for them to use things like Replayer networks.

It feeds some people, to do that kind of thing.[124] It's one of those things that gives Samantha joy, despite the fact that she throws herself against an unbroken wall of stupid most of the time she's moderating Pits. To know that she can still help, and to know that people appreciate what she does.

There are many, many ways to do this. You can hang out in the "Newbies" subforum on sburb.org. You can volunteer for your favorite projects. You can run your own project, or moderate or administrate.

Oh, and for those of you who have these kinds of jobs: I appreciate you. I know how much shit you have to wade through every day to keep things running.[125] But you have to make sure to remember, always, that you are there to facilitate other people's stories, not just to tell your own. Don't be a tyrant.[126]

==> 124. EB: I mean, I prefer writing, but everyone's different.
==> 125. CM: Thank you.
==> 126. CM: ...I retract that thank-you.

"You are not an imposition on our resources, any more than the money being spent on you
by the public educational system is a waste. The youth are the investment of the future, and
for us magical girls more than anybody else, it's valuable to remember that the future exists."

Puella Magi Michiyo Magica, Zerovirus

For me, the attraction is that I can *make things fair*. Sburb is unfair; I can't change that. There will always be bullies and careless people; I can't change that, either. There will always be software bugs and people trying to break into servers; if you don't think that's a law of the universe, you've obviously never done system administration before.

By enforcing the rules and strengthening the bulwarks, then, I straighten out the universe with my own two hands. When I take a step back, go off duty, and go browse for some videos, I can admire how much we've all accomplished. I can feel good that I've made the world a little more orderly.

And then I go back to work, because there's always going to be someone else trying to break it all down.

Art inherently flows from who you are. It will do so whether you acknowledge it or not.

Sburb will inherently change who you are. It will do so whether you acknowledge it or not.

My goal, with this work, is to teach you to embrace this contradiction. Because if you can take art that flows from who you are, and blend in the influence of the person Sburb needs you to be, you can carve out your own destiny between these two poles.

That is why I say: this is not a book about art. This is a book about how to live your life.

Principles of Aspect Art, hypotheticalOzymandias

In Sburb, despite all of the terrible things that happen, there is still free time, between one day's grinding and the next. There is almost always enough grist left, after you've made everything you need, that you can make yourself a set of acrylic paints (oil paint tends to get ruined by spawning Imps) or good sketching pencils.

There is no dearth of inspiration, either. Every Land may draw from the same pool of map tiles, models, and textures – but they are put together randomly, and so they are all unique. Every swirl of the clouds on Skaia shows you something new. Every Replayee you replace invites you to imagine who they must have been.

And, because so many of us come into the Game with some skill in art or music, one of the things that can help us keep ourselves intact is to continue to practice. Whenever you improve your skills, you demonstrate that you still have the ability to learn. Whenever you finish a new piece, you mark time and demonstrate that who you are is not who you used to be.

This isn't to say that Sburban art is always completely divorced from the game. Many Replayers practice Aspect Art – using the powers of one's current Title and Aspect as part of the work. A Dream player may make miniatures of the glass objects they fought with that day. A Flow player may breathe just a touch of fire into the center of a clay sculpture, letting an eternal, tiny flame shine from the dollhouse fireplace. A Time player may explore their Aspect by creating a loop pedal that repeats the music they've played so far, so they can layer more harmonies on it. A Life player may grow topiaries, detailed more finely than any human hand could hope to trim.

And then there are Fraymotifs. When you are fighting, you must spontaneously choreograph a lethal dance. But when you are not fighting, you can use Fraymixing to alter the Fraymotifs to your taste, or learn new capoeira or gymnastics moves, or learn how to play along with them on your own instrument.

Sburban art is not just about expressing yourself. It gives you concrete markers of how much you've grown up, and how much you've accomplished, and how long you've survived. And skills that you have learned this way are skills that Sburb cannot take away.

> Jason's so old that he still puts together a no-knead bread every morning and tosses it in the cookalizer at the end of the day. It's actually kind of charming.
>
> *Interesting Interviews*, introduction of triforceAligned by scorpionSting

This is more specific and historical than the other lifelines I've talked about, but it's still relevant. Many people use the Alimentator Hack, but have you ever wondered who *cooks* for the alimentator hack? The answer is that a lot of people do: there are whole communities on every major Replayer network, and even some of the minor ones, devoted to creating good-tasting things in the Game. Seriously, check out the "#alifile" tag on Pits sometime.

Cooking for Replayers isn't high cuisine. Sure, there's a division of people who do, but Replayer cooking is primarily comfort food.

Comfort food should not be underestimated. Food is not just fuel. Strong sensory impressions help one self-regulate, and food is a good avenue with which to get there, because the tastebuds are wired in on a very primitive level. So if you need a pick-me-up, there's really nothing quite like decent tacos. Or miso-rubbed fish. Or even, let's be honest, a box of Kraft Dinner thrown onto the cookalizer for lunch.

Because a session is eight months long, far too long for fresh goods, we cook almost exclusively from canned, dried, and frozen. It's an interesting constraint. Replayer recipes use things like powdered eggs, evaporated milk, and textured vegetable protein. Frozen meats and vegetables are also very common, as are dried beans, rice, oatmeal, taco seasoning[127], and canned fruit.

Less common are people who start gardens to provide their own herbs.[128] I don't know about gardens, but I definitely recommend at least doing some sprouting if you can.[129] Seriously, even if you don't know how to grow stuff, sprouts are dead easy and provide a spot of fresh taste that can relieve the monotony.

==> 127. EB: A matter of historical precedent – Sauce and Antie from Transamphibian famously stocked up on pound-size containers of the stuff.
==> 128. EB: Which is a noble pursuit, assuming you can keep the Underlings out. Maybe alchemized turrets?
==> 129. EB: I mean, I might just be saying that because alfalfa's my Lifeplant, but I do love a good sprout melt sandwich.

Cooking in Sburb is something that, for the average Replayer these days, is superseded by the alimentator hack. The alimentator hack allows you scan food into .ali files, and then subsequently use and distribute those files to replicate the food. As we have a short but extremely rich culinary tradition, this means that, assuming you can wait the 15-30 minutes for a food file to download (the files are about as large as a ripped movie), you have any number of gourmet meals at your fingertips. The files don't take long to actually come out of the alimentator; the longest one I know of takes maybe thirty seconds.

Because .ali files take a relatively long time to download, many Replayers keep their own private databases full of their favorites, or swap them "sneakernet"-style on flashdrives or using the in-session network.

Go ahead and adjust the exact date of Alimentator Hack adoption to your game as desired. If you want people to be able to swap food like this (and if you want to explore the implications of at least this type of post-scarcity), you can go ahead and assume the alimentator hack already exists at the time that *The Age of Replayer Networks* begins. However, it was actually invented a *bit* later than that – maybe timestamp 40 or so – so if you'd rather play around with pre-Alimentator cooking, that's fine too.

The Hack could even be the reward for someone's Quest Miracle! (Which it probably was. But if you want to withhold it until a PC completes a 45-XP Bindings/Shepherd quest to invent it, that's your prerogative as the HG.)

> The real knockdown evidence, at least for me, isn't that Sburb calls us gods, or that we know what our afterlife looks like and it isn't theologically compatible, or even the fact that a surprising number of our dancestors invented and spread religions on our native planets.
>
> It's that Paradox Space works against its interests so much. Parts of the Game are sometimes outright contradictory. It wishes to make universe caretakers, but accomplishes this by killing anyone unsuccessful, and doesn't let us into those universes anyway. It keeps making us obey Roles, only to tear us away into different Roles as soon as we get used to them, rather than letting us specialize.
>
> Intelligent design cannot be that stupid. Not even a house of competing gods could be that stupid. And even if it was an alien god optimizing the world for our suffering, that alien god has left us enough of our small joys that I have trouble believing it could exist.
>
> Sburb bears what can only be the fingerprints of blind evolution.
>
> "There Are No Theists in Sburb: or, Why Nothing is Sacred", quantumEntanglement

This list would be incomplete if I did not include faith. Sure, there are people whose experience in Sburb breaks their faith... but there are also people whose experience in Sburb strengthens (or *creates*) their faith. I mean, my sense of purpose is less... centralized, and Samantha is of the opinion that the entire enterprise is stupid and shortsighted. But you have to talk about this stuff *sometime*.

Most of us, if we were raised with faith at all, were raised in some monotheistic religion that claims, vaguely, that God loves everyone. (Except for the outgroup.) Some of us come from state-sponsored religions. Some of us grew up with something weirder; a few of us never encountered the subject.

For ordinary, presession folks, these vague claims are enough. However, we are Replayers. Because Sburb is Sburb, any belief in a fair universe or benevolent god will get eaten away, thrown around, stomped on, and/or Corrupted. And yet we have to figure out how to live in this world anyway. Because... well, if your life is pointless, why are you even alive?

PrototypeTowers has documents from dozens of religions and thousands of religious sects. And in those documents, there are hundreds of thousands of attempted answers to the great question: why does suffering and evil exist? Whose fault is it? If there is a benevolent, omni-everything God, why is he letting it happen? I will warn you: this is an incredibly hard problem, and there is no accepted solution. A lot of people think that this means it's unsolvable. But your solution only has to work for you.

And then there's maintaining a sense of sacredness and meaning. This is what the rituals of the Mannerists are; and this is what the rituals of many other religions are as well. There are obvious logistical problems with some faiths' requirements; some are easier resolved than others. (For example, Muslim Replayers point their prayers towards Skaia, but they haven't decided on whether you need to do prayers as your dreamself too.)

In summary: faith isn't something that you can just *keep*, here. You have to claw meaning out of the world, and the world will fight you all the way. It's probably worth the effort; otherwise there wouldn't be any religion here in the first place. But it is not the easy path, because none of our paths are easy.

Writing

> I would hurl words into this darkness and wait for an echo, and if an echo sounded, no matter how faintly, I would send other words to tell, to march, to fight, to create a sense of hunger for life that gnaws in us all.

> *American Hunger*, Richard Wright

This is what I, and many other Replayers, do; this is what many of the characters we write from this universe do.

I write what I do to share why I think this world is worth it – but I also write this because I want to immortalize the history of this world I live in. This is not just a didactic tome about how important I believe social connections are: it is a history book, and an RPG sourcebook, and a light I fling into the future.

The gamebreakers write their essays and FAQs. The knowledge of gamebreaking is not useful until it's laid out clearly, with ways for everyone to use it. And once it is, the techniques are open for even nontechnical people to use. For many FAQ-writers, the writing is a calling in and of itself – you aren't just presenting findings, you're trying to help other people live less shitty lives.

dryadTornado writes her series not just to share a wondrous world, but to integrate an understanding of Imperatives and Priorities into our unconscious sense of how stories work; and, from there, into our interactions with Sburb. Stories can worm their way into our hearts in a way that no FAQ could hope to replicate.

There are many streams that feed into the impulse to write, but there is something common in all of these:

Writing can make your ideas immortal.

There is no guarantee. Sburb gives us no guarantees. But if you believe in something with all your heart, and want to share it... perhaps writing about it would be a good place to start.

> Campaign: RV Chuubo's
>
> Age: 13-18 (1-4 Sburb sessions), 16-25 (5-8 Sburb sessions), 21-32 (9-15 Sburb sessions), 27+ (16+ Sburb sessions)
> Sylladex: something practical; you can have something impractical as a secondary
> Specibus: the more specific your specibus is, the more bonus you get in using it
> Academics: Good or better (with a universal nerdy streak)
> Athletics: Good or better
> Favorite foods: fresh fruits and vegetables; ice cream; curries or jambalaya are also popular
> Lifeplant: commonly borrowed from the language of flowers
>
> Genres: Fairy Tale, Gothic (before playing a Replayer in another genre, make sure you have a strong genre-appropriate concept)

So. You're stuck in this endless game with all of us, huh? Do sit down, and if you brought something for the traditional first session meeting potluck go ahead and set it on that countertop over there. Yes, go ahead and plug in the crockpot. This will take a while.

You're a competent person to make it this far. In fact, you're better than nearly everyone who's played this game. Those empty sessions we Replay into? We recolonize the husks of sessions that failed. Please don't think ill of yourself for that. It would've happened anyway whether you existed or not.

So sit straight and breathe deeply, and know that you are worthwhile and valued even if Sburb doesn't think you are; and tell me about yourself...

Step 1: Your Prenative

You came down on a meteor, when you were a child, or a wriggler. And then you grew up...

- raised on Earth, like a normal kid
  - by a mother or father
  - by an uncle, aunt, or sibling
  - by grandparents or someone further away on the family tree
  - by someone else?
- raised on Alternia, which made you a strong troll
  - by a lusus
  - you were never claimed by a lusus or your lusus died early on; you made your own way
  - something else? (An adult troll? Robots?)
- raised on a postscratch Earth, which made you competent and maybe broken
  - by someone who taught you how to defy the dystopian government

- by someone who raised you to one day take your place in the dystopian government
- something else?
- Some other world, because...
  - you just want to be from a world that isn't called Earth like all the others?
  - something got mixed up during the ectobiology or meteor-sending process?
  - you're an alien?

(Note that all Sburb-playing species are Rubber Forehead Aliens. The Game selects for neurologies that can comprehend and benefit from it. More details on the Sburb-playing species we used in RV Classic are on page ???.)

Step 2: Your Name

You will often have a name related to your native culture. Names are not limited to any particular number of letters or syllables.[130]

People from postscratch universes tend to have more elaborate or obscure names. When you're the one who came up with the cultures that the weird names come from, you can get away with picking the name and retroactively devising a cultural background to make it work.

So who are you?

Are you a human girl, from a normal Earth?

- An-Xi "Iris" Chu?
- Berta Alamilla?
- Constance Bissette?
- Emily Elgin?
- Joyce Devlin?
- Miriam Crewe?
- Saya Minami?
- Zdenka Skala?

A human boy from a normal Earth?

- Adrianus "Adrian" Johansen?
- Jean Fletcher?
- Karim Al-Farouqi?
- Min-Seok "Michael" Kim?
- Olabode Afolayan?
- Richard "Dill Pickle" Wellerton?
- Terry Weaver?
- Victor Bobienski?

A human girl from a postscratch or highly variant Earth?

- Adele Kirton?
- Dezirinda "Dez" Arthur? (The first name is actually from Esperanto.)
- Florence Faber?
- Maude Prentice?

==> 130. EB: I'm not sure who thinks names are restricted like that. Probably someone who looked around their native and tried to generalize it as a rule.

- Millicent Schurmacher?
- Slavica Cabral?

A human boy from a postscratch or highly variant Earth?

- Alasdair Dabney?
- Connor Sabins?
- Raymond "Ray" Gunn? (You'll want the Groan XP for this one.)
- Rock Gunnersmith?
- Octavius Bluetooth? (Danish last name, not electronics peripheral. Unless he's named after the electronics peripheral after all...)
- Szczęsny Kisecawchuck?

(Would you rather go find a [name generator](#) and harvest words that sound nice?)

A troll boy/girl/other?

- Elemvi Turaac?
- Khuuna Naraka?
- Mestor Torali?
- Orcris Gutral?
- Qusamo Weylon?
- Sydian Nubime?
- Tunavi Esemet?

Are you from another species that has its own naming rules?

Do you have no idea what your original name used to be, and only go by a nickname?

- Something related to your chumhandle?
- Something related to the type of person you are?

Or did something else happen entirely?

What's your name?

(We'll pick chumhandles later, once you've got a better idea of what kind of person you are.)

> **Spud-hunt**, v.: to look for evidence that the Game may once have been different, or that updates have since changed it. Derived from a meme where people were calling updates "potatoes".

> *The Gamebreaker's Glossary*, 21st edition

Sburb gave you powers and a title[131] - one designed to shape you towards a new (and hopefully better) person. They were a challenge; when you first realized what your Classpect meant, you thought you couldn't possibly live up to it. Or that Sburb was asking you to indulge in something that you thought was a bad thing. Or whatever.

But then you *did* live up to it, and it's made an imprint on your soul.

So which Aspect (element) did Sburb give you? Are you the...

- Hero of Blood - of solidarity and invulnerability? (Like me!)
- Hero of Breath - of destruction and wild freedom?
- Hero of Void - of obfuscation and nothingness?
- Hero of Mist - of substance and replication?
- Hero of Heart - of the inner nature of things?
- Hero of Rage - of the outward presentation of things?
- Hero of Flow - of fire and intensity? (You will win every rap-off you're in, except the ones you have with the Rhyme player.)
- Hero of Rhyme - of ice and relaxation?
- Hero of Might - of strength and meeting challenges head-on?
- Hero of Sand - of evasiveness, weakness, and fragmentation?[132]
- Hero of Doom - of long-term consequences and decay?
- Hero of Life - of nurturing and growth?
- Hero of Dreams - of focused creativity?
- Hero of Rain - of unfettered creativity? (And also rainbows that represent craziness and joy.)
- Hero of Light - of taking advantage of opportunities and good luck?
- Hero of Law - of restrictions and bad luck?
- Hero of Mind - of logic, dualism, and possibilities?
- Hero of Fate - of instinct, unitariness, and directions?

==> 131. EB: Note that bladekindEyewear's theories, while a good guess, don't seem to apply to our corner of paradox space. If the HG would rather use his, or another, set of Classpects, that's something you'll be told upfront.

==> 132. OJ: Native Sand players have a bad reputation. They're often "antiheroes", and some go off the deep end into villainy. But you can play a good Sand native, if you can think of a sufficiently good backstory.

- Hero of Time - of fatalism, inevitability, and subsuming yourself to a higher will?

- Hero of Space - of creation, miracles, and creating something new out of the old?

- Hero of Hope - of denial and defying the odds?

- Hero of Stars - of attraction and accepting the inevitable?

- Hero of Sight - of illusions and metaphor?

- Hero of Sound - of communication and commonalities?

- Hero of Coins - of alchemy and self-worth?

- Hero of Dust - of making do and modesty?[133]

Or are you a native Hero of some other Aspect?

And what is your Title?[134] Are you the...

- Page/Knight, the one who fights? (Were you unwilling to fight?)

- Ward/Heir, the one who accepts? (Did you have something that you were in denial of?)

- Sage/Seer, the one who plots? (Were you too confident in your knowledge and judgements?)

- Witch/Mage, the one who bewilders? (Were you hiding something different about yourself?)

- Sylph/Bane, the one who champions? (Did you not have something to believe in?)

- Scout/Guide, the one who discovers? (Did you stagnate, stay in comfort zones beyond their usefulness?)

- Dame/Guard, the one who defends? (Were you too selfish?)

- Thief/Rogue, the one who steals? (Were you too selfless?)

- Prince/Bard, the one who brings endings? (Were you afraid of decisive action?)

- Maid, the one who passively fulfills? (Were you self-centered?)

- Smith/Muse, the one who creates? (Were you destructive/self-destructive?)

Or is your title a little weirder, rarer, or more bugged? (You should get HG permission to use one of these.) Are you the...

- Waste/Grace, the one who ignites? (Were you afraid to draw attention to yourself?)

- Clown, the one who is supposed to actively fulfill but is just flat-out broken instead?[135]

You'll notice that (nearly) all of these are title *pairs*; you should pick the...

- first one, the active title, if you needed to be more aggressive/proactive and take more credit for things;

- second one, the passive title, if you needed to meddle less and let others have the spotlight for a change.

==> 133. EB: We think. It's a pretty new Aspect and doesn't really have very many examples yet.
==> 134. EB: Go ahead and ignore gendered titles. Female Princes, male Witches, and so on and so forth happen all the time!
==> 135. EB: This title should not be assigned at all. In theory. In practice, Sburb being Sburb...

If you really, honestly, have no idea (or if you'd rather start from the classpect and extrapolate backwards to the character), there are some random roll tables on page ??? you can use.

And what did you think of your session and coplayers?

- We were a bit goofy but once it sunk in how serious this was everyone straightened out.
- I took a leadership position and coaxed everyone into line.
- ...I *forced* everyone into line.
- We were friends before and Sburb only made our bonds stronger.
- We were friends before but the pressures of Sburb slowly turned us against each other.
- I didn't like my coplayers in the first place but being forced to clean up after their inadequacies made me loathe them.

Finally, how did your session go?

- Everyone lived! (What is this, *not* the Murdergame? But it happens fairly often! Your first session is legitimately suited for you, after all.)
  - It was easy! We picked up on what we needed to do pretty quickly. (This is usually associated with post-scratch universes.)
  - It was hard! We only barely made it. A couple of us nearly died. But we pulled through.
- One (or more) of my coplayers died or was killed...
  - due to the Game being unfairly hard, or bugged.
  - at the hand of another coplayer, on purpose. (Did they go after you? Did you retaliate? Was it self-defense?)
  - at the hand of another coplayer, by accident. (Was it an ability gone wrong? ...did you retaliate anyway?)
  - sacrificing themselves to keep us safe.
  - _____
- I was the only one who survived...
  - because our session was heavily glitched. I was *really* lucky.
  - because friendly fire is left on in Sburb, so I accidentally caught my coplayers in a Berserk Trigger (i.e. an area-of-effect ability that tends to be the resolution of some Issues).
  - because my coplayers kept getting picked off in ones and twos by the Murdergame.
  - _____

Or did something else happen?

> His utter powerlessness is freeing. He doesn't have to cooperate. He doesn't have to pretend that the monster has found a point of common interest, or deny it for that matter. He doesn't have to bother lying to the monster, or telling the truth to the monster, or, really, saying anything in particular at all. The monster wins. The monster always wins. In the face of that victory, until the monster explains what it entails, Micah can do *anything he wants.*

> "The Shepherdess (I/VII)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

Sburb promised you a new universe. You got thrown involuntarily into Replaying, instead. How did you react?

- I was heartbroken...
    - at never being able to see my friends again.
    - at never seeing my lover again.
- I'm furious. The game lied to me. I will make it pay.
- I blame it on one of my former coplayers screwing everything up.
- This is actually better. I'd rather not be trapped in a universe with my former coplayers...
    - because they were idiots.
    - because they were abusive and constantly put me down.
    - because I can make a fresh start and build up a new reputation now.
- Something else?

How long have you been playing Sburb? (This is probably actually going to be set by the HG, but you'll pick the exact number of sessions you've been playing from within the range provided.)[136]

- Uh, this is my first session. I don't even know if I'm going to Replay at all or not. (First-sessioners start at arc 0 on a miraculous Arc.)
- This is my second session. I'm told it's going to be a doozy. (You'll have one miraculous Arc.)
- This is my third or fourth session. I'm picking things up, I think. (You'll still have one miraculous Arc.) (This is the maximum available experience level for the default campaign.)
- I'm getting to sessions 5-8. I'm learning and doing some cool stuff. (You'll have 2 or 3 miraculous Arcs, depending on the campaign. This is the recommended experience level for campaigns starting with 3 Arcs.)
- People call me a veteran now. My number's 9-15. (You'll have anywhere from 3 to 6 miraculous Arcs, depending on the campaign.)
- Who's awesome? I'm awesome. 16+. (5 or more miraculous Arcs, and I am envious.)

==> 136. OJ: The default miraculous-arc-to-session-ratio is roughly one miraculous Arc to three Sburb sessions, with wiggle room. If your campaign's got a substantially different tone or genre-mode, that might change.

You will also want to know your previous Classpect, because the mannerisms of the old Classpect tend to cling. You can also pick your second, third, etc. session title pair at this time, if you'd like (it's not required).

You can even figure out what else happened in those sessions. Redo the "what did you think of your session and coplayers?" and "How did it go?" sections (from step 3, above, except with all the 'we were friends before the Game' sections removed). You don't have to do this either!

Step 5: Your Lifeline

Something keeps you sane, in this crazy rootless world. What is it?

- My Replayer network. (Or, as some of the older ones say, the Replayternet.) As long as I can talk to my friends, everything else is easier.
- My art or craft.
    - Writing? (This is actually more likely to be FAQs and Guides than, say, fiction.)
    - Some sort of handicraft, like woodworking, jewelry-making, silversmithing, or knitting?
    - Aspect-based art?
    - Cooking?
    - Fashion/cosplay?
    - Drawing/painting?
- Holding on until I see them again...
    - to have a joyful reunion?
    - Or to make them pay?
- The Game is a home away from home for me, and I explore it...
    - To figure out how it "should" be played?
    - To learn more about it, for the benefit of future generations of Replayers?
    - To learn more about it, so that I can break it to my benefit?
    - Just to see everything and subconsciously understand the patterns of the footpaths and the streets?
- Doing my best in every session I roll into. Being the best Sburb player I can be.
- I promised someone that I wouldn't fall apart. So I won't.
- I just take things a day at a time. This too shall pass.
- I've built myself a worldview (or picked up a worldview), and it gives me a sense of purpose.
- I'm not staying sane at all. I'm falling apart. I'm going to die soon and I might not even mind when it happens.[137]
- Something else?

==> 137. EB: If you pick this? You're going to find something else, soon, I think. If nothing else, you'll have a Replayer network to connect to now.

Step 6: Your Skills

So your skills will go something like this, if you're prescratch and relatively new to this game...

- Sburban Survival 1 (You can stumble around in the Game without getting killed.)
- Your Childhood Talent or Hobby 3 (You're very good at this.)
- Your Lifeline Skill 2 (It helps you get up in the morning.)
- Another Extra Skill 2 (You might know about something else entirely.)

Or they can go something like this, if you're postscratch...

- Sburban Survival 2 (You've gotten pretty good at this game.)
- Your Childhood Talent or Hobby 3 (You're very good at this.)
- Your Lifeline Skill 2 (You've picked up something to while away your days.)
- Another Extra Skill 1 (You may have a passing familiarity with something else, too.)

Or if you have 5+ sessions it might look like this...

- Sburban Survival 2-3 (You've gotten pretty good at this game.)
- Your Childhood Talent or Hobby 2 (You used to be better at this, but honestly you've let it slide.)
- Your Lifeline Skill 3 (If you didn't have this to do, you probably would've gone crazy at some point.)
- Another Extra Skill 0-1 (You may have a passing familiarity with something else, too.)

So you have a talent or hobby you picked up in your childhood, before you ever got into Sburb:

- Athletics 2-3
- Camping 2-3
- Computers 2-3
- Cooking 2-3
- Electronics 2-3
- Gardening 2-3
- Housekeeping 2-3
- Knitting 2-3
- Literature 2-3
- Martial Arts 2-3
- [Musical Instrument] 2-3
- Needlecraft 2-3
- Photography 2-3
- Psychology 2-3

- Riddles and Puzzles 2-3

- Roleplaying Games 2-3 (Hi!)

- Writing 2-3

- ____

And you have a skill related to the thing you chose as your Lifeline in section 5. You can draw it from the previous section, but you can also pick one of these:

- Gamebreaking 1-3

- Game Knowledge 1-3

- Game Research 1-3

- Helping Others 1-3

- Leadership 1-3

- [Religious Practice] 1-3 (Stoicism, or Mannerism, or whatever it happens to be for you.)

- [Sburban Magic] 1-3 (This is uncommon, and typically keyed to your native Aspect magic. See page ??? for cases in which this is appropriate.)

- Survival 1-3 (You can phrase this differently: it could be I'll Make It Through Somehow, or Screw Destiny, or Tenacious, or This Too Shall Pass, or Until I See [Someone] Again...)

And you might even have an extra skill, which is often drawn from the same lists as up above. You can also make the extra skill something more general like Miscellany, Well-Rounded, Crafty, MacGyvering, or Do Stuff.

Occasionally you might have a rating of 0 or -1 in a skill that you're truly incompetent at! Unfortunately, doing this does not give you any points back; it is just for flavor. Even so, you may want to put Cooking 0, Music -1, or Social Skills 0 on your sheet to call attention to how notably bad you are.

So... any of those seem right to you?

- Yeah, that works.

- I'll have to move a few points around, but I'll make it work.

- None of that seems right. I'll make my own.

(Note that you will *definitely* want points in Sburban Survival, and that Sburban Survival caps out at 3 for PCs. If you want more tenacity, you'll pick a Bond or Affliction that reinforces that!)

Step 6: Your Bond

Remember your Title and Aspect (Classpect) that you chose above in Step 3? You'll want to look at those again now. In the listing for your Sburban magic, there's a set of Bonds. See if any of those fit.

If you'd rather not use any classpect-related Bonds, or if your character is notably poorly-internalized, you can pick something more generic. Here are some Bonds that are relatively universal and can thus apply to any Replayer:

- **[I know Prospit like the back of my hand.]** / **[I know Derse like the back of my hand.]**
- **[I find (a quest chain) easy.]** (The Maturity Quests, the Denizen Quests, the Underworld Quests, the Battlefield Quests, the Mail Quests...)
- **[I can use anything as a weapon.]**
- **[I'm extremely aware of my surroundings.]** (Note that this Bond can trouble you when you stay "keyed up" and can't relax.)
- **[I'm tough as nails.]**
- **[When I go on the offense my attacks are vicious.]**
- **[I find puzzles easy.]** / **[I find puzzles hard.]**
- **[I think (my native aspect) is the best. Fight me.]**
- **[I can't tell any of the carapaces apart. They all look the same to me.]** (I mean, the Queen's usually got a crown and the King's usually got a scepter, those ones are obvious, but beyond that...)
- **[I'm good with music.]** (This is actually very useful with Sburban Survival, because you can use musical commands to do things like heal yourself or teleport out of a bad situation.)
- **[I've memorized a lot of FAQs and Guides.]** (This can be used on top of Sburban Survival so long as the HG rules that what you're trying to do is common and routine, or could be common and routine to someone else.)

This will be your starting Inherent Bond; it will be rated at 2 points.

Step 7: Your Affliction

There's some bugs that follow us around, in the Game. It's a quirk of the Game using the Shiny to store certain data files that really should be part of the game, not part of the player. (Messy coding doesn't even begin to describe the underlying structure of the game. Unless you're a Seer of Void or similar title, though, all you need to know is that this game's glitched *badly*.)

You don't have to have one! But you might, and it's more common at 5+ sessions. If you really don't like any of these, just pick two Bonds - one related to your Sburban Magic and one of the universal ones.

Here are some examples of mostly positive Afflictions:

- **[I have an unusually detailed instinctive knowledge of my stats.]** (So, instead of vaguely knowing you're getting a bit tired, you can report ICly that you're at 3/8 Will. You can apply this affliction positively to situations where you need to squeeze every last drop of MP or Will out of yourself, to represent knowing where your exact limits are; also, spending all your Will or MP will never wound you.)

- **[Consorts like me.]** (And then they will follow you around. Everywhere. Whether you like it or not.)

- **[Carapaces like me.]**

- **[My Whisperings like me.]** (This means that your Sburban Aspect sometimes does minor effects on your behalf - for example, healing small bruises and cuts if you are Life, making sure dirt never sticks to your clothes if you're Hope, and so on.)

- **[I always have someone to reach out to.]** (You don't get to choose who's available for you to reach out to. You don't get to choose if they're ultimately trustworthy. But you will have someone and they will help you.)

And here are some examples of mostly negative Afflictions:

- **[My dreamself's Sleep Ratio is bugged, so I never wake up on a Dream Moon properly.]** (You can physically travel to Prospit or Derse and entreaty the appropriate monarch with your realself if you must, but this prevents you from being deeply involved in dream moon politics.)

- **[I will survive. Whether I like it or not.]** (OK, this one isn't inherently negative, but the people who seem to have it think that it is negative.)

- **[I keep starting arguments by accident.]**

- **[Scrying effects don't work around me.]** (This can make it difficult to plan around you, and will make any future session in which you roll a Tactician class extremely... uh... fun.)

- **[I am much more likely to show up in prophecies than usual.]** (You will then have to fulfill them to the letter to prevent a Doomed Timeline.)

Step 8: Miscellaneous Details

At this point, follow the directions from the corebook to pick your

- basic quest,
- XP emotion,
- and starting quests.

(You'll have your Miraculous Arc starting quests, but you will most likely also start the Sburban Tale sidequest Seven Gates upon entry into your Sburb session. You can put off starting that quest for a bit, if you want to wander around your presession for a while.)

Step 9: Miraculous Arcs

Your miraculous arc will often be based on your native aspect. For a first approximation, go look at the tables and lists on pages ???-???. You can of course ignore all my suggestions and do something else entirely, if you really want! But I recommend at least considering the ones I've listed first.

A lot of the flavor of Replay Value is the kind of things people can do, and this requires interpreting many powers in unusually subtle or metaphorical ways. I've written many example characters that you can use for inspiration, here, but the principles are something like this:

- Most powers can be interpreted as combinations of knowing the right people, relevant bits of software/hardware, and/or weird intrinsic powers like troll psionics. If you can't do that with a particular power, be especially careful about using it.

- It is very difficult to get anything past the session boundary by means other than physical travel or digital information transmission (see page ???). This means that you will need to have a relevant Bond, or spend an unusual amount of MP, to use many powers.

- If things aren't working, save what you've got in a scraps file/folder and go back to the drawing board. I promise that you will eventually have a second idea, and that it will be better than the first.

Step 10: Handle

Even if you're not connected to a Replayer network right now, you'll probably be introduced to one soon.

You'll want to pick your chumhandle at this point, too, so you have a username to use on that Replayer network. Pick two words related to anything on your character sheet, then stick them together and capitalize the second one. (I recommend starting with somewhat obscure words related to your Childhood Talent and your Bond. If those don't go well together, try using your prenative world, your basic quest, or your lifeline skill as more inspiration.)

Many people like the [Dictionary of Unusual Words](#) to start, or looking up your childhood talent and finding some obscure piece of technical vocabulary related to that talent. If that doesn't work, pick words based on what sounds pretty, or use a [random generator](#) until it feels right.

Some example chumhandles:

- catterySpheroid
- phalangePrecision
- decrudescentChime
- ergonomicBlocks
- confusedContortionist
- laundryListings
- knittingRhyme
- subterraneanElements
- booklearnedFencer
- luciteBeading
- tacitBlue
- eightminuteMile
- gearedAccessory
- stainlessReport
- demagnetizedScrewdriver
- cinderblockedCapsule
- exploratoryHero
- deTented
- proportionateHeads
- conductorCriticism
- beautifulBracers

- patrioticGlory
- acquiredImmunity
- theologicalArgument
- filamentousAlgae
- seleniticAge
- ringingPhone
- freezedriedFaction
- perfectionisticErhu
- skipoleSkydiving

Or you can base your chumhandle on a joke or phrase. While I don't recommend it - you should try for a serious chumhandle first - these kinds of chumhandles are good for NPCs, so that's why I'm including them here.

- notBees
- coalWalker
- peasUnearthed (According to the coplayer in question it was supposed to sound like "peace on earth".)
- ticksOff
- stairsWarning
- sadFrog
- scaleneTriangle (or, I suppose, isoscelesJackass)
- oldDongers
- suchHandle
- ragingMemelord
- clippyScourge
- fuchsiaKeratin (Sburb.org has a convention of referring to people using the first three letters of each half of their chumhandle, such that, say, specificNihilism abbreviates to spenih. So, uh...)
- bannockBrion
- moreHats

Aliens (Yes, We Have Them)

by eternityBraid

Our games create universes, and not all of these universes have human children. In other words, yes. We have aliens. Some of these aliens are even playable!

In Chuubo's, alien qualities are represented by Superior Skills. Therefore, each of these species writeups is followed by one or more Superior Skills. For most Sburb-playing characters, a level of 2 in this Superior Skill is sufficient; you'll probably earn it up to 3 as a quest reward at some point.

Commonalities

> **playeroid**, n.: a member of a Sburb-playing species that can play humanoid/trolloid Sburb without difficulty or modification; this generally implies bipedal stature, fine manipulators, 1.5-2m adult height, puberty or final maturation around 13 standard years, and an emotional range similar to that of humans
>
> Suppose you have two playeroids, each of whom pulls on their end of the rope...
>
> adj.: having the qualities of a species that can play humanoid/trolloid Sburb without difficulty or modification, as above.
>
> The First Guardian of a postscratch world is generally playeroid in morphology, but not in intellect.
>
> **Editor's note**: This term was coined primarily to reduce perceived speciesism associated with the words "humanoid" and "trolloid". Some dismiss it as a PrototypeTowers neologism. However, our surveys show that the term is now widely adopted, and as such we have chosen to use the word "playeroid" instead of "humanoid" wherever possible.
>
> *The Gamebreaker's Glossary*, 21st edition

It has been observed that while Replayer aliens come in many different *physical* shapes, essentially all Replayer aliens have these things in common:

- an age of puberty/sexual maturity that is substantially after the age of sentience
- stories and societal narratives matching the traditional Hero's Journey formulation
- ability to feel a relatively standard palette of emotions, most notably including love, anger, regret, and fear
- a sense of aesthetics/fashion/beauty
- a sense of morality/virtue, although this may not be distinct from the sense of aesthetics, depending on who you ask

- ability to be sexually attracted to anyone who possesses all the above, regardless of species (okay, so this isn't actually a universal, but there are a *lot* of interspecies pairings out there)[138]

In essence, the only aliens we've ever seen are ones that share enough mindspace with us humans so as to understand and be able to play Sburb properly.

There are three main theories that try to explain this. I have no idea which of these theories is correct.

The first theorizes that aliens who don't understand our Sburb might have a Sburb, or even an entire Replayerspace, of their own with completely different contents; such a Replayerspace would thus be kept away from us because the resulting sessions would not be mutually survivable, let alone understandable. The second theorizes that Sburb-seeded words inevitably have their development skewed enough that playeroid minds can develop, due to artifacts of the Sburb programmers' minds (if you believe in them) or the mindspace catered to by the initial version. The third theorizes that if aliens are alien enough, they won't even be picked up by Sburb at all.

==> 138. EB: Samantha, I'm asexual. Does that mean that I'm not eligible to play Sburb?
    CM: Of course you aren't. You're clearly just a figment of my imagination.
    EB: I thought you were a figment of *my* imagination.
    CM: Maybe we're both figments of imagination, then!

by catalogTruisms

I have noticed that there is some confusion about the meaning of the term "consensus pressession". I will attempt to explain again what it means, in hopes of preventing people from misusing the term quite so blatantly.

It has been observed that the characteristics of pressessions tend to aggregate into several major clusters – the most common being a version of Earth with a certain geopolitical and cultural configuration, although there are, as always, small variances. Another similar cluster you may know of – famous mostly because people from that culture incessantly discuss it, rather than for reasons of absolute frequency – is that of Alternia, which has its own geopolitical and cultural configuration.

Using factorial analysis and squinting at long lists of things, we have determined an "average" that is very close to the center of all such aggregate groups. These are known as consensus pressessions.

You might ask, at this point: what do we mean when we refer to a 'consensus pressession' without qualifier, as opposed to an 'avian consensus postscratch pressession' or 'troll consensus prescratch pressession'? To answer this question, one must first delve into the history of pressession studies.

The first works on what we now call "pressession studies" were done by charismaticWhipple of Transamphibian, who worked under the assumption that the common Earth-human consensus prescratch pressession was the only one worth talking about, and as such compiled a preliminary database of characteristics of the 'consensus pressession' – i.e. the one where the local year averages at 2010, where a multipolar political picture has relatively recently become unipolar, with a 'United States' becoming the de facto world leader, and the one where the most popular religions are Abrahamic in nature.

Most of the time, then, when one refers to the 'consensus pressession' without further elaboration, one is referring to this particular consensus pressession. To refer to the *class* of consensus pressessions, plural, is to refer to all such groups. Yes, this is humanocentric, but I consider it a linguistic artifact comparable to the linguistic construction of the words "man" and "woman", and therefore I do not think it is worth abolishing.

Josh B. Alderman
catalogTruisms@prototypetowers.net-

There's actually an interesting cultural detail in this that bears unpacking:

Trolls are considered savage and hypersexual by Pits opinion. Why are trolls considered savage and hypersexual? Is it, say, like a certain other "race" of humans that was once considered savage and hypersexual, and have we merely displaced the subject of these fantasies without changing their form...?

Which is to say: You're being fucking racist as shit. I would suggest that you stick your head into a load gaper.

eternityBraid

So, those assholes with weird typing who insist they're aliens and that we're pink and squishy? They actually *are* aliens.[139]

They're insectoid, with banded orange horns and chitinous gray exoskeleton. (They also have an endoskeleton, for what it's worth.) Their blood comes in a variety of colors, which are associated with a caste system and with differences in the types of psychic powers they exhibit.For most of their teenage years – at least the first several of their Sburb-playing years – they stand about as tall as us, and have yellow sclera and black irises. As they mature, they molt (climb out of their old exoskeletons), grow significantly taller and stronger, and their irises fill with their blood color and their sclera grow dark. (Trolls from some universes do not go through "teenage molts"; instead, they retreat into a cocoon for three to six months (2-4 perigees).)

Most Trolls come from Alternia, which is a common post-scratch planet variant. Think Lord of the Flies: trolls leave their offspring on their home planet. All the adults are off conquering the galaxy. Automated drones build houses, distribute goods, and collect genetic material. (Yes, this is a mate-or-die planet.)

Trolls are classified by color castes; traditionally, there are eleven, although "mutant" is often considered an unofficial caste, bringing the total to twelve. The lowest caste is rust, and the highest caste is fuchsia. The higher the caste, the longer the lifespan: lowbloods rarely live even a full human lifespan, and highbloods can live for hundreds of years. Lowbloods exist in much greater numbers than highbloods.

