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Δ "HEARTWARMING & NIJINKS"
TABLETOP STORYGAME WHERE
FANTASY MEETS REALITY

BY JULIAN "ΔRBCO" KULECK

MY

EXCITING

LIFE

WITH

Δ TABLETOP
STORYGAME OF
FANTASY &
NORMALCY

BY JULIAN
“ΔRBCO” KULECK

Δ

FANTASY

FOREIGNER



**2019 Contest
Winner**

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My Exciting Life with a Fantasy Foreigner!

A Storygame of Fantasy and Normalcy by Julian "ARBco" Kuleck

My Exciting Life With a Fantasy Foreigner, or *MELWAFF*, is a game of people and their everyday lives. But don't worry! It's anime, too.

See, this is a story where worlds collide, where Earth discovers that we're not alone in the universe. There's another world called Epika, with dragons and dungeons, trolls and tunnels, final sorts of fantasies... and they arrive in our world, quietly and curiously.

But this isn't a story of war, invasion, or violence. There are battles, sure, but they're battles to get a cheap deal at the market while it still lasts, of trying to make the best cake for a birthday, or trying to admit maybe you really are into that holy knight that's working at the office. This is the story of everyday conflicts and victories won, of foibles and shenanigans, of coming to understand strangers and find acceptance. And also your roommate might be a devil.

Hey, what's this?

It's an introduction. And it's okay. Devils aren't so bad, they just.. use the last of the ice and don't refill the tray, this is the last time, Bezuko, just... go over to sink, and refill it, and put it back in, you *hellborne monstrosity!*

Oh, uh, sorry about that! But compliments will get you nowhere, man.

Setting

It wasn't a disaster that brought them to our world. Perhaps they came because of drama or persecution, but just as often they were drawn over by curiosity or enterprise. They came for all sorts of reasons, and once a few arrived, it was like the floodgates had been opened. Where a warrior might arrive, tired of battle, they would be followed by their necromancing rival. The necromancer would have their ogre employee tag along. And then a zombie would seek out the necromancer on Earth for a treatment for their condition. Things had a tendency to snowball. But it wasn't an invasion. It was an immigration.

Governments faced a real dilemma, still. The Newcomers weren't hostile, though they could be troublesome. Moreover, a public reaction could make dealing with them extremely complicated. And so, the Mystery Integration Bureau (M.I.B.) was formed to find "hosts" to introduce and integrate Newcomers from the world of Epika. The M.I.B. would hold them to a basic code to keep them from upending modern society.

Newcomers are held to the following basic restrictions:

- ❖ They are not to reveal their nature or to use magic publicly in a way that would expose their nature irrefutably and publicly.
- ❖ They are not to cause serious harm to or allow harm to any Earth native.
- ❖ They are required to seek out legal employment or education to acclimate to their new surroundings.

M.I.B. checkups are held regularly to check up and provide assistance or restrictions as necessary. Secrecy is not absolute, however. The key illusion the M.I.B. seeks to maintain is that every group of Newcomers is unique to their area. Locals may whisper about the golem or witch that lives in their area, but most remain convinced that it's just something unique to their little town or borough. Many Newcomers have a sense of drama and bombast, and the M.I.B. understand leaks are inevitable. It's about supervision, not silence.

In addition, every Newcomer undergoes some level of “Compression” when arriving on Earth. They can take a form that fits the local reality, most often human, though Newcomers with animal forms aren’t unknown. These tend not to be perfect, and might have tails, strange ears, or odd eyes that most write off. While some have powerful magic, the Bureau has a mastery of bureaucracy that provokes fear in the new arrivals. Though Earth is relatively undeveloped when it comes to sorcery, it turns out sufficiently complex bureaucracy is indistinguishable from magic, and Newcomers are compelled to abide by it.

Most Newcomers are paired with friendly or sympathetic Hosts who discover them early on, but sometimes the M.I.B. has to rely on imposing a Newcomer on a “local guide”. The Bureau are professionals at this, so things work out in the end, but hijinks and drama can follow in the meantime. Hosts are almost always chosen from those able to handle the situation in the long-term, as much as may chagrin a Host or Newcomer. In general, most Newcomers find Earth quite welcoming once they get over their initial shock. Locals may not consider a hamburger or the internet wondrous, many Newcomers are shocked at the level of peace and comfort the modern world can provide after the strife and drama Epika is prone to.

Monsters are real, and one is asking what size you want for your hazelnut coffee.

What You’ll Need to Play *My Exciting Life with a Fantasy Foreigner!*

To play, you’ll need three to seven friends, pencil and paper, a deck of tarot cards, and at least one set of these rules. A play table is helpful but not essential.

You’ll also need to the ability to engage in improvisation and to take charge of the narrative. Unlike a lot of role-playing games where a single player (traditionally, the “Gamemaster”) dictates the world to the players, the Bureau Aide acts more like a referee or director than a narrator. They keep one foot in the setting in the Bureau Aide, but remain able to step into other roles as necessary as in traditional

RPGs. You don’t need to jump in with both feet, but it’s something to warm up to in playing *My Exciting Life with a Fantasy Foreigner!*

Making a Character

There are a number of different elements that go into making a character for *My Exciting Life with a Fantasy Foreigner!* (*MELWAFF*, hereafter). Note that unlike many other games, you’ll be making up your own traits rather than picking from a set list. Think of it as an open-ended questionnaire with no wrong answers! Just because something isn’t an example doesn’t mean you can’t play it, as long as everybody’s comfortable and enjoying themselves. Your character will define:

- ❖ The *type* of character you have: Bureau Aide, Earth Resident, or Epika Immigrant. You’ll need at least one of each, but not more than one Bureau Aide.
- ❖ The *role* that generally defines a character - often their job, class, species, or personality.
- ❖ A *dream* for your character, which is their current goal in life.
- ❖ Two *goals* for your character, which are short-term desires and motivations.
- ❖ Three *likes* or *dislikes* for your character, things they enjoy or find troublesome.
- ❖ Five *qualities* of your character, like personal styles, skills, talents, spells, etc.
- ❖ *Details* like a name and description.
- ❖ *Common ground* with one character; this is determined at the start of play after character creation.

