

Fortune Ails You

Main Character

Astra Nobelius (Not real name)

Stats: male, late twenties, non-magical, small stature, average looks

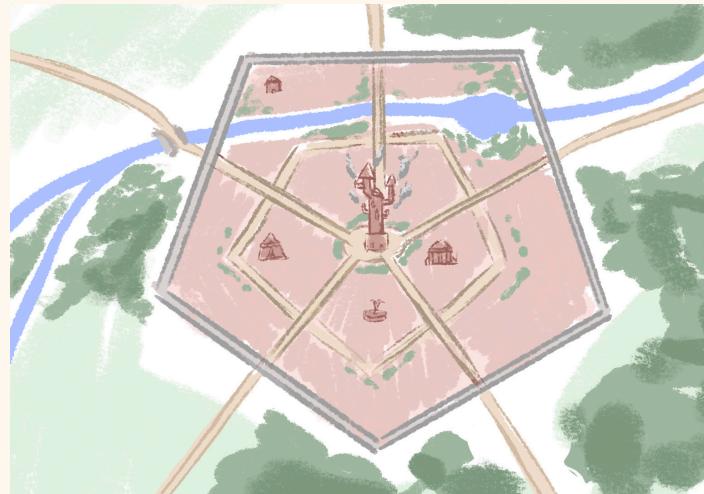
Goals: Have a place to call his own, be respected by the people around him. Have enough capital to live comfortably.

A person that is smart and not smart at the same time. Started off as the son of a poor family that struggled to get by in their one room apartment in the lower end of the city. Scrawny with no school to go to and parents busy with securing their livelihood, the young boy spent his time exploring the street and darker alleyways.

He learnt from some shady people that lying could earn him his next meal.

He always wanted to be equal to those with the spark that had a better life. So he did what made the most sense and claimed that he had magic all along. The easiest way to do that was to claim that he had powers that others could not see. Clairvoyance the school of magic most mages frown upon was his answer. After all, how would they know he can't actually see the future or talk to the dead?

As a young adult he started his business with a wooden folding table from the dump and his only friend and pet fish on the table. Now dubbed his mighty Visionary Fish familiar. After a while the business got going and he upgraded his setup with decoration to make it look more trustworthy. Inventing fancy full stories came easy to him. Once the city watch took notice of him he packed up his belongings onto a leviowagon and moved cities. This spiel continued for almost a decade. Some places see him as a reputable mage, others as a scoundrel to chase away. Now once back in the city where it all started he is faced with a new challenge. Past customers come to him for a second time. Only he does not remember what he told them in the past. So to keep his business afloat and not reveal himself as a fraud he has to keep customer satisfaction high and notice of the city watch low.



World

The world is not like ours. Magic has existed since the beginning and shaped the world around it. While in some ways more advanced than our world it can seem very backwards in others.

Magic goes hand in hand with technology to the average unlearned citizen; they seem indistinguishable. Most people do not have the spark of magic; the ones that rule are those with magic. Opening the door to wealth and fame. All roles of power are filled with someone that has the spark even if you don't need it to fill paperwork in a village office.

It is not like those without power are treated badly by the ones that have the spark, it's more like two separate societies living past each other. What does it a humble field tiller concern that the high magus summoned a golem of ice? Not much as long as it does not freeze his field.

What does concern the normal man is the technology the consortium of magic develops. Aiding in daily tasks as if the user had the spark themselves. A very lucrative business that generates mountains of wealth for those with the spark.

It came to a society based on capitalism in which a normal person can not hope to climb the ladder.

People have found themselves living in large cities powered by magical technology, high buildings in whichever style the ruling high mage prefers in grandeur of their design. Does the high mage concern themselves with overpopulation caused by the people moving into the city because magitech stole their jobs? More often than not they see it not as their problem. After all, the current city layout is a perfect magical pentagon for one of their large scale spells. New houses would ruin that.

Story Overview

The great diviner Astra Nobelius has come to town. Bringing his services to young and old, rich and not that poor people. At first Astra thought it great that his shop enjoyed some decent popularity but alas it was too good to be true. Customers of his last visit started to come in with complaints of his last prediction. Astra with not lick of real magic nor the capacity to remember his own tales stood before his greatest challenge yet. Over the coming days he had to talk to increasingly difficult customers. At the point when he barely was able to come out of a fortune-telling session with a content customer and his tall tales became increasingly specifically absurd. This left him no other option but to leave the security of his home and shop and traverse the city. He went to the places most people gathered and tried to listen in the conversations had without acting overly suspicious. Armed with a notebook he collected as much information as possible. He even bothered to write down the names of the people, a first for him. He got to know their daily troubles and joyful happenings. On the way he also could advertise his shop to new people.

Armed with his new intel he soon came to find that it was easier to construct a believable fortune if you knew the person you told it for. Visual emotional clues could only sustain his prediction for so long in the spur of the moment.

Now that he had written his possible prediction he could not wait to use them.