Alternia is a monarchy ruled by the Condesce, a fuchsiablooded troll. There is only ever supposed to be one or two fuchsiablooded trolls in existence, and the second one has to be an Heir, who will, upon reaching the age of recruitment, face the current Condesce in single combat for her job. If the heir manages to kill the Condesce she gets the job. The Condesce has a lifespan measured in thousands of years (it is sometimes theorized that fuchsiabloods can live indefinitely); in practice the average reign is between 1,300 and 2,600 years (~600 to 1200 sweeps).

==> 139. OJ: You might not have the same troll headcanon that we do. I *am* sorry. Feel free to modify or omit any part of this writeup as you desire.

You're asking me what's in their pants? No. That's an issue between them and their significant other. If you must know, make something up.

Here are the Superior Skills used to represent being a troll:

(Superior) Alternian Troll

> DAVE: it was "training" you know
> DAVE: but you know what it really was it was some vicious shit that was bad and sucked and i hated it DAVE: it didnt make me stronger
> DAVE: it did the opposite
> DAVE: it made me never want to fight
> DAVE: it made me never want to see blood or be near danger or hear metal sounds
> DAVE: it made me hate the idea of being a hero cause he was a hero and he ruined the idea of heroism
>
> *Homestuck*, Andrew Hussie

Alternian Troll 0: You're a squishy pink thing with candy-red blood.

Alternian Troll 1: You're... kind of sort of a troll? (This is where one would probably put half-breeds if the species was interfertile with humans. I am pretty sure it is not though.) Your skin is ashen, and you instinctively avoid the sun and find it unpleasant even if you are on a planet with a sun that doesn't set things on fire just by existing. Your periods of greatest wakefulness are dawn and dusk. You have night vision sharper than a human's and requiring less of an adaptation period between light and darkness. You're also a bit tougher and stronger than the average human. You may have small nub horns. Your blood may be "muddy" or "mutant", outside the normal troll blood color ranges; in either case it is still definitely not human blood.

Alternian Troll 2: You're a teenage troll, probably. Your skin is gray and tough. You don't go outside during the day; you're fully nocturnal. Your night vision is good enough to get around on a moonless but starlit night. You're a decent amount tougher and stronger than the average human; you could beat most adult humans in weightlifting and you could get stabbed in the torso multiple times and still take an hour to die. Your blood is a standard color on the troll spectrum; your lifespan varies depending on your blood color. You have horns smaller than a drinking glass. Also, whatever color troll you are and whatever gender you identify as, you probably produce small mobile gametes by the time you are ten (human) years old and are expected to contribute to a regular census/genetic material collection before the age of fifteen (human). (Yes, this is canon. No, I will not elaborate further.)

Alternian Troll 3: You're an adult troll. Your skin is gray and tough, and you're still nocturnal, and your blood is still one of the normal troll blood colors (troll blood colors don't change). You're significantly tougher and stronger than the average human; you could surpass even peak human beings in every

category of physical achievement. Your horns are larger; they are up to the size of loaves of sandwich bread.[140] You can see in near-total darkness; a candle a thousand feet away is enough to light your path.

Alternian Troll 4: You're an elite troll. In addition to the usual troll physiology, you're probably in one of the mid- to higher-blood castes; if you aren't you usually don't live long enough to get the training and augmentation to get this far. You're well-placed in the Alternian government; and since people only get anywhere in Alternian society by physical prowess, this means that you can outfight most adult trolls; hell, you might even be a troll assassin. You have a sharp mind, too; stupid trolls are only useful for cannon fodder. Your horns can reach the size of a ceiling fan or even larger.

Alternian Troll 5: You're a legendary troll. In addition to the usual troll physiology and everything included in Alternian Troll 4, you have achieved the rare feat of growing wings (instead of vestigial back-nubs left over from insectoid ancestry), and you are capable of achieving full flight with them. You're strong enough and extraordinary enough that you could probably walk around in the Alternian sun and not experience more than a sizzling noise.

==> 140. EB: ...yes, your fantroll can have horns shaped like loaves of sandwich bread. I don't recommend it, but you *can*.

"All damaged people are dangerous. Survival makes them so."

"Why?"

"Because they have no pity. They know what others can survive, as they did."

Damage, Josephine Hart

Seadweller Troll 0: Sometimes you imagine you're a fish.

Seadweller Troll 1: You can hold your breath for about half an hour, you have nubbly cartilage along the side of your jawline, and your fingers and toes are slightly webbed. Your skin is ashen, you instinctively avoid the sun, and you might have nub horns, as with the equivalent level of (Superior) Alternian Troll. You are also stronger than a human, and slightly stronger than the equivalent landdweller. You enjoy the sea, and you might even have a seadwelling lusus, but you can't follow them in. (To represent primary land-dwellers with ties to the sea like Gamzee I would probably take Alternian Troll 1 + Seadweller Troll 1 and assume that the common troll physiology stuff stacks to the level of the two added together.)

Seadweller Troll 2: You're a teenage or less sea-adapted seadweller troll. You have short fins sticking out of your face and larger gills located elsewhere on your body, although mostly this is a hassle because you have to make sure they stay damp so they don't get damaged. You cannot actually rely on your gills alone to breathe; nevertheless they make it possible for you to stay underwater for several hours on a single breath. (Plenty to follow the whales down.) You have tough gray skin, larger horns, nocturnal habits, and significant durability, as with (Superior) Alternian Troll. However, you possess greater strength than most landdweller trolls of the same level and may be able to match some level-3 adult trolls for sheer muscle power. You also have an extra set of transparent-but-tough eyelids that protect your eyes when you dive.

Seadweller Troll 3: You're an adult seadweller troll or a fuchsia-blooded teenager. You have the same face-fins, gills, and secondary eyelids. You also have fully webbed hands and feet. Otherwise, roughly equivalent morphology and habits as the same level of (Superior) Alternian Troll. (As an option you may also have a tail with a fin at the end, in addition to hands and feet, that you can use to aid with steering. It makes clothes really awkward, though, so you don't have to take this option if you don't want to.) You can stay underwater indefinitely, but also maintain the ability to function on land. You are stronger than most other adult landdweller trolls, and the only reason you lose to elite trolls in fights is lack of skill, not lack of strength.

Seadweller Troll 4: You're an elite adult seadweller troll. Basically, an adult seadweller troll but better. Assume everything from Alternian Troll 4 applies here, too.

Seadweller Troll 5: Theoretically, this would be the level of the Empress. In practice, I think even Empresses cap off at 4 and take up training in physical and verbal combat instead.

For Alternians, I suppose, although you could probably use it for the Bleak too.

(1) Tell me, tell me, tell me so:
Where did you come from? Why'd you go?

I wished to hang up ways of force;
I had to leave, and set a course.

(2) Tell me, tell me, tell me same:
What would you do if armies came?

I would then take up my sword;
I could, I think, turn back a horde.

(3) Tell me, tell me, tell me then:
How did you learn to fight so well?

I feared my world, I feared their hell;
I fear that it would come again.

(4) Tell me, tell me, tell me fair:
What is the world of which you speak?

It was a world, dry, hard and bare;
I think now that you'd call it bleak.

(5) Tell me, tell me, tell me now:
Why do you fear? That world is gone.

If it is gone I know not how.

We'll sit here, then; await the dawn.

Miscellaneous Troll-Related Traits

Technically, the previous section is all you'll need to play a troll.

"But Elizabeth," I can hear you asking, "don't trolls have psionics and stuff? I want to play those. Do you have stats for that?"

Well then, you can crack open this section...

Bonds for Alternian trolls in general can include:

- [I have a cyborg (body part).]
- [My horns are huge.] (You have trouble fitting through doors, and your neck can get sore.)
- [My horns are tiny.] (And you're insecure and defensive about it.)
- [My horns are unusually sensitive.] (A majority of Trolls I know of have keratinous horns, but there seems to be a minority branch that has horns that are derived from antennae instead. I am told it is like having two funny bones mounted on your skull.)

About 40% of the Troll Replayer population has some sort of psychic powers, with most concentrated towards the lower end of the spectrum. Here are some common types of psionics you see in trolls that I have written up skills for:

- (Superior) Telekinesis (most common in lowbloods)
- (Superior) Animal Empathy (most common in lowbloods)
- (Superior) Limeblood Empathy (limebloods only)
- (Superior) Telepathy (most common in midbloods)
- (Superior) Intimidation Psionics (purplebloods only)

And here's a weird option:

- (Superior) Vampire (corebook skill)[141]: technically, Daywalker; daywalkers are the troll equivalent of vampires – they can go out into the burning Alternian sun and glow in the dark. Just use (Superior) Vampire, though, with the following Bonds:
    - [I glow in the dark.]
    - [I have a hankering for (specific color) blood. It tastes the best!]
    - [My skin is unusually tough.]
    - [I have a strong opinion on daywalkers/vampires in fiction, and butt in with such at every opportunity.]

==> 141. OJ: They don't feed on negative energy, but the HG can rule that they do so as to reduce awkward and creepy situations with coplayers. Also, they *can* drink carapace and consort blood (asking nicely for a pint of blood tends to work better than force, and doesn't ding your rep), and there are "freshly harvested blood" files for the alimentator hack.

A very few trolls may be psionic nulls, which is most likely among highbloods (although still representing maybe two or three trolls in every *generation*, so "most likely" is relative). It is represented by this Affliction:

Psionic Null

This Affliction is a continuous low-level miraculous interference against:

- any sort of direct mind or body control about your person
- any sort of scrying (even if it is not necessarily psionic)
- at the HG's option, other sorts of mind or body control in your vicinity, even if they are not actually controlling you
- at the HG's option, people trying to use any sort of psionics in your vicinity, without visual contact (If they can see you and your surroundings, they can use psionics in your vicinity, although they still cannot control your person.)

This means that any mundane attempts will automatically fail and any miraculous attempts will need to overcome the appropriate level of Auctoritas.

Characters who are psionic nulls almost never have psionics of their own. However, if you somehow acquire any kind of psionic power, you will need to overcome the Auctoritas of this Affliction to cast *anything*.

(Superior) Telekinesis

> The "Alternian Empire uplifted" every civilization "it encountered" from Type Zero to "Type One, or" in some "cases Type Two." The "majority would have" wiped themselves "out" within a few decades if not "for our" arrival, and "from what the exiles tell us" this is what happens "to the majority" of their worlds after "we're" gone. This supposed galactic "genocide is" in fact an uplifting mission which "saves its" supposed "victims" from annihilation "at their" own hands.
>
> publicFunctionary

This kind of telekinesis works by positing that you have an invisible telekinetic "hand" – that you can only telekinetically move one thing, or extremely closely clustered group of things, at a time.

If you want multiple hands, buy the next level up and specify that it's a bunch of hands, each with skill equivalent to [skill level-1]. For example, buying (Superior) Multipoint Telekinesis 3 lets you exert Telekinesis 2-level force on as many targets as you can keep track of. (Obstacles may be involved once you get past three or four 'hands'.)

Telekinesis 0: The most you achieve by staring at something and willing it to move is a headache.

Telekinesis 1: You can move small objects that are within about twenty feet of you. Your maximum lifting load is roughly twenty pounds, and the most force you can exert is equal to about a gentle toss. Your best bet in using this in combat is to throw sand in someone's eyes. Your precision is enough for a lightswitch, but insufficient to quite press the right TV remote button.

Telekinesis 2: You can move objects that are the size of a person, and accelerate them up to running speed; you can move smaller objects faster (for example, you could accelerate a baseball to the speed of a baseball pitch – up to 100mph if you practice fastballs). If in doubt, at this level the rule of thumb is that you can exert about the amount of force that a person can. Your range is about five hundred feet. By this point your telekinesis is practical for combat – you have an extra mental "hand" to grapple with. If you focus on yourself you may be able to achieve limited levitation, although you won't be able to do much else owing to having to sustain the Intention. Your precision is enough to make legible handwriting with a TK'd pen.

Telekinesis 3: Your telekinesis can move a car-sized object (~1 ton) up to the speed of a car; smaller objects can go even faster, up to coins being able to break the sound barrier, if necessary. (If an equine has this level of telekinesis, feel free to make horsepower jokes.) Your range is a mile or two. Carrying around a pocket of coins is more useful for you than owning a gun, even a sniper rifle – your telekinesis never jams, is easier to aim, and is always silent. (Unless you make the coins break the sound barrier.) Your precision is enough to write on a grain of rice.

Telekinesis 4: You can move buildings with a thought, and accelerate most objects beyond terminal velocity. If you're on a spaceship you could exert enough telekinetic force to escape planetary gravity wells. Your range is generally irrelevant at this point; you can aim at anything within about five hundred or a thousand miles. Your precision is enough to move microscopic objects.

Telekinesis 5: You do not need a lever to move the Earth. As a telekinetic spaceship drive you could probably achieve faster-than-light travel[142].

==> 142. EB: The stuff they wire Helmsmen into on ships is a +2 Tool to telekinetic FTL.

He looked up at the bird, chirruped softly, and held out his hand. It fluttered down to meet him. "Sweetling," he murmured, "would you mind telling me if there's any guard-posts on the way to Ekanesh?"

The bird nodded, and flew away.

The Woman Who Stared Into Forever, dryadTornado

This is a kind of troll psionics.[143]

As an alternative to this skill, if you only have animal empathy for one species, you can modify the corebook skill (Superior) Cat-Speaker to apply to a different species. (Musclebeast-Speaker, Canine-Speaker, Goat-Speaker... okay, maybe not that last one; goats wouldn't listen to you even if they understood what you were saying.)

Animal Empathy 0: You like animals, but you can't really do much with them. Maybe you can train animals to follow commands, but it'll have to be through long work and operant conditioning.

Animal Empathy 1: You can touch an animal's mind and get a sense of general feelings: whether they're hungry, sleepy, scared, etc. You could probably tell if an animal has offspring, indirectly, by listening for a while to see if worry came up. You can also give them these general feelings; for example, you can radiate a feeling of safety around yourself so that animals won't be afraid around you. However, you can't be any more specific than that: you can't, for example, tell animals to be scared of some things but not other things.

Animal Empathy 2: When you touch an animal's mind, you get more specific impressions: which directions they know are likely to have food or water, whether there's anything unusual happening in their territory, that kind of thing. While you still can't use words, you can use this level to give animals more specific instructions: "be scared of a man who looks like this", "avoid this fence", "this smell means poison", "I have a birdfeeder up here", that kind of thing.

Animal Empathy 3: You're still only working with animal minds, but you can request specific information and give detailed instructions telepathically: "avoid this man only if he's making this type of mouthnoises", "when you smell something poisonous dig a hole and drop it in, then cover it back up with soil", "let me know if anyone crosses this perimeter", etc. If you're giving detailed instructions you have to ask one animal at a time, although you can still give general impressions (as with 1 or 2) to groups or crowds of animals.

Animal Empathy 4 As with 3, but you can now give telepathic orders on a mass scale and expect the animals to self-organize to carry them out: "all of you form a bucket brigade to help me put this fire

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==> 143. EB: With a little bit of adjustment, you can use this for Plant Empathy instead. I've never heard of a troll with plant empathy, but...

out", "flanking maneuver", and so on. The animals will have roughly the intelligence of twelve-year-olds.

Animal Empathy 5 You may command animals telepathically as if they had the intelligence of adult humans. (They will still have animal bodies, and exact intelligence may vary based on individual and species. For example, owls might still be dumb as bricks and mostly only useful for night watch, but you could get ravens to carry out complex espionage tasks.)

"Do you love me?"

There was an awkward silence for a moment. Then Father gave a little chuckle. "Jonas. You, of all people. Precision of language, please!"

"What do you mean?" Jonas asked. Amusement was not at all what he had anticipated.

"Your father means that you used a very generalized word, so meaningless that it has become almost obsolete," his mother explained carefully.

Jonas stared at them. Meaningless?

The Giver, Lois Lowry

There is a gap in the hemospectrum.

Between yellow blood and green blood is a classification that the Alternian Empire considers to be nonexistent. However, grubs wriggle out of the hatching caverns in *all* colors of the hemospectrum, including the ones that officially don't exist.

The reason all limebloods are exterminated at birth is because a large fraction of them have psionic empathy and experience-sharing. Despite the fact that it could be invaluable in combat, the Condesce ruled that it would be only prudent to exterminate the entire hemospectrum band at birth, because of the threat it could pose to the Empire itself.

Unfortunately, that doesn't mean that they all *actually* get exterminated at birth...

Limeblood Empathy 0 You have about as much empathy as a human, namely: nothing exceptional. Note that, *in theory*, this is more empathy than the average troll has. (In practice, troll Replayers tend to have approximately human levels of empathy. This may be due to selection effects.)

Limeblood Empathy 1 You can share your basic feelings (the six named in the center of this [feelings wheel](), plus unlocalized pain) with one other playeroid within about 50 yards/meters. They will feel the emotion (or in the case of pain, a general dull ache that they can't pin down to any particular body part), but they will know it is not theirs. You will also share their basic feelings, but you may *not* necessarily know that the feelings are not yours.

Limeblood Empathy 2 You can still only share basic feelings, but you can share them with a small group of playeroids (half a dozen or so) within a mile or two and they will not know the feelings are not theirs unless you specify that they do. You will also share *their* feelings, and you may not necessarily know that the feelings are not yours. Note that you can turn this on or off, but many limebloods at this level or above have a Bond that specifies that their empathy is usually reflexively on and they have to concentrate to turn it *off*.

Limeblood Empathy 3 You can share more complex feelings (the middle and outer rings of the [feelings wheel](#), plus pain that can be sharp and/or located in specific parts of the body) with a somewhat larger group of playeroids (maybe up to 100), and/or out to a 100-mile or so radius. You will share their feelings. They will share *each others'* feelings. Nobody will know which feeling belonged to which person unless each of you thinks carefully to separate them. There is a possiblity for destructive interference, in which people reflect feelings back and forth until everyone is completely overwhelmed: while that is possible at lower levels, basic feelings are easier to consider "not yours" and separate out, which makes that happen less often. At your option, at this level and above, you can amplify the feelings further, although the feedback would probably cripple you.

Limeblood Empathy 4 You can share complex feelings with something like 1,000-10,000 people, on or around the same planet. Everyone will share everyone else's feelings.

Limeblood Empathy 5 You could probably link together everyone in the universe. Which is why all limebloods are supposed to be dead.

This skill *can* be interfered with if an opponent has a strong enough mind-defense Intention – they can use a Meditation skill to blank their mind around a specific fact (such that even if the telepathy-user gets into your head they won't be able to find it), use Survival to resist a telepathic command to jump off a cliff, and so on.

Note, also, that there are obstacles to applying this across universes, across session boundaries, to different species, or to people who are psionic nulls.

Telepathy 0: Unfortunately, you only *think* you're telepathic.

Telepathy 1: You can sense if people are around you up to about ten feet away. You can also read surface thoughts of anyone that you are in two-way contact with, such as calling or IMing them. If the other person is distracted, or focusing on one thing, you're entirely shut out. You can also plant surface thoughts, but they're about as likely to be actually taken seriously as any other surface thought on the order of "I should really sleep" or "I wonder what would happen if I pour water over that?" (You can't actually command, at this level. Just suggest. This being said, this level can be used to put vulnerable individuals to sleep.)

Telepathy 2: You can sense people telepathically to about a mile out (or tune them out if you so choose). You can read most thoughts of anyone that you can see or that you are in two-way contact with, including calling them, IMing with them, seeing them on television or through a webcam, etc. Anyone you have a Bond or 2+ Connection to is also fair game. You can also plant thoughts and suggestions, although these can be resisted with effort.

Telepathy 3: You can sense people telepathically out to about twenty miles (or tune them out if you so choose). You can read most thoughts of anyone that you could conceivably have contact with, within the twenty-mile radius, or have a Bond or 2+ Connection with, to any distance. You can plant thoughts and make them fairly strong, or make them suggestion-level, although your control probably won't be good enough to make someone question whether their thoughts are theirs or not yet; it'll still seem like an outside command.

Telepathy 4: As with Telepathy 3, except your range is about a hundred miles (or any distance to Bonds/Connections/Treasures), and you can plant thoughts that *seem like the target's own idea* – they won't know if the thoughts are theirs or not.

Telepathy 5: As with Telepathy 4, but perhaps without a distance limit for anyone and with the ability to control multiple people?

The austere throne towered far above the great room. Upon it sat the Queen of Darkness; Her face was –

No words can describe it. My muscles froze upon my bones. Voice fled, thought fled, action fled; all that was left was Her.

And then she turned, and fixed her gaze upon us.

The Infinite Castle, dryadTornado

These are the "chucklevoodoos" wielded by the purple caste of trolls; in the Alternian Empire purpleblood trolls generally use these powers to maintain a religion (tacitly accepted by the Alternian Empire) called the Circus. The Circus' practices include painting with blood, and preaching about the two Mirthful Messiahs who will herald the end of the world. Intimidation psionics is used to collect the trolls whose blood will be used for painting religious murals, and to assist in apocalyptic preaching by Circus priests.

It has been observed that Circus practitioners seem to share many similarities with the consensus-human-presession subculture called "juggalos". The significance of this is unknown.

Intimidation Psionics 0: You glare at people. This accomplishes nothing whatsoever.

Intimidation Psionics 1: You can give people a vague sense of unease. If there is nothing obvious to be afraid about, most people can talk themselves out of it. If they are asleep, you may cause their dreams to be darker in tone, although this alone will not make dreams into day/nightmares.

Intimidation Psionics 2: You can make people about as afraid as they would be of a horror movie, as sourceless fear. Most people will find something relevant in the environment and conclude that this is what is causing them fear. If spread out over multiple people, this is enough to provide a frisson to fire-and-brimstone speeches to three to five people. Casting this into someone's dreams usually makes generic nightmares (like being naked in front of class).

Intimidation Psionics 3: You can cause enough fear to drive most people into a fight-or-flight state (or tone it down to merely be intimidating, if you prefer). About 10% of people will react to this amount of fear by becoming frozen in place instead. If spread out over several people, this could cause sourceless fear in about 50 people, and vaguely unsettle about 200. Many purpleblood trolls in the Alternian army use this offensively in mass combat; this amount of unease can be enough to break morale in many armies. Using this level of psionics on someone who is asleep will cause nightmares centered around a symbolic focus; in some cases, this is enough to cause the symbolic focus to later show up in one's Prospit/Derse dreamer tower.

Intimidation Psionics 4: About 90% of people will react to focused casting of this level by freezing. (Be careful about the other 10%, though.) If you cast this across a crowd, you can cause several hundred

people to feel sourceless fear, or make many thousands uneasy. Using this level of psionics on someone who is asleep will trap them in deep nightmares for many hours, and they will remain terrified when they wake up. The Grand Highblood in charge of the Circus usually has this level, although there are a few historical GHBs who have gotten away with level 3 and a psionic amplifier.

Intimidation Psionics 5: You could paralyze crowds, break the morale of a sieged planet, or scare people into dying of heart failure.

by catalogTruisms

There are a few isolated reports - mostly second-hand - that Ring ships have occasionally discovered things that *look* like session-bubbles, and that are recognizable as sessions of Sburb, but that have drastically different rules. These reports are not very credible when considered in isolation.

There are, however, several examples of Sburb having limited adaptations to unusual species finding their way into sessions.

In one notable instance, a "hoofdog" or "critter" found their way into a troll Sburb session. They brought with them a smattering of telepathic and/or quadrupedal carapaces, a game of Arimaa being used as the metaphor for the Battlefield of Skaia in place of chess, and a very strange variant of Pesterchum/Trollslum called Expressfriend that was operated entirely by drawing.

In another case, a species that Replayerdom has since nicknamed "birdbros" showed up in a session with other species. In that session, Sburb spawned significantly more rods proportioned appropriately for perching, and several of the lands were built on the assumption that the Player on that land could fly. Also, all god-tier pajamas in that session were sleeveless, presumably to accomodate birdbro wings.

Even the differences between trolls and humans, small as they are, can result in distinct changes to Sburb. For example, in troll Sgrub sessions, the relationship between Jack Noir and the Black Queen is explicitly acknowledged to be kismessisitude by Dersite literature. This is never found in human-only sessions.

If you were to extrapolate these developments, you could theorize that sessions entirely populated by ravecritters would have quadrupedal, telepathic Carapaces and Consorts, or that sessions entirely populated by birdbros would have horizontal beams instead of floors and benches.

Extrapolate this a bit further and you get a possible explanation for alien Sburbs; Sburb may well come in many different forms, each fine-tuned for the species and culture it was spawned from. The problem is that sometimes Sburb's algorithm for assigning players to sessions mixes several species together in the same session.

Sburb seems to prefer assigning players to sessions with other players of the same species. However, sometimes (perhaps if same-species sessions are unavailable or impossible?), players are then assigned to sessions that are maximally compatible to their morphology and mind-structure.

Sburb's algorithm for assignment by mind-structure seems relatively reliable. Unfortunately, Sburb's attempts to reconcile the features of various species' versions of Sburb are less reliable. Instead of prioritizing making the session as accessible as possible, as would be reasonable, features of alien Sburbs seem to be imported in direct proportion to the number of aliens that are in that session.

For example, in the case of the hoofdog, they were brought into a session that had three telepathic trolls. The trolls and the hoofdog could communicate telepathically with each other and with a significant fraction of Carapaces. However, there were also four other trolls that did not have telepathy. The telepathic Carapaces - some of which were critical to storyline quests - were not fluent in spoken or written language. Had several of the trolls not been reliable and experienced Replayers, this session would almost certainly have failed.

To extend this further, if for some reason a Ringship were forced to take shelter in a bubble containing an alien Sburb, they could find it difficult to resupply or leave. The alien Sburb players might not be able to communicate with the players, the architecture of an alien Medium could be impossible to comprehend or navigate, and the alien session of Sburb could have features as critical as our roleplay coefficient system that we would not be able to comprehend.

There is, however, one silver lining to this sorry state of affairs. As far as I can tell, even in sessions with aliens as strange as the hoofdog, all Denizens can comprehend, negotiate, and grant requests in any native communication system. The hoofdog could communicate with the Denizens fluently, in its native telepathy, and the denizen Medusa even served as a cultural translator between the hoofdog and the trolls on at least one occasion.

So, if you one day find yourself in an alien session of Sburb, you would be well served to find your Denizen as quickly as you can, and Bargain with her for the ability to comprehend and complete the session. That is the only advice I can give you, and for that I apologize.

Hobs

Hobs are another species that plays Sburb. While they are not nearly as prolific as other Sburb species, they're quite prevalent as networkers, organizers, and all-around pleasant people in the social graph.

Hobs are, more or less, furry dinosaurs. (Not rat-lizards. More like a squirrel crossed with a troodon.) They're tree-dwelling and have prehensile tails. They have little to no sexual dimorphism. Some of them have webbing between the legs that allows them to glide like a flying squirrel, although properly speaking they can't actually *fly*. They're about a meter tall and stand semi-upright.

Hobs hatch from eggs and are raised in communal groups with 12-46 "sisters" (their word for sibling is the same as their word for sister; the hob language is female by default). Several of them die early on – about one-quarter to one-third under historical conditions, more like one-half if under a troll state. As a result, they tend to be more attached to groups than individuals. They have a very cute tendency to "adopt" people into their "clan" (if you have one hob in your Sburb.org IRC they will end up friends with *everyone*).

Hob, by http://sretann.tumblr.com

Hobs are mentioned, in a few troll documents that have been preserved from Alternian presessions, as a client species of trolls – i.e.. a species that got conquered by trolls. Even the ones that end up in Sburb still bear thumbprints of this influence – though, as far as they know, hobs appear to have their own distinct instances of Sburb and no known mixed hob-troll native sessions exist, it is clear that both species seem to have a relationship that propagates across worldlines. Unfortunately this relationship is more one of iron fists than any sort of productive collaboration – hob society not tending to hold up terribly well under this influence – but it is clearly a formative experience of hob history and so I should mention it.

Due to being a troll client species, while many hobs have knowledge of more traditional disciplines like child-raising, sailing, farming, and metallurgy, a large fraction of them are also good at things like camouflage, interstellar navigation, and starship repair. Some of them may be good at killing trolls.

Hobs are very easy to underestimate – they're tiny and furry, and generally friendly, but they *will* call up all their friends to wreck your shit (or to provide advice on how to wreck your shit, if not physically present) if necessary. And they have a *lot* of friends.

Hobs have names that look like [clan name] [generation name] [personal name] – thus you end up with names like Groundscout Lerian Orchard, Galefriend Farishalt Brine, or Wrencher [i.e. mechanic] Janna Lily.

Hob 0: You climb trees a lot, maybe?

Hob 1: I suppose if you grew up with hobs you *might* be able to justify this, for some skill in tree-dwelling and dealing with lots of people.

Hob 2: You're a hob kid, or possibly an elderly hob. You're good at climbing trees, and probably live in them. You have a prehensile tail that helps with balance and holding tools, although I doubt it can support your full body weight. You also have retractable claws on your front legs that are definitely sharp, and the first claw *might* be venomous (although you don't quite have enough of a venom reserve for it to do more than sting and possibly fester). You have good 3D spatial awareness. You're pretty scrappy, too; you can survive more internal injuries than most humans can, although you don't *quite* approach the toughness of trolls. You're also definitely extroverted and good in groups.

Hob 3: You're an adult hob: even better than the kids at climbing trees, spatial awareness, and such. Your prehensile tail still can't necessarily support your full body weight unless you do specific tail exercises, but it certainly helps with holding tools and such. Your retractable claws are carefully groomed to remain either sharp (considered attractive, and good for detail work) or blunt (troll overseers would require your claws to remain filed-down, or just cap them with rubber, unless you were especially loyal); if you do have venom, this is the point at which it might actually be useful. You're pretty tough (although still not a match for trolls). You're highly extroverted and work well in groups, always holding up your share.

Hob 4: You're a legendary hob hero, who could probably dead-reckon your way back to the treehouse in complete darkness, be able to swing from that prehensile tail, kill trolls with your claw-venom...

Bonds suitable for hobs include:

- [So I had a cousin that used to do something like this...]
- [I have no sense of personal space and will get all up in yours.]
- [I have the tendency to "adopt" other people into my "clan".]
- [I have a sharp spike on my tail.] (This happens with a low frequency in natural-born Hobs, but Sburb players are special, so you can take it if you like.)
- [I have webbing between my limbs that lets me glide like a "flying" squirrel.] (Again, this happens with a low frequency in natural-born Hobs, but you can certainly take it if you want.)

The birdbros (our nickname for them; their own name for themselves is a whistle-trill) are another Sburb-playing species. They're descended from parrots, although at this point they have a wingspan of at least two meters. They come in bright blue, with a white belly and a colored crest on the head (although they also engage in a variety of feather-dyeing, so you're likely to see colors that aren't blue elsewhere on them).

We've only seen a few birdbros around – they're pretty rare, in Sburb – but the ones I've seen are sharp and imaginative. Also, they can fly.

Birdbros live inside the hollows of trees. They live in flocks of 6-12 members (sometimes grouped into clans of three or four dozen individuals, especially postscratch); they take approximately eight lunar apogees (~13 years) to come to the age of Sburb, the age of Coming-of-Age Stories.

The birdbros' home world, prescratch, tends to be a technocracy, with three-dimensional "traffic lanes" for flying around the cities, fields of solar panels and sunflowers out in the country, and state-controlled media (no free press here). Postscratch is usually the few clans that survive a worldwide nuclear exchange.

Birdbros generally manipulate things with feet and beak, like most of the perching birds do. In some worlds, they have one to three fingers/claws on the ends of their wings, like bats. Or they just use the feathers on the ends of their wings somehow, as feather fingers. (Don't think too hard about it.)

Birdbros have very short names like "Kev Loma" or "Isa Wilk", with the latter name being their family/flock name and the former name being their personal name. In the technocracy option, personal names are randomly assigned from a large list that the government maintains; in the postscratch post-nuclear option, they're inherited from the names of people in books. Most names do not have an explicit meaning, though some acquire one due to being assigned to birds who become famous. For example, "Met" is the name of a Birdbro who was the prime minister at the time of the post-scratch world's nuclear apocalypse.

Birdbro feet have difficulty on flat surfaces (birdbros being a type of perching bird), so most of the time Sburb will generate their lands as places with lots of horizontal rods for perching on (whether they're pipes, branches, or pencils). For navigability for us two-leggers, the closest we get is paths made of several horizontal rods placed very close together, kind of like a log path; and even then you're unlikely to be able to follow a birdbro coplayer nearly as nimbly until you have a flying machine. Dream versions of birdbros get dream moon shoes as well as (sleeveless) pajamas; the shoes hold their feet in neutral positions so that the birds can walk comfortably on Prospit and Derse streets.

Birdbro 0: No matter how much you flap your arms you're not getting off the ground.

Birdbro 1: You're a small child bird, up to about three lunar apogees old. (Or you're some sort of bird hybrid??) Which means you're a fluffy little thing that can make little hopping flights and is learning how to do stuff like read. You have a sharp beak, although you're a touch clumsy with it.

Birdbro 2: You're an older-child or teenage bird. You can probably make flights of an hour or two without getting tired, and can push to half a day if you need to. You have a sharp beak that can crack nuts and clip and tear most plastic. You have good coordination, so you can hold on with one leg while using the other leg and your beak to manipulate stuff. Your crest has filled out with your text color, although it's still flat to your head.

Birdbro 3: You're an adult bird. You can fly pretty much a full day and night (continuously), or indefinitely if you're flying fourteen hours a day and resting the other eleven. (Yes, the birdbros' home planet has a 25-hour day.) Your beak is, while not much sharper, definitely stronger and capable of finer manipulation. Your crest is now raised above the top of your head (only visible symbol in birds of physical maturity). Sexual dimorphism-wise, male birdbros have gray scaly legs, and female birdbros have blue scaly legs, but that's about it (more extreme differences got engineered/bred out by the technocracy).

Birdbro 4: You're a legendary birdbro hero, who could write on a grain of rice and fly around the world without stopping.

Bonds suitable for birdbros include:

- [I hate hate haaaaaaate walking. I'd rather fly.]
- [Sometimes I gnaw on rocks, cliff faces, or other people's Dwelling Spires.]
- [The official story is never, ever true. There's gotta be a conspiracy *somewhere*.]
- [I sleep on a 25-hour schedule, not a 24-hour one.] (This can be difficult in longer presessions.)
- [I'm used to sharing everything in my life with my flock.]

Hoofdogs

Hoofdogs (sometimes known as "hoppers" or "critters") are another rare Sburb species. They most closely resemble dogs with hooves on their back legs. While hoofdogs are playeroid in shape, they prefer being on all fours. Standing upright and walking is possible but uncomfortable; when they walk on two legs, their gait is best described as "hopping". Their front paws have toes long enough to grasp things with, and they have six digits on each paw. (Technically, their "thumb" is an enlarged sesamoid bone, like a panda's.)

The most notable feature of hoofdogs is that they are can read other hoofdogs' surface thoughts – this telepathic sensitivity does not allow for complicated concepts to be transmitted, which is why they do have spoken and written language, but it results in their language lacking precise words for many concepts. For example, their words for colors are "black", "white", "warm-colored", and "cool-colored"; hoofdogs would read the exact color off the mind of whoever was discussing with them.

Hoofdogs find it difficult to communicate with other Sburb species; because their spoken and written language is low-resolution, if they *must* communicate without telepathy, they generally use drawings. If anything, written language is more of a toy that they happen to learn in standard education, in the same way humans mostly only know math from school. Written works in the hoofdog language do exist, but they rely heavily on similes and metaphors; the graphic novel is their form of high art, and pure written works like our novels are viewed like we view James Joyce's Ulysses – things that a hoofdog would never actually read, only ever claim to read.

Because of the wide-ranging and extreme effects that a hoofdog can have on Sburb, you need HG approval to play a hoofdog.

Hoofdog 0: No, getting down on your hands and knees and crawling around does not make you an alien.

Hoofdog 1: You're a young hoofdog, or a strange half-hoofdog who's got other playeroid DNA mixed in somehow. (Don't ask me how the ectobiology machines work.) You have a heightened sense of hearing and smell, some telepathic sensitivity (you can get an impression of what the other person is thinking about, but it's fuzzy and indistinct), and you can kick backwards with your hooves and do some damage.

Hoofdog 2: You're a teenage hoofdog. You have a sense of smell like a dog, and a sense of hearing that's definitely better than a human's. You also have telepathic sensitivity, so you expect to be able to pull people's concepts out of their head; people who think in words just confuse you. Your back-kick is pretty substantial, although you can't win Sburb with that alone.

Hoofdog 3: You're an adult hoofdog. Your sense of smell is that of a highly trained bloodhound, and your hearing is good enough to hear someone approaching *long* before you can see them. Your telepathic sensitivity is two-way; you can impress concepts upon other people's minds, not just read them (although people who think in words will *still* confuse you). You pack a hell of a back-kick, and can do even better if you're fitted with metal (or magic?) hoofshoes.

Hoofdog 4: Your sense of smell is sharp enough to use instead of sight, you can hear a pin drop from a mile away, your telepathy can make concepts so clear that even word-people can understand them, and you could knock over a car by kicking it.

Bonds suitable for hoofdogs include:

- [I have a very limited vocabulary and call everything "thing".]
- [I'm unusually good at expressing my thoughts through pictures.]
- [I can't read.]
- [I'm prone to sensory overload.]
- [I'm unusually alert to approaching threats, real or imagined.]

Why are the aliens all good at fighting?

So, if you've read through all my entries on aliens and would still rather play a human, you might have a question: why do all the aliens' Superior Skills have martial ability built in?

To be clear: I am not implying that humans are bad at fighting. Quite the contrary! We can get very good, wth training – and, even without raw ability, humans have a wider choice of strife specibi than any other species we know of. (Yeah, sure, trolls get jokerkind. But they don't have candlestickkind, or pepperspraykind; and jokerkind is so wide that its strife bonus is nil. Fighting with jokerkind is only slightly more effective than fighting without a strife specibus.)

The reason to tie "alien" to "good at fighting" is really a metagame reason: if you have to spend three of your eight skill points on being an alien, I wanted you to get something more than being-an-alien cred. I don't want the alien character to lag behind in power level. And because fighting is important in Sburb, I figured that some focus on nonhumans' martial strengths would be a good idea.

I know game balance is a bit silly to concern myself with, since this is Chuubo's we're talking about here, but this is still supposed to be a game that's fun for *everyone* playing it. Not just the humans.

* cheshireCatechism has connected to the memo!
<cheshireCatechism> Ey
<articleDoorknob> Eyyyyyyyy
<frostedMatador> Challenge accepted
<frostedMatador> Eyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy
yyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy
yyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy
<cheshireCatechism> heh
<cheshireCatechism> Hi there, artdoo, Frosty
<articleDoorknob> I swear, Frosty, one of these days we are going to get
tired of you and find a Rage player who can punch you through the Internet
<frostedMatador> But that day is not today!
<frostedMatador> So I shall continue on.
<organCrank> Good luck on your quixotic quest to out-letter everyone on the
Internet.
<frostedMatador> Thank you, thank you.
<cheshireCatechism> So how's the garden, artdoo?
<articleDoorknob> my pea plant put out its first flower today!
<cheshireCatechism> oooooh
<articleDoorknob> remember that thing where I wasn't sure if it was a weird
leaf
<articleDoorknob> but I didn't want to touch it because the Growth thought
it'd be a bad idea?
<articleDoorknob> it was a *bud*
<organCrank> Yeah, the Whisperings do tend to know what they are talking
about.
<articleDoorknob> also I'm wondering whether I should seed another row of
head lettuce
<cheshireCatechism> oh god not more lettuce
<cheshireCatechism> I mean of course, growing more is always a good thing, I
don't want to discourage that, it is helping you get in touch with Life
<cheshireCatechism> (but no seriously think about your coplayers)
<cheshireCatechism> (what if /none/ of them like lettuce)
<organCrank> (You do realize that that's never stopped any other Life
player?)
<cheshireCatechism> (well yes but still)
<articleDoorknob> hm. how about herbs? I've got this bottle of whole
coriander...
<organCrank> Coriander = cilantro
<organCrank> Same plant!
<cheshireCatechism> TIL[144]
<articleDoorknob> ooh, I love cilantro. then I'll do that! thanks!
<frostedMatador> So you'll make soap-flavored dishes. I approve.

==> 144. EB: "Today I Learned".

<articleDoorknob> to quote pitspedia, your approval fills me with shame, but I'll do it anyway
<cheshireCatechism> Some people just can't taste cilantro, like our friend Frosty here
<cheshireCatechism> I pity them.
<frostedMatador> To borrow a phrase from artdoo here, your pity fills me with vague irritation.
<cheshireCatechism> Just as planned! :3
<articleDoorknob> hey you two, get a room
<frostedMatador> This IS our room.
<frostedMatador> I'm not sure what you're doing here.
<cheshireCatechism> Shush you.
<organCrank> Fun fact, articleDoorknob: baby pea plants are entirely edible, and you can pull off the shoots of your pea plants right now and eat them as desired.
<organCrank> So long as you snap them off just a bit above a lateral bud, you can encourage more shoots to grow.
<articleDoorknob> that sounds interesting!
<articleDoorknob> I will go research it more
<cheshireCatechism> Well, you might be able to get your coplayers to eat pea-shoot salad where they might not eat lettuce salad
<cheshireCatechism> It's the novelty, y'know?
<articleDoorknob> this is also true!
<articleDoorknob> I'll go try that
<articleDoorknob> ta-taaaaaaa
<cheshireCatechism> See you
*articleDoorknob has left the memo!