That might sound like a lot, but we’ll take it one step at a time!

What's Your Character Type?

There are three types of character type to choose from in *MELWAFF*.

- ❖ The *Bureau Aide*, whose job it is to keep the game lively and inject drama, as well as portray the in-game Bureau Aide who assists with acclimation.
- ❖ *Earth Residents*, with everyday occupations, interests, and troubles.
- ❖ *Epika Immigrants*, who have arrived on Earth from a fantasy world “compressed” into roughly human form.

There has to be at least one (and only one) Bureau Aide, and at least one Earth Resident and one Epika Immigrant.

While there's no strict limit to the number of players, though this is written with 4 to 8 players in mind (including the Bureau Aide). The number of players of each type will likely influence the feel of the game - a group with a lot of Epika Immigrants and only one Earth Resident will put a lot of burden on the player for the Earth Resident, and vice versa. A more balanced group will be more freewheeling. Neither are “correct” ways to play, but it's worth discussing the different character types you'll be playing.

What's Your Character Role?

The Bureau Aide... has a role as the in-setting bureau aide working for M.I.B.. More than the other character types, however, the Bureau Aide is both a character in the fiction and a referee to make sure things are fun for the players. As a referee, they create new dilemmas and circumstances to shake things up for the other characters. As a Bureau Aide, they can step in character when things are getting too serious or troublesome to help maintain the feel of the game, or to act as a sounding wall for characters.

Earth Residents... will usually list their profession for a role, like convenience store clerk, beat cop, or game designer. If they like, though, they can instead describe a type of demeanor, like energetic, mediator, or cranky. Note that everyday characters shouldn't have existences

that are so dramatic that it warps the game around their role. A beat cop in Japan is one thing, but a homicide detective in Chicago involves enough tragedy that it'd be better suited for a different type of game. If you have any doubts, discuss it with your group.

Epika Immigrants... will usually list their class and species, like elf magus, human knight, or goblin ninja. Any fantasy tabletop or videogame RPG will usually give you plenty of examples. Alternately, stranger creatures are usually a role into themselves, like dragon, zombie, or vampire. Fantasy characters shouldn't be too dangerous or troublesome. A necromancer that goes around being spooky and threatening to put curses is one thing- a necromancer that goes around causing a zombie plague is another.

Keep it light. Characters should be able to cope with everyday situations, and tend towards humor as much as drama. Have a concept that can both be both silly and serious as the need arises.

To New Epika Immigrants: Compression and You

Most Epika characters take on more humanlike forms on Earth, as noted above. They might still have a few cosmetic oddities, but generally don't come across as overtly inhuman. With effort, they can take on their original Epika form for a scene by discarding a card. Of course, the M.I.B. might look dimly on that sort of situation if not handled with subtlety, but as this is a comedic, exaggerated game of anime-styled hijinks, this kind of trouble might work itself out without their intervention. “Did you see the parade float yesterday? It looked like a real giant spider!” “Right? I didn't even know we were having a parade!”

What Are Your Dreams and Goals?

An Earth Resident or Epika Resident starts with one *dream* and two *goals* defined by the player. The Bureau Aide starts with one goal per character.

A *dream* is a long-term goal a character wants to achieve in life, like confess their love to someone, get a particular job, or research a legendary spell. This should require a more than one step to achieve, or have significant barriers towards being realized. *A character has one and only one dream at any given time.*

A *goal* is an immediate desire or motivation, the kind that might be resolved in an episode or two. Examples would be to finally have a clean apartment, to visit a distant shrine, or to get tickets to an idol concert. These should be difficult but achievable with a little help or chutzpah. *A character starts with two goals and gets one more from the Bureau Aide.*

For Bureau Aides, the goals are a little different – the goals they choose are given to each player and represent things you want to see a given character explore or run into. These should be oriented towards a character's happiness or character development - they should never be used to trouble or impose upon a player. If a player doesn't care for one of your goals, listen to and heed their advice, and strongly consider changing it. The goals of Bureau Aides are essentially assigned to the players to achieve and address.

Earth Residents and Epika Characters start with two goals. As goals can be changed, removed, or added during play, they don't necessarily need to have all three. *The Bureau Aide starts with as many goals as there are characters in the group, and can only have one goal per character at a time.*

What Are Your Likes and Dislikes?

A character starts with three *likes* or *dislikes* total. At least one has to be a like and another has to be a dislike - you can never have all likes or all dislikes.

Earth Residents may only have one like or dislike related to Epika or fantasy matters during character creation. So if a character likes gold dragons, or is highly suspicious of potions, that's their one thing. It's not necessary for an Earth Resident to have a Epika like or dislike. This restriction is lifted after character creation.

Similarly, Epika Residents may only have one like or dislike related to Earth or fantasy matters. So if the character likes a pop band, pizza, or comfort wear, that's their one thing. It's not necessary for an Epika Resident to have an Earthly like or dislike. This restriction is lifted after character creation.

Bureau Aides may take them in relation to Earth or Epika as they like, but should bear in mind they're cues for players as to what their Aide likes or dislikes as much as defining a character.

But What's Epika or Earthly?

The individual player is the arbiter of this. While there are examples below, there's no need for arguments or debates on it. The worst thing that happens if a character "breaks the rules" in this regard is that a character is a little off; it's a thematic concern, and has more to do with game focus than game balance.

What Are Your Qualities?

A character starts with five *qualities*, four of which are decided by you, and an extra one we'll work out in the final steps of character creation. At least one should be positive or helpful, while one should be negative or troublesome. Note that you don't have to reemphasize anything in your role - a fire wizard can be presumed to be able to heat a teakettle. A programmer can whip up cool programs. A soccer star can definitely kick a ball real good. And so on.