> After all this is how he would make the big profit that will lift him to the same step as the great mages. His notes will help him make open predictions that will have the customers coming back.

> The lives of the people are actually quite interesting and they listen openly to his suggestions disguised as predictions of the future. He could make a discount for repeat customers so they could talk with him more.

The city started to take notice of presence with his shop increasing in popularity. Divination is often disputed in the mages circle so the great mage of the city ordered the city watch to keep an eye on Astra's doings. Some guards will come for their own predictions but others will just drop by surprise in a session of a customer. But one thing is clear: he can't allow himself to slip up otherwise he will have to pack his bags fast or land in some dungeon.

Astra has now spent almost a month in town. His shop sees some regulars that come almost daily now. An old man asks for the day he will die and will not accept anything vague but is satisfied if the prediction is just a day further away than yesterday. A woman with ever new troubles of love even if her partner and she are hopelessly in love. A worker trying to get his own doom foretold

so he will be able to skip work and collect gifts of pity. A child foretold to be an invincible hero in the future, throwing itself into danger every chance it gets. A worried mother scared of everything needing assurance of health. A guard very vain only needing words of affirmation and a foretelling of hair loss to be made into a most amicable patron.

With the people eating his word he now knows how to bring them back for more and be aware of the consequences it can bring. A person to wait for their destined love and they will never take initiative themselves. Tell a mage they will invent a magical brush for removing inkstains that will bring them great renown and you will have a useful trinket that will finally lighten the hem of your robes to their original color.

To keep his business going he will have to make the hard decision of revealing the truth and living with the consequences of his past as well as the genuine connections he will be able to build, or continue to live in the shadows, to strive only for fame and fortune, never certain how long he will remain in one place.

Secondary Characters:

Various returning customers of different social standings and magical ability.

Guards of the City.

Mages of the Consortium.

The clairvoyant emotional support fish.



Story Excerpt

A new day, a new customer to relieve of their coin. Astra was just feeding the great clairvoyant fish when a woman in wizard garb came into his semi-permanent home / shop setup. Damp wide brim hat drooping, raw lips with permanent bite marks, clothes that needed at least a go over with a steamonimus if not directly a wash. Needless to say that she was upset.

She made a beeline for the customer chair sitting down with plump and launching her monologue.

Customer:

It was simply not true, how else could he do this to me? You told me to wear blue, to wait for him at the fountain. The place was exactly as you foretold but he was not. He only wanted to learn a water spell from me and nothing more. My life is ruined, I tell you. Ruined.

She dabbed at her eyes and nose that started to leak fluids with an embroidered handkerchief.

Apparently she once before took hold upon Astra's services, not that he could remember this lady wizard or whatever tale he had spun for her.



Astra Option 1:

Are you sure it was the right shade of blue?

Customer:

Shade of blue? You just said blue. Was that of importance? Why have you not specified it then?

(Mood -1)

Astra:

Well no not necessarily of course whatever shade of blue will have been the right one! Let me consult my crystal ball to see the strings left by the past.

Astra Option 2:

Are you certain that the place was exactly like I described it would be?

Customer:

Yes I am certain. In Twilight just when the heliolights start to glow at the fountain on the day of the first snowfall.

(Mood +0)

Astra: If it was not time nor place that was wrong there had to be another factor that changed your future in the time since my last prediction. How long has it been since our last conversation? The nearer the future the clearer it is for me to tell.

Astra Option 1:

I can see it clearly because it was ocean blue.

Astra Option 2:

I see it was clearly such a pretty blue.

Customer:

What ocean blue? I wore sky blue that day!

(Mood -1)

Customer:

It is, isn't it? But if the blue did not matter why does he not like me? (Mood +1)

Astra Option 1:

It certainly had to be at least a year past?

Customer:

Longer even! You foretold me my love three springs ago.

(Mood +1)

Astra Option 2: But It can't

have been that long? Last month?

Customer:

You have to mistake me for someone else for you foretold me my future many years ago!
(Mood -1)

This was an ordeal but Astra now believed he now knew how to spin this into his favour. It did not seem that his past self had predicted a tale of love but did it specify the person? He would guess not. His past self had certainly not given such exact predictions. That would be a rookie mistake. From her repeated cries he could tell that she was rather vain of character. What should he do? Say it was not the time yet? Fault the poor sod that caught her attention?

Astra:

I feel it now in the stars, this was no fault of your own. But your destined one gets pulled in many ways out of your orbit.

Astra Option 1:
His future might also be interwoven with another.

Customer:
Which wench has sown themself into my most dear?
I call for death by mages embate.
(Mood -1)

Oh no she has gone off the leviotrack.
He needed to get her to calm down or he feared she would leave his shop a wreckage.

Astra Option 2:
He is simply blind to what binds you.

Customer:
Blind you say? How can that be?
(Mood -1)

Astra Option 3:
The future is fickle and I now see that it has changed.