Networks, Factions, and Forces

[or, the things that tie us together, and the things that drive us apart]

I have no faith. Not in love, not in determination, not in morality, not in logic, not even in whistleblowing. I do, however, have a coiled, three-foot-long antenna attached to a Ring server.

It'll do. It has to.

Memoirs of a Seer, epinephrineElectrified

Loose Replaying and the First Servers

by eternityBraid

> It's lack of love we die from. There's nobody here I can love, all the people I could love are dead or elsewhere. Who knows where they are or what their names are now? They might as well be nowhere, as I am for them. I too am a missing person.
>
> From time to time I can see their faces, against the dark, flickering like the images of saints, in old foreign cathedrals, in the light of the drafty candles; candles you would light to pray by, kneeling, your forehead against the wooden railing, hoping for an answer.

<div align="right">

The Handmaid's Tale, Margaret Atwood

</div>

In the beginning, there was only Sburb.

Imagine this: You go through the Door. You wake up with no connection to who you were before, save a half-emptied sylladex with only the most emotionally resonant of trinkets, and that only if they were starting-level gear. You don't know anyone in your new session. You don't know if you even *existed* before this session. Or if there will be anything after.

You play. For nothing, because you can accomplish very little before you end up shoved through the Door. You Replay. Your purpose in life gets slowly whittled away. You die, eventually. Your passing goes unknown and unmourned. Nobody will know you existed. Nobody will know what you did.

That is Loose Replaying.

And then we decided – because we, as Sburb species, must have creativity and ambition and intelligence – that we wanted to make a mark on the multiverse.

It was discovered, via the whisperings of bubble-ghosts, that the Furthest Ring was common across all sessions. It was further discovered, via Bargains, that it was possible to launch servers into the Void, and that some of them might even stay there.

The first Bargain, for the first persistent server: that was what began the Age of Ring Servers.

We do not know who had that first persistent server, but they went on to launch others, and tell others of their discovery; and that is how we may speak to each other across sessions.

When we do so, when we reach across the great interstitial void and speak to each other, we tie each other to life. We transmit friendships, love, and found family by radio. We shout across the universe, and hope that we are heard.

It is not enough, and it will never be enough. But it is not nothing, and sometimes that makes all the difference.

These servers, their structure and function, are shaped by the role they have to play.

Ring Servers, and their communities, grew under the pressure that they had to spread lifesaving information, and with no way to pay anyone anything for it; and so they have much in common with open-source projects and reputation economies.

Ring Servers must be launched into the Void complete and able to go without service for long periods of time; and so they are built on old software and hardware. Simple, robust, and no-frills.

Ring Servers must connect people and build communities; and so they grow social networks, all with different norms, but with the commonality that we all cling to each other strongly across the void.

I was signed up in third session, and Samantha in her second. We did not disintegrate in the face of the void, of the Fairy Tale, of the Sburban ideal of perfection. We found each other instead.

We are of the second generation, they say, that grew up fully connected to a Replayer Network; those who have been truly Loose for five, six, eight sessions tell us how unspeakably lucky we are, to have some permanency to cling to.

Replayer networks measurably increase lifespan.

Replayer networks are the only reason many of us bother to live.

> You might ask: With the trials and tribulations of Replayer life, why would one ever bother to live?
>
> Death and the dreaming, as far as we can tell, mute your ability to make a mark on the world: it can take hundreds of years just to get a single message out to Replayerdom, assuming you don't care who you end up in contact with, and it might take thousands if you do. And after long enough, the immortal dreaming dead end up reliving their experiences over and over: the oldest memories, the memories of life, are easy enough to keep fresh; but anything since then is likely to be forgotten in mere decades. Psychological development is extremely difficult under these conditions, and very few manage it.
>
> The dreaming dead cannot accomplish, in ten thousand years, what a living writer or gamebreaker might do in one session. As long as you live, as long as you lean into the biting of the wind, you have the capacity to make a difference.
>
> "Life and Afterlife", terminalAccomplice

by godsgifttoGrinds

Okay so you confirmed deaths and recovered pendants. Now you can take a deep breath and let the events sink it. You're gonna have to deal with the fact that people die. One way or another, the game must go on. I don't have a lot to say about this so it's gonna be short alright.

When it comes to dealing with the subject of death, most people just writhe like a flagellum and puke melodrama. It's always the same bromides. "Oh it's so hard but I understand what you're going through, oh it's difficult but you're strong, blah blah blah, death is sad and you'll never get used to it because everybody is a unique snowflake and this is totally not an excuse to pretend to be a motivational speaker."

These people are full of shit. They don't know a single thing about death that doesn't come from a TV screen. So I'm just going to say it like it is.

You're gonna get used to death

And it's not a bad thing.

It's not a bad thing because death makes you learn more about yourself. I'm not entirely sure how to say this so bear with me. It's like this. You are defined by everybody that you meet. Right? It doesn't matter if they were pretty cool guys or if they were assholes, you always react to people. These reactions leave a mark behind. All of these marks are then color-coded based on your feelings and arranged into a mosaic that paints your portrait, pixel by pixel.

And every time you lose someone, there's a part of yourself that is going to die. It's like something was ripped out from your portrait and it leaves a hole behind.

It's not sad or traumatizing or anything like that just by itself, it's just a hole. But you can TELL that something is missing. Like when you can't remember something and you know that there's something you forgot but you can't do anything about it. That kind of hole.

So you'll find yourself thinking about casual stuff and it'll lead to thinking about someone that died and it'll lead to a void and you'll be like "oh right, there's a piece that is missing". That's the death of a person, right there. You'll go through this crap even if the person was a dick. In fact, the death of assholes is often the most confusing of them all because you don't understand why you miss them.

Yet the the thing is, you'll grow up. You'll get over it. You're just going to paint over the hole in your portrait and you'll keep on going. In the end, the person's death didn't really mean anything. Unlike in fancy stories, deaths are anticlimatic and pointless. I mean, real events don't have any moral. They don't need to have a moral.

I think cliché stories are harmful in that regard, they lead people to expect proper dénouement from things that never promised to make sense. And then these people don't know how to cope with it. They'll

squint with their eyes and look everywhere for a moral secretly woven in the wax and wanes of their adventure. But there isn't anything hidden. It's just stuff that happens. And people dying is a part of stuff that happens.

The looming feeling of loss that comes with death is just a concomitant overgrowth, a superficial extension to a meeting by happenstance. There is no logic to be found in these individual events. There's nothing that can explain why someone had to die because shit, there's never a good reason for it.

But still there is a point of interest in all of this. It makes you discover something important about yourself that you can't see otherwise. It's when you realize that no matter how many times you lose parts of yourself, there's one part of you that never gets replaced. It's a part of you that just doesn't die.

And it's the part of you that isn't defined by other people.

I mean, it's like how you can't smell your scent, or how you don't recognize your voice when it's recorded. You're blind to the part that defines you the most because it's drowning in all the parts that come from other people. You can only find it when you start losing things. And you'll only meet it face to face when you lose everything.

It's like looking at a night sky where all the stars go out one by one, until there's only one star left. You used to think that it was just a faint blinking light among all the other stars. Well now it's the only thing you have left so you start to pay attention to it, you take a closer look and you realize that hey, it's a motherfucking star. It's a thundering deluge of constant themonuclear fusion blasting at full throttle. It's burning harder than you could even imagine and it was always there. It's like an ocean that was inside you all along and you just started hearing the rumble of its crashing waves.

I don't know, maybe it's a Might player thing.

It was during my fourth session that it all clicked. It was a session wipe. You know, a session where you are the last survivor. The next to last dude in the game was a PK, he had four kills on his head, I probably should have died too. Well I'll spare you the details. Then it was just me, my roadsignkind abstratus, the eight pendants around my neck and the wreck of a burning session.

I found myself humming the lyrics to that stupid cartoon that pre-installation puts on every damn universe. The show with the octopus crap and the tentacle buddies. You remember the song?

> ♪ wake up in the morning ♬
> there's a brand new day ahead
> the sun is bright and the clouds smile down
> ♬ and all your friends are dead ♪

Now that I think of it, that was when I started writing the FAQ.

I think I rambled too much.

The Age of Ring Servers (up to TS35)

While Sburb.org and PrototypeTowers were established during this Age, I will write about them in the next section.

Early Ring Servers

> You know, out there in the darkness, there are ghosts who've lived there for thousands of years. Tens of thousands. Times far, far longer than any of us can comprehend. Those of us born outside the sea of the womb are destined to go there, I am told, eventually – but between now and then, we dream.
>
> When I was young, a ghost with silver hair and silver eyes spoke to me, and said, "There is something I wish to show you." And he took me by the hand, and we flew through strange twisted space.
>
> "Look well upon this," said he. "It is your history."
>
> There was a box, a computer, a server, with the great coiled antenna we use for transmissions across the void; and upon it was a plaque of gold:
>
> *We dedicate this server, Transamphibian*
> *to those who came before us*
> *and those who come after us –*
> *we fling a light into the darkness,*
> *knowing it will not long light our path*
> *but in hopes that it will guide our descendants.*
>
> I woke up, then; but it is an image that has followed me for all my days.
>
> <div align="right">"A Thousand Dreams", dryadTornado</div>

I assume that, in the mist-wreathed distant past, someone figured out you could launch stuff into the Ring. I assume that, at a point fairly soon after that, they figured that launching a server might be a good idea. And I assume that this person was rapidly informed of the need to make a Deal for safe server-hosting.

Ring servers that exist without comment, with various versions of FAQ collections or narratives or guestbooks on them, are the most primitive Ring servers, and even now they are still frequent – because a server that isn't attached to a timetrav, a server that can slide back and forth in time as well as space, is simpler to construct and may ultimately reach more people.

Because FAQs have various states of completion, and version numbering, it is possible to date Ring servers by the versions of the texts they carry. The earliest versions of the *Glitch FAQ* date from this era; you may also find drafts or early versions of gentlemanMannerism's *Etiquette Guide*, tranquilAttrition's *Prospit and Derse*, or butteredChamber's *So You Want To Not Die*.

There are no timetrav encryptions ensuring that these FAQs download in one piece; the only thing ensuring that they download intact is Skaianet hardware checksum algorithms, and even then it was some time before people figured out they could turn that option on. The greater part of the *Sburb Glitch FAQ*[145] is, in fact, mostly incompatible with these checksum algorithms; as a result, there is a high risk that your download will be missing random chunks, often of critical information.

Checksums mean that if your download is damaged, you don't get anything. They do make complete FAQs more likely to download than partial ones. But the advantage of using the checksum feature on your Ring server is unclear.

==> 145. CM: There are many other works that can't be checksummed, but the Glitch FAQ is the most high-profile example of this incompatibility.

```
> cd ring

> ./find.sh --closest
```

Scanning for server... server found.
Connecting... connected.

Read This If You Want To Live
in memory of Tristan Lazarov (tigertailChains)
12 session veteran / Sylph of Law
Press "esc" to skip to main menu.

If this is your first time picking up a signal from the void between worlds,
you'll probably want to go straight to the walkthrough section of this
server; it will explain why this is here, give you critical information, and
assist you with finding other Replayers and launching your own Ring servers.

Sending no further commands, or interrupting this and then sending the
command "> all", will cause this server to send you its entire contents.
This is recommended if your connection to this server is not
circumstantially stabilized; if you don't know what that means, it probably
isn't. A Time player can temporarily connect a "handle" to this server to
ensure linearity for the duration of these transmissions. For more
information, see the Time FAQ provided under the "Aspect" directory, if
available.

If this connection is linearized or otherwise stabilized, you may choose to
browse the file tree and download only the files you want; this uses the
standard SNT (Skaianet Terminal) protocol and commands.

Waiting for input.....

```
[ESC]
```

RingServerLite v. 3.9, installed/maintained by [cogitativeMistake]
Please input command.

```
> login cogitativeMistake
```

Password required.

> `***********`

Welcome, cogitativeMistake.

> `sync ring/images`

Checking for changed files... [100%]
2 of 115 files need to be uploaded. 0 of 115 files need to be downloaded.
Uploading checksum.pkg... [100%]
Uploading faq_inheritor.pkg... [100%]
2 files successfully uploaded.

> `quit`

> `./find.sh --closest 2`

Scanning for server... server found.
Connecting... connected.

Read This If You Want To Live
Press "esc" to skip to main menu.

If this is your first time picking up a signal from the void between worlds,
y`[ESC]`

RingServerLite v. 2.1, installed/maintained by [lizardLogic]
Please input command.

> `read info`

Hello world! Replace this with your own text if desired.

> `read vitals`

This server is running RingServerLite v. 2.1.08 "Butterfly Effect", a pared-
down fork of RingServer v. 0.14.69 "We'll Finish This Soon, I Promise". Full
source code and credits are on this server in the coda.txt file.
Server uptime (subjective): 11.65 Ms
Time since last accessed (subjective): 2.30 Ms
Server Deal status: n/a (no Deal detected)
Self-replication: Off

> `quit`

```
> ./find.sh --closest 3
```

```
Scanning for server... server found.
Connecting... connected.
```

```
Read This If You Want To Live
```
in memory of Megan Lacre (orpheanDistinguishing)
```
Press "esc" to ski[ESC]
```

```
RingServerLite v. 1.4, installed/maintained by [anonymous]
Please input command.
```

```
> read vitals
```

```
This server is running RingServerLite v. 1.4.0 "Fractal Dimensions", a
pared-down fork of RingServer v. 0.14.69 "We'll Finish This Soon, I
Promise". Full source code and credits are on this server in the coda.txt
file.
Server uptime (subjective): 6.52 Ms
Time since last accessed (subjective): 0.31 Ms
```

```
> quit
```

The Invention of Timetrav Encryption

She explained it to me like this:

A single timeline, a single Session, that was a piece of string. She cut many pieces of string, tossed the string around in a bowl for a bit, and then told me to imagine that I was on one of the strings, trying to understand how many other pieces of string there were in the container, and where they began or ended.

And then she tied some of the pieces of string together – that was a Time player, keeping track of me through many sessions. And then she looped other pieces of the string together, tying some sort of complex knot with them – that was a Time player, holding several people constant to each other. Did it look solid, she asked? It certainly looked solid to me.

Then she pulled a string out of the center of the knot and the entire thing disintegrated.

"That," Myra LeJean said, "is why you don't depend on your own assessment of whether a timetrav encryption is secure."

Interesting Interviews, tingedCharacterization as edited by scorpionSting

It is impossible to nail down who made the first timetrav encryption. Most likely it was just the efforts of one Time player to make it easier to maintain their own Ring server, which was eventually formalized and passed around to everyone involved.

But we do know that timetrav encryption has been critical for every Replayer network since.

I'll turn you over to Samantha now; she knows more about this than I do...

by cogitativeMistake

Why do timetrav encryptions exist?

Because Paradox Space is nonlinear. Although a sort of informal pseudotimeline can sometimes be inferred from Skaia's concept of circumstantial simultaniety, this pseudotimeline only anchors on the great, plot-turning events that define a session (leaving plenty of room for lesser annoyances with nonlinearity in online chats and across sessions), is not comprehensible to the vast majority of Players, and is not amenable to Player intervention.

Thus, unless a timeline is manually enforced by a Time player or directional (non-anchored) encryption, intersession communication will be at best difficult or incomprehensible, and at worst actively catastrophic.

How does directional encryption work?

Simplified version: The client – that's you, usually – generates a new keypair (lock and key) for each message. You lock up each message you send to the server in a new lock, keep all the keys, and then try every key on every locked message on the server; only locks that you have the keys for will open. This is also sometimes called non-anchored encryption because it does not depend on a Time player "anchoring" the two timelines to each other.

As everyone who has tried to enforce a password system on their Time player will know, this is finicky and difficult to extend to multiple people at once. However, it is often sufficient for multiple people in the same session (for whom keysharing is simple and linear) unless your Time player actively decides to sabotage this linearity.

Sharing keys across sessions invokes the problems with Paradox Space having many timelines and these timelines not necessarily being linear to each other, so this isn't a scalable solution. Some servers have tried doing multiparty directional encryption, which only a Time player could comprehend so I won't even try describing how it works; suffice it to say that the calculations required to sync up the sharing of keypairs are generally prohibitive and significantly restricted the growth of Replayer networks before timetrav encryption was discovered and implemented.

How does "anchored" (Time-player-enforced) timetrav work?

Time players can use their Time powers to grab hold of two timelines and mark events that should be synchronized together on these timelines, and thus either force or coax the timelines into alignment (depending on the Time player's title). Most Time players with any experience will be able to do this for two or three timelines; however, with some titles (the Creative, Performer, and Destroyer classes) it is possible to extend this control over a large multitude of timelines. Your average post-Denizen Prince of Time will be able to maintain linearity across approximately three dozen timelines without

compromising in-session effectiveness; a Muse of Time sometimes becomes *more* efficient the more timelines they're holding together (and thus facilitating contact between).

Because holding together timelines this way – serving as an "anchor" to maintain a timetrav encryption – is a cost-effective and constant source of ARC that "bears interest" (as it were), maintaining a timetrav is thus an attractive proposition even for Time players who otherwise would be perfectly okay with nonlinear communications.[146]

I understand how the Creative and Performer classes can get ARC for timetrav encryption, but why is it also ARCful for Destroyers?

A properly maintained timetrav will *restrict* information to flow in one way: from the consensus past into the consensus future. This prevents the consensus future from affecting the consensus past.

In some cases, people have complained that it prevents future versions of you from sending messages to past versions of you specifically to avert events, or the equivalent across timelines. (If you want a headache, you can go ahead and try thinking about that. If you don't, just don't go there.) However: We cannot specifically automate only sending "important" messages backwards through the timetrav tunnel. "Important" is relative: if future you wants to be an asshole they can start sending you frivolous "important" messages. If you block them to try to retain some semblance of your sanity, then we're back to the case mentioned before: not having any backwards movement of information.

The reason most people assume that timetravs increase information flow is because most Players are more willing to share information if they don't have to run into massive headaches trying to understand the wibbly-wobbly. So while in most cases timetravs actually increase cross-session cooperation, they do this by restricting information flow and thus are technically a "destruction" of information using time. (Or a destruction of time shenanigans.)

> There is a near-inescapable allure to destroying your hopes for the future; for if you no longer have hopes, they certainly cannot be dashed.
>
> But the maw will not be satisfied with that. The next thing you will be tempted to destroy is the notion that there was such a thing as life before the Game, for if you do not have that to compare to, then you will not feel so keenly the pain of your loss.
>
> Ask any Sburb veteran; and they will tell you that it feels like they have always been playing Sburb, and that they always will be playing Sburb. Presessions, or other respites, are merely exceptions that prove the rule.

<div style="text-align: right">"Observations", duodecimalDelineation</div>

==> 146. OJ: I make some unavoidable assumptions about the "economics" of maintaining timetrav encryptions; I am not actually sure Aradia could keep even *two* timelines lined up without sacrificing effectiveness. It has to work out this way in order to result in the Replay Value AU we know and love. If timetrav encryptions didn't have a "return on investment" for Time players, they wouldn't be nearly as widespread, and if one Time player couldn't keep together several dozen timelines, timetravs wouldn't be big enough to cover communities of thousands of people. Such is AUing for you, I suppose.

What is the difference between a loose timetrav and a tight timetrav?

Assuming you passed elementary algebra, the difference between a loose timetrav and a tight timetrav is a bit like the difference between a relation and a function.

A loose timetrav is a timetrav encryption that grabs hold of two timelines only via important events (from what Elizabeth has told me, "important" is approximately equivalent to whether something is an XP action in the system she's using). Thus, if important events are more frequent in one timeline as opposed to another, the "dense" timeline will thus move at the same *circumstantial* speed – speed of events – as the "sparse" timeline, but the exact ratio of time between the two timelines can vary wildly. This kind of timetrav encryption is enough for approximate linearity of asynchronous communication (such as forums and email) where a difference of several minutes is unimportant; however, synchronous communication such as chatrooms will still show up slightly nonlinearized because individual chat messages do not usually qualify as "important events".[147]

A tight timetrav is a timetrav encryption that grabs hold of timelines continuously; it thus enforces a simple linear ratio (often 1:1) between time passing on each timeline it is grabbed to. This makes it possible to engage in some types of synchronous communication, such as chatrooms; subsecond accuracy of transmission is often enough as long as the main bottleneck is typing. However, the pluck cost of maintaining a tight timetrav is significantly greater; this is why most early standards used loose timetravs and even the Sburb.org hybrid timetrav system (described in more detail below) tries to keep its subscribers on loose timetrav most of the time.

It is notionally possible to facilitate a "hypertight" timetrav that is accurate down to microseconds (such that it is possible to have synchronous voice and video chats), but the pluck cost for this is generally prohibitive and thus it is not used outside of extremely specific and limited instances.

Hey, that doesn't make sense. If we have to use radio waves to connect to servers using streams of packets, that implies that there's a miniature hypertight timetrav around each stream of data denoting a "file" or "webpage", so all you'd have to do to make a hypertight timetrav for video conferencing is to crank up your video quality to maximum and keep the data flowing!

Firstly, that isn't a question.

Secondly, linearity for individual transmissions of a very short duration is generally an implicit or explicit clause in most Ring deals for server stability.

Thirdly, the maximum filesize for these "linearity implied" transmissions is something like a megabyte. Plenty for text, pushing it for pictures, and video and programs *have to* be broken down into chunks that can be downloaded out of order like torrent files.

==> 147. OJ: This is something I came up with to make roleplaying in the original Replay Value amenable to shifting schedules. It just so happens that it is easily adaptable to RV Chuubo's. Chapters end whenever everyone's done with XP actions, and therefore can be essentially any length, and can even be different lengths for characters in different sessions. I suggest that the HG wash their hands of the entire affair and let each handler decide on how long the chapter was for their characters. Within reason, of course: I think that the minimum subjective chapter length should be one day and the maximum about six months, with the average being between one and two weeks.

Finally, essentially all Skaianet networking software contains provisions for caching data that it receives unexpectedly, such that if you receive files before you request them, you don't actually get shown this until you request said data. (The existence of this cache is exploitable if you are extremely good at hacking.) This hides the fact that many transmissions arrive out of order from the end user.

> Did you really expect me to play by the rules? You seem to be in the wrong universe. This is Sburb.

> azureTourniquet, as told by magnoliaTrellis

What are "handles", and why do I see people arguing about how many Time players "have" them?

A single "handle" is the local terminology for a block of users that are assigned to a Time player to keep together. Overlapping these handles such that each player is linearized by at least two or three Time players is generally considered best practice.

However, smaller timetrav encryption standards have gotten away with having single Time players assigned to them. This is not considered wise – people may be thrown back into Loose Replaying (with the capital L Loose this refers to being relegated to nonlinearized play again, thus being cut off from your community for what could well be *forever*) if the Time player assigned to a handle abruptly dies. Until Sburb.org's Seer Network discovered "dongle scrying" (which is a misnomer; it should be called "timetrav connection scrying"), it was difficult to check how many Time players were involved in helping linearize you.

With the death of the Seer Network dongle scrying permissions became much more restricted (and even banned on some servers), but they are still useful for transparency purposes in circumstances such as these, which is the only reason it isn't considered best practice to ban dongle scrying completely. But that's a tangent.

Why can't people sign up for multiple timetrav encryption standards at the same time? / How do you transfer between timetrav encryptions?

Because they're not generally compatible. Loose timetravs set performance targets for average server-to-client ratios that differ from timetrav to timetrav, tight timetravs may have different server-to-client ratios, and it is best not to talk about the bad interactions that happen when you try to attach a loose and a tight timetrav to the same person.

The best-case scenario, if you try to sign up for multiple timetravs without letting both of them know, is that the Time player on the second timetrav gets a backlash headache from trying to connect to your handle and writes you a strongly worded letter. The worst-case scenario is that there is destructive interference and you get cast off Loose.

You generally have to let both timetravs know you're transferring; they can then step you down to a 1:1-ratio tight timetrav and hand you off that way to minimize adverse effects. You will then be stepped back

up to the server-to-client ratio the timetrav uses, your timetrav will be loosened if necessary, and you'll get assigned to handles.

Can you use timetrav encryption together with regular encryption? Is that secure?

As even the staunchest of Time players cannot bear the number of unstable loops required to complete an NP-hard factorization problem due to the fact that it results in Veil-meteor-sized piles of doomedselves, public-key encryption ca. 2020 remains secure and, when layered inside a timetrav, makes access near-impossible (why this is "near" and not actual impossibility is described below) for those who are not supposed to see.

There have been isolated instances of Denizens or Others allowing access to individual encrypted posts or threads with Deals. The price of such a Deal tends to be outside the reach of those who wish to use it for harm (although this is a tendency, not an absolute), and more accessible (but still an arm and a leg) to those who request decryption for noble purposes. It is unknown how the Others and Denizens crack such encryption; theories generally center around the fact that both classes of beings seem to be outside Time somehow.

> Tissot sighed, and scratched at the base of a horn. "The ice itself, that far north, is polished into mirrors that would show the Queen in Black your approach. It would be impossible to sneak in."
>
> "That's fine," I said. "We have our magics. I'm sure we'll figure something out."
>
> "I certainly hope you do," said Tissot. "It would be nice to be able to look at my own face again without fear."
>
> *The Infinite Castle*, dryadTornado

How does Sburb.org's hybrid timetrav work?

Sburb.org's timetrav is "hybrid" in that it keeps people on a loose timetrav most of the time, but automatically switches you into a tight timetrav if you wish to log onto the IRC chat. It will then switch you back to loose when you log back out. In addition, you can pick your target average server-to-client ratio, if you wish. (I just leave it on the 1:1 default. It hasn't served me wrong yet.)

This is achieved via having the timetrav connections routed through a highly specialized piece of technology[148] that automatically manages the output of Time-energy to each individual connection, thus eliminating the need for the Time player in question to manage it herself. (The plans for this technology are available, but it is so immense and difficult to construct that the Sburb.org dedicated null session is the only place where it has ever been built in full.)

Incidentally, this is why it is technically against the rules to idle in the IRC chat for long periods of time without participating; you're increasing resource load on painterlyDabbling. (Yes, she's an *actual*

==> 148. OJ: i.e. phlebotinum

person.) In practice most people are allowed about two days' worth of idling at a time, and anyone who participates regularly and is helpful can stay connected forever if they'd like.

Transamphibian

Q: What did you make this place for?

A: There's a lot of incredibly noble things we could say here, but the truth is a lot simpler. We wanted to talk to our first-session coplayers again, and we wanted others to talk to their first-session coplayers again.

Say what you will about the Horrorterrors; they did fulfill their end of the bargain.

Now it's time for us to fulfill ours.

"FAQ", transamphibian.admin, scrollbackAntacid

An ancient and venerated Replayer network, Transamphibian (sometimes shortened to Transam, which sounds like an airline to me so I won't use it) is/was a Usenet-like service based in the Ring. The legend goes thusly: two Replayers who had been in the same Native session rerolled with each other, and with someone else who just happened to be working on reliable Ring server placement. (I'm honestly not sure that two Replayers in the same session from the same Native was something that was even in the realm of possibility, then. It happens more now. But it was unheard-of at the time.) Timetrav encryption had not yet been invented (for such a level of "not yet" as exists in nonlinear Medium time); they simply talked with one of those squid ohgodwhats out there in the Ring, then strapped their server to a rocket and hoped for the best.

They found that there were already timetravs anchored to the beginning of the server's timeline, then, and a userbase that had gone backwards in time somehow, and that – most of all – they could find everyone else in their Native session, there. Because that was what they had bargained for: a Replayer network where people who played in the same Native session could find each other again.

The admins went by Sauce (scovilleSaucepan, native Guide of Doom) and Antie (scrollbackAntacid, native Ward of Heart); they say that the thing they bargained to keep their Servers safe was their ability to use their real names. I have no idea if this is true, but it makes about as much sense as any other explanation does.

A lot of Usenet terminology and tech made it to Transamphibian, like killfiles and FAQs and binary file downloads split over .rar archives and such.

Trivia: Transamphibian was frequented by such personages as enturbulatedOccupation, who later went on to found Sburb.org, and gentlemanMannerism, the actual person and not the urban legend, responsible for at least the first several editions of an Etiquette Guide which is an extremely dense treatise on polite behavior.

While, because of the lack of timetrav, Transamphibian can technically be spoken of in the future and present tenses as well as the past tense, I will adhere to the past tense below so as to be concise and cause a minimum of headaches.

The Hierarchy

> Look, if you're going to make a fool of yourself I certainly won't stop you. But I figured you should know that everyone else thinks you're being a dumbass, just in case that wasn't the impression you planned on making.
>
> *"Re: Re: Re: Trolley Problems Taking Over .philosophy"*, earthenElemental

Transamphibian could be said to have "subforums", of a kind. However, because it was on newsgroup software, they referred to it as "the hierarchy", instead.

Here's a sample of important places on the Transamphibian hierarchy:

transamphibian.sburb: The Game and all discussion related to it.

- *transamphibian.sburb.gamebreaking*: Gamebreakers.
- *transamphibian.sburb.aspects*: Individual Aspect newsgroups. Each Aspect got its own newsgroup; I'm only listing a few because of time constraints on my research.
    - *transamphibian.sburb.aspects.light*: Notable for briefly running Transamphibian's only betting service (Horserace Services), which was astonishingly popular when it existed despite only running on imaginary points. The admins cracked down after people started trying to use Light charges on the servers to affect outcomes.
    - *transamphibian.sburb.aspects.time*: Only readable by anyone who was a Time player. Non-Time-players found it absolutely impenetrable.
    - *transamphibian.sburb.aspects.void*: Does not actually exist. Sauce and Antie tried to establish it several times but it just wouldn't stick; Void players thus ended up just posting on the main .aspects newsgroup, much to the annoyance of people who thought the .aspects newsgroup was meant only for metadiscussion.
- *transamphibian.sburb.titles*: Individual Title newsgroups. Each Aspect got its own newsgroup; I'm only listing a few because of time constraints on my research.
    - *transamphibian.sburb.titles.witch*: Notable for being one of the most organized of Title newsgroups. Also notable for one of the best ASCII art creators on Transamphibian, kawaiiHats – the FAQ for this newsgroup was, and is, a work of *art*. Art you couldn't read at times, but that seems to be par for the course for Cryptics.
    - *transamphibian.sburb.titles.waste*: Insisted upon by enturbulatedOccupation, although she seems to be the only person who posted to it in seriousness; as far as most people could tell everyone else there was trolling. She even wrote a good fraction of an FAQ for the title, then abruptly dropped the project and went dark for several months.
    - *transamphibian.sburb.titles.sage*: High overlap with the Gamebreaking newsgroup, to the point where users who weren't gamebreakers often complained that the jargon used by the gamebreakers was absolutely impenetrable. These being Sages, the response was a glossary of terms that pushed twenty thousand words. This is now known as the *Gamebreaker's Glossary*.

- *transamphibian.sburb.titles.bane*: Responsible for the "we are all Batman" meme you still see popping up occasionally even on modern Replayer networks.
- *transamphibian.sburb.thefirstreplay*: Second sessioners and the older folks that gather to talk them through it. There's been at least a few instances of people talking *themselves* through their second sessions, although they're rarer than the stories would have you believe.
- *transamphibian.sburb.alchemy*: Hopefully self-explanatory.
- *transamphibian.sburb.moon.prospit*: Kept up a low-key, half-joking rivalry with the Derse newsgroup.
- *transamphibian.sburb.moon.derse*: Also a participant in said half-joking rivalry.

transamphibian.offtopic: Discussion of things unrelated to the Game.

- *transamphibian.offtopic.philosophy*: You'd be surprised how many people liked to relax from a day of questing by arguing with people on the Internet about the nature of existence.
  - *transamphibian.offtopic.philosophy.trolleys*: Created to quarantine the annoyance of trolley problems popping up in the Philosophy group essentially daily.
- *transamphibian.offtopic.eating*: Home to several early Sburban cooks, such as inquiringGourmand.
- *transamphibian.offtopic.memoirs*: Known for being a circlejerk of "ooh you went through such a difficult life". (A known stomping ground of the infamous and divisive enturbulatedOccupation, who thinks your attempt at misery poker is masturbatory wank.) (Because it is.) (This may or may not have been reactionary. Goddamn nonlinear time.)
- *transamphibian.offtopic.knitting*: …These people focused way too much on "knitting is manly!" Like, I get that it's not something men usually do, but from what I've seen they were almost as bad as *bronies*.
- *transamphibian.offtopic.aspectart*: Projects where your Aspect was an integral part of the art. Lots of pictures, and lots of native Dream players.
- *transamphibian.offtopic.shipping*: "Sburb is Not A Dating Service!"

transamphibian.communities: This is kind of like the alt hierarchy on Usenet, although in practice it was usually used for people that Played together and want to keep in touch.

- *transamphibian.communities.lostandfound*: Theoretically for posting "have you seen this person"-type notices. Because this was often used by people who were new enough to Transamphibian to not yet have realized the importance of timetrav encryption, it was, in practice, essentially impossible to navigate.
- *transamphibian.communities.theoldrevolution*: This was where Sauce and Antie hung out with *their* first session. Most of the posts were heavily encrypted.
- *transamphibian.communities.allyourmemesarebelongtous*: A product of a notorious and very high-profile split in the higher-ups of *transamphibian.sburb.aspects.mist*, whereupon one of them flounced and settled down here with a half a dozen other Mist players. It died off after a while.

- *transamphibian.communities.portalcut*: Once upon a time, there was a session filled entirely with native Space players…
- *transamphibian.communities.scratchescapees*: Pretty much what it says it is.
- *transamphibian.communities.decentbehavior*: gentlemanMannerism's discussion forum for the Etiquette Guide; she welcomed people who were willing to pose her difficult ethical problems so that she could puzzle over them and find a satisfactory answer. Sycophants and trolls, by contrast, went in a community-maintained killfile.
- *transamphibian.communities.nak.nak.nak*: As far as I can tell, a newsgroup in which everyone roleplayed as Consorts.
- *transamphibian.communities.doof.doof.doof*: I have no idea why this exists.
- *transamphibian.communities.shoosh.pap*: The logic of people who made *transamphibian.communities* newsgroups continues to escape me.

transamphibian.admin: Metadiscussion. Some are only accessible to Sauce and Antie and the "moderators" of Transam.

- *transamphibian.admin.mailslot*: Feature requests, fanmail, and the like.
- *transamphibian.admin.abuse*: All posts were encrypted to only be visible to moderators, with a readily available public key; posts that weren't encrypted are deleted and the poster invited to submit again. Generally used for coordination of moderation over multiple newsgroups.
- *transamphibian.admin.techsupport*: Ruthlessly moderated, in order to maintain at least a semblance of only being tech support for Transamphibian, rather than for Sburb in general.

Sandy Clearwater, mainsailTracker@telescopic.med

Page of Might/7 sessions/artist

"The words we say are as waves crashing upon the shore – one may be little enough, but thousands reshape the continents."

<div align="right">signature block, mainsailTracker</div>

Transamphibian's prominent users included:

- **scovilleSaucepan**, "Sauce", Guide of Doom. Admin. Decent at software (although he insisted he was still outclassed by enturbulatedOccupation). Had a fondness for curries and was an active participant in transamphibian.offtopic.cooking.

- **scrollbackAntacid**, "Antie", Ward of Heart. Admin. Worked for years on perfecting Ringstable server configurations.

- **enturbulatedOccupation**, who later went on to cofound Sburb.org. She got away with a hell of a lot more trolling and invective than anyone else did. I shall not say more here.

- The other two surviving members of the group that calls itself the "Old Revolution", who went by the handles **sarabandeOpaline** and **earthenElemental**, were also present on Transamphibian. After Transamphibian died their final whereabouts remain unknown.

  - At one point scrollbackAntacid confirmed the existence of a deceased sixth member of the group, then later attempted to recant said statement. I believe it safe to assume that there was such a person, and that should they have once existed they are dead now, for some value of "now". This being said, if you'd like to use this as a plot hook in a game, I won't stop you.

- **pumpkinMenu**: The first to come up with an alchemizable, palatable curry powder. You might underestimate this now – we live in a time of plenty by culinary standards – but at the time it was an incredible breakthrough.

- **bromidePretence**: A NOTORIOUS TROLL who PUSHED BOUNDARIES yet somehow NEVER made the admins angry enough to GET PERMANENTLY BANNED. They can be IDENTIFIED by the fact that they CAPITALIZED PARTS OF THEIR SENTENCES. This is not Rangoon infection; as far as I can tell it's how they actually talked.

- **regretFactory**: The utterly ruthless moderator of *transamphibian.offtopic.knitting*. Didn't seem to realize the irony in their name.

- **kawaiiHats**: Made the best ASCII art. The best.

- **pretenseDiscarded**: Responsible for the 20K word Gamebreaker's Glossary discussed above, which is an incredibly comprehensive FAQ in and of itself, albeit in a nontraditional format. Not sure whether they should be saluted or given a good long shake of the fist.

- **misphrasedAnschluss**: One of the "amusing" trolls the admins kept around for sport, who seemed to be unaware both of the irony in their username and of the fact that nobody else believed what they were saying.
- **calligraphicMailer**: The long-suffering primary moderator of *transamphibian.offtopic.philosophy*. Notable for making the first edition of the legendary "Why You Were Banned" checklist copypasta.
- **concaveConclave**: An early member who is the reason why all religion and politics debates must take place in a heavily moderated newsgroup created for the purpose. Had been permanently banned, but later rolled into a session with scovilleSaucepan and apparently passed muster as sufficiently reformed to return. They were indeed, and spent the remainder of their life contributing heavily to *transamphibian.sburb.aspects.light*.

Timetravs

> Q: Why do you have so many timetravs? Which one is the best?
>
> A: Hey, we weren't the ones who came up with them. We just shoved the server out there and found timetravs on it like barnacles on a whale. This being said, Telescopic and The Vine are the most popular ones, which means you probably can't go wrong with them. Probably.

<div align="right">

"FAQ", transamphibian.admin, scrollbackAntacid

</div>

Because Transamphibian had no official linearizing service, a multitude of timetrav encryption standards emerged. Some of the more prominent ones include:

- Telescopic Timetrav: A timetrav that actively searched backwards for the beginning of the server's timeline, and, thus, was the first timetrav available to Antie and Sauce, who signed up because "why not" and thusly unintentionally avoided much annoyance with nonlinear timelines.
  - This standard also allowed access to Corpseparty; if you were attached to this timetrav Corpseparty died approximately halfway across Transamphibian's lifespan.
  - Also the largest Transamphibian timetrav encryption. There was extensive active recruitment for Time players to manage the anchor timeline; an advertisement to volunteer for "handling" is common in Transamphibian signature blocks.
  - They ran a chat server and also maintained a small separate forum that was invite-only in addition to being restricted to timetrav members.
  - Members voted repeatedly to maintain tight, Time-player-labor-intensive timeline control despite increasing demands on dwindling numbers of time players because of their reliance on synchronized communication. This is why it died and set everyone off Loose Replaying about three or four years after the known end of Transamphibian.
- The Vine: A timetrav encryption heavily associated with the gamebreaking community; notable users include grindinglyGodliest/godsgifttoGrinds, the author of Sburb Glitch FAQ, and epinephrineElectrified[149], later of the Seer Network and Ivory Tower.
  - Unlike Telescopic, it was run as a "loose" timetrav: exact client-to-server time ratios could slide around slightly, which made the demand on the Time players less.
  - Vine's admins ran a small community blog exclusive to people on their timetrav where many early Gamebreaking groups networked; because their timetrav was Loose, it was not possible to run a realtime chat.
  - While this standard did not allow access to Corpseparty during Transamphibian's lifespan, after Transamphibian died it switched to following Corpseparty's linearity. When *that* died, it floated around without attachment for a while and finally connected to Sburb.org.

==> 149. EB: While I mention epinephrineElectrified being attached to this timetrav, he was not actually present at the time of Transamphibian; he only showed up later, during Vine's Corpseparty years.

- eTimeline: A timetrav encryption that was small and experimental. Among other things, the favored timetrav of enturbulatedOccupation. Everyone involved acknowledges that the name is terrible.
    - Less reliable than the other timetravs; they used a subscription to Telescopic to maintain linearity with Transamphibian's servers because they did not have enough manpower to get a direct fix.
    - As compensation, the timetrav included the ability of users to individually pick their client:server ratio and whether their personal connection to the servers was loose or tight. This was apparently helpful, or else people wouldn't have used it.
    - A significant chunk of it failed without warning because the Time player who was managing one of the handles died and did not have a backup. After that, everyone fled the service. One of the victims of said failure without warning was selfsame enturbulatedOccupation.