Just as with likes and dislikes, Earth Residents may only begin with one quality that relates to Epika or supernatural matters. An example would be a magic ritual for luck, a low-level supernatural power, getting along with zombies, etc. Even when it comes to such, abilities should be subtle or low-key. Similarly, Epika Residents may only have one quality that relates to Earth or everyday matters. This restriction is lifted after character creation.

Qualities can represent a number of things, including but not necessarily limited to:

- ✧ This can represent something you're good or bad at. This can be things like learned skills, inborn talents, degrees or apprenticeships, and so on. Alternately, it could be something you *think* you're good at, but are actually bad at.
- ✧ They can be something distinctive about your personal style, dress, or behavior? It could be the best hat, a winning smile, or an irritating laugh.
- ✧ For Earthly Residents, you can have local technology or privileges. For Epika Immigrants, you might have a magic power or natural ability. Bureau Aides are generally like Earthly Residents in this regard, but might have supernatural technology or knowledge above that of Earth Residents.

What About the Rest?

You can define as much about your character otherwise, but should probably come up with the following:

- ❖ A *name*.
- ❖ A general *description*, including things like age, gender (or lack thereof), bodily hues, clothes, etc.
- ❖ If you're an Earth Resident, how'd you get settled with these new arrivals?
- ❖ If you're an Epika Immigrant, why did you come to Earth?
- ❖ If you're a Bureau Aide, how you get into social work over supernatural immigrants?

And that's all!

A starting Earth or Epika character should at least have:

- ❖ A *name* and *description*.
- ❖ A *role*.
- ❖ One *dream* and two *goals*.
- ❖ Three *likes* or *dislikes*. At minimum, one needs to be a like and one needs to be a dislike. Only one may be Epika-related for an Earth character, and vice-versa.
- ❖ Four *qualities*. At minimum, one needs to be a positive and one needs to be negative. Only one can be Epika-related for an Earth character, and vice-versa.
- ❖ In addition, characters will be getting *common ground* that grants an additional like or dislike (for four likes and dislikes total) and an additional quality (for five qualities total). This will be covered in the start of play, below.

The Bureau Aide should have:

- ❖ A *name* and *description*.
- ❖ Their role: Bureau Aide.
- ❖ One *goal* per Earth or Epika character.
- ❖ Three *likes* or *dislikes*. At minimum, one needs to be a like and one needs to be a dislike.
- ❖ Four *qualities*. At minimum, one needs to be a positive and one needs to be negative.
- ❖ Patience and a tolerance for shenanigans.

Once all the players are done, we can move on to playing the game, below.

Examples for Character Creation

Example Roles

Earth Roles: Office Worker, Genius, Retail Goon, Optimist, Cook, Janitor, Night Owl, Farmer, Dancer, Caretaker, Schemer, Salesperson, Gamer, Bodybuilder, Unlucky, Surfer, Gourmand, DJ, Fan, Construction Worker, UFOlogist, Overthinker, Bartender, Troublemaker, Rock Star, Journalist, Dreamer, Professor, Charmer, Martial Artist

Epika Roles: Warrior of the Seven Blades, Ingomancer, Crimson Dragon, Ninja, Dire Wolf, Goblin Jury-Rigger, True Vampire, Prince(ss) of the Feather Throne, Pink Slime, Elf, Court Astrologer, Salt Elemental, Dungeon Delver, Sea Priest, Nickel Golem, Barbarian Mercenary, Cursed Peasant, Pit Fiend, Octopus Mage, Fairy, Mystic Monk

Example Dreams

General: Earn praise from a mentor. Admit to someone you really, really like them. Admit to someone you really, really don't like them. Become a better person. Earn enough money to help a relative. Help somebody else achieve their dream. Unlock a hidden talent.

Earth: Become a famous manga writer. Earn a promotion at work. Buy the car of your dreams. Get a ultra-rare drop in *Epika Online*. Go on a faraway vacation. Quit smoking. Get signed by a label. Win the heavyweight championship. Start a business. Earn a gallery showing as an artist. Stop being so clumsy. Train a show dog. Get fit. Get into college.

Epika: Learn a legendary spell. Master a forbidden sword technique. Tame a familiar. Seek lost treasure. Gain a level. Learn to fly. Out-drink a dwarf. Become a knight of the realm. Build a flying ship. Become human. Map a strange new land. Build a temple. Defeat a Grand Master of Flowers in a fair challenge. Cure a curse. Earn a title. Fulfill a prophecy.

Example Goals

General: Write a song. Choose a gift for someone. Solve a local mystery. Earn money busking. Overcome a challenge set by someone. Win money at a game of chance. Find a way to stop being bored. Read a really long book. Befriend a grumpy stranger. Settle a grudge. Overcome a mild illness. Throw a party. Strike a really cool pose.

Earth: Get a job. Bake a cake. Find a great deal on a dishwasher. Finish *Epika Souls*. Beat a sports rival. Negotiate an important contract. Fix a leaky pipe. Ride a really scary amusement ride. Eat a burrito bigger than your head. Get an A+ on a test. Earn a raise. Get tickets to a sold-out concert. Buy a pet.

Epika: Ride a dragon. Cook up a potion. Meet a fairy. Travel to a strange world. Come to understand an Earth holiday. Befriend a battle-foe. Learn how to make Earth-style burgers. Hide a pet monster from the landlord. Undo a troublesome spell. Forge a suit of armor. Get a local to eat a weird Epika delicacy. Deal with Earth bureaucracy.