Customer:
Changed in what way? Will he not be mine any more?
Oh how terrible! I will seek the fountain to drown my sorrows, and myself.
(Mood -2)

Astra Option 1:
My lady mage, do not hasten. With your skills it will not take long to win your love. I see it happening very soon.

Customer:
I will see this stealer of hearts obliterated as soon as I find them. (Mood -1)

Astra Option 2:
Fear not my lady mage, your meeting will have awoken feelings in him that leave no space for the other.

Customer: Oh is that so.
That is good his eye shall not stray from me no more.
(Mood +1)

Astra option 1:
Well you don't see like I saw. Are feelings of another that obvious to see. I say nay. He is already yours, just well hidden in his heart.

Customer:
Truly? Has his heart already fallen for me? Oh how did I not see? I am blind myself!
(Mood +2)

Astra option 2:
Certainly, while his focus might be on the studies he chases right now but your beauty has left an impression most deep.

Customer:
Just my beauty? That is not enough at all!
(Mood -1)

That hopefully marks the end of her worries. Astra was contemptuous of the things this lady mage would do left to her own devices. Now she only had to pay and he could call it a good day.

Mood =>3

Customer:

I should not have come in doubt. He does love me no doubt. I will wear blue all my life as he will be by my side. Our wedding will be grand under the open sky.

Astra:

Is that so? Then why not let me ask the stars for the best time and place to swear your vows? A day of spring calls to me. auspicious indeed.

She sprung from her chair and did a twirl right there. Fluttering her handkerchief around. Astra's sharp eyes could make out a name stitched in one corner in blue.

Astra:

May I ask where you acquired this excellent piece?

Customer:

It is pretty isn't it but buy it you can't for my dearest special love let me borrow it! You might find one not half as bad at the market though. Here is a little tip so you can get one for yourself.

She was giggling to herself while Astra could only think that after all this trouble she was indeed the one who was blind. At least his story had some truth to it this time, accidentally.

Mood => 0

I will have to try again. Next time by the fountain he will confess I hope. The stars can not lie right?

Astra:

Right, they do not. Be sure the blue of your hat is true and the time exact. If not, all the stars in the night sky will not be able to help you.

She did pay but Astra could tell that she was not entirely satisfied with his tale. She might be back when it does not work out again. Until then Astra has to invent a better story or he will be in real trouble the next time.

Mood =< 1

Blast your crystal ball! I will take this in my own hands. He will love me one way or another. No one will stand in my way. I will see to that.

She was determined at least. But in her rage she completely forgot to pay Astra. At least he hoped she only forgot and did not do it on purpose. But better some coins less than a head.

She left the tent in a hurry clutching her soaked handkerchief. Interactions with mages prove always to be of some difficulty. Astra could only hope that the next one would not bombard him with his own tales. It did though poke Astra's curiosity who the man was that got this lady mage in such a flurry. It was not of importance to Astra but he kind of wanted to know it anyway. He could search for a place from which he could have a good view of the fountain in the coming days. Should he?

Game Mechanic

The game is centered around one big city with your shop as your central hub.

When on the clock you wait for customers to come to you for a fortune reading. Some Customers only want a simple fortune that you can put together through card readings. Others come with complaints for which you have to use your crystal ball to reconstruct the original fortune. This consists of asking the customer subtle questions in hope of figuring out what you have forgotten without them getting mad at you.

The questions are presented as dialogue option buttons. After a few days with customers have passed and Astra has realised that he is a bit out of his depth he can leave the tent to go to town. Advertising his shop to passerby but more importantly to collect information on the townsfolk that are already or will be his customers. Occasionally during work hours the city watch will come

by for inspection. Astra has to be extra convincing in his ability to use divination magic and can't allow himself any wrong answers.

The gameplay loop has Astra talking to customers each day for about a month in which he gets to know them personally and their problems. Your choices as him while conversing with them will change him as a person and the clientele that comes to him.

If the player selects answers that go into the emotions of the customers and genuinely tries to help them he will turn his path and become a counsellor that does not rely on falsehoods but acts for the good of the people.

If the player selects answers that are only here to get the customer to spend more and not are not caring for their emotions he will continue on as a fortuneteller and be eventually chased out of the city by the guards.

Moral of the Story:

Astra has often taken the easy way in life and not thought much about his impact on people. Through repeated visits of customers and their life stories Astra comes to understand what his own role in the life of others is. His thoughtless telling of stories can have drastic consequences on those around him.

Fazit

It was fun to build Astra as a character and the world he lives in. The Story would if it actually was a longer game come more to life with meeting the townspeople. I think it would be fun to come up with some quirky customers.

I think the biggest challenge that would come from making an actual game from it is to streamline it so that it does not branch out too wide with the little stories of the customers. Also it would need sections that are the same no matter the path you take like mid points or events that would need to make sense.

I had my troubles with writing a daily protocol as I found it quite exhausting to have a thought about it every day especially after the idea got more clear and it was less of a brainstorming activity. There it was easier to sit down and write for a while.