There were many smaller timetrav standards; some of them went backwards in relation to the Transamphibian server timeline, and some of them lost a "fix" and reconnected to Transamphibian later or earlier in the timeline, thus resulting in a multitude of amusements.

Corpseparty

by wagglanGimmicks

as further ~~censored~~ interpreted by eternityBraid[150]

And the horse you rode in on. And that horse's [male genitals].

> anonymous comment sent to someone's Pitsblog

Corpseparty was an anime imageboard. Yes, an imageboard, unlike the leddit knockoff that cuck Mind native who calls himself E-Peen coded up. If you don't know what that means try not being so f–ing new.

Legend tells of a man by the name of anonymousCoward. A man who struck up a bargain with the Noble Circle for a ring server, handed off the keys to six people who seemed trustworthy in the first six months of operation and then disappeared. They say he liked being an anon more than he liked being an admin.

Like any imageboard you had your mix of different rules for different boards. Forced anon on /b/ (thank f—), and everyone remembers on /asp/ you'd get the little icon by your post showing everyone what your native was. Yes we had trip[homophobic slur], and I wished they had skipped CP and headed straight to the oncology ward, because every single one of them was cancer.

>b-but what about Myra ;_;

She managed to make her presence known without a trip, attention [insinuation about sexual promiscuity] that she was. Not really a big surprise that she [multi-paragraph, profanity laden rant omitted; just pretend he said "good riddance"].

I'm not going to give you the laundry list of boards because you can find that anywhere on Pits. You had your basics like you'd find on a normal imageboard, then of course you had your weird game s– t. /asp/ – Aspect Generals (half filled with [female genitalia]), /cgl/ – Class Generals (prissy [yes, Eric, we know]), /ck/ – Cooking (worthless maple syrup [racial slur]), /gb/ – Gamebreaking (bunch of worthless [more racial slurs]), the list goes on.

Myra was a hero in the same way the IRA were heroes. That is to say, 100 percent unambiguously.

> movingParts

Really? You sure she wasn't, as Eric puts it, "an hero"?

> eternityBraid

==> 150. CM: …Elizabeth what the hell did you do. I thought we agreed that we'd only *lightly* edit contributors' essays. At this rate we may as well have written our own.

Now this is going to come as a shock to the [inexperienced homosexuals] among you, but back in the day we didn't use the term "troll" to refer to the worthless horned [amusing word choice to describe a true hermaphrodite species] who came flooding into the community like a ["harmless" jibe referencing Eurozone mass immigration] around timestamp 40 [would you say back in your day trolling meant something?] Generally the posting environment was a lot lax[ativ]er than anything you'll find today. Unlike the simpering tumblrites who run Pits and SB.org, we had this idea that people who'd had their parents killed and made it through at least a session or two were resilient enough to handle the bantz on an anonymous anime imageboard. I should mention the userbase was mostly underageB&, which given the site's name abbreviates to CP you could argue has some unfortunate [redacted to help save limited supplies of brain bleach].

If we're talking moderation we have to talk about the admins.

- *transientSuppository*, native Thief of Flow. Total beta. Should've been a Pits admin, the spineless [metrosexual] [description of anal sex omitted].
- *spacerHose*, native Dame of Space. Loved anonymously baiting /asp/ with endless [translation: the only actual feminist in the entire damn place, I've seen the logs], until one day she accidentally left her name on. Got [nothing near] what she deserved.
- *bagpipeBlower*, native Ward of Breath. Actually went on a ring voyage to upgrade the server when the site was suffering an influx of [uncooked sausages].
- *scroungingTotem*, native Rogue of Time. Worked a lot on the timetrav encryption and the code, for all the f—ing good it did her.
- *calumnyEntire*, native Sylph of Doom. Dealt with the janitors. Once literally blew someone's [hot grits] out through CP on a Rage roll.
- *pausedVideo*, native Knight of Light. Liked to [express nudity] on /soc/, had a lovely roast beef appearance thanks to some nasty burns.

Of course the good times had to come to an end. Some [pleasantly neurodivergent] fa/gb/asher got it into his head to use the server to scry cross session, which invalidated the deal that kept the servers up. Within a few days you couldn't even check dubs without a greasy armored squid's [licorice-flavored nectar] leaking out of your disk drive. At last, CP was undone by the very lax posting environment we worked so hard to cultivate. [And, as they say, nothing of value was lost.]

If you're thinking about using CP in your Chuubo's game, don't. Knowing the kind of person who's going to read this you're just going to spend ten minutes on ED and then act like you know what the f — you're talking about. Stick to 9gag you little s–t. [I will damn well use it in my game if I want to. You can't stop me. Besides, it makes good backstory and good memes.]

Gamebreaker Culture

> I dunno. I'm pretty sure Sburb runs on actual magic. I mean, considering if you dig deep enough into Sburb's code you get things like files that when you open them crash your computer to a purple screen of death (and not a *blue* screen; and yes, I tried afterwards and verified the computer was still capable of BSODs), or folders that nest inside themselves, or files named such obscure things as "freudian_slip.dat", "MEOW.db", and "moremagic.hlp".
>
> cogitativeMistake

Sburban gamebreakers are a loosely affiliated group of people who poke and prod at the edges of the Game. Because there will be a section below on modern Gamebreaking practices, this is primarily a section on the historical Gamebreaking community and culture.

First I'll cover Gamebreaking categories, and then the largest communities or parts of Gamebreaking that acquired followers pre-Age of Replayer Networks.

Categorizing Gamebreaking

> Q: What can you even do with gamebreaking?
>
> A: A better question is what we *can't* do. We push against the boundaries of what the Game lets us do. We're your forward scouts, your explorers, forwards to either discoveries with glory or an ignoble death. Sure, this is risky, but think of the other option –
>
> Do you really want to live your life out entirely within the confines of safety? Isn't that just horrifyingly boring?
>
> skiddingZebra

Gamebreaking is conventionally considered to fall on two axes of specialization; one is the method you use to Gamebreak (Method Specialization), and the other is the section of the Game you specialize in breaking (Region/Item Specialization). Until recently, people only really specialized in one: such that you would have someone who would Gamebreak by Seer-scrying, or perhaps someone who would Gamebreak consort-related things.

Having two categories – for example, being a Seer-scrying consort-quest gamebreaker – is a telltale sign that you got into the field past ts20 or so. Until rather recently, this would have been considered unnecessarily hemming oneself in. However, it's more recently become abundantly clear that Gamebreaking has become so massive that no one person can hold an entire subfield in their head anymore, unless they are especially intelligent. And while we do have a large contingent of people who are extremely intelligent, not all of them are guaranteed to create breakthrough discoveries.

Here is a nonexhaustive list of what falls under these specialties:

- Method Specialists
  - "Stackers", i.e. unintended usage of existing Game stuff that explicitly doesn't involve memory editing (stacking percentages, hitbox corners, sequence-breaking, etc.)
  - Memory-editors (Pendant, Session CD, Null-Terminated String Modus, harnessing Corruption, etc.)
  - Seer-scrying/Decompilation (Properly speaking, this is a misnomer. While it is best done by Seers, it can be competently done by Sages, Scout/Guides, and Ward/Heirs.)
- Region/Item Specialists
  - Lands
    - Consorts/Consort Quests
    - Dungeons/Ruins/Puzzles
    - Tunnels/Denizen's Cave
    - Underworld
  - Dream Moons
    - Carapaces/Carapace Rep
    - Quests
    - Underground (catchall term for the maze of tunnels inside Prospit, Derse, and their Moons)
  - Equipment
    - Cruxtruder/Punch Designix/Totem Lathe/Alchemiter
    - Cookalizer/Alimentator
    - Cloning/Ectobiology (Frogs, Carapaces, and Players alike)
    - Appearifiers/Sendificators/Transportalizers

Many Gamebreakers would thus specialize in one or the other – for example, they'll use Seer-scrying for whatever strikes their fancy, or they'll use whatever methods suit them for breaking dream-moon quests. Some Gamebreakers, especially recently, specialize in some of both – for example, some people specialize in "stacking" alchemization or decompiling Ruin-generation.

> We watched the light show on Skaia by the docks on my Land, as if we were watching fireworks. The Time player had brought a picnic basket and everything.
>
> It wouldn't be until much later that we realized that we were watching our doom.
>
> The Time player knew this, of course. It was why he'd brought the picnic basket.
>
> "Narratives of the Dead", ceaselessEcho

There was, and to an extent still is, a rivalry and a blurry line between the "Stackers", those who would exploit the game without actively seeking to explicitly break its confines, and those who did memory-editing.

Essentially, the Stackers were happy to sequence-break, manipulate event flags, exploit stackable buffs (which is where their name comes from – the discovery that you could stack multiple Land Beds to get an extremely high bonus to Sleep Ratio), or otherwise screw around with the Game, but they drew the line at deliberately committing memory overflows. With – and again, I point out that the line is blurry at best – the occasional exception, such as telling the Denizen your name is "aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa [etc.]" to take advantage of the fact that this would freeze the Denizen for several seconds whenever they had to repeat your name, thus letting you sneak around under their notice if you were fast enough about it.

The memory-editors, by contrast, preferred active memory editing by way of such techniques as causing buffer overflows or harnessing Corruption. They would explore things, and then deliberately break them using methods that the Stackers wouldn't (or couldn't?) use. They're the ones who figured out that critical player information is stored on the Pendant and can be manipulated using Heart-aspect techniques, and that discovered the strange linkage between the clocks that sometimes show up in the Magicant and people's lives and deaths.

Both groups came up with meaningful discoveries: the Stackers did some extremely useful pioneering research into ARC-measurement mnemonics, and the memory-editors are the precursors to the people who work on Alchemiter and Alimentator jailbreaking and custom firmware today.

They also had a sometimes-tongue-in-cheek-and-sometimes-dead-serious rivalry: Stackers would try to figure out how to do things without editing memory, and the memory-editors would then be spurred to improve upon their methods and create ever more impressive results. At its peak, this resulted in the death of three coplayers when a memory-editor gave in to the lure of using Corruption to edit memory and ended up going Singer on their session. After that, things cooled down. Today the rivalry is more of a joke than anything.

The Vine's Dreamers

> We are, I suppose, at the relative dawn of Replayer science – but that's fine, because what we'll lose in terms of our own survival will more than be made up for by the immortality of our names, attached to what we'll discover.
>
> "Madmen", bobcatBox

"The Dreamers" is the name of a group that was present on the timetrav encryption known as The Vine. Originally this was an alliance of convenience and shared information, but it developed into a full-fledged social club and friendship circle.[151] They moved back and forth between whatever forums The Vine happened to be present on, not being particularly tied to any given medium, and investigated things on the Dream Moons.

The Dreamers were a very patient lot – I'm given to understand that they explored and worked out how big the Tunnels inside Prospit and Derse were (and whether, therefore, they were bigger than could reasonably fit inside the Moons themselves) for something like three years subjective. They were also an incredibly supportive and pleasant group, although of course not without their flaws.

The most prominent Dreamers include immediateThorium, of *Imperatives and Priorities* fame, who got his start studying the Libraries on the Dream Moons; unitedEirwens (who later wrote *Moonjacking for Fun and Profit*); originalCharacter, who could tell you essentially anything about the Mail Quests; rhesusRotative, who would probably be known today as a Stacker specializing in getting Carapaces to break out of their normal societal roles; and bobcatBox, who (while engaging in relatively little Gamebreaking of her own) was absolutely instrumental in making sure everyone got along and pushing people with complementary research focuses together.

==> 151. EB: They'd also make a great group to put the PCs in!

by cogitativeMistake

Gamebreaking is a dangerous pastime. Dangerous enough that #ultimatereward, admins and all, was terrified by it. And, the story goes, why *shouldn't* they be terrified? Trying to break any other videogame from the inside runs the very real risk of crashing it, at which point everything inside it ceases existing.

But Sburb is never actually seen to crash, because any crash, any fatal exception, is automatically timeline-doomed. The doom propagates backwards all the way to whatever point the crash became inevitable, and retroactively prevents the circumstances of the crash from happening. There is at least one theory that says that this is how all timeline-dooming works, and/or that this is why timeline-dooming exists in the first place.

In some rare cases, it is theorized, this backwards propagation could erase all of you, forever, from existence - because if cat-killing curiosity is written into your personality deeply enough, every single timeline in which you exist would eventually lead to a crash.

But this is theoretical, because if it happened, we would never know that it had happened…

The Age of Replayer Networks (TS35 – present)

> The population of paradox space is uncountable. But we do know how many living people are on Replayer networks as of this timestamp: 2,091. This is approximately a large high school's worth of people, or a small town just large enough for a proper main street.
>
> From some perspectives, this is a spectacularly large number. We have the expertise of thousands, about a hundred organized groups, a multiversal web archive dozens of petabytes deep, and more people than you could make friends with in several lifetimes.
>
> But this number is also frighteningly small. It is small enough that every single death notice will devastate someone you know. It is small enough that if you do not do something yourself, it is likely to never get done. Even a relatively broad interest may only have a hundred people in it - and, if you've alienated those people, then you may well have nobody left to talk to.
>
> "Ballpark Numbers, ts70 Survey Edition (¼)", erythralTimepiece

The Age of Replayer Networks is our "modern day", such as we have a modern day in Paradox Space.

Timestamp 35 was marked by two events: the stable release of RingServer In A Box 1.0, and the final disappearance of enturbulatedOccupation, the Sburb.org administrator. The former allowed even novices to establish Ring servers; the latter demonstrated that it was possible for networks to survive past the death of their creators.[152]

The beginning point of the campaign for this setting, also called *The Age of Replayer Networks*, is thus benchmarked at Timestamp 35. Partially because we really feel like we should write what we know, and partially because timestamp 35 is long enough ago that you can watch many now-legendary Replayers rise from obscurity.

> Almost all Replayers pick one network to serve as their "home base", even if they have accounts on many networks. Many Replayers describe this network as being their "family", or "clade", because this network serves as one's source of help, companionship, and love.
>
> *Sociology of Replayer Networks*, lavishBoar

==> 152. CM: Myra made a good show of Sburb.org being based upon the equal contributions of six different people, but it was totally her show. Fight me.

It gets very lonely in a session where you're the last one standing. Sometimes I just lie down and wonder – what am I even still here for? Why am I not dead?

It takes so much strength to get up afterwards. It takes so much strength to go on.

I do it because I love you. I love even those of you I've never met. I love you all.

<div align="right">

"Session, Annulled", weatherWonder
</div>

This Ritual was originally designed for registering an account on a website, but it could also be for filling out and turning in forms to join something else, such as naturalization documents or School registration forms. Or being inducted into a particularly formalized group like, say, a witch coven or the Fortitude knitting club.

The HG has several ways in which to phrase each question, so as to make it suitable for multiple types of group registrations. Pick only one.

I'm going to call the person who's filling the form out the Respondent, and someone from the rest of the group a Witness (the HG should go around the group in order to pick who has that role line-by-line).

A free response is some sort of emote, some sort of "pose" (showing off what you happen to be doing), interactions with other characters involved, or the invocation of a second ritual to combine the two rituals thereby.

For this Ritual, whoever happens to be the Witness at the moment sheds their usual character and acts as if they are a person who *belongs* to the group whom the registering person wishes to join – witches, future classmates, bureaucrats, and the like. If you wish to act in your usual character anyway, the HG is allowed to request a Will surcharge from you. (It shouldn't be terribly difficult to do this, but I want you to think about it to ensure it is sufficiently awesome.)

This is how it goes:

HG: "What should we call you?" / "What is your name?" / etc.

Respondent: "You shall know me as ____." (This name is how you will be referred to for the rest of the Ritual.)

Witness: "We welcome you, ____." Then, if desired, a free response (pose/emote/interaction), in the character of someone in the group to which the Respondent desires entry.

HG: "How old are you?" / "What is your birthday?" / "How many moons have you?" / etc.

Respondent: Free response. (It must be tenuously connected to the concept of age, but it can be cryptic or tangential.)

Witness: "We celebrate your birth, _____." Then, if desired, a free response, in the character of someone in the group to which the Respondent desires entry.

HG: "Where do you live?" / "Where should we contact you?" / "What is your email address?" / etc.

Respondent: Free response. (It must be tenuously connected to the concept of home, but it can be cryptic or tangential.)

Witness: "We open a portal to your life, _____." Then, if desired, a free response, in the character of someone in the group to which the Respondent desires entry.

HG: "What will your password be?" / "How will we know of your approach?" / "Can I see your ID, please?" / "Step right this way and we'll fingerprint you." / etc.

Respondent: Free response. (It must be tenuously connected to the concept of identity, but it can be cryptic or tangential.)

Witness: "We will remember your face, _____." Then, if desired, a free response, in the character of someone in the group to which the Respondent desires entry.

HG: "It is witnessed."

Everyone then repeats: "It is witnessed."

Thus the Ritual closes. The Respondent generally receives as a reward some token of their registration; an ID card, perhaps, or a lanyard, or a charm necklace.

Sburb.org and the IRCs

by cogitativeMistake

Sburb.org is a set of servers with timetrav stabilized by a Time player, all located in a Bargain-stabilized null session. These host a forum and associated IRC server, with a population numbering in the thousands.

Sburb.org was founded by six Replayers who had to leave their original session and travel the Ring because of two overlapping Cataclysms. One Cataclysm is rare enough; two is unheard-of. The odds were against this session even forming at all, let alone everyone surviving it. Furthermore, it turns out that four of the six players were rerolling their full native Title and Aspect for the first time (the exceptions being potassiumEngineer, who was a first-sessioner, and painterlyDabbling, who started out as a Witch of Void).

These admins' meteoric rise to prominence in the Replayer community is legendary.

Admins and Mods

> I remember what it was like to be a part of #ultimatereward. I remember what it was like, to be so tightly knit with the other "greats", and to go through life together with them. And yes, it was a place that had to die – but I mourn it anyway, the same way you would mourn the death of a fucked-up relationship, because on some level that's what it was.
>
> *Memoirs of a Seer*, epinephrineElectrified

By default (i.e. the way it happened in this timeline), the Founders are these six individuals:

- Cole Kingston, potassiumEngineer, Sage of Mist
- Myra LeJean, enturbulatedOccupation, Waste of Mind
- Vitaliy "Vitt" Bokun, genesisArtificer, Seer of Space
- Betsy Vadha, specificNihilism, Grace of Void
- Ross Eberhardt, ventricularPipefitter, Smith of Heart
- Cherlie Lightbearer, painterlyDabbling, Muse of Time

The current admins are potassiumEngineer, painterlyDabbling, and the following:

- Levi Storm, calculatedTorque, native Sage of Mind, promoted ts57
- Carina Ciernik, severalEntries, native Knight of Heart, promoted ts65
- Miguel Alvarez, orderlyDiphthong, native Muse of Sound, promoted ts68

There is also a constantly-changing cast of 30-34 moderators (each of whom is assigned to various subsets of the forums or IRC channels), but you won't need to know most of them – unless you range all the way across Sburb.org, you're unlikely to interact with more than a small handful. This being said, here are a couple important names:

- Zeimah Dalyce, stanzicApparati, native Mage of Time
- Bill Tellurian, charmedMittens, native Guide of Coins
- Sitka Donaldo, repeatableWit, native Page of Rhyme

Culture

> Sburb.org has a culture in the same way an entire microbiological lab has a culture: yes, you can speak of the big overarching one, but you should be more specific – because, on the level you're probably interested in, it has hundreds.

<div align="right">

"Re: What Is The Culture Here Like?", fletchedSunlight

</div>

The moderators of Sburb.org are given an unusually large amount of leeway, which means that subforums – and even individual threads – can have wildly different cultures. The admins are happy to let each subforum determine its own culture, so long as it doesn't become "toxic" (for their own idiosyncratic definition of toxic).

Personally, I think the heavy siloing of subforums contributes to the uneven moderation standards; if they had global moderators, or rotated their moderators from job to job, or even exercised *any real oversight whatsoever*, Sburb.org would have less of a reputation for capriciousness.

It would've helped if one of their founding members wasn't a Corpsefriend.[153] Myra explicitly valued this kind of fracturing, called it "diversity", and encouraged it. That is why the "newbies" forum is heavily-moderated and very friendly, and other parts of the forum... aren't. For example, the Space forum (frustratingly) requires you to fill out a long questionnaire before you request help from them,[154] and the Rage forum is full of heated arguments staying just within the letter of the global forum rules, if not the spirit.

One of the few things common across wide swathes of Sburb.org is that they seem to have a widespread fear of gamebreakers.[155] Many are afraid that, if a gamebreaker overreaches and gets themselves killed, they might get caught in the backlash. A lot of them think that gamebreakers are like speedrunners, too – that gamebreaking is a hobby that requires enlisting other people as your pawns and endangering everyone's lives. (For the record, it is not.) The best thing is, I'm pretty sure this has already happened – see the remaining fragments of the Lotus cognitohazard, which as far as we can tell began on Sburb.org.

Sburb.org heavily encourages descriptive titles and summaries at the top of first posts, their rationale being that this serves the same purpose as trigger warnings without becoming a status competition or a silencing technique. Moderators are willing and able to edit these in, if necessary. Among other things, this means that searching thread names is actually useful.

As an extension of this philosophy, the forum rolled out a feature that is currently in secondary testing[156]: a small, 4,000-character wiki entry prepended to a topic, in which people are encouraged to

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==> 153. CM: The proper term contains a slur against sexual minorities in it, which is unsurprising given that the term came from a certain Replayer-run imageboard; see page ???.

==> 154. EB: Look, I can sort of understand making newbies fill out a form like that if they're planning on sticking around, but for someone who just needs to ask a question, it's excessive. Why do you need to know how long my shoelaces are to give me help on Space?

==> 155. CM: Sometimes it comes across as disdain or anger, but I'm pretty sure it's fear.

==> 156. CM: We do not call software "alpha" or "beta", here. It's bad luck, because Sburb uses those terms. We often use "primary testing" and "secondary testing" instead, although these are by no means standardized.

write a summary of everything that happened in the thread. This is currently well-used in some subforums but not all.

Interestingly, people often make that 4,000-character wiki entry a table of contents to a guide that is then written in the thread – linking to new posts made as new chapters or versions are generated. (Link URLs are not counted against the character limit.) This has allowed guides to be written collectively. There is even a script to compile this kind of guide into a single text file, suitable for submission to Pits, complete with full attributions.

> Every IRC has its own culture, and each one of them was randomly seeded by the people who populated it.
>
> Thus, even though the IRC-assignment algorithm itself was verified to be random, the various IRCs have developed reputations of their own: for example, #crystalanthology for writing, #magican for Aspect art, and #pierograph for cooking.
>
> To be fair, in that last instance, the name of the IRC might have helped.
>
> <div align="right">*Sociology of Replayer Networks*, lavishBoar</div>

One of the strangest features of the Sburb.org culture is the IRCs. IRCs are intended to provide ready-made social groups for Replayers, to provide the social support we are so often wrenched away from. Each Sburb.org member is automatically assigned to an IRC channel when they sign up. While one can join other channels, or request to have their "home" channel changed, most people stay with the IRC they were assigned to. Each IRC is, in theory, balanced to have an even mix of veterans and newbies. (Veterans often spread themselves out over three or four different channels to provide advice, although even they still socialize in the IRC channels in which they were placed.) In practice, the distribution is uneven because many people never even use IRCs, many more lurk, and only a few participate regularly.

IRC channels have names like #genesisshrimp, #ultimatereward, #crystalanthology, and #airfare – puns and wordplay based on Sburb terminology. Some have stronger reputations than others. For example, #ultimatereward is where the admins originally placed themselves – and although it was shut down around timestamp 55 (presumably for being too obvious a smoke-filled room), it was the origin for an unusually high proportion of moderators.

Most IRC channels have a strong, tribal identification with "their own". It's a small-town type of place, in all the bad ways as well as the good ones. If someone does something bad, other people's judgement of them is heavily colored by whether the victim or perpetrator or both were members of the same immediate group. For example, exceptionalBender was tolerated for *years* in #ultimatereward despite being a serial PK who provided visual evidence and confessions several times.

Multiple people who sign up from the same session are generally assigned to the same IRC, as are multiple people from the same native session. This is by no means reliable, but it can help to make sure people who need to bump into each other again are at least within proximity of each other. If you did not get along with the people in your native session I advise you to request a change of home channel immediately. Change of home channel requests take a while to get approved.

IRCs are a very good way to gather player characters.

> **Spontaneous Cheerleader**, n.p.: a Carapace from Prospit who likes organizing flashmobs. If your Prospit rep is high enough that you are getting 30% discounts on non-equippable goods, you can give her an idea for a flashmob, and she will make it happen exactly 72 hours after your request. This is useful for drawing attention away from shady activities.
>
> *The Gamebreaker's Glossary*, 21st edition

The Replay Value AU universe is much larger than just the PCs; RV Classic often had as many as a dozen characters in the memo at one time, and had a regular cast of 40 or more. I'm not going to expect the HG to play that many characters, so here are some rules to let handlers play NPCs or extra characters.

Troupe Play and Disposable NPCs

Trope play is where, if your character is not on screen, you can play a different character who is on-screen. This different character usually an NPC (unless it's an Alternate Identity; see below). Sometimes, the HG will ask you for a specific NPC; other times, you'll be playing a small herd of unimportant NPCs (such as Consorts); yet others, you can come up with one yourself. These characters exist to react to whatever the other PCs say, to give the HG less work in coming up with and playing bystanders, and to give you something to do when your PC isn't on-screen.

You are never obligated to play an NPC - you are always allowed to sit out a scene entirely. You are also always allowed to remove anyone (not just an NPC) from play midscene. *Try* to come up with at least a flimsy excuse for it. For example, a Sburb player's dreamself might suddenly wake up, making them go to sleep; or a Consort/Carapace could be accosted and summoned by a messenger.

These NPCs are generally considered disposable. They do not have wound levels. If someone else does something objectionable to them, you should play the negative effects straight.[157] If the HG really likes your NPC, sometimes they will overrule you and have the NPC "take a wound" instead of going along with the effects. This should be rare.

If you want more plot armor for a side character, you can convert them into an Alternate Identity by taking the Alternate Identity perk. Let's talk about that…

Alternate Identities

The Alternate Identity perk is a perk you can earn from certain quests (especially those on a Storyteller arc). It lets you play a second character, with their own character sheet, alongside or alternating with your first. Many people in Replay Value AU played multiple characters. I had two primary PCs, and for some time I was playing both of them at once (until I could come up with a good-ish ending for one's story, at least).

==> 157. OJ: You are *allowed* to drop the character, optionally fob them off on the HG for the rest of the scene, and then never play them thereafter. This being said, that's an "allowed" and not an "expected".

Health Levels are shared between the two sheets; the justification is that they are a player-level resource, which is to say it would be unfair for people who only played one character versus people who played two. You can tweak what each wound refers to depending on which sheet you're on, though.

Quests are also player-level. You still only have the four (or five, in RV Chuubo's) quest slots, no matter how many characters you play. You can reserve XP earned when using one character for using on character-specific quests. You can also swap out basic quests, alternate between basic quests, or leave one character without a basic quest.

You must keep the Alternate Identity perk active in a perk slot on *both* sheets in order to continue using it.

Alts and Defeat

As noted previously, Health Levels are common across sheets. However, if you have an alternate character, and they weren't taken out by the specific thing that Defeated the original one, you can continue playing them - but you can't earn or use anything besides emotion XP and quest bonus XP until you've talked with the HG to establish what happens next.

Similarly, Illusion 5 autodefeats your character. Usually, you relinquish your character to the HG, and the only thing you can earn in the meantime is emotion XP and quest bonus XP. This is still true even if you have an alternate character available, but an alt means that it makes more sense for your primary character to be off-screen.

If, after events take their course, you decide to leave one character dead, you may then create a new Alternate Identity character sheet and use it; or you may discard the perk and play just the one character thereafter.

by saltPork

> Many problematic changelings are not so obviously villainous. Some simply have hair-trigger tempers and are prone to violence when some person or situation inadvertently reminds them of their captivity with the Fae. Others may be completely non-violent but are pathological liars, petty thieves or simply completely self-centered and amoral. All such changelings can be exceedingly difficult to deal with.
>
> The situation is naturally made worse by the fact that many Lost are willing to ignore serious eccentricities in their fellow changelings. This dismissal means that problems only tend to be raised once they have become so severe that no one can ignore them anymore.

> *Changeling: The Lost*

When a lot of people think about The Greeks, they don't realize that being exiled from your home was actually a Big Deal. Basically everyone (with the exception of a few weirdos like Diogenes) defined their identity in terms of the city-state they were from. When you were exiled you didn't just forfeit your right to live there, you gave up, in part, your right to be treated like a human being.

This is what getting banned from your home IRC channel is like. Usually if you get banned, it's because you've done something horrible, like torture, rape or serial murder (there have been some notable exceptions to this rule, including several famous users and a few moderators who got away with it). That means that when you get banned your name is also most likely going up on a list of people who do those sorts of things. In effect, being banned is more than exile, it's a form of outlawry.

by cogitativeMistake

Millions of words have been written on the topic of Myra LeJean, cofounder of Sburb.org and probably the person who did the most to move us from the Age of Ring Servers into the Age of Replayer Networks. So I would not write an essay if I did not know that I had something to say. Fortunately for us all, I'm pretty sure that I actually do.

Myra LeJean was not just someone who wore anonymity, she wore emotional and moral commitments to the concept of anonymity. It is important to consider this in any analysis of her personality and actions.

I: The Anonverse

To create a Waste one must start in presession.

We should first consider Myra LeJean herself: though we never heard many of the specifics, it is clear that her ability to maintain relationships, trust, and emotional stability was compromised at a very early age. Abuse early in childhood can produce what the official books often call personality disorders; personally, I think that borderline personality disorder, antisocial personality disorder, developmental trauma disorder, and a variety of other diagnoses of this nature describe different manifestations of the same internal state. While Myra LeJean appeared to be a survivor of psychiatric abuse and as such refused to let anyone use these terms in relation to herself, and I am wary of narrowing it down to any specific "diagnosis", it is generally accepted that *something* happened [1, 2].

While Myra was never particularly forthcoming about her native world, some of her conatives were. Most of our extant documentation on the subject comes from scrollbackAntacid, who wrote a full series of articles for Transamphibian under the name "Why Revolution Is A Terrible Idea, Except When It Isn't" [3] explaining the political and social structure of what is sometimes called the Anonverse.

Myra was a member of a militia that appears to be an exaggeration of a social trend visible along the seams of a significant minority of politically otherwise stable Earths; namely, that of large social movements organized via the Internet and infused with Internet culture [4].

Myra was a member of one such culture: one premised upon the concept of anonymity (thus the name Anonverse), where self-aggrandizement was looked upon as the highest sin. Furthermore, as the Anonverse drove groups like this to an extreme, Myra was heavily indoctrinated into this and related principles. It probably increased her brittleness.

II: The Waste

It is clear that Myra LeJean did not adapt well to Sburb.

For those of you not familiar with the details of Sburb title assignment, holding the belief that self-aggrandizement is the highest sin is a one-way trip into rolling the Waste title [5]. Furthermore, Sburb

titles are generally designed to correct these ostensible personality flaws by indoctrinating one in behavior opposite to that of one's "flaw". This means that Myra was forced into attracting and seeking attention.

It is clear from contemporary written evidence [6] that Myra LeJean enjoyed this attention. It is also clear from similar evidence that Myra LeJean believed that seeking such attention was morally wrong [7], that seeking such attention would bring doom upon her head [8], and that seeking such attention was her giving in to Sburb's attempts to erase her personality [9].

As such: unlike most Sburb players, Myra's struggle against Sburb took on a moral dimension. Because she was culturally expected to bow to the needs of the collective, she faced several of the same pressures that face other Replayers coming from collectivist cultures [10], despite the fact that most people do not consider Anonymous a collectivist culture.

III: A Hill To Die On

In the words of the eternal gentlemanMannerism, "one must pick one's own hill to die on" [11]: meaning, everyone decides for themselves which principles they choose to uphold as sacred, and it is the utmost in discourtesy to attempt to argue against someone else's Hill unless they actively solicit such arguments.

Myra did not pick the hill that she was going to die on. Sburb picked it for her, by making her a Waste.

That Myra conformed to the expectations of Sburb with such alacrity, despite her morals being so adamantly opposed, would perhaps surprise most presessioners, but that's the nature of Sburb. Being forced to the brink of death clarifies one's values immensely, after all. Myra decided that she was better placed among the living, despite the increasing self-hatred that she accumulated over the years in remaining that way.

But the moral conflict of being forced to act against herself did not dissipate over the years. Though we have little writing from Myra's late period, secondhand accounts from close associates and coplayers verify that her difficulty in dealing with this dilemma obsessed her up until the end [2, 12].

Furthermore, Myra LeJean remained committed to the *concept* of anonymity long after she gave up trying to maintain it herself; see the Guest boards of Sburb.org, which to this day can be posted on under any name, in theory. In practice, the concept has been heavily compromised, but to this day the "Relationship Help" thread and other Guest Board fixtures remain culturally involate except in extreme cases like spamming.

(Around Timestamp 63, after much debate, the ability for moderators and admins to associate Guest posts with Sburb.org timetrav and forum accounts was added… and it should be said that Myra did not make doing this *easy*. I should know; I volunteered developer time trying to make it happen.)

Conclusion

Myra lived and died a Waste, tangled up in the notion of anonymity and attention-seeking with a moral dimension that most of us would never think to assign to it. It's something she couldn't transcend, but she tried her hardest despite it.

I guess that's a conclusion for both Myra and her boards: our original values may have been compromised, but we still try. There are worse hills to die on.

Note

Immediately after I posted this, I got an email from a nonexistent Pits account stating that "I may be dead but I can still see this, you know."

Make of this what you will.

References

[1] enturbulatedOccupation. "[Brainwashing, Torture, and the World of Sburb](#)", PT0000/FAQ/ts51. See section titled "Psychological Effects".

[2] ringlessOrdinateur. "Waste of Mind: A Retrospective, 20 Timestamps On". PT0000/Articles/ts55.

[3] See PT0000/TA/scrollbackAntacid/ "Revolution" series.

[4] catalogTruisms. "Interuniversal Correspondences, Part 5 of Inf." PT0000/Collections/Interuniversals/ts52.

[5] You should be able to find more information in any Comprehensive FAQ, but I recommend wedgeIssue's *Sarai's Sburban Guide*, sections 157A-H.

[6] Corpseparty Archives, /b/, pages 183, 201, and 433

[7] Ibid. pages 185, 247, and 252

[8] Ibid. pages 186 and 325

[9] Ibid. pages 413, 486, and 499

[10] For further information, see indifferentBem's book "On Non-Western Cultures and Sburb" (PT0000/Collections/ts67).

[11] gentlemanMannerism. *Etiquette Guide*. 15th Edition. Book IV, Section 6.

[12] scorpionSting. "Interesting Interviews" podcast series. Episodes 5 (epinephrineElectrified) and 18 (tingedCharacterization).

The Seer Network and Ivory Tower

by cogitativeMistake

> We knew. The Seer Network wasn't called that for nothing. But he had years on a Ring voyage, and we had a week to put together a response, and none of us was fast enough to stop it.
>
> Skaia to Epic E-Peen: You have made a mistake. You have made a terrible mistake. And if there's no way to take it back, you owe us all at least an apology.
>
> Oh, and also about five thousand hours in back scrying that you haven't written up properly.
>
> Love,
> *Lord of the Rings*

<div align="right">

"Response to Recent Leaks", unitarianMultitudes

</div>

The Seer Network was a gamebreaking and research group, originally hosted on Sburb.org, that focused on the development of advanced scrying techniques. It was ultimately shut down after epinephrineElectrified and octagonalPhanes leaked the entire contents of the Seer Network's private forums.

epinephrineElectrified and octagonalPhanes later went on to found what they called Ivory Tower, a network that carried on with cutting-edge scrying-based research. Unlike the original Seer Network, Ivory Tower is entirely opt-in, aggressively transparent, and did not enforce any particular reroll or expertise requirements on its members. However, Ivory Tower retained and, if it is at all possible to say so, further exaggerated the native elitism of Seer participants. (This despite the fact that epinephrineElectrified attempted to make certain that the network would not cause another lucidChthonia-type incident.)

Seer Network

> T ! H ! E M t I o R r R O h R T t R i E w E y S R v O a O e T h S A e R r E F a A y R R e E h A t C H t I u N b G
>
> [the mirror tree's roots are far reaching / but they are heavy with rot !!]

<div align="right">

quicksilverTragedian

</div>

The Seer Network was a private research group based off Sburb.org, which (if you take it at face value) put out a lot of very interesting and novel Game research. The problem was that the organization's closedness led to various forms of corruption. They invented dongle scrying and then proceeded to misuse it. They hoarded information for themselves. They pulled in a little Sylph who shared the aspect of Mind with me and twisted her up until she could no longer see straight. Since Elizabeth has already invoked Troll Godwin's Law, I'm not even going to go there.

The Seer Network was led, primarily, by the Seer of Space (genesisArtificer), the Seer of Heart (stagnantAnimus), and the Seer of Rage (auctoritasAuspex). The Seer of Space provided the institutional backing (he was also an administrator of Sburb.org), the Seer of Heart handled recruiting, and the Seer of Rage handled internal affairs. This all seems very reasonable and sane and normal. A division of labor based on everyone's natural talents: what could possibly go wrong?

> The innkeeper put down his glass. "Say, lass. I hear you're traveling to the capitol." I nodded, and he continued: "My brother said to give you some helpful advice: *don't go there*."
>
> "It's a bit late to tell me that," I said. "There's no way for me to make it home before the snows come."
>
> *Assuming there's even a home left for me to return to at this point*, I thought, as I sipped the last of the cider.

<div align="right">

The Infinite Castle, dryadTornado

</div>

The first problem was when the Seer of Rage decided that to "maintain quality" she wished to create a private invite-only forum for Seers who had proven themselves sufficiently enough of a "good fit" for the culture. (If you have read about implicit racist and sexist bias in hiring, stemming from interviewing people for "fit" and "culture", you may see where this is going.) The Seer of Rage thus implicitly assumed authority over the Seer of Heart and the Seer of Space, and nobody complained.

The second problem was when the Seer of Rage decided further that to "maintain quality" she wished to make sure that everyone else, to fit in, had the right mindset. At first it was gentle enough – some prodding towards more positive mental states – but, as such things go, it gradually became more of a slippery slope towards first gently encouraging rerolls, to requiring a certain level of rerolls in order to join at all, to full-on cultishness.[158]

After that – well, the Seer Network abused the fact that they could scry other people without being noticed. They did not notify the members of Sburb.org that they would be scried on at all times for often no reason at all (for example, one member *literally* had a voyeurism kink, and it was thusly indulged). Oh, sure, there was a clickwrap thing with a generic "information gathered through your use of this Service may be aggregated for research purposes" clause, but that isn't anywhere near informed consent.

According to the accounts of those in the Seer Network, the way everyone else got strong-armed into accepting this involved abusive behavior on the part of the Seer of Rage. Rage-aspected, miraculous-level abusive behavior. The Seers learned that they could do no wrong. That they were the only ones who would understand each other. That everyone had blackmail material on everyone else, so if any of them tried to leave they'd be smeared across paradox space.

Unsurprisingly this did not end well for anyone involved.

==> 158. CM: As you can see "maintain quality" was used as an excuse for lots of things.

Meanwhile, while this brainwashing was happening, the Seer Network was actually doing some genuinely good work: doing research into the incidences of various classpects that couldn't be biased by survey-participation rates, infiltrating the Azurites and surreptitiously sowing discord, doing some interesting research on alternate methods of treating Corruption, providing reliable information and leads for gamebreaking groups to investigate, and so on. And since much of this was facilitated via the selfsame, unethical dongle scrying, we're not going to get an opportunity like this ever again.

Honestly while Elizabeth thinks the Seer Network was unambiguously horrible I don't think of it that way. It's… a bit like unethical research, you know? Human experimentation is horrible but since it already happened we may as well use the information, and as someone who thinks about this kind of stuff I can't help but wonder what we could've gotten from more of the same.

> "You're supposed to lie still while I do this. It's something an idiot could do. Why don't you just do it?
>
> "Could it be that you don't want this to be happening? Surely not. If you didn't want this to be happening you would've said something by now, right?"
>
> Matilda could hear the blood rushing in her ears. *I would certainly say something*, she thought, *if you hadn't put me under a geas of silence*.