Example Likes / Dislikes

General Likes / Dislikes: Sandwiches, Romance Novels, Rain, Bugs, Snakes, Quiet, Journeys, Sunsets, Dolls, Writing, Dancing, Math, Boredom, Luck, Walks at Night, Beer, Cats, Beaches, Retail Work, Stargazing, Hugs, Hiking, Parties, Green, History, Mountain Climbing, Architecture, Royalty, Puppets, Sleep, Sharing, Prayer, Sightseeing, Running

Earthly Likes / Dislikes: Ugli Computers, Sports Cars, *Star Walkers*, Lake Monsters, Internet Forums, Sushi, Clowns, Anime, *Super Italian Siblings*, Whiskey, Death Metal, Creepypasta, Roller Skating, Prank Calls, Storytelling Games, Chocolate, Ties, Sewing, Soccer, Graffiti, Virtual Idols, Superheroes, Street Fashion, Ice Cream, Mystery Novels

Epika Likes / Dislikes: Intelligent Weapons, Dark Magic, Ninja Trickery, Hundaric the Bear God, Dungeon Traps, Unicorns, Demons, Chaositech, The Ring of Tir'a'goth, Spicy Kraken Pot, Dwarven Ale, Siren Songs, Festival of Stars, Overlording, Rot Grubs, The Evil Eye, Smithing, Knightly Games, Necromancy, Limbo, Teleportation, Faerie Food

Example Qualities

Positive General Qualities: Strong as an Ox, Good With Children, Fast Reflexes, Empathetic, Wise Beyond Your Years, Natural Baker, Mysterious, Always Prepared, Enlightened, Heart of Gold, Green Thumb, Chill, Timely, Energetic

Negative General Qualities: Debt-Ridden, Unlucky at Love, Nosy, Lightweight Drinker, Sickly, Airheaded, Sleepwalker, Greedy, Awful Cook, Smugface, Botherome Friend, Forgetful, Short Fuse, Insufferable Fan, Sinister-Looking

Positive Earth Qualities: Ping-Pong Master, Pizza Chef, King / Queen of the Beach, Streetwise, Cool Shoes, Amateur Detective, IT Guru, Neighborhood Celebrity, Insightful Critic, Human Beatbox, Star Player, Candymaker, Barista

Negative Earth Qualities: Lousy *Battlecraft* Player, Pachinko Addict, Crazy Driver, Hikikomori, Hokum Devotee, Internet Rager, Computer Jinx, Caffeine Junkie, Workaholic, Egocentrism, Forum Moderator

Positive Epika Qualities: Survived the Devil Dungeon, Magic Tattoo, Enchanted Sword, Giant-Blooded, Quick Caster, Mini-Dragon Pet, Friend to Doppelgangers, Paragon of the Knightly Code, Ghostly Medium, Hallowed

Negative Epika Qualities: Cursed by a Witch, Attracts Troublesome Pixies, Evil Twin, Hated by the Dark God Taros, Noisy Ninja, Haunted, Spellfumbler, Monster Magnet, Geas, Overly Bombastic, Tilts at Windmills

Preparing to Play *My Exciting Life with a Fantasy Foreigner!*

Take the Tarot Deck, and separate it into *three decks*.

One deck should just consist of only *Cups and Pentacles*; this becomes the *Earth Deck*. Sometimes pentacles are known as coins or disks, and such terms should be treated respectively as synonymous with cups or pentacles.

The second should just consist of *Swords and Wands*; this becomes the *Epika Deck*. Sometimes wands are instead called batons, rods, or staves, and such terms should be treated as synonymous with wands.

The third should consist of only the *Major Arcana* (The Fool, The Magician, The World, etc.); this becomes the *Fate Deck*.

Some tarot decks diverge further from the norm, and there are all sorts of variations on the above. As covering every possible version here would be futile just find the closest equivalents you can.

Shuffle them up separately. Earth Residents default to drawing from the Earth Deck unless stated otherwise, and Epika Immigrants default to drawing from the Epika Deck unless stated otherwise. Unless directed specifically by a rule or card, only the Bureau Aide draws from the Fate Deck. All players share the same set of decks, *but each player should have their own discard pile*. In the unlikely event the deck runs out, each player contributes their bottommost three cards (or less, if they have less) to form a new deck.

If this your first time playing, each player should introduce and describe their character. Feel free to ham it up- this is your chance to make an impression with the other players!

What's Your Common Ground?

All characters draw two cards each from their respective decks. If the two cards have matching numbers, discard one and draw another card to replace it. Then, in turn of introduction, players count clockwise around the players in the group a number of times equal to the number on each card, not counting themselves. This should result in them landing on and selecting two other players. They then gain *common ground* with the characters of the two players they selected.

For face cards, Pages and Jacks are worth 11, Knights are worth 12, and Kings and Queens are 13. For Major Arcana, just use the number associated with that Arcana.

For *common ground*, each player should select a like or dislike of one of the two characters selected, and add it to their sheet. For the other character, they may select a quality and add it to their sheet. The Bureau Aide may ask you to "adjust" your sheet if a quality doesn't make much sense - a fire elemental's flaming pompadour makes little sense on an ordinary biker dude, but might have a bright red pompadour instead. That being said, if players are okay with an odd result, it may be fine to let it stand. It's your game!

How to Play *My Exciting Life with a Fantasy Foreigner!*

In line with the anime that inspired it, *MELWAFF* is broken down into sessions called *episodes*. In general, the game has been designed with a flow that should allow you to complete an episode in an evening, or maybe even multiple ones if you have a longer play session. The Bureau Aide should suggest breaking off scenes that go on too long and hog time, but if an episode has to go between meetings, just try and make sure the decks are kept intact.

Starting the Episode

The first step is to determine who the *central character* is for this episode. Each player starts by drawing three cards from the deck. Then all players but the Bureau Aide play one card face down of their choice, and reveal them simultaneously - the higher the card, their better their chances of being central. So if a player wants to be the central character, it's best to play their highest card; if they don't want to be, their lowest card is the best. Of course, the strength of their opening hand may influence this choice as well.