<div align="right">

Sorcerer's Son, dryadTornado

</div>

Here's some important names you might encounter in the Seer Network:

- Kaya, **auctoritasAuspex**, Seer of Rage. She was vicious and perfectly willing to use her (frequently rerolled) Rage powers to beat other people into submission. In Chuubo's terms this is probably the Commanding Aura ability of the Become Somebody arc.
- Vitt, **genesisArtificer**, Seer of Space. His role in the Seer Network was to facilitate its existence by letting it have a place in Sburb.org's infrastructure.
- "Skully", **cessationInvestigator**, Seer of Doom. She wasn't a bad person, but she was… sometimes unaware of what other people considered unethical. For example, she's probably the only person who thought that dissecting timeclones (after they were dead) was a perfectly normal thing to do.
- "Stag", **stagnantAnimus**, Seer of Heart. He… should've been the moral center of the Seer Network, but for the fact that he was actually the least experienced Seer in the group at time of its formation and even to the end was the one with one of the least rerolls. So while he did quietly object to most of the things that were happening he wasn't nearly as good as Kaya and thus did not really have the power to fight back. (Plus, in general Heart is more of a self-focused power and Rage is more of an other-focused power; Rage players can command others trivially and it takes Heart players much work to get others to do things, but Heart players are extremely centered and Rage players find it very difficult to keep control of themselves.)
- "Null"/"Nulldude" (**rudimentaryCipher**, Seer of Void), Tocrux (**directionlessShooter**, Seer of Fate), and "Idiot" (**burningJupiter**, Seer of Stars) were older than the average Seer Network

member when they joined later on. Mostly they were really in the Seer Network for the old boys' club aspects of it. They managed to avoid most of the fallout by keeping completely quiet. I even think Null might still be alive.

- Flora (**fertileFootgear**, Seer of Life), "Surfer" (**boatswainWhisperer**, Seer of Might), "Drums" (**rimshotRegularized**, Seer of Time), "Lord of the Rings" (**unitarianMultitudes**, Seer of Mist), "Glassy" (**venetianManufacture**, Seer of Dreams), and "Duck"/Eric (**waterproofWindbreaker**, Seer of Hope) were known as the "regulars". They were the most frequent perpetrators of the offenses we have come to know the Seer Network for.
- Gwyn/"Tears" (**suspiciousLacrimosa**, Seer of Law) and Lune/"Quick" (**quicksilverTragedian**, Seer of Rain) were… not bad people. They had, however, extensive ties with unsavory people, histories of Corruption (Angelic and Otherwise, respectively), and a great deal of dirt on them. While they survived the initial fallout of the Seer Network, they did not survive much longer than that – Tears was personally hunted down by someone who she'd "befriended" and then left (using a discarded pseudonym, while trying to infiltrate the Azurites), and Quick died a Speaker.
- Tony (**revolutionaryThrombin**, Seer of Blood) was ridiculed for being the "worst Seer" on a regular basis, and was quite relieved when the Seer Network was dismantled. Not that it did him any good. He was murdered by Azurites.
- "Demoman" (**levelHundred**, Seer of Breath) was practically a lurker, and frequently in the running for "worst Seer" as well. Notably, however, he was kicked out of the Seer Network after he completely failed to respond to any scrying requests during an entire Seer of Time session. Even after he left he still didn't talk.
- Aelfrida/"Lucid" (**lucidChthonia**, Sylph of Mind) was the Seer Network's unofficial pet. She wrote up a lot of their discoveries for her Pitsblog, and was a pretty good gamebreaker in her own right, but none of that mattered: the same techniques used to make native Seers so full of themselves that they would reroll? Convinced her that she was inherently inferior for *not* being a Seer. She eventually tried to have someone totally overwrite her personality with Heart, but didn't survive the attempt.
- Riley/"Epi" (**epinephrineElectrified**, Seer of Mind) and Alex (**octagonalPhanes**, Seer of Light) were, of course, the perpetrators of Seergate.

Those who think too hard about this have a tendency to end up with their heads unexpectedly located in their large intestine.

"Psychology of the Seer Network", simulationFumigated

You will note in several of those descriptions that I note that several Seers were killed by Azurites.

The Azurites are a deathcult that believe that if they show their worth in the most Darwinian of ways Skaia would eventually recognize said worth and let them through to their Ultimate Reward. suspiciousLacrimosa, the Seer of Law, had been working on infiltrating the Azurites, to see what their organizational structure was like and how best to fight them.

When epinephrineElectrified and octagonalPhanes released the entire archives of the Seer Network forum in a data dump known as Seergate, they did not think to sort through the data.[159] Aside from the fact that everyone had blackmail material in the Seer Network, Seergate also exposed certain data that suspiciousLacrimosa had been collating. Data on the realnames and realhandles of many Azurites, data on how to find certain secret Azurite servers, and – probably most offensive to the Azurites themselves – a complete copy of the Azurite's Handbook: a compilation of tips for recruitment and player-killing, mixed in liberally with the founding documents of the Azurite philosophy.[160]

The Azurites responded by declaring a blood vendetta on all Seers, not just those of the Seer Network. Seers in many sessions suddenly turned up dead with their eyes gouged out. On the plus side, the vendetta did expose a great deal of sleeper Azurites. On the minus side, it also resulted in the deaths of a great many Players, including at least four former Seer Network members.

==> 159. CM: Epi has stated that he regrets this but that the influence of Kaya meant that if he wanted to dump the data at all he would have to dump it all at once before he got a chance for second thoughts.
==> 160. CM: It used to be that possession of the Azurite's Handbook if you were not an Azurite was punishable by death. (To be fair, technically being in an Azurite's session at all was punishable by death, but you know what I mean.) This is no longer feasible for them to enforce.

by eternalFarnham

> In the immortal words of our Lady, "maturity is all about death". Well, what she actually
> said was — well, there was a lot of profanity, but you get it.
>
> "Video Gospels II", azureWitness

> "But it doesn't work," he says. "Helping them hurt you—it doesn't give you power. Even
> though it should."
>
> "Nabonidus' Gods (IV/IV)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

The Azurites are famous as the "PK cult" amongst Replayers, although that's not a perfect explanation. As a purely object-level summary: occasionally, people with a handle formatted as "azure(Noun)" will Replay into a session. These players, or "Azurites," will attempt, via brute-force physical and psychological attacks on other players, to kill every other player in the session, take their pendants, and solo the game to a greater or lesser extent (some start around the Reckoning, while others only wait until the entry chain is complete). They do not post on Replayer networks, and are loosely coordinated around a collection of, if you'll pardon the phrase, Sburban legends, regarding the life and sessions of their founder, "Psycho Rosemary."

P–Rosemary (as she is "affectionately" called) is shrouded in mystery, since almost all accounts of her have been written by the Azurites, who, on the occasions that they share, are almost certainly attempting to conduct psychological warfare or induct new members. They all tell different stories, too, and each and every one acts like they're reciting from a memorized, formalized canon or scripture. What little is known about her follows, although keep in mind that at least one of the following statements is almost certainly a lie:

- Her name sounds like "Rosemary." A few competing monikers — "Rose Maria Bellsword," "Rosemary Partridge" and "Ruth-Marie Friedland" — exist; everyone agrees that her handle is azureGoddess.
- She is a native Sage of Time. (You know how morbid players sometimes sing "Psy-cho Rose-ma-ry, the Sage of Time" and it sort of sounds like "Parsley, Rosemary, Sage, and Thyme"? That's only half a joke.)
- She was the only survivor of her first session, and made an unspecified but widely speculated-upon deal with her Denizen.
- She has a double-digit body count of fellow players and Replayers. (Or triple-to-quadruple, if you believe the Azurites; one fringe case claimed that she set up a damaged Incipisphere of some sort that devoured players who attempted to hop sessions via meteor.)
- There's a manifesto attributed to her and to a mythical(?(probably)) Azure disciple, detailing the "nature of Skaia."

All else is fog, mist and inferences. The timeframe on this information is unknown; generally, Azurites claim that the tradition has been around for decades or more, but, as has been previously remarked, Azurites are not super trustworthy.

They possess a Writ,[161] which, as many players know, starts "Lo, the Game looked out over the world and decreed that everyone be wasted. And it did this to everyone but you." Most attribute it to Rosemary herself, or to her Disciples (transparently Apostles and probably imaginary; there's frigging twelve of them, for one thing, with handles in a suspiciously appropriate alphabetical ordering: azureAdonis to azureFist and azureHedonic to azureMarauder). It details a heavily muddled cosmology in which the Game thinks, lives and breathes, as well as a set of values by which it intends its players to live.

A few Azurite sources claim that the text is ancient, which is probably why it's written in Papyrus in "wrinkly-paper-looking" PDFs. (To what degree they are fucking with us remains to be seen.)

The basic concept on which the Azure philosophy is based is that the Game values heroism and drama more than life. Since Skaian defense portals inevitably wreck the player's home planet, not to mention timeline dooming, this is not *necessarily* an inaccurate conclusion; however, the Azurites, out of a weird transcendence philosophy that makes vague references to the "Wheel of Skaia" and "the ring structure of reality" which (I'm going to be honest) is almost certainly bullshit, *model* their actions on their conception of the Game, such that they intentionally make the Game *as hard as is possible* in order to encourage the universe to read them as more heroic.

The immediate manifestation of this is best summarized by a quote from one of the many existing Writs:

> Weakness is the enemy. Enemies are chances to prove you're not a scrub. Other players are a chance to prove you're not a scrub. Everything in the Game, in fact, is a chance to prove you're not a scrub. And yet, lo, day after day, session after session, person after person, Hero after Hero proves a goat.
>
> the Writ, Third Primary Version,[162] commonly attributed to azureGoddess

In other words, PvP is more difficult than PvE. Azurites do both, as hard as they can, because it is their belief that SBURB will only save those who are the best and playing on "the hardest difficulty." This is why they all take the "azure(Noun)" handle — to prove as a function of their existence that they are a threat to the lives of every other player.

==> 161. CM: Which comes in as many editions as the Bible, each of which is claimed to be the One True Version, also like the Bible. The most popular version is heavily edited and admixed into an Azurite's Handbook, but independent copies exist.

==> 162. CM: Title not from the original; meme-theologician countrymanTroubles has classified the various versions of the Azurite Writs based on their frequency, their claimed proximity to the source, and in what order they've found their way to Replayer networks. Because this is claimed to be directly from Rosemary, it's a Primary Writ; and it's the third major version that we've seen. There is, alas, not enough room here to go deeper into meme-theology as a topic of study.

For inexperienced and loose Replayers, Azurites are *supposed* to send death-threat messages explaining the basic premise of the Azure Hunt (i.e. "Kill or be killed! Let's rock!"), though this is more a principle than a fact (according to witnesses who have survived Azurites).

In short, Azurites kill every other player, regardless of ARC and roleplay costs and the time-cost and resource-cost of hunting and killing everyone else, because being a good person or a team-builder makes the Game too easy to satisfy the transcendent Skaian consciousness that runs its narrative.

(On a related note, it is doctrine that Azurites refuse to use non-default Game resources to their advantage — in fact, it is an explicit goal of a number of Azurites to destroy the Replayer networks, as they are inherently Weak and are a manifestation of Outside Help that's ruining the quest for Difficulty for everyone else. While this principle is largely ignored, as Azurites — like anyone else — are people, and are thus likely to rationalize or ignore inconvenient or soul-crushing parts of their own philosophical systems, Azure Networks are few and far between; those that players in general have found tend to be flamed out of existence or erased fairly quickly. The same goes for use of Magicants and, interestingly, Corruption; Corruption's debuffs are all social compared to its massive magical enhancements, Azurites don't play nice anyway, and it comes from glitches and unintended elements of the Medium, so it's *cheating*.)

There's something appealing about the Azure conception of Maturity, in a way. In a world where the whole basic idea of growing up is abstract and tied to values that don't quite make sense and you don't really have any adults around and you're locked in a sadistic storygame mousetrap, it's nice to imagine that Maturity has tangible, concrete steps that involve fighting obvious enemies,[163] and that your apparent failure is the fault of other people for being coddled.

Nevertheless, it takes a certain mindset to actually come around to the idea that growing up is about murder, one that the Azure Hunt doesn't entirely share. Some known Azurites who talked appear to actually buy into it (i.e. azureCanid, azureProfessor, azureJuggernaut), claiming vague influences from Darwin as well as from the "great history" of PK heroes, while others (the famous azureWitness Clips) claim only that it is the philosophy of the Game, rather than their own.

==> 163. CM: Like in, you know, *actual videogames*.

Note from Elizabeth: Someone then left an anonymous comment on my blog...

> azurites always sort of reminded me of that "dead session" rumor[164] you see pop up
> sometimes. the one where if you manage to enter as your own server, you supposedly get
> an 8-ball pool metaphor instead of a chess metaphor, and a dead planet instead of your
> Land, and all the session lore is about how the unreasonable difficulty is exactly what you
> deserve. you think there's a connection? like, that maybe it's an azurite legend that took on a
> life of its own?
>
> wait, shit. what if rosemary was real, but her native session was a dead session? maybe
> after going through that she'd think that THAT was the normal way to play the game and
> everyone else was the ones whose sessions were abnormal

I'll admit this connection is tenuous, but it's certainly no worse than any of the other *theories about
how the Azurites came about.*

==> 164. OJ: Remember that Replay Value AU is a *very old* Homestuck AU. We came up with the Azurite M.O. *years*
before the dead session ever showed up in Homestuck proper; I think it's an interesting speculation but I don't want to
canonize it.

by skinnerBox and dyingPerfection

Ivory Tower is a network, originally established by epinephrineElectrified, that focuses primarily on Game research. It is not and was never intended to be a network accessible to the general public; it is supposed to be a meeting of the best and brightest minds of Replayerdom, all of us working on various aspects of the fundamental problems of our existence. As such, it differs significantly from other major Replayer networks in concept and execution.

History

> "This you see here, these ruins wondered at by tribes of savages, do you not think that this
> will be again? Aye. And again. With other people, with other sons."

-Cormac McCarthy[1]

Ivory Tower is intellectually and circumstantially descended from the defunct Seer Network, a division attached to Sburb.org that did game research and, to that end, had special access to cross-session scrying through the Sburb.org servers. In fact, it was one ex-member of the Seer Network, epinephrineElectrified, who established Ivory Tower after the Seer Network's downfall at his own hands.

After instigating Seergate with one of his compatriots, epinephrineElectrified was apparently seized by a horror for what he had done, and assuaged this horror by establishing a replacement that he hoped would not repeat the Seer Network's failures.[2] While it is doubtful that he achieved his original intention, Ivory Tower produces papers at a prodigious rate, and even the detractors will admit that Ivory Tower is at least as good at producing major discoveries as the Seer Network.

Governance

> "Good governance never depends upon laws, but upon the personal qualities of those who
> govern. The machinery of government is always subordinate to the will of those who
> administer that machinery. The most important element of government, therefore, is the
> method of choosing leaders."

-Frank Herbert[3]

Somewhat like 4th Century Athens, Ivory Tower is governed by two bodies: a board of directors appointed by lottery, and a popular assembly which all members in good standing may sit on. The board, comprised of 23 members, is responsible for some decisions reserved to them by Ivory Tower's governing documents, for appointing committee chairs and members from the general assembly, and for exercising the powers of administrator over the site. As Ivory Tower currently weighs in at 241 members, this places roughly ten percent of its number in senior leadership positions, leading to criticism that the organization is unnecessarily top heavy.[4] An alternate viewpoint holds that the large

amount of senior leadership soaks up what would otherwise be social unrest, due to Ivory Tower's population having, on average, unusually low agreeableness.[5]

Members of Ivory Tower's board include:

- *hammerHead*: Current board chair. Native Mage of Breath. Abnormally strong.
- *saprobeSporophyte*: Native Prince of Life. Signature "plant" is *boletus edulis*.
- *fishboneHarp*: Native Sage of Time. On at least one PK list due to a misunderstanding.
- *castawayIonian*: Native Seer of Might. Notable for being extremely good with Photoshop.

The assembly is charged with voting on certain day to day matters of administration, including most crucially the recommendations of the various committees. A point of contention in recent timestamps has been exactly what items committee chairs must bring before the assembly for a vote, and what they may act on themselves without the approval of the main body.

Admissions: Responsible for reading and evaluating papers and other research material submitted by prospective members, and for determining which of their authors are eligible for membership. The largest committee. Chaired by attunedContrarian.

Linearity: Responsible for the oversight and maintenance of Ivory Tower's interfaces with timetrav encryption systems, as well as the servers themselves. This committee clashes on occasion with the board of directors on which administrative privileges and responsibilities should belong to who. Chaired by cogitativeMistake.

Overwatch: Responsible for processing and approving requests to employ Ivory Tower's cross session scrying capabilities. While it once enforced robust proscriptions on frivolous use of this surveillance technology, the timestamps following epinephrineElectrified's death have seen a swift collapse of most restrictions, prompting criticism that the committee is now rubberstamping practically anything put in front of it.[6] Chaired by petulantPanopticon.

Prices and Values: Responsible for maintaining the web of Deals with the Noble Circle that ensure Ivory Tower's continued existence, as well as those other agreements which pertain to the storage and use of corruptive information, along with research and gamebreaking tasks of the same description. Notably this committee has drawn harsh criticism, as (its members argue) due to the nature of its work, its proceedings and actions are largely kept secret from the organization at large.[7] Chaired by androgynousAutarch.

Membership

> "oh, no 12oom for Hyksos eh? fine, I'll go 13uild my own Ivory Tower. with private messaging, and hookers. in fact, forget the Ivory Tower and the private messaging."

-overwroughtStenographer[8]

To become a member of Ivory Tower, applicants must submit a piece of original research they themselves have produced, which imparts some new and pertinent information regarding Replayerdom. The original research is then viewed and voted on by the Admissions committee. If one fails to gain entrance, they must wait ten timestamps before applying again.

Many observers, both inside the organization and out, have commented that this admissions requirement is used as a proxy for intelligence testing, which is made unreliable by the difficulty of administering proper IQ tests in a Sburban environment, and the difficulty in assessing intelligence in a world where cognitive capacity can change rapidly with the acquisition or loss of aspect powers, ARC, and other game related modifiers to brainpower.[9]

Notable members of Ivory Tower, and their entry theses, include[10]:

- *androgynousAutarch*: investigated Debug NPCs and the implications of the possible existence of the Green Sun as the power source for Sburb
- *cogitativeMistake*: dug into Time magic's representation in game code, then applied it by programming a way for a timetrav's software to measure how many people were attached to a timetrav handle
- *fractalOrphean*: gathered data on how long, on average, servers without a Deal would last in the Ring
- *jocularPhial*: theorized that Pawns do not have theory of mind, but instead simply store all relevant information in a communal memory, divided by location/alignment and not by individual identity
- *noblePhosphate*: wrote a decompiler for DIS*, and in so doing demonstrated that most Skaianet compilers for the language implemented it as an interpretation layer on top of ~ATH
- *orangutanFingernails*: described precisely what psychological features, in those with the Sylph and Bane native classes, would result in a reroll of said class titles
- *restrictedDomain*: used Space to investigate how far down Sburb actually simulated physics before it stuffed everything in the black box of "game code"
- *skeletonWhiskey*: one of Ivory Tower's few trolls, investigated the "Doomed" phenomenon with special reference to nonplayers
- *skiddingZebra*: discussed "room IDs" on Prospit and their implications for sequence-breaking by manipulating location values
- *skinnerBox*: claimed that "Knight Syndrome" was actually how replayers would feel all the time without the game's psychological manipulation
- *thePresident*: examined how changes to the Shiny mapped themselves onto players' brains, and vice versa

It is also worth noting that there are also many notable *failures* to gain access to Ivory Tower. Here are some of the more amusing ones[11]:

- *dialogosEido*: submitted an audio recording of himself reciting a thirteen hour epic poem in ancient Greek, with appropriate bardic conventions and meter, detailing the history of Replayerdom[165]
- *eternityBraid*: wrote an impassioned defense of social relationships as the cornerstone of Replayer life[166]
- *plausibilityStudy*: submitted a detailed and extremely obscene narrative of the author's sex life, claiming it was an extensive investigation of the morphological differences and similarities between various Sburb species' reproductive tracts
- *wagglanGimmicks*: submitted an extensively researched meta-analysis of which demographics among replayerdom were responsible for the highest per capita rate of offenses such as assault, rape, torture and murder. He later admitted it was a joke, but the paper was seriously considered by at least one member of the committee, who apparently thought that the results were supported by actual statistics, as opposed to being heavily skewed by the author's hatred of trolls.

Research

"Forget the lever, or the place to stand. To move the Earth, all you need is a compiler."

-epinephrineElectrified[12]

epinephrineElectrified and octagonalPhanes destroyed the Seer Network because, among other concerns, they were concerned that its members had unhealthy reroll rates, fostered by the institution's culture and several of its members. In Ivory Tower, epinephrineElectrified created an institution that, since his demise (or possibly even since its creation) has been lurching in the same direction.[13] Seer (and other natives deemed desirable for research purposes) reroll rates have been steadily creeping upward compared to those of non-members with comparable demographic and Big 5 profiles.[14]

However, Ivory Tower is still a productive research institution. Here are several of the things Ivory Tower has discovered:

- **Soul Pollen**: A few throwaway remarks on loose Ring servers suggested that figuring out where "updates" came from might be a productive avenue of investigation. theologicalDifference pursued this idea, and found evidence that "updates" to Sburb are, at least in part, distributed through what were previously considered "junk files" in the Shiny (compare "junk DNA").[15] This meant that for a while, the only feasible solution to realizing that you were carrying a malign Update was suicide. More recently, geraniumLogic figured out that, by removing a large part of the "junk" space and shoving everyone through the door before it re-implemented itself, it was possible to stop such updates from spreading.[16] People who have survived this kind of drastic Heart-surgery often exhibit subtle procedural memory deficits or personality instability; most, however, consider these effects acceptable, if the alternative is death.

==> 165. CM: This later enjoyed great success on Pits. However, it had absolutely no place on Ivory Tower.
==> 166. CM: How did she actually think that would work?

- **Presession Length Prediction**: While it is not currently possible to reliably measure the length of a Presession from inside that presession, lackingTelepathy has done some very interesting work towards that end. He has found that running certain ~ATH programs, tied to very specific pieces of equipment present in Skaianet headquarters, yields a prediction with error bars of about two weeks in either direction. Currently, this requires gaining access to the Presession in question's Skaianet headquarters and finding the UUIDs of several highly specialized machines, but lacTel says that he has every hope that further refinement will eventually produce a program readily usable by even nontechnical Replayers.[17]

- **Denizen's Grist Hoard**: The "Skaian grist" or "liquid grist" released by killing the Denizen is incompatible with the grist used for Alchemization; it is only usable for creating the universe-frog. However, there is also an unused room full of usable Grist located directly adjacent to the Denizen's lair, in a way that suggests it may have originally become unlocked after defeating the Denizen. Previously, breaking into this grist hoard has required highly dangerous gamebreaking actions: most notably a noclip that, if failed, embeds you within Bedrock permanently. However, ocarinaPituitary has found that putting certain Consorts into the Royal Vault (or otherwise erasing them, such as with Void powers) also happens to erase the wall separating the Denizen's grist hoard from the Denizen's lair, making it trivially accessible.[18] This means that alchemizable endgame equipment becomes accessible significantly earlier than intended.

- **Roleplay Coefficient**: Historically, while we have been perfectly capable of measuring accumulated roleplay coefficient after the fact, there is no good way of figuring out how much roleplay coefficient any given action will generate, except for intuition. terracePins and adequateIvory, among others, are managing a database of individual actions and their effects on Roleplay Coefficient, indexed by class and aspect.[19] While we still do not have enough data to reverse-engineer the roleplay coefficient algorithms with any precision, the collected data has already settled several long-standing disputes about the relative benefit of subtly different actions - for example, we now know, definitively, that Scouts get roleplaying bonuses just as large for conceptual exploration (such as gamebreaking) as they would be for physical exploration.[20]

- **Magicant Connections**: The legend of the Player who spent so long wandering through the Magicant that he ended up in a different session has long been told and retold through Paradox Space. loxEternal has mathematically proven that there does exist at least one path through every Magicant that will eventually exit in another session; however, it requires repeatedly opening and traversing several million doors, on average.[21] Current estimates suggest that it would take 30-40 years of walking to exit the average session through the Magicant, a time period long enough as to be infeasible before the Magicant gets swallowed up with the rest of the session during garbage collection.[22] Furthermore, it does not yet seem to be possible to determine what kind of session you will exit in. However, since the current theoretical estimate for a minimum Magicant traversal time is less than one month, it is possible that we will figure out a way to forecast whether traversing any given session's Magicant is likely to be a workable method of escape.

Notes

[1] Cormac McCarthy. "Blood Meridian" Page 153. Presession designation PT944w5w (PrototypeTowers).

[2] epinephrineElectrified. "Memoirs of a Seer", chapter 13, section D.

[3] Frank Herbert. "Children of Dune". Presession designation PT944w5w (PrototypeTowers).

[4] prismaticSpray. "Inefficiency in Ivory Tower"

[5] duodecimalDelineation. "Average Personality Compared Across Replayer Networks"

[6] beefSteak. "Panopticon Society: Dramatic Increase in Number of Requests Granted by Oversight"

[7] dualisticArchery. "Occultists, Madmen, Fools and Corpses"

[8] overwroughtStenographer. #ultimatereward on the Sb.org IRC, Timestamp 39.11.23.68

[9] thePresident. "The Difficulties of Measuring Replayer Intelligence"

[10] Ivory Tower. "List of Accepted Theses"

[11] attunedContrarian. "The Nonsense We Have To Go Through", Admissions Committee official blog

[12] epinephrineElectrified. "Memoirs of a Seer", chapter 18, section B.

[13] sephardicSuzerain. "Meta-Analysis of Ivory Tower Surveys Timestamps 56 to 70"

[14] munificentMisericorde. "Pattern Recognition: A Matched Cohort Study of Ivory Tower Members and Equivalent Replayers"

[15] theologicalDifference. "Soul Pollen and Unclassified Soulspace"

[16] geraniumLogic. "Gross Shiny Manipulation and the 'Roadrunner' Bug"

[17] lackingTelepathy. "Presession Length as Measured By Meteor-Monitoring Equipment"

[18] ocarinaPituitary. "Memory Locations and Consort Erasure"

[19] adequateIvory and terracePins. "Introduction to the Roleplay Database"

[20] terracePins. "Gamebreaking Is Good For Scouts"

[21] loxEternal. "The Traveling Replayer Problem: Magicant Traversal"

[22] erythralTimepiece. "Some Hard Numbers: Why The Magicant Traversal Proof Is Less Awesome Than You Might Think"

Using Ivory Tower in Your Game

by cogitativeMistake

> I created Ivory Tower because I'd knocked down the Seer Network, that, for all its abuse and flaws, was *still* a major source of Game research and information. The culture was worth destroying. The information, and the infrastructure supporting the gathering of that information...
>
> ...not so much.
>
> I know some things cannot be forgiven. But I still have to try.
>
> *Memoirs of a Seer*, epinephrineElectrified

As a member of Ivory Tower, I'll supplement the Ivory Tower writeup with some extra information on how to actually use it.

Firstly, unless you are screening your players for high intelligence the way Ivory Tower likewise screens its applicants, it is unlikely that Ivory Tower will accept more than one or two characters from any given group of PCs. (As to using it as the "home base" network for an RP... forget it.) Like the IQs of people who do extensive text roleplaying online, the IQs of a random sample of Replayers cluster around 110 - bright, but not necessarily gifted. By contrast, the median IQ on Ivory Tower is estimated to be above 135.[167]

The main appeal of joining Ivory Tower is the fact that it is marketed as, and mostly lives up to its reputation as, a group within which productive Gamebreaking and other research can take place without "stupid questions" taking up the majority of one's time and energy. This is because the culture of Ivory Tower requires that one be in the habit of reading all the current literature on a problem before asking it. (This is enforced by the Admissions committee requiring complete sourcing and a literature review in all theses.)

As a result, Ivory Tower has an insular set of concepts, references, and memes that are unlikely to make any sense to those outside the group.[168] There are ongoing attempts to condense the Ivory Tower "sequences" to something less imposing than the current 7 million-odd words, but none have yet proven successful.

Because of the extremely high percentage of Ivory Tower members in leadership positions, politicking and plotting for power is practiced far more often on Ivory Tower than it is on other sites. People with the right set of interests plot to get appointed to the relevant committee. Committee members jockey for position so that they may one day become committee head. Once committee head, one then slowly

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==> 167. CM: While IQ is not necessarily a good measure of intelligence, it does seem to correlate with gamebreaking ability.

==> 168. CM: For example, there is an amusing meme where you append "Yet! Growth mindset." to things that obviously cannot be helped by a growth mindset, i.e. one's height or neuroticism.

expands the boundaries of the committee's jurisdiction to try to claim "essential functions" that require "continuity of leadership", not to mention fending off attempted coups.[169]

The culture, power struggles, and tales surrounding Ivory Tower are detailed and fascinating, but since this sourcebook cannot dedicate another hundred pages to the subject, I will give you several seeds around which you may construct your own interpretation of events.

- There have been repeated challenges to petulantPanopticon's leadership and, for that matter, the notion of the Overwatch committee itself. Their main defense against these challenges is that *an* oversight committee is necessary to prevent another Seergate-style incident; however, there is a growing suspicion from the populace that *this* committee is not up to the task.
- People keep arguing that I shouldn't be allowed to both chair an Ivory Tower committee and serve as a moderator on PrototypeTowers at the same time. Personally, I think I'm perfectly capable of the task, but what if I wasn't?
- A bunch of people from Sburb.org (or Rustbucket, or whatever) could get together and collaborate on an entry essay to Ivory Tower that adheres to our standards flawlessly. They then use their newfound access to, say, publish further papers attempting to take a relativist/postmodern viewpoint where such a viewpoint is totally inappropriate. It is extremely difficult to ban people for their ideology/"research" alone; the Constitution made sure of that. (It's a bit like tenure for university professors - once you're in, you're in for life.) But that also means that people like this, who pretty much just produce pure noise and no signal, are very hard to root out once they've been accepted.
- The Prices and Values committee is, in local vernacular, sometimes referred to as "Occultists". They are even less trusted than the average Ivory Tower committee (Ivory Tower is not exactly a bastion of open hearts) – and this is not without reason. For example, since they manage the Deal for the server, they can hold the entire server hostage if things don't go the way they like.

A Few More Adventure Seeds

by eternityBraid

> Every hunch is born of a hundred barely-noticeable clues. A tilt of the head here, a shifting of papers there. It would be impossible to document them all consciously – but there is a part of your mind that takes tiny notes of tiny clues, and it is that part of the mind that gives you the hunch.

> Fate is not teaching you to ignore reason. Fate is telling you that sometimes your unconscious really does know best.

> > "Fate for Mind Players", inkblotDetermined

==> 169. CM: ...I am not excluding myself from this.

I can't really trust Samantha to say things that cast Ivory Tower, or herself, in a negative light. She has something to lose by writing about this kind of stuff. I don't. So here's some extra ideas.

- So there's this notion that certain people on Ivory Tower might be "selling" or "bartering" cross-session scrying powers. For example, someone might offer their own cross-session scrying capabilities, in exchange for another Replayer running dangerous or unethical experiments for them.
- The timetrav handles of Ivory Tower glitch out, or fail briefly. While the staff[170] manage to wrangle it back again, it's possible that in the brief period the server was nonlinear, it may pick up some data about the far future. Like, for example, a "future" in which all major Replayer Networks have failed. (Which might well be the "past". As far as such a timeline exists in Paradox Space.)
- Ivory Tower has very little in the way of privacy norms, and some early and influential members came from presession worlds where sur- or sousveillance was omnipresent. As a result, many of them have… rather strange… ideas about what kind of data is appropriate to collect. So, say one of them has developed a modification to the ubiquitous dongle which is used for the purpose of establishing linearity by the majority of Replayer Networks, one which reports information on the user's shiny to a central server. They've gone to great lengths to distribute this "dongle rootkit," persuading and/or tricking users to install it in place of normal, non-compromised designs. When you find out that this is happening, you might go to Ivory Tower and ask them to stop it. Unfortunately, they might close ranks around their spying-happy member instead...
- In a similar vein, a bunch of Ivories have been lobbying to remove soft- and hardware restrictions on the cross-session use of aspect abilities - not just scrying, but everything else too. These restrictions were put in place by modern Replayer networks because - well, just imagine what kind of havoc someone could wreak if they gave a server an Aspect charge, or if they could cast [Wrath of the Storm God] into the session of someone they're arguing with over the Internet. (And, of course, everyone remembers how Corpseparty's servers were Corrupted by someone trying to use abilities through them.) Even so, *certain* individuals - people who think they'd have an advantage if this happened, perhaps? - still think it'd be a net positive...

==> 170. CM: Staff... plural? No, it would just be me. I am their local timetrav nerd.

A User's Guide to the Apocalypse

PrototypeTowers and the Pitsbloggers

> Tell me, muse – tell me of the tales of the great library. Tell me of the library's keepers. Tell me of its books, and of those who plundered the riches of worlds to stock it.
>
> I call upon you, muse; for I cannot speak for myself. I dip the pen and place it on the page, but all I can write is blots of ink.

A History, vermilionSparkle

PrototypeTowers (often known as Pits, because "Pee Towers" just doesn't roll off the tongue) is a Replayer network that is… kind of like, but not entirely like, Archive.org, Textfiles, or Youtube.

Replayers keep all the information they can get on Pits, including large book scans from gutted Sburb-generating worlds' libraries, mirrors of almost all major guidebooks/FAQs, and what is basically a web caching service that saves webpages past the point where they'd normally die due to being hit by meteor. Depending on what you feed it, it will download everything from Wikipedia database dumps to Youtube videos.

PrototypeTowers is under active development. It uses a kind of balancing system to mirror files across hundreds of essentially untended Ring servers, and portions of many major community servers such as Transam and Sb.org.[171] This mirroring process tries to ensure that files remain somewhere on the network even as nodes join and leave the network – not unlike a torrent swarm. The priorities are, in decreasing order, retaining information, ensuring ease of joining the PT mirror network, ensuring ease of upload, and only last the speed of those who actually would like to access the network for their own use. So yeah, PT's a bit… slow and temperamental, at times. However, Sburb.org's high rating in the PT peering network means that logging into PrototypeTowers via the Sb.org servers is fairly quick and easy, as many, *many* files are cached on Sburb.org's own servers.

Special priority of PT archive (especially redundant storage) is emphasized for universes with unique (nonstandard-Earth) cultures and the "culture produced in the Medium" category, because these two categories are especially valuable in terms of information that cannot be had anywhere else. You cannot delete anything from PT proper, although most mirrors have a takedown notice style system where you can hide from the mirror server and all servers that propagate directly from it. Moving creates redirect links.

There is a strict no-broodfester and no-angeltongue filter on the server, which tends to reject uploads almost capriciously[172] but also accounts for the fact that it hasn't died of corruption yet despite being in the Ring.

==> 171. CM: Sburb.org actually has a large fraction of its storage space dedicated to a good, reliable, large PT mirror.
==> 172. EB: As the meme goes, "Pad your upload with zeroes and try again!"

The default interface is a [GOPHER](#), although programs are readily available that skin it to look more like a proper website. Frontends of PrototypeTowers content can imitate many popular websites, most notably Archive of Our Own and Tumblr.

PrototypeTowers is not inherently linearized, but use of a timetrav encryption standard is heavily encouraged and linearization is extended to all servers that authorize it. Currently, most people on PT use Sburb.org's timetrav, although there's also a competing standard called 0AD. (It currently advances in lockstep with Sburb.org's timeline, but is maintained by a separate web of Time players.)

> You have *no* idea how much pornography is on Pits, and how much of it we have to go in and tag manually. Versions of the software up to 1.3 (timestamp 60 or so) didn't have NSFW built into the category system, and there's a lot of material from before then that's barely even been seen by *bots*, let alone actual human eyes.
>
> I mean, of course there's a report function and such, but we have to *verify* these things, you know, because Skaia forbid some random Youtube video that's 95% identical to the ones two universes over gets tagged when it shouldn't be.
>
> Don't get me wrong, I like my job usually, but this is totally enlighteningFont's fault. She was the one that thought we could use formally defined categories to organize everything. Turns out tags work better if you've got an archive growing faster than any of your mods can read it.
>
> cogitativeMistake

Garden Perks in RV

About 90% of the time you acquire a Garden Perk/"It's like a home to me." in RV, it'll be a blog. Which is a lot of the time. Also, about 90% of the people you'll ever meet in the RV setting have a blog. So what's the difference between your usual, run-of-the-mill Pitsblog, and a blog that is loved enough to be a Garden?

I think one of the key indicators is this: Can you find an arbitrary piece you made or reblogged a long time ago (fast enough that you won't give up if you have to find two or three of them in a row)? The search function is fine, as are highly idiosyncratic tags. But knowing this kind of thing, and keeping it straight enough to use, is representative of how much time you spend making your blog easily navigable enough in general.

Also, having a layout people can actually *read* is a good idea, too.

> Put down your bubblegum and knitting needles and *listen*. I don't want to have to say this twice.
>
> "Frequently Asked Questions about PrototypeTowers", methodicalConductor

Pits, due to its self-assigned mission of being an archive, requires a large number of people to maintain it. This large staff is needed to synonymize the tags, clean up the categories, and other such bookkeeping, in addition to more standard moderator and administrator duties. Many of the highly active members and administrators of Pits are native Light, for reasons I very much hope are obvious.

The current admins of Pits consist of these individuals:

- **templeGuardian**, Zoey Sidra Walker-Templeton, native Bane of Time. She's been the admin-in-chief since ts44. She is an information magpie with a head for long-term planning, who has been thinking about how to promote Pits' community as a competitor to Sburb.org's. Her plans have enjoyed a... variable amount of success.
- **integralNuclear**, Mary Otter, native Prince of Mind, is the current Technical Director. She spends much of her time laying down the law about documentation and standard formatting in the Pits code repository. In her spare time, she makes wire jewelry. Her stance on the Mannerists is, and I quote, "I have no opinion, and am not interested in in obtaining one."
- **goeticFacehugger**, Vadim Glosovsky, native Guard of Void. As far as we can tell, the main reason he's on the staff is because the Others said so, although it must be admitted he is a blithe spirit and extremely pleasant to be around. He specializes in the information of occult and hidden traditions (Hermetic magic, Freemasonry, Illuminati, etc.)
- **enlighteningFont**, Rita Milestone, native Guide of Light. She was a deletionist admin on her native universe's Wikipedia, but came around to Zoey's inclusionist philosophy after a reroll of Light and several very interesting discussions that have since been released to the public. She particularly enjoys cataloguing alien flora and fauna.

There are also several moderators of Pits, and non-admins closely associated with administrative work. I cannot list all of them here due to space and relevance issues (there are over a hundred people who could fit in this category), but here is a selection that should get you started:

- **abolishedHearth**, Zithra Aukian, native Maid of Light. Rita's intern, apparently picked because the ceruleanblooded troll was the only one that would put up with Rita's constant stream of questions about troll culture. Extremely bribeable with cat videos.
- **methodicalConductor**, Romy Keepsake, native Muse of Rage, deceased. She programmed most of the site, notably including its extremely effective corruption-defense programs. She was suspicious of most people, but would open up if informed that they also shared an interest in Mannerist philosophy (see below).
- **maraudingWhimsy**, Marlowe Magee, native Smith of Mind. Mary's intern, and is probably the one that'll actually answer your tech support tickets. Is absurdly good at making edible cake-

frosting art. A Mannerist of the reformed variety, and is quite willing to expound at length about such.

- **pseudoanProgrammer**, [untypeable mess of Unicode gibberish, we all just call him Pseud], native Sage of Dreams. He works on categorizing, automated comparison programs that can collect non-obvious multiversal parallels of works, automatic transcription of images and audio, and language translation. He also likes subway maps, constructed languages, conworlding, and in his spare time works on an extremely dedicated long-term project including all of the above which nobody else really understands.

- **flintlockOctopus**, Jillie Diodato, native Guide of Dust. Jillie is a near-full-time "synonymizer": most of the time, instead of being a visible moderator, she works on wrangling tags. She presented a wishlist of features needed to reorganize the tags and categories, helped get almost all of them implemented, and has been hard at work using those features since. According to her, synonymizing includes identifying tags that are similar and connecting them, fixing misspellings, and theorizing about the most efficient and comprehensive way to lay out the category tree.

- **veritableVerses**, Entiem, native Rogue of Doom. Former admin, currently probationary moderator. She was a very good and very active admin right up until trolls started coming out of the woodwork in earnest, at which point she uploaded data from troll homeworlds at a pace so much faster than her average session length that eyebrows were raised. It turns out she had a double-dreamself glitch in her native session in which one of her dreamselves was a human and one was a troll, and has never been quite sure what species she belongs to since. The Pitsblogger community converged in an uproar, she was banned briefly for being dishonest about her identity (enlighteningFont likened this to her Wikipedia's Essjay Incident), and her personal blog is basically the battleground for Pits' former SJ bloggers to argue about the validity of transspecies and speciesqueer identities. You really do not want to link to anything from there or all the trolls will swoop down on you.

- **immaculateArchivist**, Helen Rodriguez, native Dame of Light. Moderator. Formerly owned her own archive, with a great deal of unique material that has since been merged with Pits. She has an eidetic memory and can quote many FAQs verbatim, complete with section references. Including gentlemanMannerism's guide. *Anyone* who can memorize even a fraction of GM's tome has my respect.

- **sandpaperTide**, Lloyd Dufour, native Prince of Time. Moderator. Is pretty much the best moderator to have around when the Pitsbloggers are working themselves into a lather again, since he's quite willing to shut down bullshit arguments and tempban both parties. Is pretty much the worst moderator to have around if you *are* one of said arguing parties. Also, he's a decent logician, and will tell you all the argumentative fallacies you used in the comments that got you banned.

- **catalogTruisms**, Josh Alderman, native Ward of Light. Unusually formal writing style. Manages the largest set of multiuniversal correspondences checkers on Pits, as well as a blog that analyzes how Replayers tend to classify and categorize things. Has been nominated for moderator twice, but keeps turning the position down. There is a small movement on Pits that is attempting to draft him into the position anyway. He disapproves.

- **cogitativeMistake**, our very own Samantha Chandrasekhar, native Dame of Mind. Moderator. She call tell you all about herself![173]

OK, who told you that the Fuchsia Ruler has anything to do with the Yellow Yard? That's unsubstantiated fanwank and I will have no part in it.

"Re: Plot hole in *The Infinite Castle*?", educatedThorax

==> 173. CM: Actually, how about I *don't* tell you about myself and you figure it out from everything else I say? That seems more fun.
EB: I was really hoping for something more sporting from you, but fine.

Q: Whose work on Pits (or anywhere else), living or dead, do you actually like reading?

A: Ooh, hard question. dryadTornado is one of the best fiction writers we've got around (there's not really a difference between genre and litfic here, but I guess I'd call her a science fantasy writer if I had to); stupidityTolerated's blog is mostly average but for the periodic "Troll Roundup" (title from before we discovered Alternians) where he collects asshole comments on his blog posts and makes amusing commentary on them; erythralTimepiece is really good at repackaging the latest Gamebreaker advances without all the jargon so they're actually readable for us mundies.

<div align="right">eternityBraid</div>

The community on Pits is most active in the comments on various uploads. Because small text uploads are simply displayed inline when you click through (rather than needing download, a fact that is endlessly convenient), a common way to start a discussion thread is to upload a short text file with a comment or question and see what happens. The community has gravitated towards tagging these discussion threads with "#blather", which makes them easy to filter out for those who prefer their multimedia experience antisocial.

Then again, there's another tag to filter out if you want to completely cut out the Pits community for some reason – "#pitsblog". In the category for Culture Generated Within The Medium (better known as PT0000, after its system designator), there are several users that regularly upload original content in the form of HTML blog posts. (These are not displayed inline by default on the BBS interface, but most graphical-browser-type interfaces will also display such HTML blog posts inline.)

These users are known as the Pitsbloggers. A community that can be closely likened to Tumblr during its heyday, Pitsbloggers are both fonts of extremely useful information and perpetrators of some very strange groupthink and witch-hunting. (Unfortunately, such things seem to be part of the human condition. I don't think I've ever seen a large online community without such things.) Pitsbloggers often write about social justice, cooking, and Game research; blogs on other subjects are a regular occurrence, but these are the biggest three attractors.

All the writers of these blogs consider themselves a single community in most cases, the exceptions being in times of great controversy, such as the case of a highly regarded gamebreaking blog's writer being revealed as a PK (see lucidChthonia). Polarization is fast, furious, and subsides quickly, with opponents generally silenced by social pressure.

You cannot keep a secret on Pits. There is a private messaging system, but the social norm is that it is vaguely suspicious to use, and is solely for bland coordination messages that other people would not want to read anyway. Anything more interesting than that tends to get posted by one or the other end of the conversation. Names will probably not be redacted. Individual users may be more amenable to keeping a secret in cases of significant danger to life and liberty, but there is no guarantee.

by cogitativeMistake

The Skaian Birth Liturgy is as much a hypothetical literary analysis project as a theory for how Sburb came to be. It is a theory based on the analysis of archetypal stories and symbols that recur across societal mythologies and Prospitian libraries. Few people consider it capital-T True, but many people take it as lowercase-t true, as a metaphor, because it's useful for framing their situation mythologically.

Obviously, Elizabeth and GGTG both think it's bullshit, but it's *fun* bullshit; that's half the point. Yes, the original justification was the fact that Game code research could well take decades or centuries to get to the point where you could understand how the Game worked. I consider it more a metaphorical project than anything, though, and so do most people who contribute to it in the present day.[174]

The Skaian Birth Liturgy has many branches, subtypes, and obscure academic disputes. I cannot cover many of them here, but it should be known that my interpretation is not necessarily the "correct" or "most popular" one, and may be rapidly outdated by further advancements in the consensus.

The Skaian Birth Liturgy is traditionally organized into Books. Books were originally arbitrary handles added to make discussing parts of the theory easier, but they stuck and have since become enshrined in the structure of the project – for example, there exist certain people who focus exclusively on the Exodus, or who wish to expand upon the Revelations, and so on and so forth.

So here are the consensus books of the Skaian Birth Liturgy.

- **Prelude**: Traditional mythologies begin with "In the beginning". This one does not. This one starts in medias res because we came to live in the very middle of the story, and in the age where stories are now expected to start *in medias res*. There is discussion of the symbolism of Entry here, and of the fundamental cosmology expressed by your Kernelsprite.
- **Genesis**: Ectobiology. Where did the concept of ectobiology come from? Why does it exist? The advanced technology of the Game comes from no tradition of science or art we've ever seen; no matter how advanced the presession world, the evolution of technology never comes anywhere near the capabilities needed to create Sburb… until the Frog Temple self-causes its creation.
- **Eden**: A common theme in several mythologies is that the world began with paradise: where there was no death or pain. There may have been art and beauty there but since it wasn't timeline-doomed nobody had to die. relicWithdrawn has come up with an intriguing theory that the First Woman's temptation was, in fact, science: that she discovered how the world worked, and in so doing discovered that it was failing.
- **Exodus**: The fall from paradise is a feature of many stories, too. We wander, lost, in our own fall from paradise. But the first – the first was a last-ditch effort by the residents of Eden to escape their dying reality through a game.

==> 174. CM: I also find it amusing that Elizabeth teases me for having a less scientific worldview than she does in this regard, despite me being the Mind player.

- **Requiem**: Unfortunately, none of the realities they made instead would last forever. They couldn't, as they had inherited the doom of their predecessor. Many of Eden's former residents despaired. Some of them, though, adapted the code they had used to escape their realities and make the Game self-replicate.

- **The Meek**: All those thousands and thousands of years of history required to set up a world of sufficient advancement to run Sburb? Thousands of years of people whose history will, in the end, count for approximately jack shit.

- **Chronicles**: But the thousands of years of history do not pass unobserved. There were, have always been, people who want to write them down, document these things. We do not know of worlds in which Sburb never existed. We do know of the thousands of years of history before us in which people did not live in fear of Sburb simply because they did not know it existed. But there were a few people who knew, ever since the first discovery of Frog Temples in antiquity. A few people who prepared.

- **Rapture**: And so we circle back around to Sburb. Sburb was the thing that snatched us away from the reality that was our cradle – but was it for good or ill? This book argues that it could well have been for good. That we have been spared from the Doom of our former worlds for something – although nobody can agree on what, exactly, that something *is*.

- **Creation**: Sburb players are supposed to build universes through frogs; a very strange creation myth if ever I heard of one, but no more implausible than anything written in the Elder Edda.

- **Revelations**: These are the Books where theories about what we *ought* to do, considering this history, are filed. Is it possible to create universes without Sburb? Is it possible to create universes that won't die? Is it possible to unchain ourselves from the endless wheel? We do not know. I am not sure we *can* know. But perhaps the key lies in the stories.

> May the Pulse draw from his love,
> the Wave her courage,
> and the Grid their hopes and dreams;
> I will let the Faith teach me the wisdom of the fallen,
> help me keep moving to the Groove,
> and synchronize the Beat to my heart.
>
> So wish I, to understand the fate of the disappeared.
> So wish I, to avenge the fate of the meaningless.
> Amen.

<div align="right">

"Recitation 23", *Etiquette Guide*, gentlemanMannerism

</div>

One important subset of Pitsbloggers is the largest community of Mannerists around – Mannerists being followers of gentlemanMannerism's Etiquette Guide.

The Mannerist Pitsbloggers have social structures that I find completely impenetrable. As far as I can tell they look a lot like theologists who disagree about the interpretation of holy writ. Which… I don't really get why they follow gentlemanMannerism's advice as if she was literally their god, but it makes them happy, so I don't begrudge it, I guess?

I asked one of them for a clarification. I got this.

> 73-23.18172 <entropyEquivalent> The primary disagreement in the Mannerist community at the moment is reformed versus unreformed, a dispute that primarily centers on the acceptance of Appendix XXIV or lack thereof
> 73-23.18199 <entropyEquivalent> which, to try to simplify, is GM's best attempt at a doctrine regarding behavioral norms when applied to foreign and alien cultures
> 73-23.18211 <entropyEquivalent> (most notably trolls)
> 73-23.18229 <entropyEquivalent> in essence, most trolls who get anywhere in this game can come close enough to human moral values that we should allow them the indulgence of their native cultures as long as they don't outright contradict natural rights
> 73-23.18236 <entropyEquivalent> So you've got the reformed, who on the one hand are accepting this stance of, essentially, biased compromise
> 73-23.18248 <entropyEquivalent> and the unreformed, who have decided that even a biased compromise is morally ridiculous
> 73-23.18257 <entropyEquivalent> Most casual readers are reformed, but most bloggers are unreformed.
> 73-23.18263 <entropyEquivalent> It's all so simple you wonder why you even bothered to ask.

Yeah, I still have no idea what she's talking about.

> For the other eleven entries in my Twelve Days of Gristmas series, see: Braised Lamb with Pomegranate, Yam Fries, Red Garlic Mashed Potatoes, W(h)ine Fruitcake, Acorn Squash Pie in Acorn Flour Shells, Sesame Brittle, Spiky Cider, Cherry Chia Pudding, Bacon Tempura, Crabapple Pie (Cinnamon-Free), Gingerbread House II.
>
> "Twelve Days of Gristmas XII: Mom's Stollen", dillydallyingDirector

Another important subset of Pitsbloggers are the cookery blogs, which, owing to their highly valuable and uncontroversial output, are probably the reason that a significant fraction of Pits *stays* on Pits despite the drama.

We use an alimentator hack to distribute edible food that can be whipped up by your alimentator on demand. Download the alimentator hack file seeded by scholasticMarque, follow the instructions to install that, then grab the linked .ali files from these people's upload bins if you want to eat what you see in their blog posts. (Keep your Aspect-charge-filter set to max, though. It's better to eat something vile and know immediately that it's not meant for human or troll consumption, than to eat something that seems okay only because a Doom charge is masking the bitter taste, or to eat something that tastes perfectly fine only to find a Sand charge slowly tearing up your internal organs a couple hours later.)

Pits has more or less reached saturation on things like macaroni-and-cheese, hamburgers, and cakes (except for elaborate frosting constructions, those are still interesting). So if you're planning to open a food blog, please don't start it off with your favorite coffeecake recipe! Pits has 9,186 coffeecakes and counting. You're never going to get noticed. You'll want to do something different. Something new.

Here's some names to look out for:

- **clobberedSpinster**: Comes from a native session in which British cuisine is actually good. The aspic will *blow your mind*. Seriously. I'm not so sure about the steak, though. It seems this user likes steak so rare it's practically still mooing.
- **mollifiedMaintenance**: Nice troll and troll-fusion cuisine! The perogies are a must-have. The curries are pretty good, too, although they're very spicy even by my standards. One of the users that first pushed for marking allergy warnings upfront, owing to trolls such as her apparently having anaphylactic reactions to cinnamon.
- **elegantBox**: The strangest things I've ever seen that are still edible. Foamed salmon? Fruit nectar in tiny droplet spheres, with skins like grapes? A meal where you pair different smells with your food to explore how your sense of smell affects your sense of taste? Wow. Not something you eat for an ordinary meal, but if you want your mind blown, this is where to go.
- **uncouthShyster**: Okay, so not really food *per se*, but (for example) an entire clock made out of sugar-crystal and salt-crystal mechanisms, with licorice for the mainspring, is pretty impressive. Their current project is a full Turing-complete computer using a tape of candy buttons!

- **unexplainableImproviser**: This blog features desserts – the desserts taste okay, by Pits standards, but the real allure is in the presentation. Carved melons, sculptured and decorated cakes, berry towers carefully glued together with icing, fresh ice cream with spirographs drawn on top with handmade caramel sauce…

And here's some names that have historically contributed to Replayer alimentary ventures:

- **potassiumEngineer**: Hacked his alimentator to produce bacon way back in the day. We all owe him a BLT for documenting and commenting his work so well.
- **integratedInfiltrator**: Created the 1.0 version of the alimentator hack that allows uploading and downloading arbitrary food items. Other people who have worked on the project since include scholasticMarque, emptyTennis, and larghettoSpade.
- **ballisticSpectacle**: An early champion of the alimentator hack who, among other things, created the classic Red Velvet Cake, which is still the test file distributed with new Alimentator Hack installations by default. (Depending on what you'd like to do with continuity, you can also have him be the one who came up with Lifeshakes/Voidshakes/Lightshakes (replenishing health, combating Otherwise corruption, and combating Angelic corruption), have them come up later in the timeline, or leave them out entirely.)

The Game research community heavily crosspollinates across servers and as such is covered separately.

> Nothing is going on here that I haven't signed up for. There wasn't a lot of choice but there was some, and this is what I chose.
>
> *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood

There are a few Replayers – perhaps two or three out of every thousand – who claim that they *chose* to Replay. That they chose to abandon their native coplayers, and their new universe, in favor of... what?

What were they looking for, when they chose to Replay?

Certainly some of them just wanted to escape. Not everyone loves their native coplayers, or the world that said coplayers would've created. For some of them, Sburb was better than the rest of their life put together, even *after* accounting for dying being everyone's favorite hobby.

There is at least one Replayer who claims that Replaying was part of a Bargain they agreed to. Apparently they deliberately traded their Ultimate Reward away to the Horrorterrors. But why would someone trade away their Ultimate Reward?

Here's a hypothetical, then: The Bargain may have been retroactive. They traded away their Reward *after* having experienced Replaying. And for... what?

For the privilege of knowing others, through Replayer Networks.

For the friends and clade and family that their future self would know and love.

For the ability to be here, to support others. To lock arms against the void.

Honestly, given this choice... I think I might've done the same thing.

To: Samantha Chandrasekhar (cogitativeMistake@sburb.org)
From: Stefanija Atteberry (knurledKatabasis@sburb.org)
Subject: Re: Survey for my friend Elizabeth's book

    Look, this isn't something I'd usually write, but you insisted you wanted my honest opinion and I don't give a flying glass shit about my reputation on Pits anyway, so here's my take, as a Sburb.org person:
    Pits is xenophobic as fuck. Pits is filled with oversensitive ninnies. Pits holds witchhunts all the time. Sure, there are ridiculously talented artists scattered around in the dross, but they're also often friends with the people who have the worst opinions, and that makes it impossible to avoid those opinions.
    In other words, Pits is Tumblr.
    Go on, look up what Tumblr is, if you don't know it from your prenative. I'll wait.

Stef (moderator of Hope-aspect subforum)
knurledKatabasis, native Bard of Hope, 9 sessions

To: Stefanija Atteberry (knurledKatabasis@sburb.org)
From: Samantha Chandrasekhar (cogitativeMistake@sburb.org)
Subject: Re: Survey for my friend Elizabeth's book

    Am I correct in assuming that this is a common opinion in your social group? I don't get out much, so I don't know.

Samantha Chandrasekhar, Sburb.org code maintainer (emeritus) and PrototypeTowers moderator
cogitativeMistake / Dame of Mind / 15 sessions

To: Samantha Chandrasekhar (cogitativeMistake@sburb.org)
From: Stefanija Atteberry (knurledKatabasis@sburb.org)
Subject: Re: Survey for my friend Elizabeth's book

    Ask a stupid question, get a stupid answer.
    In case that didn't get through your skull: that means yes.

Stef (moderator of Hope-aspect subforum)
knurledKatabasis, native Bard of Hope, 9 sessions

Corpse Fiesta and the Corpselikes

by eternityBraid

> It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing.

> *Macbeth*, William Shakespeare

The term "Corpselikes" refers to a kind of website descended from the community of Corpseparty and Corpse Fiesta, the latter of which was open-sourced. The community around these websites is frequently considered the scum of the Replayernets.

Corpseparty

Corpseparty was the original Corpselike, a Replayer imageboard. Eric's already written about this for us (page ???), so I won't say more about it; it's mostly here to help establish chronology.

Corpse Fiesta

> CF was absolutely nothing like Corpseparty. Riley removed anonymity, added a voting system, and let people make their own boards. It was a disgrace.

> A further disgrace is that now everyone thinks this is the way things should've been.

> *Interesting Interviews*, bundleofSticks as edited by scorpionSting

Corpse Fiesta (CF, for short) is the creation of worriedGranite and epinephrineElectrified. While the original Corpseparty dated from the Age of Ring Servers, Corpse Fiesta was created well into the Age of Replayer Networks.

Despite the name and heritage of the community, Corpse Fiesta was not actually an imageboard. worriedGranite had sent up a simple multiparty directional encryption service; epinephrineElectrified programmed a Reddit-style discussion system around it, with logins, upvotes/downvotes, and a relatively simple system for requesting new "subfiestas". This system was then open-sourced, allowing anyone who wanted to create their own servers running the same software if they wished.

epinephrineElectrified was accused of completely misunderstanding the intent and structure of Corpseparty, of attempting to turn it into SomethingAwful, of attempting to turn it into Reddit, and of completely neutering the point of an imageboard by not allowing anonymous posts. He vacillated between ignoring the accusations completely and attempting to justify his structural choices.

CF had numerous moderators and admins – of note were snowplowTreading and severedBoard, who distinguished themselves well enough as moderators that they were eventually promoted to full site admins. However, epinephrineElectrified – despite his attempts at devolving power – never managed to find a suitable admin to take his place. After his announcement that he had reached the point of no return

after the results of an unfortunate Deal with a Horrorterror began to manifest in full (about two timestamps before his death), he shut the network down without warning.

Corpse Revival

[USER WAS BANNED FOR THIS POST]

yotsubaRescuscitated

"Corpse Revival" is one of the most prominent Corpselikes today. Established by severedBoard, troubledThoughts, and forgeBellows, it uses the Corpse Fiesta open-source framework. It is where most of the Corpse Fiesta refugees went, including worriedGranite.

I don't go on there much so I can't tell you that much about it, but it's apparently enough like the presession near-universal website Reddit that you could probably use that as a reference.

Other Corpselikes

- **Zombie Fiesta** – snowplowTreading runs a competing service. The admins announced at the founding of the website that they'd try to find a way to restore anon posting, although they have nothing to show yet so far and I'm starting to suspect it's vaporware.
- **Dead Dove** – Has a really good NSFW fanfic section, although the rest of it is eh.
- **Grave Rave** – This place is very new. They're apparently trying to have less "biased" moderation than Corpse Revival, but as far as I can tell their idea of not being biased involves being able to make fun of people without being punished for it.
- **Rustbucket** – dedicated to the troll gutterblood population. The source of a prank involving automatic Rangoon warnings making manual Rangoon warnings obsolete – for the record, no, you still need to warn for Rangoons by yourself.

by OJ

> [Myra] learns you have an amateur interest in programming and, when you ask if she can teach you, gets a glint in her eye. The next day, she shoves the descriptions of three different simple programs at you and asks you to figure out which one is fastest. You slap together some code, run it, and present the results to her. She rolls her eyes. "Without doing that." You find yourself immersed in her PDF library two hours later, learning what sorting algorithms are.

<div align="right">"In Memory Of", epinephrineElectrified</div>

The beginnings of chapters in RV Chuubo's are marked with MOTDs and/or newsposts on whichever Replayer network the characters have gravitated towards. These recap recent events in the Replayersphere that the characters were not involved in.

Newsposts are a feed of events down the front or login page of a Replayer site, somewhat like an admin blog. MOTDs – it stands for Message of the Deci (i.e. decitimestamp, a length of time roughly corresponding to the Chuubo's chapter) on Sburb.org IRC, derived from the older term "Message of the Day" – are the equivalent, text you're sent upon logging into an IRC server.

Don't think about this too hard; it would be infeasible to write a full blog post for every chapter, especially in live play. So I'm going to give you several categories of newspost content, and you can pick two or three of them and present them as bulletpoints, like thus-and-so:

irc.sburb.org MOTD – Timestamp 61.8

- The winner of this timestamp's Cooking Competition is electricFlow, with a glorious salmon and leek soup! sb.org/cc/61
- The latest version of restlessTomato's "Alchemiter Hacking for Assholes" FAQ is out – sb.org/faq/31126
- liminalComposer is running a survey on Replayers' early experiences with music: sb.org/poll/994183

(You don't have to make up shorturls to put on the end, if you don't want to; I just think it looks more realistic this way.)

So, here are the categories in which you can make newspost content, and plenty of examples to pick from to mix and match.

Project announcements

Replayers have numerous collaborative projects; they often wish to place announcements where they'll be seen by the wider community, and all major Replayer communities have a way in which anyone can submit these announcements.

- discussedMegaphone is looking for native Rage players to write guest essays for an upcoming Rage-player newsletter, *In Our Words*.

- repellingCitronella says that the Beta Readers Pool is very busy and could use more help. As always, you can also submit FAQs to be beta-read, although the wait time is currently upwards of 2 decis. repellingCitronella would also like to remind potential submitters that this is not a service for fanfiction editing.

- sinusoidIce is soliciting recipe submissions for a frozen dessert cookbook. Recipes that do not use any dairy products are especially needed, as dairy products alchemize unreliably.

- phosphorescentTrickle wants you to measure the circumference of the Crystalanths in your session and then enter them into the survey form provided.

- The Replayer Community Songbook, Volume 3, has been released, with songs from over sixty contributors. Special thanks to coordinators risingTide and depletedUncertainty.

- severalEntries is compiling a book of Replayer fairy tales; tag your fiction upload #replayerfairytale to be considered.

- The 0AD timetrav is always looking for handlers! Contact deletedSith, fractalOrphean, or specializedArchipelago for more details and to sign up.

- The Recipe Circle has turned one server-year old today! In celebration, spectacularTwine is releasing an alimentor file for mixed berry jam and some octagonal millet crackers to eat it on.

FAQs, software, and related announcements

This is pretty much what it sounds like.

- commaSpliced, the author of *All Punctuation, All the Time: A FAQ Editing FAQ* has released a new guide, *Laws of the Universe: A Law Player's Guide to Self-Actualization*.

- The latest edition of *Moonjacking for Fun and Profit* by imitatedShowtime has been released.

- The newest version of the venerable Alimentator Hack is available from scholasticMarque's uploads feed, as usual.

- openSystem's ~ATH compiler, version 0.8.1, is now available for download. See changelog for details.

- *A Dumbass's Guide to Light*, the sequel to *An Idiot's Guide To Breath*, has been released. stupidityTolerated would like to request that you not complain about the construction of the possessive form in the word "dumbass's".

- balkanizedKelp's *Comprehensive Sburb FAQ* is out of beta; the 1.0 can be downloaded here as well as from all major mirrors.

- The latest edition of *Double Teaming: or, Fraymotifs and You* by errantSpray, now with guest sections from skiddingZebra, is out.

- The newest community revision of the *Gamebreaker's Glossary* is now available.

Contests

Submissions for contests are often solicited by newspost, and winners are often announced the same way.

- Submissions for this timestamp's Cooking Competition are now open.
- The winner of this timestamp's Cooking Competition is neglectedLactase, with the best tiramisu the judges have ever tasted.
- The winner of this timestamp's Cooking Competition is shoreLeave, with a delicate jellied melon-and-basil salad.
- The winner of this timestamp's Cooking Competition is tastyMiracles, with an Alternian-inspired mutton stew.
- The winner of this timestamp's Cooking Competition is isotopeStarlight, with seasoned yam fries and a caramel-cinnamon dipping sauce.
- The Obfuscated DIS* Contest has been jointly won by noblePhosphate and peripheryAnalyzed, after the judge's computer spontaneously burst into flames and toppled off the desk while playing "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" when this duo's script was run.
- bacchanaliaDroplet is reopening submissions to the Doom Cocktails Collection! Please make sure that your .ali files are appropriately marked for toxicity.

Community-related announcements, including death announcements

…and yeah, there'll be a lot of death announcements. Such is the Game.

- The head moderator of the Time subforum, endymionTicker, has died. Condolences accepted in the stickied thread at the top of the page.
- Discussion of "the incident with the snowman" is not allowed until further notice; all threads on the topic will be locked and anyone who tries to reignite the flamewar will be tempbanned.
- The Sburb.org admins would like to announce the official opening of a new subforum for the Dust aspect, now that we have twenty confirmed rolls! The Dust discussion thread will be moved out of Misc. Aspect Chat to the new subforum accordingly.
- fletchedSunlight, author of *The Last Fate FAQ You'll Ever Need* and sixteen-session veteran, has passed on into the Bubbles.
- Please tag your NSFW uploads appropriately. We do *not* want a Replayee's guardian looking over someone's shoulder just in time for them to click on an unmarked pornography file, especially because that someone could be you.
- We've updated the Rules to clarify rule #4 in the wake of the mixedMaestro incident; please take a moment to reread the rules.
- The server will be switched into read-only mode for a period of up to 30 minutes serverside (contact your timetrav provider for clientside conversions) for maintenance; make sure to save your work.

- errataComplicated, primary maintainer of the Tabletop Games archive, has died. specializedKimono will take up the position of primary maintaner until further notice. Anyone who asks to be promoted in the wake of these developments will automatically be removed from consideration. If you're begging for the job then you don't deserve it.
- Gristmas will be next deci! And before you ask, no, the holiday theme will not have mistletoe on it this time. We have learned our lesson.[175]

Interesting articles, threads, and other content

This one should be self-explanatory.

- A fascinating article by the name of "Observations On The Average Pressesion" was posted the other day by photographerFacilitation.
- You should check this song out: ["We Didn't Want to Replay", a parody of "We Didn't Start the Fire" featuring Sburb references.]
- paraphrasedStygian has provided an interesting hypothesis on the origin of Consort species in the thread "Consort Variation – your stories?"
- thoraxDepreciation's article "Prophecy Hacking and What It Tells Us About Skaia" is currently ranked Most Popular In The Last Week. And for good reason!
- The blog "Into the Dark", a liveb og of a V id native's full-t tle-rero l se si n that we've been tra king, has reached the oint when all the po ts are being entirel whited out by the Nu l. It was a good run, thou h, and we l ok forward to seeing negatedStrength's wor s again hen he ret rns. (goddammit I hate it when it does that)
- I'd like to call attention to "Look Into The Mirror and Tell Me What You See", an article about the House of Mirrors by stagnatedDragonfly.
- The new blog "Mechanisms", novelEntry's collection of salt-crystal mechanical constructs that are fully alimentable and fully functional, looks very promising.
- The entire thread "Flash fiction – you wake up in a presession where…" is amazing – but I'd like to call attention especially to the posts by watercolorMixer and moonGoddess, which when paired together tell a very different story than if read separately.

Administrators misusing newsposts as a personal blog

epinephrineElectrified, worriedGranite, severedBoard, and snowplowTreading of Corpse Fiesta are the primary offenders here – the CF newspost has traditionally been an arena for the admins to goof off as well as a serious place for announcements – but it is not unknown for administrators on other services to use the newspost for irrelevances.

- [twenty pictures of an administrator's presession]

==> 175. EB: Because time has no meaning in the Medium, holidays are totally arbitrary and are therefore celebrated whenever one's home Replayer network decides they should be celebrated. Some examples of holidays include Gristmas, on which you give presents; Pumpkin's Eve, on which you dress up and eat butternut squash pie; Wester, a fertility holiday; and St. Slick's Day, on which you wear green. If you are in a place with a consistent, linear calendar, feel free to use this to justify IC holiday episodes coinciding with real-life holidays.

- [a music video parodying Gangnam Style, featuring epinephrineElectrified and numerous Consorts]
- Sheila, will you marry me?
- She said yes!
- [pictures of a five-foot-high snow… er… phallus]
- Oh, by the way, I just wanted to let all of you know that I love you. No hetero.
- Hey, I wonder if anyone else has experienced this extremely specific problem with dungeon entrances…
- Whoever makes the best contribution to this thread I just started will receive a free badge on their profile.
- [pictures of epinephrineElectrified doing something stupid for attention]

Actually, if you don't know what to put in a CF newspost, it's probably a CF admin doing something stupid for attention.

Modern Gamebreaking

> Nowadays there are all these cute little squads of gamebreakers – Dreamers, Octopi, whatever. A few of them even bother writing up their findings for the unwashed masses.
>
> And yet I see a lot of f-gs whining about how FAQs aren't good enough, about how all they discover these days is dumb bullshit and all the good gamebreakers are dead now. Whiners couldn't find their dicks if they had a map.
>
> You should be grateful these squads exist at all. Once upon a time, "gamebreaker" wasn't a hobby. It was the only way you could survive.
>
> *You're All a Bunch of Pussies*, enturbulatedOccupation

The people who push the boundaries of the Game – to find out what's possible and stretch the boundaries of what we can do – are called Gamebreakers. (I think there is some argument for naming them Investigators, or Scientists, or something else, instead – but Gamebreakers is the traditional name for them.)

They are the ones who discover and write up those little glitches we take advantage of every day as Replayers. They are the ones who document new parts of the Game, try out dangerous things so that we don't have to, and see how much lenience they can steal out of the Game's uncaring hands.

If you are a Replayer you will probably owe them your life many times over.

Or you might *be* one.

Stacking, Decompilation, and Memory-Editing

Gamebreaking these days cannot be neatly defined into the categories of old – though some will certainly still specialize, the divisions of method are far blurrier than they used to be.

The low-hanging fruit of Stacking has mostly been exhausted; but it is Decompilation that finds the instances of it that ought to still be tested. Memory-Editing relies upon Decompilation to ensure that planned memory-edits do not overflow into dangerous areas. And Decompilation relies upon both Stacking and Memory-Editing to find targets and optimize scrying.

Examples

While I can't provide a full accounting of modern gamebreaking, here are some major gamebreaking innovations from the Age of Replayer Networks that you may want to use or expand upon:

- **Wage the War**: While it's always been rumored that there is at least one alternate way to beat the Black King, the event flags required to trigger this alternate win condition were discovered ts31, by torrentialDiamond. However, it took until ts36 for researchers colorlessGreen and diaphanousMembrane to describe the situations in which Waging the War – i.e. using the White

army to defeat the Black army, rather than fighting the Black King yourselves – was preferable. They then began an extensive survey of quests that affected the Black King fight in general, a survey that has since been passed down through many hands. paradiseUnknown's "The King in Black: A Play in Several Acts" has a good overview of the Black King fight and recent developments about useful quest chains; he was the one that figured out the Prospitian Skyguard quest sequence actually led somewhere.

- **Tunnel Sequence-Breaking**: For a long time we've known that dungeons can be completed twice to gain access to tunnels under the Land, and that this is helpful (although not necessary) for progression to unlock the Underworld. With modern techniques, some Gamebreakers have actually managed to complete the dungeons – and gain access to the tunnels – before even waking the Denizen. This really messes up the event flags, but (again) because of modern techniques, this isn't as much of a problem as you might fear it to be.

- **The Clocks of the Magicant**: There are sometimes clocks in the Magicant that track the alive/dead (and heroic/just) status of the Players in that session. Recent teamups between Decompilers and Memory-Editors have identified the feedback loops that synchronize the clock with the person's status. Because these are feedback loops, they can be used to modify whether one of your coplayers is dead or not. (Unfortunately, it is much easier to kill someone with a Clock than to resurrect someone.[176]) A very few Clock-gamebreakers will consult with you on how to reverse a coplayer's death – they will send you to find out various things about your session (many of which seem esoteric or irrelevant), so they can work out what the mechanisms inside the coplayer's clock might look like, and what state of these mechanisms corresponds to life or death. This is then written up as a set of very specific mechanical adjustments that you need to precisely reproduce. This is time-consuming and hideously difficult, but it *might* be worth it...

FAQs

Gamebreaking discoveries are only useful if people know how to use them. As such, an extensive culture of FAQ- and Guide-writing is present in Replayerdom.

Ask any Sburb veteran, and they'll tell you that they've at least considered writing a guide. Even the luminaries of Sburb.org have double-handfuls of FAQs stashed in their history. enturbulatedOccupation's guide, *You're All a Bunch of Pussies*, documents tricks of the trade for completing the Mail Quests. specificNihilism's *Corruption Guide* was one of the earliest to detail what Corruption felt like from the inside.

Early FAQs were pre-formatted so you could post them directly to GameFAQs and other similar databases in presession. However, few FAQs nowadays are truly straight text; many include weird

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==> 176. OJ: LE gaining immortality required the use of a juju. Due to the way that jujus are entangled in the story of Homestuck itself, none of them exist in RV AU. This is because a juju's existence implies that a session *matters* to the greater scheme of things.

effects that are only possible to represent in more complex markup languages. The newest writers – myself included – have discarded the pretense of flat-text-compatibility entirely.

an optional rule

> The woman sat, in a rocking-chair, staring through the window on the far wall. Her eyes were unfocused. She did not acknowledge my presence.
>
> After many minutes, I decided to speak. "I have come to seek the Seer of Time."
>
> She snapped her head up and stared into my soul.
>
> *The Woman who Stared into Forever*, dryadTornado

Basic quests are a critical part of characterizing Chuubo's characters; they generally don't change for the lifetime of the character. But sometimes you might want to! For example, if a character recognizes that their basic quest is self-destructive and puts work into overcoming it, it should be possible to change it to something less destructive. Alternately, if it just doesn't fit your character concept, you should be able to change the basic quest to something you find more interesting to play.

Note: this is a big deal. Basic quests are one of your character's core motivations at all times! (Like, me going overboard in talking about things I like, and in replicating bits of them in my real life, is *my* basic quest. This is also known as the tendency for "special interests".)

In general, this is a thing you're going to need to argue with the HG, moreso than anything you might do in-character. There aren't really firm rules for this – I'm mostly discussing examples and possibilities here. If you're changing it early on because it just doesn't fit your character concept or later on because the HG's decided to change something you based your character on, it might be a matter of a short anytime quest, take effect at the resolution of an Issue, or even your HG just letting you swap it out without mechanical penalty. But in general, I think this replaces a quest reward near or at the end of an Arc, for a longer quest (35+ XP).

by cogitativeMistake

There are few players who would ever consider destabilizing or destroying a Replayer Network, and even fewer who would actually go through with it. However, these people do exist, and to be able to effectively defend against them, we must first predict what they might do.

Therefore, this paper intends to be a threat assessment, viewing Replayer networks from the perspective of someone who might do them harm.

Disclaimers

I have previously worked on the codebase of Sburb.org, and am currently a moderator on PrototypeTowers. This threat assessment is most likely not complete; there are almost certainly other loopholes that I have not found. I have absolutely no intention of using these loopholes, and point them out in hopes that they can be mitigated.

General information

The main two avenues for attacking a Replayer Network are to destabilize the network itself, and to sever it from its timetravs.

In general, the fastest way to destabilize a network is to force it or its creators to renege upon the Deal that has been made for its servers, at which point the Horrorterrors will destroy it. Many modern networks have robust upload filters that will catch this kind of thing (for example, Pits has an extremely strict Corruption filter that throws false positives).[1] However, being in a position of authority, or bending the ear of someone in a position of authority, can bypass any and all software. As they say in computer security, the humans that use the computers are always the weakest link.

Another (less feasible) way to destabilize a network is to kill everyone who is in charge, and then everyone who will get that power when the current admins die.[177] Aside from some specialized circumstances (see below), this is infeasible-to-impossible. However, if you pull it off, it will do one of two things: either it will leave the server with nobody capable of administrating it, thus leaving security holes unfixed for attackers to find at their leisure; or the server will automatically assign administrative power to *someone* on the system (usually based on seniority, activity, and/or participation in some sort of volunteer committee). If you do this enough times, you may eventually end up with someone who will listen to your demands…

Timetrav encryption provides the linear connections that keep users attached to a network. Timetrav encryption requires the active participation of, in most cases, dozens or hundreds of current Time players to keep it running.[2] This means that it is surprisingly fragile. While my work on self-reporting timetrav

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==> 177. CM: Because this is the murdergame, automatic reassignment of power upon one's death is very common.

handles has provided more accountability for timetrav encryptions' staff to answer to (and, ultimately, more security for timetrav users), no system is perfect.[3]

Sburb.org

By necessity, due to the nature of the Deal that was made to create it, Sburb.org is located inside exactly one stabilized null session. While individual users can back up as much as they want, and all major FAQ and much important cultural information is mirrored on Pits, it is infeasible-to-impossible to back up the entire thing. The conditions for this Deal remain unknown, although it is rumored that it involves the capability for the admins to access the Ultimate Reward, all the doomed timeclones generated by painterlyDabbling, and/or specificNihilism selling her soul and her ultimate fate to Horrorterrors.[4]

Null session: The Sburb.org null session was made with a Deal with some of the highest in the Noble Circle.[5] To have the Horrorterrors let you travel there, you will have to offer the HTs a better deal. This is an extremely tall order. It is, however, not impossible. Once someone does that, you could start a bidding war with the Horrorterrors to try to preserve the place. This is a terrible idea, but if one's home network is at stake, there are indeed some people who will sell their souls to preserve it.

A better strategy than a flat-out bidding war may be bargaining with the Horrorterrors merely for a chance to intercept the attackers. In this case, you do *not* want to contact the Noble Circle; you want to contact a "free agent" or "outlaw" Horrorterror. These HTs are more dangerous: if you succeed, you will be at their whim, and if you fail, you will end up with the entire Noble Circle of Horrorterrors after you. But it *may* cost you less than the other option.[6]

Timetrav: One interesting angle of attack on Sburb.org is to attack the timetrav that holds it together. Due to its structure, Sburb.org has exactly one Time player maintaining linearity. In the event that painterlyDabbling dies for good, the software and hardware structure maintaining linearity for Sburb.org has enough of a buffer of time energy to hold things for a decitimestamp[178]. After that, the entire server will only be held together by the other timetravs that are anchored to it, and anyone relying on the Sburb.org timetrav will be cut Loose.

Current Time players attached to Sburb.org may feed their own Time magic to the linearity machine; the energy outlay required will cripple approximately one-sixth of the current Time players on the Sburb.org timetrav, or be a meaningful but not insurmountable burden on two-thirds of said current Time players.[7] Long-term stability of the timetrav thus *requires* someone to travel to the null session to take painteryDabbling's place as full-time linearity supervisor. I can only hope that someone will be courageous and selfless enough to take on that burden.[179]

==> 178. CM: ~one week; while the deci is also the default chapter length, in a crisis like this, you may want to split it up into three or four chapters.

==> 179. CM: The only characters with the potential for growth great enough to take this burden are Main Characters. Good luck and good sense.

PrototypeTowers

PrototypeTowers is a Network built as a distributed swarm of small to medium size Ring servers; the Deal that holds this swarm together will cover anyone who wants to launch a server into the Ring. "Launching drives" increase the capacity and size of the swarm regularly to handle demand. The network is designed for resilience and data preservation; theoretically, it can withstand a loss of 20% of its servers without any loss of data, and a loss of as many as 60% of its servers will still preserve the vast majority of the PT0000 (Produced In The Medium) category.[8]

Corruption filter: It is possible that the reason that PrototypeTowers has a corruption filter so strict is because, if *any* amount of corruption got onto their network, it could doom the whole thing. Mind you, I am not at all certain about this; but it is entirely possible. This means that if you would like to void the Deal that holds PrototypeTowers together, you may want to figure out a way to bypass or subvert the corruption filter. To do that, you're going to need to figure out a way to get code that does that onto the filter.

You may want to try slipping a subtle bug into a large commit to the PrototypeTowers codebase; while people do vet the contributions carefully, it is still possible for bugs to last through these checks and make it to production versions of the software. After the software update has been distributed to most of the servers, you can then exploit it.

Denial of service attacks: A deliberate design choice of the PrototypeTowers network is that it prioritizes preservation of information over anything else (including the people who actually use it).[9] Without regular launching drives, PrototypeTowers would not have enough capacity to serve its current userbase effectively. As it is, it runs very close to maximum load at all times.

Therefore, even a small increase in usage could drastically decrease the ability of the service to do anything at all. Get about a hundred Replayers' computers to constantly load new PrototypeTowers pages, in the manner of a web spider, and you could bring the network to its knees. (As to how to get a hundred Replayers' computers? I would suggest a trojan.)

However, keep in mind that this is an inherently temporary attack. The Door, as part of its resetting of anyone who walks through it, confiscates computers and almost all computer code; and many PrototypeTowers users' response to a slow network is to alchemize a new server, load a saved copy of the PrototypeTowers server software onto it, and shoot said server into the Ring. The network will eventually adapt to any amount of load you could feasibly put on it.

Netsplits: PrototypeTowers servers form a "swarm" of servers, each of which tends to listen to servers with higher ratings to bring them back to the "consensus" state. However, if a portion of the swarm is isolated from the majority of the swarm for long enough, it will eventually diverge until there is no way to merge the changes back in. This is called a netsplit.[10]

PrototypeTowers software can manage most netsplits by renumbering later uploads, so the upload IDs don't collide. However, in theory, a lengthy enough netsplit could cause problems that would be

prohibitively difficult to resolve automatically, and impossible to solve manually. It would then be unclear which of these new networks was covered by the HTs' deal; the smaller half of the netsplit would probably be destroyed. In this way you could probably carve out a large enough chunk of the PrototypeTowers data and userbase to cripple the network permanently.