The player who played the highest value card becomes the central character and will be second in the *scene order* (after the Bureau Aide during the first act. The scene order continues in descending numerical order of cards played, with each player taking their turn. If there's a tie, players may decide amongst themselves, or instead choose to draw and reveal the top card of their deck as a tiebreaker, and then discard it. If there's another tie from drawing the top card, simply repeat until the tie is broken. Whenever a scene ends, the Bureau Aide may declare a scene of their choice by discarding a Fate Card, but only once per act.

The central character then chooses a dream or goal of theirs to be the central *dilemma* of the episode - can they achieve it? Generally, this will be their dream, but doesn't have to be. If the player cannot decide, they can ask the Bureau Aide to help them choose. Each character that is not the central character may highlight a goal to try and achieve as well.

All revealed cards are discarded, and all players draw a single card, which should bring them to having three cards total as the episode begins.

Playing the Episode

Each episode is broken into an *intro*, three *acts*, and an *outro*.

The *intro* involves the central character and all the other characters as they introduce their current situations, and the central character introduces and emphasizes their dream or goal that the game is going to be based around. This can be kept light and short, as its main role is just to set the stage.

To start the *first act*, the Bureau Aide starts by declaring a scene with the central character as the *spotlight*. Then, each player takes turns in the scene order as established above, declaring scenes until all players have gotten to be the spotlight at least once. When declaring, the person creating the scene is known as the *declarer*, and the focal character for the scene is known as the *spotlight*. The declarer and the spotlight cannot be the same. For clarity, bear in mind the Bureau Aide is considered a player for this purpose.

Note that whoever's bottommost for the scene order does not get to declare a scene, as all the other players will have had a turn as the spotlight during that act. This is intentional; consider it a social pressure escape hatch.

But I'm playing online!

People wanting to play this online by chat or post will have some issues to referencing counting around a table. In that case, just create an alphabetical list of people's names (online or otherwise) and count down when going to the right, or up when going to the left, and just "loop" to the other end of the list as if you're all sitting around a table.

Cards can be tracked by the Bureau Aide, but if you come up with a better solution, let me know!

Declarers can introduce the following types of scenes:

- ❖ *Trouble* can be declared for the spotlight. The declarer chooses one of the spotlight's dislikes for the declarer's character to spark or trigger (or, alternately, a like or quality to deny). Play out how this occurs. If the spotlight agrees that the trouble was legitimately bothersome, the declarer whose character caused the trouble then gives them a card, and then draws a new card to replace it.
- ❖ *Kindness* can be declared for the spotlight. The declarer then chooses how to show kindness to them, and the declarer's character chooses a like to fulfill or a quality to highlight (or alternately, a dislike to soothe). Play out how this occurs. If the spotlight agrees that the kindness was legitimately heartfelt, the spotlight gives the character who showed kindness a card, and then draws a new card to replace it.
- ❖ *Introspection* can be declared for the spotlight. The spotlight speaks an inner monologue about the current situation for several minutes. When done, they can discard an Earth Card or Epika Card, and draw a card from the deck that came from.
- ❖ *Flashback* can be declared for the spotlight, but only if there are more than three cards in the declarer's discard. The spotlight speaks about a past experience they've had with the declarer, either from the story established or some new fact. When done, they can shuffle up the discard of the deck associated with the declarer (the Earth or Epika deck), and draw two at random, one for the spotlight, and one for the declarer.
- ❖ *Learning* can be declared for the spotlight. The declarer offers to teach them a new like, dislike, or quality, sharing it with them through a teaching scene. If the spotlight agrees, they remove a like / dislike or quality, though they cannot remove their last negative quality or their last dislike. They then give the declarer a card of their choice.

First and foremost, you should be working to come up with an engaging and heartwarming narrative. Things may not always turn out well, but bear in mind there's a charm to both failure and success. Ultimately, this isn't about necessarily achieving your goals and dreams, but seeking them and the story that comes out of it.

That being said, when putting together your hand during scenes and deciding what to discard, you generally want A) high-value cards and B) to have a roughly equal amount of Earth and Epika cards at the end of the Episode... presuming you want your character to meet your dreams or goals. There's no pressure to, but your character hopefully appreciates any metafictional hard work you put in on their behalf!

When each character has had the spotlight, the Bureau Aide will call the start of the *second act* by playing one Fate Card. If they're out of cards, they play the top card of the Fate Deck instead. They cross-reference the Fate Card and implement the listed *twist* in the plot using the below chart, describing what happens in a scene involving the central character. Then, for the second act, have people declare scenes in *reverse scene order* from the first. Note this means the central character does not declare a scene in the second act.

The *third act* goes like the second, only the Bureau Aide reveals a Fate Card and cross-references it on the below chart implement it as a *hope* with a scene involving any one character of their choice *except* the Central Character. Then players declare scenes in normal Scene Order just as before.

During the *Outro*, the Bureau Aide then draws Fate Cards until their hand equals the number of players present, and then plays them face-down in front of each player.

Then, each player may play pairs of Earth and Epika cards to see if they achieved their dream or goal – any even number, as long as the number of Earth and Epika cards is equal. You could play 1 Earth Card and 1 Epika Card, 2 Earth Cards and 2 Epika Cards, and so on, but never something like 1 Earth Card and 2 Epika cards. This will give you a numeric tally as listed below under “Achievements”.

Then, the Fate Cards in front of each player are revealed and checked for Achievements. After people work out whether or not they’ve accomplished their dreams or goals, the characters should gather for one last scene in which that plays out. The Bureau Aide should help describe why things did or didn’t work out, and may want to use the Fate Cards as a guide as to why.