The most devastating consequence of this attack, however, would ultimately be the loss of trust in the network. Data is fungible, but social capital is irreplaceable.

Ivory Tower

This section is only available to those who are members of Ivory Tower. Apply for membership <u>here</u>.[180]

References

[1] Prototype Towers Bug Reports 09790.7837, .6724, .2367 and .4300

[2] eternityUnstuck, "The Fundamentals of Timetrav Encryption"

[3] cogitativeMistake, "Self-Reporting Timetrav Handles: A Proof-of-Concept"

[4] sophisticatedAstarte, "Scurrilous Rumors Regarding the Original Sb.org Administration"

[5] ibid.

[6] heterogenousHecatomb, "Discourse on the Politics of the Furthest Ring"

[7] calculatedTorque, "Sb.org Emergency Procedures"

[8] *PrototypeTowers Moderator's Manual*, pg 451, article II

[9] ibid., pg 290, article xi

[10] salesmanTraversal, "PT Network Maintenance: Basic Terminology"

[11] oracularArchetype, "Doubting Thomases and Faithful Souls: The Role of Belief in Replayer Institutions"

[12] Ivory Tower Constitution, article III, clause 4

[13] epinephrineElectrified, "Memoirs of a Seer", chapter 3, section H

[14] gentlemanMannerism, *Etiquette Guide*, book 7, introduction

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==> 180. CM: As per best practices I am holding this section for a full timestamp or until all issues have been addressed, whichever comes first.

Minor Networks

There are a couple more small networks that might show up on occasion. "Small" means that relatively few Replayers identify the website as their home base; they may still have many regular users, but these sites are not as inherently important to Replayerspace.

Skyblue

Skyblue is a fanfiction and writing group that looks similar to what a fraction of presessions call "Archive of our Own". They write fanfiction, or post Guides, and people roleplay in the comments. Such as a completely inexplicable roleplay in the comments of a certain Sburb Glitch FAQ.[181]

Fiction by writers who have disappeared for more than five timestamps, or who are confirmed dead, are moved into a separate section called "orphaned works"; but there is an established tradition of taking over unfinished works and finishing them yourself. An epic may pass through three or four different hands before being "completed", and even then, people can still write new endings.

After a few years, a new feature was made available on Skyblue, where you can attach private notes to your stories and outline what you want(ed) to happen next. This is automatically made public when the work is orphaned, to better facilitate finishing orphaned works.

Skyblue is run by Kacper Bartos, a native Mage of Sound who goes by the handle of craftedImmolation.

Kittenparty

This server is filled with pictures and gifs of kittens and cats. There is also a subsection for goats. "Why goats," you ask? "Because", says the founder, symmetricalFortune, Ace Whitmore, a native Dame of Space. "Because."

There is a rival website called Puppypalace which was created by someone upset by the lack of dogs. It belongs to one Jeannie Baker/gemstoneAmalgam, native Witch of Time. It is not nearly as popular.

Meatspin

The presession shock site Meatspin is still available as a Ring site. Nobody knows who put it there. Nobody knows why. We shall not speak further of it.

Corpsekiss

This is a site for reaction images. It is named after its flagship category, which is pictures people take of themselves while corpsesmooching coplayers.

Vasilis Costa, malignantFelidae, a native Ward of Dreams, runs this website.

==> 181. OJ: Bwooooooooong.

by skiddingZebra

Servers placed in the Furthest Ring are the backbone of the Age of Replayer Networks, tied together by timetravs and by the hard work of people whose only outlet is the Internet. Understand that creating a new one is a difficult and permanently taxing affair, owing to the requirements. If you'd like to start your own, you should answer the following questions first.

Why haven't you used someone else's?

Replayer networks are difficult to establish and difficult to keep. You *must* make a Deal for the safety of your network; there's no two ways about it. I would dissuade you if at all possible.

Note that launching a redundant server for Pits, or for other such distributed-federation networks, is already covered under someone else's Deal and thus does not carry the same level of risk. If you'd like to, go ahead!

If you think none of the current Replayer networks work for you – if you object to all their policies, perhaps – then we proceed to the next step.

How will yours be different?

Let's be honest, nobody will use an untested server whose only virtue is that it isn't any of the current ones, especially if they're coming from an existing Replayer network. What do you offer? (It's okay if "more stability" or "better moderation" is the answer. But you have to figure out how you'll be doing that, too.)

How you'll attract new users is a question, too. While there are plenty of loose Replayers still sweeping the skies looking for signals, recruiting from an existing Replayer network has the advantage that it'll jumpstart your growth by providing an initial seed community. The problem is that you're passing a high bar: are a large number of people dissatisfied enough to move? Is it something that fulfills a need that noen of the current networks do?

Usually… the answer is no. But if you think it's yes, do keep going.

How will you run your Ring server?

Remember: your Ring server will be *in the Ring*. You will not be able to physically visit it and turn it off and back on again if it acts up. (The Horrorterrors can… for a fee. But best to minimize that possibility.) What hardware will you use? Software?

The Skaianet OSes are pretty stable, if you strip them down to command-line-only. Which requires that you know how a command line works. It's on the graphical level, I'm told, where problems tend to emerge.

You may want to try using a hypervisor – an outer operating system that is extremely simple, that lets you manipulate the inner OS in ways that would otherwise require physical access. For example, the hypervisor can let you monitor the boot sequence without being there, or restart the inner OS. This requires that the hypervisor be even more stable than the server software you're running.

Do you have a plan for growth?

Many communities fall foul of this: that their governance structures work fine for an informal server of about eight friends, but it falls apart when a flood of people suddenly bloats the userlist to a hundred.

Write clear rules now. How will you enforce them? How will you select moderators? What gets your post deleted? What's a ban-worthy offense?

And what can you to do to try to preserve the character and intention of your Replayer network as it grows? True preservation is impossible, but you can try to foster the principles upon which you built your Network in those who join. Clickwrap is useless, moderators are mostly useless – what'll really acculturate people is *other people*. It is important to have consistent rules for what kind of content you like from the beginning.

Who will you Deal with?

This, unfortunately, is a personal decision I cannot help you with.

Keep in mind that researching Horrorterrors is *inherently* Corruptive. Doing too much research is dangerous. Unfortunately, doing too little research is also dangerous.

Angels and Others

> Never, ever promise that you'll do something "just this once." Sburb gets a good story from forcing you to face moral dilemmas. Circumstances *will* be contrived in which you will wrestle with the idea of doing it again.
>
> And once you give in the second time, you might not be able to stop.
>
> *Sarai's Sburban Guide*, wedgeIssue

We do not have the misfortune of having one set of incomprehensible, Lovecraftian gods, in the Game.

We have *two*.

A pair of inscrutable factions, known as the Angels and the Others, share Paradox Space with us. They have their own agendas, follow their own plans, and – quite probably – shape the ultimate fate of the multiverse and all of us who live in it.

To learn about these gods is dangerous. To write about these gods is more dangerous. Learning too much, or spending too much time with them, inflicts those of us in Sburb with the status of Corruption. To be Corrupted is to no longer care about your people and your network and your life.

And yet, there are rare circumstances where we must petition them; for they are gods, and as gods they have powers far beyond ours.

If only one of these groups existed, we would be long gone. But because there are two, we can play them against each other – and it is not impossible that they would lose, or that we would win.

Two Types of Corruption

> Impossible and eldritch gods? Really? One of them's pots of overcooked spaghetti with keysmashes for names. The other is winged sperm that are also on fire.
>
> "Re: If You Found Yourself In A Dead-End Session…", terrariumAcquaintance

The Others (in what the Game calls the Furthest Ring and we call the Interstitial Void) and the Angels (sealed within the Underworld, usually) cause distinct types of corruption, each of which is equally dangerous. Of the two, Other corruption is more accessible earlier in the game, but Angel corruption is subtler until very high levels. The common elements of both are referred to as "corruption", as they have many important similarities.

> Do you really think that you're the first person who thinks they have the one true solution to the hard problems of philosophy? Do you really think you're the first person who's actually right, as opposed to so wrong that a college undergrad could roast you?
>
> Remember that all of us, to a one, are self-taught, and that means we have huge blind spots.
>
> We don't know what we don't know.
>
> *Memoirs of a Seer*, epinephrineElectrified

Part of why corruption is dangerous is because corruption can modify parts of the game code that are supposed to be read-only. The Game being sloppily coded, this can result in any number of effects, from broken event flags to Skaia no longer being usable. I shouldn't have to tell you why this is a bad idea.

Another part of why corruption is dangerous is because small corruption charges are carried by common household objects – for example, Bibles carry a small Angelic charge, and Dr. Seuss books carry a small Otherwise charge. (The Bible thing is obvious – it mentions Angels at several points – but Dr. Seuss stumps us.) Furthermore, using corruption-charged objects in punchcard alchemy tends to magnify the charge: if you alchemize a weapon that seems to be abnormally effective for its grist cost, it is probably Corruptive, and you should discard it immediately.

Corruption does not exist in presessions. You may safely handle corruptive objects during presession, as the "stat" linked to how corruptive an item is doesn't exist until Entry. For example, the Bible is Angel-corruptive because it has detailed descriptions of angels and people listening to angels. So Christians in the Game have used presessions to collectively edit the Bible, to cut out most of the thousand-eyed wheels of fire and replace the remaining mentions of "Angel" with "Messenger of God". This modified version is Corruption-inert.

Both forms of Corruption resemble each other at lower stages; thus, while, in theory, it is possible to counteract corruption with a controlled exposure to the other type of corruption, it is a bad idea in case you pick the wrong direction and further corrupt yourself or your coplayer.[182]

The simplest way to treat mild and moderate Corruption is to apply physical contact. Generally, hugs are preferred by Sburb players, although grabbing onto someone's ankle and not letting go, or sleeping together (or "sleeping together"), will also work. Certain Aspect-charged foods are also anticorruptive, so the Alimentator Hack gives you a few extra options.

Severe Corruption must be treated with death and resurrection. Corruption on a Player ceases to be dangerous at the moment they are no longer alive, and since you can kissrevive and god-tier revive people, this means that if your realself is corrupted and then dies, your dreamself instantly loses all Corruption and becomes safe to revive into. Make sure to kill with a method that leaves ample time for resurrection.

==> 182. EB: To be fair, it is a bad idea to handle corruptive items at *all*, but this is an especially bad idea.

Note that when god-tier players are corrupted, there's a chance that you killing them will be interpreted by the Game as "just", and turned into a permanent death. Are you feeling lucky?

The last way to clear Corruption is to shove someone through the Door, and hope that there's still enough of them left that the Door will count them as a Player.

> Her form was cloaked in night and tendrils, and her skin was as charcoal. She shouted in some exotic, guttural tongue, and a film of darkness sprung up about me.
>
> I fired desperately once, twice, thrice; and though she buckled she did not stop.
>
> I think she couldn't stop. Not even if she wanted to. She was too far gone.
>
> "Short Story #40", balkanizedKelp

Otherwise corruption is the kind of corruption seeded by the Horrorterrors, also known as the Noble Circle of the Furthest Ring, also known as those things you hear whispering if you go outside during a Derse Eclipse. Though dreamselves do not display most signs of corruption, they can still pick up Corruption (and propagate it back to your wakingself), so it is a bad idea to spend an extended period of time outside during the Eclipse.

Otherwise corruption is associated with the Squiddles, Dr. Seuss, Lovecraftian and Lovecraftesque writing, and tentacles. This means that alchemizing your hentai is a terrible idea, and that alchemizing things that use Lovecraftian motifs is even worse. The Squiddles TV show is noncorruptive if you edit out the title sequence, but most of the merchandise exhibits a low level of corruption.[183]

(If you're not entirely sure about whether the thing you are trying to alchemize is Other-corruptive, mix in some Charles Dutton merchandise. For some reason, Charles Dutton neutralizes Otherwise corruption. The resulting product will still look extremely unsettling, though.)

Otherwise corruption at low levels displays the common low-level corruption symptoms: a desire to Break The Game, withdrawal from most social contact, and trying to rope you into their schemes (the better with which to corrupt you too).

At high levels, Otherwise corruption can manifest as a roiling black aura, darkened skin, speaking Broodfester (the native tongue of the Others), and growing tentacles.

The endpoint of Otherwise corruption is Speakerdom, where the Other-corrupted individual loses all free will and is taken up as a puppet by a Horrorterror. Occasionally, people with extensive histories of contact and/or Deals with Horrorterrors can be made Speakers over very short periods of time, but this is extremely rare and only happens when the player's Horrorterror deems its "asset" valuable enough to protect.[184]

Void players have some passive resistance to Otherwise corruption. Rain players are especially susceptible to Otherwise corruption.

==> 183. CM: There are some rather interesting theories about how the Squiddles TV show is supposed to be a direct representation of the Horrorterrors. None of them explain why the show itself is noncorruptive.
==> 184. EB: PCs being exceptional, this will probably happen to them.

If the Alimentator Hack is available and the HG allows, Otherwise corruption can be purged using the "voidshake".

Angelic Corruption

> 'Do I want to know?' That's the real question you should ask yourself. 'Is the knowledge I seek worth the price of my life?'

<div align="right">

"dissidentCitation", *The Gamebreakers of the Vine*, rhodochrositeMajesty

</div>

Angelic corruption is caused by the Angels that live in the center of your Land. Angels are the - I wouldn't say enemies, more like passive features of the environment - that have a disturbing tendency to swoop down from the Underworld unsky, and screech at you, chase you, and try to burn you with fire.[185]

Angelic corruption is associated with Bibles (as mentioned above), explicitly Christian crosses (although crosses that happen coincidentally, as well as crosses that aren't explicitly Christian, seem to be fine), distilled spirits, and uncanny-valley eyes on inanimate objects (such as evil-eye warding charms and certain types of dolls). Be careful about the distilled spirits thing: many camping stoves run on alcohol, so if you're doing some presession shopping, make sure you look for kerosene, propane, or fuel tablets. Distilled spirits purchased pregame cause relatively minor corruption (so long as you're not drinking alone, you should be fine), but you should be very careful around distillery equipment. Incidentally, if you have any coplayers that state that they are fans of a TV show called Supernatural… please keep an eye on them?

Angelic corruption at low levels displays the common low-level corruption symptoms: expressed desires to gamebreak, invitations for you to join them, and pulling away from social contact.

High-leveled Angelic corruption can manifest as a flaming white aura, blinding white light coming out of the eyes, speaking of oneself using the royal "we" (Replayers call that "pluralizing"), a glowing ring or halo above/around the head, and a voice that takes on inhuman overtones and harmonies.

Angelic corruption culminates in Singerdom, where the Angel-corrupted individual is inducted into the Angels' hive mind and used as an extension of the Angels' will. People with extensive histories of Angel corruption may be able to recall some of the things they have done for the Angels, but the Angels defend that information fiercely...

Light players have some passive resistance to Angelic corruption. Hope players are especially susceptible to Angelic corruption.

If the Alimentator Hack is available and the HG is amenable, Angelic corruption can be purged using the "lightshake".

==> 185. EB: They look a bit like Sprites, except they have giant wings of fire and blurry faces; if you can see any more, that means you're too Corrupted and should get out immediately.

by terrapinExcuse

Why does anyone listen to the Angels? They offer no miracles to you, speak not your language, are completely avoidable if you don't open up your Underworld, and will singe holes through your soul until there's no "you" left.

But it is said that even people who join cults join them for a reason – that such things endure because there is something genuine that they provide, that the participants *need*, however wrapped-up it may be in layers of fear and coercion. The Azurites appeal to those who despair of meaning in their life; the Seer Network gave its members permission to follow their scientific desires, then lured them past the bounds of morality.

The Angels give you unconditional love and acceptance. They will listen to you. They will sit with you. They will never leave you. It is just that giving them your attention, having them embrace you, also leads to them drilling holes through you and turning you into their pawn.

I don't think I can assume safely that you had the Charismatans or the Spirograph Gate people in your native presession, or that you heard of them, so let's start with some definitions of "cult":

- A very small religion with very few adherents.
- A religion designed by the creator for self-aggrandizement rather than out of sincere belief.
- A group that appears to be powered by religion that acquires and retains its members through coercion.

While the first two definitions are useful for explaining religions on Earth, it is this last definition that is most useful for exploring the Angels; they're hardly *small*, and I have never heard them speak of having a creator.

So, what about the "coercion" thing? The problem is thus: *all* methods used to convince people of anything whatsoever could, theoretically, be classified as coercion, which does not help here. We're going to assume it means that it means coercion significantly more severe than the average religion might indulge in. The Chart of Coercion, popularized by enturbulatedOccupation to describe Sburb itself, is also used in the study of cults.

Now, I don't want to go into too much detail – I may be safe in presession, but I can't assume you are – but, among other things, they:

- lie to you
- force you to depend on them for survival and power
- cut you away from your friends
- cut away the parts of your identity that would defy them

The "drilling holes in your soul" is *literal.* People recovering from extreme cases of Singerdom – from being used as a finger of the Angel hivemind – often have symptoms consistent with those of brain damage or stroke. They may lose the ability to speak, perceive, or remember certain things, develop various palsies and tremors, and/or lose chunks of memory.

Where Other corruption gloms alien bits onto your soul, Angel corruption tears away bits and pieces of your essential self. This is why the two types of corruption are mutually incompatible; one will remove what the other adds, and vice versa.

So, how do you pull someone away from chronic Angel corruption? The study of cult deprogramming provides no certain answers – many alleged "deprogramming" methods involve coercion just as severe as that of being inducted into the cult in the first place, equivalent to throwing someone from the Angels into the Others – but here are some things to keep in mind:

Try to keep in contact with them. Remember that people join cults because the cults *accept* them, because the cults provide critical emotional needs such as "belonging" – but it's possible to provide these things in a less toxic way. Remember that the things they do because the Angels said to aren't the whole of their personality, and that not all of them is lost. Make sure that they know you'll help. Don't push; they've probably been warned of people who are trying to take them away. Just be there.

If they ask for your help – even if they haven't contacted you for years – try to give it to them. Because one of the ways that cults like the Angels function is to cut people away from social support, providing that social support when they ask is something that can break someone free from the cult mindset.

Instruct new Replayers on the Angels, and warn them away. This is difficult to do in detail due to the fact that the Others and Angels are cognitohazards, but you can share basics like this essay.

Remember that it's not your fault. People don't fall into cults because of one thing one person did; it's a long process that takes hundreds or thousands of interactions, and years or decades. The Angels have certain advantages in this regard, such as their positive portrayal in Abrahamic religions and the nature of Loose Replaying.

And: one of the more insidious effects of the Angels is that they instill in you a lack of faith in the future and in others, so that you will be driven further into their arms. Always hold hope, even if hope may seem lost. It might work out. Who knows?

Plot Hooks

The Others and the Angels each have their own inscrutable plots, the main commonality being that these plots happen to have many openings for each party to corrupt Sburb players. But since this is supposed to be playable, the HG is going to have to bring them down to scrutable-level.

Deals

> I knew, instantly, that I had been irrevocably tainted by supping with him; and yet I could have done nothing else.
>
> <div align="right">crypticDividend</div>

So far, the Others have been willing and able to Bargain with Ring server-affiliated Replayers. The price they ask a Bargainee to pay is often substantial and Faustian. Many Replayers take them.

Deals are required for Ring travel. If you are in a session that is screwed enough that you have to leave, I am sorry. Having to give part of your soul to a Horrorterror, on top of being in an unwinnable session, is incredibly unfair.

The Others manage all Deals to keep servers in the Ring safe; this means that someone on the top staff of every Replayer network is deeply enmeshed with the Others. Thus, the Others have a tentacle in the content and dynamics of every major Replayer network. What are they doing with this tentacle? I have no idea.

If you wish to play a Deal out in detail, see the instructions for The Bargain (page ???).

The Hymns

> [The Hymns] were dangerous not because of their content, but because they were *distracting*. Because if I couldn't tear my mind away from thinking about them, I'd slowly collapse inwards on myself and never come out. Sometimes I still catch myself thinking about them anyway; and those are the days I spend on the Battlefield, to drown those thoughts in blood.
>
> <div align="right">*Interesting Interviews*, northwardsNodule as edited by scorpionSting</div>

The Angels seem to be seeking certain puzzle pieces of something they call the "Hymns", according to reports by patricianPhenotype, fallenEndcap, and other individuals with substantial ties to the Angels. Each fragment is apparently sealed within a prominent Replayer's soul.[186] If the Angels are able to reclaim all pieces of the Hymns – and we know that they can reclaim pieces by maintaining people as Singers, and/or by having them die as Singers – they may be able to do something interesting.

==> 186. EB: The chance of someone having a Hymn inside them seems to increase with the number of Miraculous Arcs they have – not by their session number. So PCs and other main characters with high levels of advancement are particularly vulnerable.

So far this has not happened, because other Players have intervened: preventing the relevant individuals from becoming Corrupted, Tier-and-Clearing individuals who were involved, and – in one notable case – making a personal request of the Horrorterrors to shield the person in question.[187]

I am not sure what happens to Hymns when people die as non-Singers. Do they get sent to the soul of another Replayer? Do they fly free of the decaying flesh of the individual and back to the Host? Are the Hymns just an excuse for the Angels to pick prominent Replayers to learn all the secrets of?

Double Corruption

> There is no reconciliation possible between these forms of yin and yang; you may swirl them together, you may take from one or another and try to balance it out, but they will never mix, and separate like oil and water whenever you try.

<div align="right">

"Metaphysics and Meta-Metaphysics", dryadTornado

</div>

Is a baseless rumor. Generally, Otherwise and Angelic corruption drive each other out; in the domains experienced by most players it is safe to treat corruption as a number line or tug-of-war. It is *possible* that if you break the Game enough, taking both types of Corruption fast enough, you could exhibit both kinds of corruption, but nobody's ever seen it happen. The one time some idiot took an Other-corruptive object in one hand and an Angel-corruptive object in the other hand, they were never seen again and their entire Land was engulfed in masses of white and black.

(I am mostly glad that they set up a livestream running through a corruption-filtering fusebox, and that the video was then uploaded to Pits, such that nobody ever has to do this again.)

Origins

> "It didn't make any sense, and I couldn't make it make sense." He shook his head. "I admire those who are willing to throw themselves against intractable problems, but I can't be one of them."

<div align="right">

"occipitalElegiac", *The Gamebreakers of the Vine*, rhodochrositeMajesty

</div>

Why are the Angels and Others even in Sburb? Here's a few theories.

Maybe they aren't supposed to be part of Sburb at all. The Angels are held within the center of your Land by a layer of bedrock, i.e. the kind of rock that Land Beds are made of. Bedrock is, by definition, indestructible. No Aspect power can break it, not even Void. The Black King cannot break it. Neither the Angels nor the Others can break it. The only thing that can break it is a *Player* who is corrupted – and since the Angels are sealed inside the Underworld, this means that if you go from the Denizen straight to the Battlefield (as most new players do), they never contact Players at all.

Similarly, the Furthest Ring has natural inhabitants – the ringbeasts – who seem to be unrelated to and unconcerned with the Others, and during a normal playthrough, the Others stay well away from the Veil, remaining outside the consensus reality of a session bubble. It is possible that the Underworld was

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==> 187. CM: Also known as the only good thing Maggie Monda ever did.

not supposed to have Angels in it and the Furthest Ring was not supposed to have Others in it, but that each of them was banished to their specified place in Sburb as a kind of containment.

Maybe they're part of a Sburb "expansion pack". You can play a game of Sburb that stops at the end of Terraforming – as soon as you slay the Denizen – and never have to touch the other content at all. You can proceed straight to the Black King from there. Many players without much experience or contact with the Replayer community do not realize that the Earthsea Borealis, let alone the Underworld, are things that you can do. Also, there are a couple of snippets on the ruins that you encounter in the Underworld that suggest that originally the Taking of the Heart was supposed to release the "Skaian grist" hoard, currently released when you kill the Denizen. This suggests that everything past the Denizen is bonus content, or part of the game that was dummied out at release.

Skaia Travel

> "Shall we dance?"
>
> I looked up at her, and nodded yes, and took her hand. And then everything went blue.
>
> <div align="right">"What Never Happened", photonDecided</div>

Generally, we Replayers use the Ring to escape broken and null sessions. But there are scattered reports that you could travel through Skaia, instead.

When you are carrying a sufficient load of Angel corruption, you begin seeing Skaia as multifaceted: every instance of Skaia in every session of the Game is really just a different face of the same thing. Usually this is the point when other people are supposed to stop listening to your rambling, and apply physical contact until you no longer rant about the clouds being brilliant like diamonds.

However: if you have something the Angels want, *such as one of the Hymns*, they will leave you slightly more agency when Corrupted. Therefore – if you are a Player who *has* a Hymn inside you, and you don't know if you have a Hymn until you've been touched by the Angels – you may have enough of your original consciousness left, in corruption, that you still understand that your session is no longer safe and that you need to leave through Skaia.

There may even be an entire parallel culture of Replayers who host their servers in Skaia, travel through Skaia, and consider the Others to be more incomprehensible and dangerous…

For more speculation, see page ???.

by OJ[188]

> The admins on #replayvalue definitely had a deal with a certain member of the noble circle, one which applied to the whole IRC. I don't know the exact terms, but I know they didn't get upset with this one fishtroll when he murdered a rustblood on her behalf. Yet another reason it was shut down, I guess.
>
> anonymous comment

Each of the Others, in Replay Value, is based around something repulsive. Something that we believe should not exist –

And yet it does, for we are imperfect and they would prey upon our mistakes.

They [1] are aspects of the sapient condition that we cannot lose, though we might try. They remind us of how small we are, how far we still have to go despite our arrogance…

[1] Technically HTs refer to themselves and each other with the neopronouns "y/yr/ys"; if one of your coplayers starts using these pronouns they're Other-corrupted.

Deal HTs

P'Shorshasa, the Goddess, is the Horrorterror that represents *not being able to learn from your mistakes*. Her Deals are usually about memory: you may be asked to give up your memories of the most important day in your life, or given the chance to discuss something with your future self but retain no memory of the event. Her aesthetics center around representing her as a trustworthy being; there is a temple, and tea, and small conversation about innocent things. Sometimes she sends an Emissary; he, the Sage, no longer remembers who he used to be.

Kh'bbrologoth, the Corpse, is the Horrorterror that represents *callousness*. His Deals center upon the Mark, which was said to represent the hold he had upon the Dealer's soul; what it actually did was drain emotions and morality away, leaving the recipient unable to tell right from wrong. His Deals often also involve hurting those you love. He is a roiling mass of flesh trapped in a Frog Temple. His aesthetics center around blood and rotting lotuses.

Grthskyn, the Name, is the Horrorterror who represents *regret*. Its Deals center around those memories that you draw emotional strength and importance from; it becomes a part of them, and taints them forevermore. Its aesthetics are a library with the simultaneous, paradoxical smells of damp and smoke; it speaks in the soft voice of damp pages.

Zahuulghj'ilkyn, the Millipede, is the Horrorterror that represents *disgust*. His Deals center upon embracing that which humans generally consider to be inherently repulsive: requiring you to sacrifice

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==> 188. OJ: Few Replayers know this much about Horrorterrors, and none can write an article with this level of detail. In-character, this document would carry dangerously high levels of Corruption.

your beauty and become a hag with sunken cheeks and yellowed eyes; asking you to give yourself to those who insult you and withhold yourself from those who praise you; making you into someone that you would have never wanted to become. He is a millipede with a true thousand legs, skittering across the tops of trash heaps: modern trash, ancient trash, alien trash. His herald is the smell of dung and rot.

J'lmieltk, the Fungus, is the Horrorterror who represents *lost purposes*. Her Deals center upon giving you the ability, and then eating away at the reason you wanted to do it: you may retain the ability to destroy something you hated or feared, but without any of the hate or fear that got you there, and if you do not follow through you will simply be taken away by her hand. Or you will be given the ability to do something you always wanted to do, but you will not be the one accomplishing it – *she* will be the one that does it, leaving you a prisoner in your own flesh. Her heralds are fungi eating away at flesh, scattered feathers, and a strange pliability in things that should not be pliable – the bending of a steel beam or the collapse of a strong person.

Gnonr'wl, the Toad, is the horrorterror who represents *culling the herd*. Its deals center on cutting away what is not in use, or more accurately what you do not realize you are using until it is gone. A toe or two, what use do humans have for toes? Your appendix. One of your kidneys. That coplayer of yours; she isn't pulling her weight anyway. It is a massive toad, gorging itself and birthing a new generation of horrors from pores in its back. Its aesthetics center around cannibalism and good, rich food. Its heralds are its worshippers, blessed with wondrous transformations.

Anzszagrha'walthiel, the Black Sun, is a Horrorterror that represents *atrocity*. It expects its petitioners to cement the Deals with wholesale slaughter of species or classes of being – in session it could be slaying all Consorts on all Lands, or cruelly betraying Prospit by executing the White Queen before her very subjects before killing them all as well. Its aesthetics center around its essence as the Nadir of the Ring, and include obsidian, jagged thirteen-pointed stars, and the terrible feeling of its anti-light stripping away all goodness you have left in your heart (though, unless you bargain those away, it only leaves you shaken and drained). Anz'el usually appears in a form of one of the people it bargained with, except rendered in a complete monochrome and with empty, black eyes.

Storyline HTs

HTs also make good features for storylines!

There's Y'rabsicurth, who is an HT that is incapable of making Deals due to being "asleep", and thus would only ever be a storyline feature. Her principle is *neglect*. She is associated with "troll goth" aesthetics (bright colors and sunlight).

And then there's one possible origin for P'shor: that she isn't a Horrorterror at *all*, but a longtime Speaker who wormed her way into the confidences of the Noble Circle and snatched up a certain level of power thereby.

And then there's the case of the Oathbreaker, who broke promises and stole Speakers from other Horrorterrors and was eventually thrown out, though not before forcing everyone else into a war of bald miracle-slinging across the Furthest Ring.

And then there's what those players did to K'b, to trap him *in* that Frog Temple in the first place…

Mechanical Details

> You can have anything in life if you will sacrifice everything else for it.

> *Peter Pan*, J.M. Barrie

Here's some suggestions for how to represent this in Chuubo's.

Issue: Sburban Corruption

Both types of Corruption are similar enough that they can be represented using the same Issue. For many characters on Sickly arcs, this is the Issue that they will be incrementing. In game terms this type of Corruption can replace Chuubo's corruption – if you were going to earn a point of Chuubo's corruption, you get one of this one instead (assuming you already have one point in this issue), and trauma can rewrite *this* corruption's trigger.

Speaking of triggers: The standard trigger for Sburban Corruption is that you get exposed to a source of your relevant type of Corruption. Both Corruption-bearing objects and Corruption-bearing environments count, although only alchemized Corruption-bearing objects will count for this, as alchemization tends to magnify corruptive influence. (Corruption from having Lovecraft or Dante on your shelf is below the resolution of this system. Below that, you'll have to treat it purely as a Replayer-cultural disdain for and avoidance of Corruptive objects.) Trauma can rewrite this trigger as mentioned in the writeup about genre – when you gain a Trauma point from, say, having to find the pendant on a coplayer's dismembered body, you might have your Corruption trigger expanded to include, for example, blood.

- Sburban Corruption 0: Nope. Not Corrupted at all.
- Sburban Corruption 1: You've been handling some dangerous things, but you have everything under control.
- Sburban Corruption 2: No really, you have everything under control.
- Sburban Corruption 3: These inferior creatures called coplayers know nothing of the enlightenment that you are chasing.
- Sburban Corruption 4: One of these inferior creatures will either let you complete something amazing… or rob you of your power.
- Sburban Corruption 5: Similar to Illusion 5: character moved to HG control.

Depending on the source from which you received your Corruption point, note which flavor of Corruption it is; your Trigger will match that. If you were exposed to a Corruptive object or environment, it will be the matching flavor. If you have received this point from Sickly or taking your first (Suffer) Corruption action without an obvious source, it will match the type of Corruption that you have established that your character tends towards; I'd like to discourage taking (Suffer) Corruption without an obvious source unless you've already established "your type" of Corruption. Note that having a "type" of Corruption does not *immunize you against the opposite kind, if you are exposed to a Corruptive object.*

Sburban Corruption 1

These are dangerous things to be playing in the sandbox of! But you know what you're doing.

Sburban Corruption 2

Some of your coplayers have looked at you weirdly lately. Which is kind of weird. You have everything under control.

Even so you've been getting these strange urges to do things…

As with Illusion 3, you will now take a Serious wound related to your Corruption. In most cases it will result in the Bond [I must serve the purposes of the Others]/[…the Angels]. This wound will last as long as you have Sburban Corruption 3 and is not possible to cure separately. If this defeats your character, resolve as in the text of Sburban Corruption 5.

Sburban Corruption 3

The voice whispering in the back of your head is louder now. You trust it, for some reason. It knows what it's talking about. Your coplayers have no idea. They're scared of joining you, for some reason.

As with Illusion 4, you will remove the Wound from Sburban Corruption 3-4 and re-inflict it as Deadly. If this defeats your character, resolve as in the text of Sburban Corruption 5.

So, Corruption 4 will require you to reach out to someone, and then either they decorrupt you – thus resolving the issue – or you corrupt them – thus escalating the issue to 5. If you don't manage to get this done before you hit your Corruption trigger again, you'll be punted upwards to Corruption 5.

Sburban Corruption 4

The thing about breaking the Game and converting everyone to your side is that you can't do them in that order.

It's going to be dangerous for you to approach one of your coplayers. But you're going to have to risk it, because if – if – they don't return you to the little mewling child you were before, you and they could reach great heights!

When you reach out to your coplayers and they drag you back to sanity, close this issue, heal the wound, and earn 4 bonus XP/1 MP.

I expect Corruption 5 to happen about once or twice per Arc if you're on a Sickly arc.

Sburban Corruption 5 symbolizes your character becoming a Speaker or Singer; the HG will then take control of your character. If you want to play this through mechanically, Speakers and Singers are on Called Away, with a number of arcs equal to that of the highest Arc Trait that the character has, and in addition have at least 4 Tough Health Levels. Remember that a Deadly wound can fit into a Tough Health Level.

Your character may cut a bloody swathe through their session before being stopped, or may fly out through the Ring or through Skaia, as appropriate, to find a different session to decimate. Some Speakers/Singers may cut through a dozen sessions before being neutralized. If the PCs are unable or unwilling to confront the Speaker/Singer, or there are no PCs in the Speaker/Singer's session, feel free to toss in more sessions full of NPCs to lay waste to, and eventually a session of NPCs that will bring them back down to normal… in the wrong part of the universe. Have fun.

Sburban Corruption 5

> You are no longer playing your character, so this card is OOC. Talk to the HG about a time frame—something that works in the game, something that puts pressure on them but doesn't screw them over. Single-player game? 10 minutes. Crowd of 8 players with a lot of stuff going on? 60-90 minutes. Forum game? Maybe a week and a half. Forum game where you're having fun playing your alternate character? It could be as much as two months.
>
> But there is a time frame, and since you're OOC it's even a RL one.
>
> A clock is ticking.
>
> > Illusion 5 issue card text, Chuubo's corebook

The Speaker or Singer will be taken down – and your own character will return – when this metaphorical clock rings. At that point, you'll also get 4 XP and an MP and the Issue'll resolve.

If you have ever reached Sburban Corruption 5 – now, or in the past – you should make a note on your character sheet that this has taken place, and of what type of corruption took you that far. It won't be your "type" of corruption, not until you codify "having Corruption problems" on the arc level, but this record will be good to glance back at if or when you do need to decide.

Corruption on the Arc Level

> There are two ways of seeing: with the body and with the soul. The body's sight can sometimes forget, but the soul remembers forever.

> *The Count of Monte Cristo*, Alexandre Dumas

During character creation, or during play, you may find that you need to represent a character with ongoing problems with Corruption. In the Game this essentially means that one or another kind of Corruptive force has figured out how to get a toehold in your soul.

Chronic corruption of this type is represented with Arc Traits, themed appropriately to represent the power and danger of a long-term relationship with Corruptive forces.

- ♚ **Accursed**: Your Corruption type will be your Curse, and thus affect the thematics of Falling From the World. Appropriate for people who sought Corruption for power or revenge, or for Wastes and Graces with Corruption problems.

- ◈ **Become Somebody**: Your Corruption type will be your Failing. Appropriate for people who encountered corruptive influence in the normal course of Sburb but can *mostly* live normal lives.

- ♻ **Called Away**: I strongly discourage using this option for a PC, but it may be how NPC Speakers/Singers work. Your Chancel will be either the Underworld or the Furthest Ring. Its Principle will be along the lines of conformity, arrogance, or power. I should note that Catalytic, Estrange, or Arrive in Force will be *absolutely terrifying*. Use of Catalytic will grant Sburban Corruption points unless Answer is made to the Bleak.

- ♻ **Child of the Ash**: While this is extremely rare in the default genre, it seems like this could happen in the Epic Fantasy variant of this setting. Appropriate for people who have achieved an… understanding with the forces that corrupt them. Your Mood may be your own, but your Kaiju Form will manifest as your corruption type. (Your Wicked Mode will, alongside its other effects, convert you to an avatar of the opposite corruption type.)

- ⚡ **Creature of the Light**: This isn't exactly a Corruption arc *per se*, but a single level of Creature of the Light may be appropriate for characters designed with 3+ arcs and a history of Angel corruption.

- ☺ **Gatekeeper**: Rare in the default genre, but Epic/Adventure/Immersive Fantasy characters may have Horrorterrors or Angels as their Other.

- ⚡ **Self-Made**: This option represents succeeding in taking a sliver of the Horrorterrors' power, at the cost of your own humanity. Low levels are appropriate for Replayers who have a two-way understanding with Horrorterrors. Those with higher levels of this Arc Trait may be long-term Speakers or Singers, who are learning enough that they could one day become Horrorterrors or Angels themselves.

- ☺ **Witness** (fanmade): Pick what you like for your Principle, but your Torment will be the type of Corruption you are saddled with. This one could be really fun, if your HG lets you bring in a fanmade arc!

- ☺ **Wounded Angel**: Your Corruption type will most likely be tied to your Blasphemy somehow – most commonly through "instant speakerfication" being said Blasphemy. This is most appropriate for people who were looking for power but got burnt.
- ♛ **Visionary**: Again, this is not a PC option. However, a Horrorterror may have a few levels in this Arc.

by OJ

> Cultural training and wishful thinking lead us to believe that our own good character would have stood firm to the point of death, rather than submit to this final degradation [of being coerced into committing violent or coercive actions of one's own]. Or we imagine that our intelligence would have seen a way out that the victim did not. These beliefs lead inevitably to the feeling that the person who was broken by coercion has been defective from the start and deserves neither compassion nor treatment.

> *Achilles in Vietnam*, Jonathan Shay

This Ritual is a stylized bargain with a Horrorterror. You will lay down your terms. The Horrorterror will lay down their terms. There will be some back-and-forth, but it should be clear from the beginning what you're getting into.

Before you begin, each Horrorterror will have an aesthetic – the surroundings in which they prefer to meet you, how you contact them, and so on. These are great and varied and the HG (or the person who is in charge of the Horrorterror, who may well be another person entirely) will pick one when creating their Horrorterror.

For example, P'shorshasa prefers her (such as Horrorterrors have genders; I suspect the pronoun is invoking the "innocent" nature of the human female gender role) negotiations in a great Greek temple, lined with statues of tentacles instead of gods, and over a pot of unidentifiable tea at a low, kneeling table. She often sends an emissary, someone person-shaped who is probably a Speaker, to drink the other cup of tea and lay out the terms. You contact her by speaking her name into the void, which in the age of digital communication includes speaking her name to an empty IRC chatroom or sending an email to an account that doesn't exist.

By contrast, Kh'bbrologoth presents as a roiling mass of flesh creeping up the walls of a Frog Temple, with a booming voice from all sides and the overpowering smell of rotting flowers littering the floor. He (pronoun for convenience) appears to be there in the flesh, and considers the niceties of P'shorshasa to be unnecessary wastes of energy and time. You contact him by putting a drop of blood on a piece of paper and then setting it on fire, wafting the smoke out into the Furthest Ring.

There are other Horrorterrors – see page ??? for details.

The ritual begins when you invoke the Horrorterror using their standard calling-card. The world spins around you, and you are sucked through a portal into the Furthest Ring, and into the negotiation room that your Horrorterror favors.

The Horrorterror or their Emissary sets up. For example, K'b releases you from the inside of a lotus, which instantly blooms, then rots to become part of the detritus on the floor. P'shor has her Emissary pour tea and engage in social niceties and small talk.

And – whether it happens quickly or slowly, you will eventually make your way around to the question: "What is it that you ask?" says the Horrorterror.

You state your aims, using this formula:

"O Noble of the Furthest Ring, I ask that you grant me _____." (Safe passage through the Ring. Power to take revenge. The ability to place a Replayer Network. You may even ask for something larger, like the elimination of all Replaying, but the price you will be asked to pay for that will be great and you may not find yourself able or willing to accept.)

The Horrorterror replies, immediately or perhaps after a pause: "That is possible. But in return… _____"

(Rarely, they say "That cannot be done." and eject you back into your session. But a "yes, and…" approach to HGing is especially good here.)

Here are some things the Horrorterror may ask of you:

- your memories of something precious to you
- your ability to engage in your Lifeline (as chosen in the Replayer Lifepath, it's the thing that keeps you sane)
- your relationship with someone else
- your reputation
- your connection to your Replayer network
- a Mark (which does something undisclosed, and while you could ask what it does the Horrorterror may be evasive about it)
- if you are asking something really large, like the elimination of Replaying, the Horrorterror may ask something you *cannot* give up, like retroactively making it so that you and everyone you know never existed. (If this is proposed to you the HG is trying to say that the request is just too large.)

The critical point here is: it is something that you will seriously need to consider. It is something that is precious to you; while I suppose the Horrorterrors could engage in such bargaining without asking anything of us, the fact is that they *take advantage* of their position. I am not sure why. Perhaps they feed off our emotional turmoil? But I digress.

You consider it, for a while. The traditional reply is "That is too much." (You could accept right then and there, but it is prudent to at least see if your luck can be pushed.)

The Horrorterror replies with a small revision, or with "Such are the terms." to signify that it is not possible to pay less of a cost.

You may refuse, at this time, as with Turn Back! for a Wicked Action in Epic Fantasy. You may refuse to have the Horrorterror do anything to your soul: and they *will* respect that. It is one of the Ancient Laws, they say. They cannot harm you, by action or inaction, unless you specifically consent.

But you may also accept. Why, and how? That will be your decision.

Either way, the Horrorterror will, after a moment, throw you back into your session through the tunnel, leaving you blinking on the streets of Derse.

How to represent this mechanically is technically the final choice of the HG, but you should be able to have a lot of input (and be able to decide on which Arc you get). Options include:

- A Miraculous Arc at level 0 codifying your Corruption (page ???), paired with an inherent Affliction tied to the Arc level with the terms you agreed to. This Affliction may break one of your other Bonds or Afflictions with the usual wound effects.[189] If you break this Affliction, your Deal is null and void – and you still retain the propensity to Corruption encoded at the Arc level. You may switch over to the appropriate starting quest instantly, or after your current arc is finished. Try not to put it off too long, though.
- Alternately, if you already have a Miraculous Arc that you have started, and are using this Ritual as a capstone for one of the Arc's quests, you may continue to pursue that Arc.
- A Mundane Bindings, Otherworldly, Emptiness, or Mystic arc at level 0, paired with an Affliction, as above. This is only appropriate for games where a secondary Mundane arc is a common occurrence.
- An Imperial Miracle – enforcing the price you paid for the Deal the Deal's effects. This is suitable for Prices that you cannot uphold yourself, such as retroactively giving up your connections. Anyone may take the wound or wounds to try and oppose the miracle or part of the miracle; however, you must take two Deadly Wounds (as if breaking the entire miracle) if you want to get out of the Price. *These Wounds cannot heal while you are still benefiting from the Deal in any way.*

It *is* an option to follow the letter and not the spirit of the terms you agreed to. However, if you do this, the Deal's results will be twisted as well, and often the results will end badly for whatever or whoever you were trying to protect *anyway*.

==> 189. EB: I have a suspicion that Horrorterrors choose terms specifically crafted to force you to break your Bonds.

Hypotheticals (The Future)

> If you look in some of the old Transamphibian archives some of them talk about inheriting scraps of information from Replayer networks that we simply don't know about anymore.
>
> We lost Lotus Network, and The Pond, and Flying Spaghetti Monster, and probably innumerable others. The only thing left of them is occasional references that seem like they were missed by a cosmic attempt to scrub them from the face of the multiverse.
>
> What if this isn't the first Age of Replayer Networks?
>
> What if there have been ages and ages' worth of Replayer Networks, all of which have eventually fallen?
>
> <div align="right">"Really, Now?", internalTriad</div>

The future gapes wide before us, now. I refuse to believe that we are the pinnacle of Replayer civilization. We could do better. We could *be* better than this.

Better than a group of slowly dying children clinging to rocks, at the very least.

Look at the bright side: at least there's lots of room for improvement here.

The Green Sun

It is a legend that has persisted, and even now I believe is being slowly confirmed by dint of sheer number of observations: the existence of a strange green sun, somewhere in paradox space.

It is a sun the same green as an Installation/Debug NPC[190]'s power. This has led to the hypothesis that it is, in fact, where Installation/Debug NPCs get their power from. But that's not the important hypothesis here:

The thing that I'm referring to that could be useful is the hypothesis that it is a *fixed point* in paradox space.

Fixed Point

One of the things that foils plans to build structures in the Ring is that nobody knows where they are. Oh, sure, you can make a Deal to navigate to the precise point in non-spacetime spacetime that it might be in the Furthest Ring, but that kind of Deal is expensive: far more expensive than the kind of Deal where you take care of your own navigational concerns.

==> 190. EB: An Installation/Debug NPC is *supposed* to be a playeroid, enigmatic figure. Due to a glitch, about 40% of Installation/Debug NPCs are, while charged with the arrangement of events on their planet to bring about Sburb, not sapient enough to do it effectively. They all have the same powers, though, which is why it is always a blindingly terrible idea to prototype them.

IDE/Theory: The Green Sun is actually a yellow sun that got dunked in a vat of dye.

"If I Was A Gamebreaker", vermilionSparkle

The solution to this is to build a landmark. The most popular proposal has been to build a ring around the Green Sun, with clock marks that people can dock their Ring ships to or near.

"Meet me at 6 o' clock at the Green Sun" wouldn't mean 6 PM, then. It would mean proceeding to the nadir of the ring around the Green Sun – possibly for trading, to ferry supplies, or simple social contact.

Eventually, the clock ring would become a habitat in its own right, and – assuming that enough Deals have been made, or that a Deal sufficiently powerful has been made – it means that we could have somewhere to rest, between sessions; a sort of inn between the worlds.

When we dream about this kind of thing, on our Networks, we call such a place Can Town, from the tin cans that we could borrow from ages of space exploration past to put it together.

Even if we couldn't stay there forever, it might be nice to have.

So one of the things that's been bandied about is the concept of a sort of fixed-point beacon: a beacon that, visible from enough sessions, is somewhere that other people can aim towards. Unfortunately, the Horrorterrors have prevented us from actually launching any such beacon ourselves.

Which is why some types of Gamebreakers are so excited about the Green Sun. It could be a natural beacon, and we could use it for greater coordination – pooling the resources of sessions, having multiple people meet up physically, and so on and so forth.

The only problem is that the Green Sun is a sun, and is therefore absolutely massive; and just because you can aim towards the beacon does not mean that you'll find people once you get there.

The Replayer internet is, by default, based off the aesthetics of 1990s computing. This is because I like the aesthetics of 1990s computing. But you don't have to do it this way!

For example, in the default setting, the linearity and bandwidth demands for video streaming are prohibitive, unless you do a very large favor (i.e. pay MP) for your friendly neighborhood Time player. However, if you declare that streaming (or even just uploading of chunks of video with an hour's worth of buffer, assuming the server has the space) is possible, you can have all sorts of fun with Replayers that stream their life to Twitch-like chats, or perhaps "consort cams"/"carapace cams". (Unlike consorts, carapaces actually know what video cameras do, so you'll need pretty high dreamrep to pull it off. If you hide the video camera in a fancy hat, it might be discovered...)

Similarly, in the default setting, using those fancy Web 2.0 websites you kids use these days is impossible – if some parts load and execute faster than others, the page will break in entertaining ways. However – again – if you decide that linearity allows this to be possible, you can have all the pretty widgets and dynamic updates your heart desires.

Weird Ghost Shit

When we die, we become ghosts; and while most of these ghosts are content with their afterlife, there are a few who pursue greater aims. It is very difficult to pursue such an aim if you are a bubbleghost, due to the nature of the Bubbles. And yet there are a few who manage to do so, by chance and numbers alone.

These ghosts and their "weird ghost shit" (as they like to call it) are a valuable resource – but they are few, and Paradox Space is huge. All the same, maybe there are enough of them to make a difference.

The Dreaming Dead

> "This is the dominion of Ii Ma. […] Here, Sid, we mean nothing, do nothing, to no effect. Here the knives of you will not cut; here the hands of you will not hold a knife; here we are severed from substance but, Sid, we are safe from doing harm or becoming anathema to ourselves."
>
> "Hitherby Annual #2 (Maundy Thursday)", *Hitherby Dragons*, Jenna Moran

Those of us who die in Sburb, for reasons other than Corruption or data erasure, pass on to a (presumably eternal) afterlife in the dream-bubbles. These Bubbles allow you to relive memories, dream things up that satisfy your desires, and socialize with dreamers and the dead.

However: everything in the Bubbles works on memory. And our memories cannot hold more than a hundred years before all but the most potent of them fade away. The memories of life are sharply defined enough to stay in the memories of the Bubble-dead. Memories within the Bubbles are not.

If you try to dream up a notebook, and write down your experiences, it will reflect only the notebook entries that you remember having written. If you try to dream up a computer, and do some work, it will reflect only the work you remember having done.

Dreamers only believe they have their Classpect abilities; they are dreamed up the same way that everything else in the Bubbles is. These abilities will work exactly as one expects, which is not necessarily how they would act in Sburb. With rare exceptions, they will reflect only what the dreamer knows, and cannot provide new information.

A Dreamer, then, tends to get stuck in a cycle: that memories fade out of your mind at the same rate that you create them. So, after their first several hundred years getting used to immortality, almost all Dreamers repeat the same cycle of behavior all the way out to eternity. Writing the same book, and then having everyone read it, and then forgetting having written it, and starting all over again. Having the same arguments, with the same people, because everyone has forgotten about how the argument went last time. Having the same parties, with the same people and the same food, because you no longer remember that you have had this party a thousand times before.

By and large, dreamers do not even realize this is happening. They live out their immortal lives, doing the same thing over and over again, because they cannot think of anything else to do.

Realness

> The dead have names. The dead have voices. The dead have aims. We know this, because they're out there.

> The trouble isn't hearing them.

> The trouble is tuning them out for long enough that we can *live*.

<div align="right">

"Some Philosophical Thoughts", millenialCrampons

</div>

The thing that stirs mirror-eyed ghosts out of their infinite reverie is when the Real intrudes upon their existence – when a dreamer, or perhaps a Ring ship, comes passing through their bubble. And because Real things stick in the memory far better than dreamed ones, this can stir the dead into new and interesting patterns.

(You can deduce the passage of a Ring ship – and, if it was less than a few hundred subjective years ago, how recently it passed through – by the disturbances in the dreamers that it leaves in its wake.)

Some of the dead know this, and exploit the Real to anchor their memories.

If you have a notebook that is Real, that you did not dream up, it will keep records far longer than you can remember them. If your computer has a Real hard drive (and if you can keep it working), you can work on projects bigger than you can fit into your head. But this isn't just limited to things you can write on; Real items can still collect sentimental value over the decades, or be tethers that ensure you remember what you're working towards.

There's a bubbleghost out there who has a Real rosary; he composes an endless poem of his experiences, line by line, and uses the clusters and shapes of the beads on the rosary to help him remember the poem whenever he recites it. There's an audio recording of his poem on Pits. I listened through the whole thing in two-hour chunks while clearing the Angels from the Underworld, once. The whole poem is six days long.[191]

Occasionally, if you are on a Ring ship, you will come across a bubbleghost, asking to barter or exchange for such a Real possession. It may cost you dearly from your precious stocks of alchemiter grist – but in exchange, the ghost can get you introductions, pass on gossip (the kinds of ghosts that barter for real things will also have sharp eyes for things that might happen in the "future"), or even give you the data from one of their projects.

==> 191. OJ: Solzhenitsyn did the same thing, when he was in prison. I don't think his poem is six days long though.

Projects

Those few ghosts who have decided to tether their lives to the Real – to serve the living – have vast expanses of time and energy to gather data and observations, or to write, or to analyze and program. Occasionally, if you find one, they might be working on something useful.

For example, two ghosts, who give their names only as Melissa and John, have spent an estimated half a million years mapping out the whorls and currents of spacetime in the Ring. While I'm not sure they can give you a map specific to your situation, they can speak knowledgeably about the "spacetime weather formations" that you need to watch out for, help you find out where/when (on average) you should launch Ring servers for maximum lifetime and easy access, or explain the particulars of how to find Bubbles that contain people you might want to see.

pomegranateAttribute (Tasha Blue), who was Loose for all her life and only learned of Replayer networks in her death, studies the psychology of Replayers, especially 15+ session veterans. She's focused on finding "longevity traits" that can be trained or impressed upon younger generations of Replayers, and also investigates whether this would actually improve their quality of life.

A small band of bubbleghosts is in sporadic contact with a group on Pits that gathers data on stats and other available numbers in the Game; the ghosts download this data, crunch numbers and statistics, and occasionally report interesting findings. The extreme lifespan of bubbleghosts allows them to find correlations that would have required prohibitive amounts of work to find in the Game; for example, one of their findings is that the number of battlements on the Black Queen's castle seems to vary logistically with the starting Mangrit of the second Sburb player to enter the session. (Obviously, correlation is not causation, but correlations do point out places where Gamebreakers should investigate further.)

epinephrineElectrified reports that enturbulatedOccupation's bubbleghost is also working on "weird ghost shit" (a term I have borrowed to name the chapter); he has provided no further information.

I mentioned, previously, that almost all Aspect abilities do not work in the Ring. There is one notable exception: Some Seers who were blind when they died can still scry for information, and that information will be real. The name "Far-Seers" is a Replayer coinage that stuck; they aren't really a guild so much as a few scattered ghosts, and most likely you will have to explain to them what the term means.

It is thought that their abilities result from a distant-past deal with the Horrorterrors, with the original request long since lost to time. However, given how time works (or, more accurately, doesn't work) in the Ring, this doesn't mean much.

Far-Seers are extremely rare; there have been six in all of recorded Replayer history, including the Transamphibian and Corpseparty archives. It takes months or years of dedicated searching and inquiry to find one; they do not reveal themselves to Replayer networks (presumably because the terms of the Deal don't let them). Of course, PCs are special...

Far-Seers' scrying is miraculous-level, and they can scry across sessions, across time, and even into presession universes. Furthermore, they can pierce any level of Auctoritas, and carry no Corruption risk (because, of course, dreamers can't be corrupted). They convey their results by projecting them onto the bubble around them, so you can walk around and examine the scry in whatever level of detail you like.

It takes a full 60 XP quest to find a Far-Seer. Finding a Far-Seer makes the entire next chapter Immersive Fantasy for all players. This compresses the timing to make the entire chapter about eight hours long, and makes Sympathetic Action, Shock, Discovery, and Foreshadowing in-genre. The Far-Seer will be available for that time period to answer questions, refuse to answer questions, or give cryptic advice. I am assuming that the other players will either be present at the Far-Seer's location, or will be following developments through text chat; otherwise, the sudden genre shift won't make sense.

Unless your HG says otherwise, you may only have one Far-Seer appear in your entire campaign.[192]

==> 192. EB: I can imagine an Epic Fantasy game where you deliberately find and gather Far-Seers, for whatever reason. But I can't think of any other games where it'd be appropriate.

Skaia Servers

> **Skaianism**, n.: A belief that Skaia is inherently benevolent and watches over its players. See also **belief system**.

> **Editor's note**: Due to past controversies, the editorial staff has removed all comments about the validity or usefulness of belief systems. You will have to judge that for yourself.

> *The Gamebreaker's Glossary*, 21st edition

It is generally accepted that Skaia is a constant across sessions. It has been confirmed to most gamebreakers' satisfaction that every instance of Skaia in a session is, on some fundamental level, *the same Skaia*.

We know it is possible to use Skaia for travel. We do not know exactly how, only that individuals on Angel corruption seem to manage it, and that individuals with something the Angels want are given a bit more freedom when Angel-corrupted, so it is *plausible* to use Skaia as a method for escaping a session.

It is just not something we *do*, here.

Our servers are in the Ring; we think we might understand the Others fractionally better than the Angels (if only because they actually deign to speak our language); when our Replayers need to escape sessions our thoughts first go to the Ring.

Using Skaia for intersession purposes seems too dangerous, too unpredictable, insufficiently researched, associated with eldritch horrors we don't understand.

But what if it *wasn't*?

How It Could Work

The key to getting through Skaia might be *having something that isn't the Game*.

So – most technology you're familiar with, anything past probably the mid-90s or so, is seeded by Skaianet tech. And if you launch Skaianet tech into Skaia, it tends to disappear after a while. Skaia seems to decide it no longer has a use and garbage-collects it, or something. But that really old dial-up equipment and BBS stuff? It stays. Skaia doesn't know what to do with it. It just sits there, and continues to get power, and continues to transmit.

I assume you can still have timetravs. I assume you can still have communities of Replayers that hold each other together. People aren't *that* different, I think. Even if they're aliens, they're still people, and they can't be that much different, not if they're playing the same game of Sburb (or Sgrub, or whatever) as all of us are.

We've got old BBS frontends and IRC servers and Usenets as our primary interfaces, too, us Ring Server people. We do it because they're small, and more efficient – a critical thing, when you will never be able to visit your server to upgrade it again unless you sell the rest of your soul away. A critical thing,

when the larger the file you need to download, the less likely the data is to arrive in the right order, or even intact at all.

But if you're running a Skaia-server? It's not just a matter of efficiency. It's the only thing that works at all.

Skaia-Travel

> Do not go gentle into that good night.
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

<div align="right">Dylan Thomas</div>

The same concept would hold if you were a person, and you wanted to get through Skaia, too.

What is your lifeline? What keeps you going through this, and not just giving up and self-modifying to subsume your will to Sburb's, or giving up and dying? What makes you defy it? What can't you lose? Holding on to that, I think, is the key to getting through Skaia and into another session, without disappearing into the blue.

I saw someone tell the tale, on Pits, once. Five people, the survivors of an eight-player session that'd gotten eviscerated by a Ringwraith, proceeded through Skaia. Two came out the other side. Now, they didn't come out to the same session; and they only knew that the second person came through because the second person had a Sburb.org dongle that was still active, even if all they did there was lurk. So it wasn't a matter of losing contact.

But the other three – they didn't do anything important, had no Great Projects, had nearly resigned themselves to dying when the OP's furious research had turned up the idea of Skaia travel. And yes, he made a speech, convinced them to come along, but part of them didn't want to come along, and… well…

(The OP, he's a Pitsblogger now like us. He's a botanist, collecting information about how plant species vary across presessions. The other one – well, the OP says that they're still working on their Great Cookbook of Alchemiter Food. So it doesn't have to be something objectively important. Just something that you hold onto.)

Skaian Replayers

If there's a group of people, a culture, perhaps, that uses Skaia servers instead of Ring servers, there'd be some differences about them –

They'd trust the Angels more than the Others. The Others, they'd say, hire you like a prostitute; the Angels are more like a pimp. The relationship is still exploitative, but the pimp actually has incentive to maintain their… possessions… for longer periods of time to get more use out of them. The Others only speak our language to get us to trust them; it conceals their inherent inhumanity and alien goals.

They'd trust Skaia more than the Furthest Ring, of course, for mostly the same reasons. The kind of people who use Skaia servers wouldn't *not* visit the Veil, they would still have Derse dreamers and play the game the same – but when given the choice of escapes, they'd choose differently.

They'd have researched different things. Gamebreakers in different communities would gravitate towards different specialties in different parts of the Game, and the subsequent communities would probably follow the lead of their progenitors. They might have a cutting-edge knowledge of Moonjacking but be far behind us in alimentator hacking, for example.

They might have a different culture. This one's harder to nail down; there's plenty of diversity in what we have already. But perhaps, if you had the right kind of Skaia server, or the right kind of research, they'd be the type of people who would log onto a voicechat server, or have a culture like that of Orkut or ICQ, or something even stranger or more alien. Even if they were based off the same cultures we were, though, they may have grown in different directions – drifting into radical honesty, or even a neo-Victorian throwback politeness, instead of social justice.

Things would be a *lot* different. If we ever met them, we'd have some serious culture clash to work through.

Mechanics (or more properly the lack thereof)

I'm hesitant to provide mechanics, here; this isn't the kind of thing you resolve mechanically.

This is the kind of thing you resolve with a Transition, and then maybe a timeskip or some wounds if the HG feels like handing them out.

But even that might be too much. So I think you should actually plan this out on the quest or Arc level, letting the HG know that you want the result and reward of some fairly large quest to be successful travel or server-placement.

by littleSpoon

This is an alternate setting for your Replay Value Chuubo's game. Instead of setting Replay Value in the world of Homestuck, it sets it in the world of Problem Sleuth instead, which I think we can all agree is the superior MS Paint Adventure. If you want to run it like the actual comic, it's Techno, if you want to run it like RV, it's Fairy Tale.

The idea is that on exiting the door through the "real city streets" (or if the end boss kills the detectives, more on this later) the victorious players wake up in their offices again, with a randomly selected group of replayers, for another round.

The imaginary world of PS is far less hostile to its players than that of Sburb, filled with zany characters, puzzles and adventures. Unfortunately for the replayers playing it over and over, it's also an adversarial game. Sessions are anywhere from two to ten people in size, but while most of the players are given the roles of detectives, one is always assigned the role of the final boss. The players can't leave until they kill the end boss and take the megaton key, the end boss can't leave until the players are all dead.

Replayer Networks exist here, but they're different. When you aren't going to be on the "same side" as at least one other person in your session, your attitude toward building a community, publishing guides and FAQs, all that stuff tends to be a little different compared to Sburb. You're a little less likely to make friends when there's a chance you'll be forced to murder them one day. Turning to the IRC for advice is a little odd when the guy you're trying to kill logs in begging for help. Some people can't take it and end up going native, convinced they really are gumshoes and gangsters in a vaguely prohibition era universe. Some people get it into their heads that they'll just forge a truce and spend the rest of their lives in the session together, no need to murder anyone. Don't try it, eventually it all falls apart. If you think the Others showing up to eat a decaying session is unpleasant, I pray you never find yourself in the imaginary world when the players' minds inevitably start to turn.

Like in Sburb, there are a lot of uncomfortable unanswered questions. What about all those imaginary selves you create? The ones that look just like you, the female (or male) versions, do they have qualia or just p-zombies aping conscious minds? What happens to the people in Death's tearoom when the session ends? There aren't any presessions either, and without those brief periods of normalcy people start to wonder if there was ever a world outside the game at all.

If you're reading this because you've just been dropped into your second session and have no idea what's going on, good luck. If you're one of the detectives, chances are you'll be paired with at least one other person who's more experienced, but odds are the end boss is also going to have more sessions on you. If you've woken up in the boss' office, I'm sorry. You're on your own and it's a shitty way to start Replaying.

Whatever you are, read up on whatever role you've been given. eyeballKid's Imagination FAQ and Encyclopedia of Weird Puzzle Shit are probably the best starting point for the investigators. parsimoniousParacoita's Kingpin Compendium is the best resource I can offer for anyone rolling the boss for the first time.

Just remember that it isn't all bad all the time. If we end up rolling detectives together make sure you hit me up, I remember what it was like being new. If we end up on opposite sides of the fence, I won't say I'm sorry and I won't promise to go easy on you, but I won't say you don't have a chance.

Epilogue

[or, a few final thoughts]

Three More Letters

A User's Guide to the Apocalypse

Elizabeth

There is one thing I really do want to warn you against: fragmentation.

I remember the book that made me who I am today. It was called *My Father's Letters*, by mainspringAnatomy. Her father... had written her letters, for years, about the things that he never was able to say, about what he had to become to survive, and about what he thought about himself.

Starting in her third session or so, she decided to actually crack open that box of letters that was her last memento of her father. She read one of them a month, because that was the pace at which they had originally been written. She was expecting some interesting stories, alien to the Replayer experience, sad and cute but in a fundamentally mundane way. What she found were stories of the war he fought in, when he was young.

mainspringAnatomy's native world wasn't a consensus presession, so we never figured out why her father's war had been started. But the stories of bonding with the people you fight back-to-back with – the stories of learning that the very army and/or game that fed and cared for you was also forcing you into doing despicable things to survive – those were all too familiar. As was the account of how he'd slowly lost the ability to care about society, about the army, about the people he was fighting for.

He wrote, in one of those letters, that if his world was cleansed with meteors and fire and his family were the only ones to escape, he would not feel the difference.

(And every Replayer knows exactly how that feels. After all, we've gone through it five, ten, twenty times.)

Early Replayer networks, and even some of the more recent ones, socially organized themselves on sectarian lines. Your Group would keep you sane. Your Group was the only thing you could trust. Anyone else... well, best not to think about them as people, since that would just hurt you.

It's a coping mechanism playeroid species have had since time immemorial, and that we have reinvented again and again: the squad-level unit, as the only thing that was of moral worth. The Transamphibian-era Mind players, cloistering themselves in their newsgroup, talking about how Endless Climb broke them, and how nobody but another Mind player would understand. The Angel Support Groups of early Pits, where unless you knew the touch of the searing wings of fire, your "knowledge" was worse than useless. The Seer Network, talking each other up, convincing each other that the Network was their only bulwark against chaos and ignorance. The Sburb.org IRCs, even; the Cladethicket of #ultimatereward was merely the most high-profile example of this moral withdrawal from the rest of the world.

It is a coping mechanism, yes. But it is also wrong.

Our damage may have been impressed with different branding-irons, but the effects are the same, and the way that we grow around it is the same, too. The only thing we achieve by segregating ourselves is preventing ourselves from realizing that other people have the same experiences.

Even though we have experienced the terrible truth of Sburb in a thousand different ways, we are all still Replayers. Even though we have different Natives, different ways of engaging with the world, we still play the same Game.

Ultimately, what I want you to remember is that more people understand than you think.

The truths you think unspeakable are truths that you must speak through Paradox Space, that other people may hear.

The memories that are most shameful to you are the ones you must write about and launch into the Ring, that other people may know they are not alone.

The knowledge you cannot share, for fear that it may break other people, is that very knowledge you must disseminate; for it is only through that knowledge that we can figure out how to make it *stop* breaking other people.

In the immortal words of epinephrineElectrified: there is an us. We will help you.

May the strength of the Pulse course forever through your heart.

– eternityBraid

Samantha

Anyone who knows who I am, and what I do, must wonder why I am even part of this book. Why would I put my name on an opinion so far away from reality, they might ask? Don't I always complain about impracticality, and about wasting time? Yes. Yes, I do complain about those things. But this stuff needed to be committed to a guide eventually, and I'm willing to tolerate the weird and impractical filigree that came along with it.

Sometimes, it takes someone like Elizabeth, someone with too much vision and too much heart and not enough practicality, to get something done. Sometimes insane risks are necessary, because the alternative is stagnation. It's one of the reasons I eventually broke with sburb.org -

OJ

> The question "If you were a society, what kind of society would you be?" is strangely existential. Some people are bland liberal democracies. Some people are tropical island paradises. Some people are extremely efficient Singaporean city-states. But anyone at all interesting is something that has never quite existed before on Earth. Tolkien was the Elves. I don't know much about Iain Banks, but it wouldn't surprise me if he was the Culture. [...]
>
> It makes you examine your soul, conworlding does. Over the centuries, changes in your outlook are mirrored by revolutions in your country's government. The problems debated in its universities and great books are the problems you struggle with every day. Sometimes your values and aesthetics drift, and some fictional philosopher mirrors the change across a span of worlds. Very rarely, it is the fictional philosopher who makes a good point that the real you is forced to consider.

"Things I Learned By Spending Five Thousand Years In An Alternate Universe", Scott Alexander

I

Replayers are an itinerant, persecuted culture: they're told that they implicitly approve of their own abuse, and at the same time they know that this abuse is institutionalized and supported by ancient law. The only thing that keeps them sane is to connect to other people, over the Internet - and though the Replayer internet is an eternal font of drama and frivolities, it still keeps them sane.

That isn't even a metaphor. That's literally what happened to me.

The funny thing about creating a world and a culture is that it's based on the way you already think. And the way I think has been irrevocably shaped by the things I've gone through. Of course I would write a story about learning the contours of the edge of despair. Of course I would build a society where too-fragile webs of words are the basis of everything one could hold dear.

And of course I would eventually have to tell a story, there, about fragile, reconstructed hope.

II

I realized recently that this isn't a work of fiction, not exactly. (Well, okay. It isn't a work of fiction because it's an RPG sourcebook, but bear with me here.) This is a map of a certain kind of human soul. More specifically, it's a map of the soul I used to have back in the days of RV Classic;

those days that I spent roleplaying on the Internet with other traumatized people because our stories intersected and that told us that we were not alone;

those nights of having nothing for comfort but the faint traceries of electrons long gone;

those fears I can still see projected on a stranger's hairstyle or a kitchen shelf;

those blurred places of no memory that the text-logs say were filled with cruelty –

I did not make it through the gauntlet whole. I do not think anyone makes it through the gauntlet whole. But I found paths around the worst of it; places where the help of others makes impossible canyons into difficult but possible climbs; corners in which one can rest, however briefly.

Many of them, I found by chance. Some I pieced together, from their shadows in books written for people who had already left. Some were offered to me by others. A scant few, I think, may have been truly mine (or, at least, independently reinvented). Of course I wish I had known of those things before, but time does not loop, and I did the best I could with what I had.

III

I remember asking my best friend, a few years ago, if it was worth trying to overcome my PTSD. I had stories I wanted to tell, and I didn't know if a changed mindset would make them obsolete. She said I should try to get better. She told me that I wouldn't lose the ability to tell the type of story I wanted to tell; and that while I was putting myself back together I would be able to tell other stories, new stories, as my perspective changed.

Strictly speaking, that's true. I can still tell this story. I can still tell stories of despair. The issue is, I'm not actually sure I want to anymore.

I mean, I've always known that I cannot tell stories that are cast of pure idealism. I cannot comprehend of a world without stains, because I'm so used to facades hiding terrible things that I no longer believe in utopia. Even an average world must harbor its share of dark secrets.

At the same time: a story made of pure despair, the one where everything is going to shit and it would be for the best if everyone just died? I've spent too long digging myself out of that hole to dig it for others.

So this isn't idealism, and this isn't despair, either. This is something constructed out of the shattered ruins of both.

IV

The actions of the adults in my life told me, implicitly, that this was an acceptable amount of abuse for children to go through - that there was no point trying to help me, because that would imply that the childhoods of a very large fraction of students in the school district were unacceptable.

I've since learned that CPS looking away wasn't just a "quirk" of where I grew up: that child abuse is an issue large enough that all the therapists that exist cannot be enough to address it. I have no way of solving this issue, not by myself. But as soon as I saw the numbers, it was clear to me that this was my life's work. It had to be.

I know I can't make it stop directly. I don't have the emotional capacity to be a therapist or a social worker (at least, not unless something about me fundamentally changes). I don't have money for lobbyists. I don't know what job I need to do, and I don't know if I'm capable of doing it.

But hey, at least I wrote a book. How many people can say they've done that?

V

So what am I doing now? Well, I can't call it any of the glib words that you might come up with.

I don't think this is recovery, because that would imply that there was something to recover in the first place, something that existed before. The deeper I dig, the more I realize that there isn't any such thing. There is only what I build for myself now, and that is all new.

I don't think this is moving on, because that would imply that there is a point at which the influence stops. As far as I can tell, it doesn't. As far as anyone knows, it doesn't. I was grown as a bonsai in a shallow dish, and even being transplanted to fertile soil will not straighten the kinks in the trunk of the tree. At best, I accept that this happened, and try not to be surprised when it surfaces again five, ten, twenty years later.

Maybe the only word for it is life.

VI

And if you're the kind of person I am trying to help:

I won't tell you that there's a way out; doubtless you've heard that enough from yourself and others, and you're sick of hanging on for it to happen. I won't tell you that you won't break, because likely as not you feel like you already have. I won't tell you that you can cut yourself completely free with one decisive action - the heart doesn't work that way.

If you're still inside the abuse, you probably can't see a way out; and indeed Replayers can't see one either. But I can tell you that, even if there isn't a way out, there is a way through.

So, in the end, this book is an argument. An argument that even in a world that's trying to break you, even in a torture you can't escape, even knowing that the game will never stop and that thousands upon thousands are being broken every day, there is a reason to continue living.

The fact that other people suffer the same way is terrible. Yet it is, paradoxically, a gift. Because –

Someone has gone through this before you, and they can help you.

Someone will go through this after you, and you can help them.

And between those two facts, there is a whole life to be lived.

– OJ

Resources

How To Use This Section

A lot of research went into this book. I have cited as many of my sources as I can, in case you wish to read them for yourself. I don't expect you to read any of the sources; I aim for this book to stand well enough on its own.

Many of these sources were ones that I read years ago. These works' influences cannot be cleanly separated from the surroundings, much less properly cited. This is a roleplaying book, not a research paper.

This being *said*: If you are an overachiever, like to peek under the hood, or have way too much time on your hands, this section is for you.

A Selected Bibliography of RV Classic

tentacleTherapist. "Sburb Beta Walkthrough." http://mspaintadventures.wikia.com/wiki/Rose's_walkthrough, found on Ring server without timetrav.

schadenfreudeSchwarmerei. "Alchemization Guide for Imbeciles." http://archiveofourown.org/works/4236186, found on Ring server without timetrav.

existentialExternality. "Living the Dream." http://archiveofourown.org/works/572619, Usuals timestamp 38df9e6.

marmaladeSkies. *Sequence Breaking for Sbummies*. http://archiveofourown.org/works/421982/chapters/704075, Vine timestamp 98319.

godsgifttoGrinds. *Sburb Glitch FAQ*. https://archiveofourown.org/works/340777/chapters/551606, Vine timestamp 288309 through Sburb.org ts41.19.

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genesisArtificer. "Mental Support Abilities." http://archiveofourown.org/works/406875/chapters/672206, ts8.29 through ts10.04.

specificNihilism. *Corruption Guide*. http://archiveofourown.org/works/434295/chapters/736971, ts19.98 through ts24.57.

lucidChthonia. "Entry Object Prognostication, or: Sburb's Foreshadowing Strikes Again!" https://archiveofourown.org/works/3151886, ts21.37.

openSystem. ~*ATH and You: A Primer*. http://archiveofourown.org/works/595823/chapters/1073550, ts34.33.

earLender. "In Defense of the Perceptions." http://archiveofourown.org/works/876679, ts43.16.

spacetimeCounselor. "Maturity Quests." http://archiveofourown.org/works/481546, ts██.██.

enturbulatedOccupation, ed. epinephrineElectrified. *Brainwashing, Torture, and the World of Sburb*. http://archiveofourown.org/works/887975, ts51.54.

equalitySaurus. "JOY." http://archiveofourown.org/works/4141980, ts66.38.[193]

medicinalElectricals. *Experiments on Doomed Timelines*. https://archiveofourown.org/works/6578272/chapters/15050617, ts74.41.

On PTSD

"Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) 101." *ACEs Too High*. http://acestoohigh.com/aces-101/, 2014.

Cole, Myke. "What PTSD Is." http://mykecole.com/blog/2013/03/what-ptsd-is, March 18 2013. If you read nothing else in this section, at *least* read this one.

Grossman, Dave. *On Killing*. Back Bay Books, 2009.

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery*. 2nd edition, BasicBooks, 1997.

van der Kolk, Bessel. *The Body Keeps the Score*. Viking, 2014.

Manija, Rachel. "A User's Guide to PTSD" (series). http://rachelmanija.livejournal.com/tag/ptsd%3A%20users%20guide, November 26-28 2007.

Schiraldi, Glenn R. *The Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Sourcebook*. 2nd edition, McGraw-Hill, 2009.

Shay, Jonathan. *Achilles in Vietnam*. Trade paperback, Scribner (Simon & Schuster), 2003 (reprint).

Shay, Jonathan. *Odysseus in America*. Trade paperback, Scribner (Simon & Schuster), 2002.

On Internet Communities

I am indebted to the staff of the now-extinct online forum *Cogito*, for giving me actual moderator training before letting me loose on the site. Unfortunately, the materials I used don't seem to be publically available, which means I can't link to them here. I'll give you what I can link to, though.

MeatballWiki. http://meatballwiki.org/wiki/MeatballWiki, 2000-2013.

nostalgebraist. The Northern Caves. https://archiveofourown.org/works/3659997/, 2015. This is a horror story that ends anticlimactically; however, nostalgebraist's portrayals of forum personages are spot-on.

==> 193. Note that Joy, as a Sburban Aspect, is not featured in this book.

Suler, John. *The Psychology of Cyberspace*. http://users.rider.edu/~suler/psycyber/psycyber.html, 1996-2008.

On Computers and Gamebreaking

I learned much of my computer vocabulary from the community on Slashdot around 2008-2009. Unfortunately, I cannot link you several hundred Slashdot threads, because that would require another book's worth of effort.

Cosmo. "Zelda: Ocarina of Time speedrun in 18:10 (commentated)." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aq6pGJbd6Iw. A good beginner's introduction to what gamebreaking looks like.

dotsarecool. "Super Mario World Credits Warp Explained." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vAHXK2wut_I.

pannenkoek2012. "SM64 – Watch for Rolling Rocks – 0.5x A Presses (Commentated)." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kpk2tdsPh0A. Another good beginner's introduction to gamebreaking.

Raymond, Eric S. (editor). The Jargon File. http://www.catb.org/jargon/html/, 2003 edition. Outdated, and if you use the term "cracker" people will laugh at you, but still a good snapshot of old computer culture.

http://textfiles.com/. A collection of old BBS stuff, to get you in the mood for Transamphibian and early PrototypeTowers.

TASVideos. "Common Tricks." http://tasvideos.org/GameResources/CommonTricks.html. A compilation of the techniques and moves most commonly used to create speedruns.

therusemanspeedruns. "Pac-Man World 2 in 44:53 (Post-Commentary)". https://youtu.be/PvC-xlFkAOA?t=21m40s. Most of the run is precise movement skips; nothing terribly interesting there. At the linked time, though, the audio commentary gives basic instructions for how to get into speedrunning.

White, Ron. *How Computers Work*. 9th edition, Que Publishing, November 2007.

Influences/Miscellaneous

Book series: Animorphs by K. A. Applegate (multiple recommendations: "kids and fun")
Book series: Discworld by Terry Prachett (KarrinBlue: stories being parasitic on reality)
Book series: The Dresden Files by Jim Butcher (Keleviel)
Book series: The Kingkiller Chronicle by Patrick Rothfuss (Ops: Abilities names/aesthetics)
Book series: Foundation by Isaac Asimov (Ops)
Misc: Lovecraft mythos (multiple recommendations: stuff about the Others)

Book: A Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood (OJ: tone)
Book: MetaGame by Sam Landstrom (OJ: the experience of living inside a game)
Book: Seveneves by Neal Stephenson (OJ: tone; yes, I know it came out after Replay Value Classic wore off, but it's an inspiration for RV Chuubo's)
Book: World War Z by Max Brooks (Rave: tone/aesthetics)
Book: The Zombie Survival Guide by Max Brooks (Rave: tone)
Short story: When Sysadmins Ruled the Earth by Cory Doctorow (OJ: in which the Internet survives the end of the world. Also aesthetics.)

Anime: Shin Megami Tensei (Keleviel: for Angel characterization)
Anime: Puella Magi Madoka Magica (multiple recommendations: tone)
TV show: Quantum Leap (Zuki: premise)

Game: Metroid Prime (Ops: Corruption mechanics)
Game: Mother 3 (OJ: game mechanics/aesthetics – I guess Earthbound counts here too, but M3 is less well-known.)
Tabletop RPG: Changeling: The Lost (OJ: another abuse/trauma allegory, although I didn't hear about it until after RV Classic ended)
Tabletop RPG: Bliss Stage (OJ: A post-apocalypse game where almost all of the mechanics are relationship-based. It is possible that if you heavily modified this system, you'd be able to use it for Replay Value AU. It would play very differently from the one in this book, though.)
Tabletop RPG: Orpheus (Mnem: tone)
Tabletop RPG: Unknown Armies (OJ: UA's sanity system is the least bad I've ever seen, and inspired my first abortive attempts at tabletopifying Replay Value AU)

Fanfic: Sburb Character Creation Guide, https://archiveofourown.org/works/211975/chapters/317350
(OJ: Sburb gamebreaking aesthetics. Be sure to check out the works that were inspired by this one that are listed at the end; it's a very small AU that died on the vine, but it's worthwhile to explore.)
Fanfic: SBURBFAN947'S ANY% SBURB V1.1.82.5212 SINGLE-PLAYER SPEEDRUN NOTES, https://archiveofourown.org/works/390379 (OJ: More Sburb gamebreaking aesthetics.)

Web: Homestuck (Obviously.)
Web: TVTropes (multiple recommendations)
Web: Hitherby Dragons by Jenna Moran (OJ: themes)
Web: GNUrb Session roleplay (OJ: gamebreaking aesthetics)
Web: Sburb Patch Notes roleplay (OJ: overarching concept of how/why RV gamebreaking works; also aesthetics)