Achievements

During the *outro*, the Earth and Epika players play pairs of Earth and Epika cards as noted above to determine a *tally*. The initial value of the tally is equal to the sum of the highest Earth and highest Epika card played, with +1 added for each pair played. And so, two pairs is +2, three pairs is +3, and so on. If you exceed the value of the Fate Card put before you, you succeed and gain *achievements* as noted below on that dream or goal. (The value of the Fate Card is listed below on the chart if not included on the Major Arcana of your Fate Deck.) If you don’t exceed it, you fail and instead gain a *bonus* equal to the number of pairs you played plus one. If you had one pair, you’d have a bonus of +2, two pairs would be +3, and so on. If you have no pairs, you gain a +1 bonus (i.e. $0 + 1 = 1$). Bonus does not stack between episodes.

Face Cards have the following values:

Type	Value
Page or Jack	11
Knight	12
Queen or King	13

What If I Have a Fate Card?

Under some uncommon circumstances, players may end up with Fate Cards in their hand. Fate Cards are considered to be wild cards - that is, treated as either Epika or Earth as the player likes, with a value corresponding to the number of their Arcana.

You gain achievements for:

- ❖ Success during the *outro*. If you’re the Central Character, gain an additional success (for a total of two).
- ❖ Having worked your Goal or Dream into at least two scenes.

Mark the goal or dream with any achievements gained. It takes *three achievements* to reach a goal, and *ten achievements* to reach a dream. When you achieve a dream or goal, you can take a *fulfillment*, and then that goal or dream is removed. It often will take multiple episodes to achieve either.

The Bureau Aide does not advance the same way. Instead, they may discard a Fate Card to gain a minor fulfillment at the end of an episode, as they do not achieve goals on their own. (They cannot gain a major fulfillment.)

Fulfillments

Fulfillments represent the growth and development of a character undergoes under the course of a campaign. There are two types of fulfillments: *minor fulfillments*, guided by reaching goals, and *major fulfillments*, guided by reaching dreams. You may only have one of each at a time.

If you should have a minor fulfillment and gain another, exchange it for an additional bonus of +2. If you should have a major fulfillment and gain another, gain a minor fulfillment. *It's best to use them before this comes up!*

A minor fulfillment can be exchanged for one of the following at any time:

- ❖ *Add a new goal* if you have less than three goals. If this is a goal another character already has, add an Achievement to it immediately. *If you have no goals, this must be the benefit you select.*
- ❖ *Draw two cards* from either the Earth or Epika deck, and hand them to other players as you like, which can be held until next session.
- ❖ *Exchange one of your likes or dislikes* for another. This cannot remove your last like or dislike.
- ❖ *Exchange one of your qualities* for a new quality. This cannot remove your last negative or last positive quality.

A major fulfillment grants you a new dream when exchanged, and one of the following:

- ❖ *Exchange your role for another role.*
- ❖ *Achieve as many goals as you like.* Note that the minor fulfillments from such can be resolved each one at a time in order - they're not forced to become bonuses.
- ❖ *Remove one of the lowest value cards in your deck from the game, permanently.*
- ❖ *Draw a card from the Earth Deck and a card from the Epika Deck and place them into the opposite decks, permanently.*
- ❖ *Add a character to your cast.*

Bonuses

If you don't achieve your goal, you get a *bonus* to help you out next episode. A bonus means that in the next episode, you may draw cards from either deck to start your hand with, but one card must be from *your* deck for every card you draw from the opposite deck. If, somehow, the Bureau Aide gets a bonus, they simply draw cards from the Fate Deck.

Bonus only applies to your next game; it does not "stack" at any point.

Cast

One of the choices a player may take from a major fulfillment is to create an additional character. Once they do so, they may choose either their original character or the new character to play during a given session. *Bear in mind they cannot switch characters if that would mean nobody would play a Epika character or that nobody would play an Earth character.* Whatever character they choose to play is called their *active character*, and any character they aren't playing is the *passive character*. Passive characters can be called for spotlights by other characters, but they cannot be declarers.

There is no limit to the number of characters you can create save for what your group feels is practical.

In addition, the Bureau Aide may introduce *minor characters* as a part of a Fate Card effect or by discarding a Fate Card. Minor characters created by the Bureau Chief have only a name, description, and role, and can be represented by a simple folded index card or sheet of paper to remind people of their existence. They can be called as the spotlight, but the player doing so must discard a card, since they're not the focus. When doing so, the Bureau Aide will usually play their role, but may ask another player to do so with their permission. If a minor character ends up being used a lot, somebody may want to consider adding them to their cast!

Wrapup

After you finish an episode, there may be a few things to discuss or keep in mind:

- ❖ If you really liked a scene, let the players involved know clearly.
- ❖ If you disliked something, let the players involved know appropriately.
- ❖ Make sure you marked down any achievements, fulfillments, and any changes to your character.
- ❖ Offer suggestions for new goals or likes / dislikes for other players.
- ❖ Remember that your bonus gained at the end of a session only affects the next session.
- ❖ If the decks have been modified by a major fulfillment, make sure to keep them intact.
- ❖ Put any discard piles back with their respective decks and reshuffle them in advance of the next session.
- ❖ The Bureau Aide may want to copy character sheets in case they're lost, or otherwise record them.
- ❖ If you want to play another episode, let the Bureau Aide know and work out when best to schedule it with the other players.
- ❖ Make sure you take care of yourself.

The Fate Deck

The following is the list of *twist* effects and *hope* effects for Fate Cards. As a reminder, the twist affects the central character during the second act, while the hope affects the person selected by the Bureau Aide in the third act. Both of those count as “you” respectively in below descriptions when referenced.

Sometimes the exact cards and values can vary between different Tarot decks - if there's a conflict between the cards and the table when it comes to the value of a card, use the value from the card. (The most common difference is to see Strength and Justice swapped, as noted below. If one of the Major Arcana listed below doesn't match up, do your best to try and figure out what it corresponds to- or do your own thing.

So the Bureau Chief is a Gamemaster, Right?

Sort of. Those of you who have played other role-playing games are likely familiar with the notion of a “gamemaster” who portrays anything outside of the main characters' immediate influence. They essentially run the show, while other players only handle the actions of their characters.

The Bureau Aide plays a similar role, but is more like an assistant who stands in for the world when necessary, acts as a mediator, and tries to spur on the other players. It's more a “guide” than a “master”, somebody who works to make sure the game runs smoothly and enjoyably. A lot of players used to other games will be used to having their hand held by a gamemaster, but the Bureau Aide should encourage them to be willing to stretch out and portray other characters when necessary, and introduce new twists and scenes of their own. Making the story a group affair means everybody gets to be surprised by what comes out – the Bureau Aide along with the characters!

Major Arcana	Value	Twist	Hope
<i>The Fool</i>	0	Discard your all but your lowest card as the Bureau Aide describes how you end up with the worst luck. If two cards are tied for lowest, you may choose which.	During the outro, once Fate Cards have been placed by the Bureau Aide, choose a character at random. The Fate Card assigned by the Bureau Aide is replaced with The Fool, face up. Describe how random chance aids them.
<i>The Magician</i>	1	The Bureau Aide should describe circumstances that transport the characters to Epika. The central character has to add the goal "Get everybody back to Earth" and make it their focused goal for the episode. If they're at three goals, they have to discard one as a result, and the Bureau Aide should describe why they can't achieve it because of this. You cannot gain achievements on any other goal until this is fulfilled.	A solution to a dilemma in this Episode lies in Epika! Describe how you can make a journey to the fantasy world to consult with a sage or other helpful figure, then everybody may draw a card from the Epika deck.
<i>The High Priestess</i>	2	The future suddenly seems unclear, as the Bureau Aide describes some troublesome foreshadowing or ill omen. The third act now opens with a twist <i>and</i> a hope.	Describe a good omen or delightful sight. All players except the Bureau Aide get Bonus +1 at the end of the episode. This stacks with any bonus they might get during the outro.
<i>The Empress</i>	3	A parental figure shows up for you, and the Bureau Aide describes how trouble results from their meddling or arrival. Discard a card of your choice. Then, when you act as declarer in the second act (or third act, if you cannot do so), you have to cause trouble - or rather, your parent causes trouble. You and the spotlight should both work out how this happens.	Choose a character other than yourself that has a parental figure show up. Draw three cards from that character's deck, describe how that parent shows kindness, then give that character the highest and lowest cards of the three drawn, and take the remaining middle card for yourself. (You can choose in the case of a tie.)
<i>The Emperor</i>	4	A down-on-their luck deity from Epika shows up and causes trouble for a bit, which the Bureau Aide should describe. The central character has to change the goal or dream they're focusing on this episode to another they already have, or lose one achievement from the goal or dream they chose in the intro.	A down-on-their luck deity from Epika shows up and helps out in exchange for small favor. Describe them and what they want. Any player may discard a card to represent helping out; if they do, they gain an achievement in their current goal or dream.
<i>The Hierophant</i>	5	The Bureau Aide is keeping a careful eye on you, as they suspect you of something troublesome, and being careful makes it hard to get anything done. When you draw a card for the rest of the episode, draw two instead, and discard the higher one.	The Bureau Aide shows up to lend a helping hand with your current predicament! Describe what sort of help they show up with, and the Resident with the lowest number of cards draws two cards. If there's a tie, all Residents with the lowest number draw one instead.

Major Arcana	Value	Twist	Hope
<i>The Lovers</i>	6	An old friend or romantic partner shows up with problematic baggage. Maybe they need an old favor repaid, or just make a pain of themselves. Either way, the central character describes them, and the Bureau Aide describes what kind of distraction they bring. For the rest of this episode, when you draw a card, place it face-down- you may not look at it thereafter. You may discard face-down cards as if they were in your hand, but they cannot be played towards your tally.	You have a pleasing surprise reunion with an old friend or romantic interest, which you can describe. You may replace one of your goals with a new goal to rekindle your friendship or flame. If you achieve that goal, add three achievements towards your current dream.
<i>The Chariot</i>	7	It's time for a party or celebration, but things go wrong, somehow. The Bureau Aide should describe how things might go badly for you, with your assistance. Remove an achievement from your current goal or dream, and then give an achievement to another player on their current goal or dream.	You and your friends have a party and everything goes awesome. Everybody should describe what they contribute to the fun! For every character you have common ground with, draw a card from <i>their</i> deck. This applies to all characters except for the Bureau Aide.
<i>Justice or Strength</i>	8	You break a rule, or maybe there's a mistaken frame-up. The Bureau Aide should come with a situation regarding an infraction with your cooperation. Take the Justice or Strength card into your hand, and you may not discard it. If it's ever the last card in your hand <i>at any point</i> , you get caught and punished, and you may not earn any achievements this episode.	You have a chance to make a wrong right. Take this card into your hand. When you show kindness, describe something you did to wrong the spotlight. If they accept your forgiveness, you both draw a card.
<i>The Hermit</i>	9	Something truly unexpected happens! The Bureau Aide plays the three top cards of the Fate Deck face up as additional twists in addition to this one. You may choose which two of the three take effect, and the other is discarded.	You get a dream that you know will come true, or some other clear vision. Draw three cards from the Fate Deck, select one, and place it face down aside from the Fate Deck. You may want to put it in an envelope. In the next episode, this will be the twist. You may or may not share this with the other characters as you like - you're the only one who gets to see the card beforehand.

Major Arcana	Value	Twist	Hope
<i>Wheel of Fortune</i>	10	A disaster or mishap causes chaos in everybody's lives, and the Bureau Aide should describe how. Take all cards in the hands of players other than the Bureau Chief. Shuffle them up, and deal them out evenly. Any excess cards that would result in uneven hands are discarded to the Bureau Aide's discard.	Mischief comes to in everybody's lives, in a humorous and light sense. The Bureau Aide should describe this. Take all cards in the hands of players other than the Bureau Chief. Shuffle them up, and deals them out as evenly as possible. Any player who has less cards than the rest draws cards to match the hand size of the rest of the other players.
<i>Strength or Justice</i>	11	The Bureau Aide describes a new character that has a grudge against your character, rightfully or wrongly. They then must play the numerically highest Fate Card that they have available against you during the outro, as that character foils your hopes.	The Bureau Aide describes a minor character that feels a responsibility for the characters, either due to connection or fondness. Describe how they help out. They then must play the lowest Fate Card they have available against you during the outro.
<i>The Hanged Man</i>	12	You should describe how your character takes risky action that profits everybody else. Then, take your cards, shuffle them up face-down, and distribute one card to each other player (except for the Bureau Aide) without looking at the cards. If you have an uneven number of cards, you decide who gets each.	Other players should describe how they turn around to give you a helping hand. Take one card at random from each other character. They then gain Bonus +1, which is cumulative with any gained during the outro.
<i>Death</i>	13	Your current goal or dream becomes unattainable, and the Bureau Aide describes why. Remove all achievements from it, then remove the dream or goal, then draw cards equal to the number of achievements it had. At the end of the episode, you also gain a bonus equal to the number of achievements it had; this takes with any bonus gained during the outro.	You choose a goal or dream of your character's, and the Bureau Aide decides what circumstances put it out of the reach of possibility. Choose a goal or dream on your character, remove all achievements from it and redistribute an equal number <i>plus one</i> to any other goal or dream of yours. Then, remove the goal or dream originally chosen.
<i>Temperance</i>	14	The Bureau Aide should describe a moment of malaise or boredom for you, and why things are off-kilter. If you succeed during the outro, you cannot gain achievements; instead, you gain bonus as if you failed, and then increase the bonus by 1.	You may describe a chill moment or meeting for you and the other characters. Characters can, if they like, reveal their cards and exchange them one-for-one as they like. To do so, they have to introduce a topic of conversation to chat about. You cannot trade cards unless you participate in the conversation, no matter how modestly.

Major Arcana	Value	Twist	Hope
<i>The Devil</i>	15	Choose a goal or dream on your character. The Bureau Aide should come up with a troublesome minor character that can help them whether they like or not, letting them mark achievement on that goal or dream. The Devil card is then shuffled into their respective player deck. When it's drawn by a player, it has no effect, but that player must reveal it. The Bureau Chief should describe how that troublesome character makes a fuss again. The player may choose to discard a combined value of 21 or more; if they do, the Devil is discarded into the Fate Card discard. Otherwise, it's discarded back into that player's discard.	The Bureau Aide should offer you a new goal born out of opportunity, one that may be more troublesome than most. If you accept it, it comes with one achievement already on it. If you refuse, take a 1 bonus instead. This stacks with any bonus from the outro.
<i>The Tower</i>	16	The Bureau Aide plays another two twists, either from their hand or the top of the Fate Deck. They should describe how they're rolled into one big ball of trouble. If you succeed during the outro, you gain 1 extra achievement.	Draw three cards from the top of the Fate Deck, and play one as a twist and another as a hope as you like. Describe how one part is the cloud and the other is the silver lining.
<i>The Star</i>	17	The Bureau Aide should describe an event that draws the character away from their ambition. They select a goal or dream on the character other than the one selected during the intro - of the remaining goals or dreams, it must have the lowest amount of achievements. That becomes the central character's focused goal or dream for this episode.	The player should choose a goal or dream on their character. The Bureau Aide describes how they have a sudden opportunity to realize that - a sale, a chance meeting, or other lucky turn. They draw a card from the Fate Deck and place it face down. The player may immediately play an Earth Card and an Epika Card together, and if it matches or exceeds the value of the Fate Card, they may immediately gain an achievement. If they do not do so, they may draw a card from either the Earth Deck or the Epika Deck.
<i>The Moon</i>	18	Things get... odd... and ominous. The Bureau Aide should describe how. They then play another Fate Card, either from their hand or the top of the deck. This counts as a hope and not a twist. However, during the third Act, the hope is treated as a twist instead.	You gain some occult influence over your existence. Describe some ritual, creature, or lucky item that helps you out. Discard one or more cards. Draw a Fate Card, then one more for each card you discarded. Choose one of your choice and play it as another hope.

Major Arcana	Value	Twist	Hope
<i>The Sun</i>	19	The sun is out, nothing too bad happens.	Charity ripples through the group. The character describes how they do something nice for a character, who then describes how they do something nice for another character, and so on until each character has one (but not more than one) nice thing done for them. Every time such a thing is done, the recipient draws a card from the deck of the type of character who does them a good turn.
<i>Judgement</i>	20	Something is really embarrassing you to your friends, like it or not. The Bureau Aide should describe what happens to make this occur. Each player (except the Bureau Aide) should play a card face down, then flip them up simultaneously. If the median card is 7 or lower, discard your highest two cards. If the median card is 8 or higher, discard your lowest card. (If there are cards tied for the median, average them.)	You have a chance to make something better. Choose a goal or dream on another character and comment on it in character. If you approve of it, they may draw a card from your deck. If you don't approve of it, they gain 1 bonus instead that stacks with that gained during the outro.
<i>The World</i>	21	A major trouble is coming up that affects everybody, like terrible weather or an economic disaster - the Bureau Aide should describe what. Everybody should discard a goal of their choice. If there are any achievements on that goal, they gain +1 bonus for each achievement. This stacks with any bonus during the outro.	Describe a major festival, carnival, or holiday coming up! You may gain a dream or goal of your choice, though this has to replace a current dream or goal. Any achievements on the old dream or goal transfer to the new one. In addition, if the old dream or goal was your current focus, the one that replaced it becomes your new focus, and add +2 to your tally during the outro.

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... and you, for buying this! Draw a card once during *MELWAFF*, for free, any time you like, as thanks. I said you could, it’s in the rules, it’s *official*.