

The Classification and Coding of Misfortune and Good Fortune

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Introduction

In the preceding three sections emphasis has been placed upon the various interactions and activities of the characters. They may fight, dance, make love, converse, walk around, look, listen, or struggle to accomplish something. All of these acts involve some deliberate, voluntary choice on the part of the character engaging in them. As the result of these acts, characters may be killed, hurt, or defeated, or they may become engaged, popular, or prosperous. These bad and good outcomes are, therefore, the consequences of what the characters have done or attempted to do.

It sometimes happens that bad or good outcomes occur to a character independent of anything he or she may have done. Fate, in a sense, has stepped in and produced certain results over which no character has any control. We have labeled these impersonal "fatalistic" events as misfortunes, where bad things happen to a character, and good fortunes, where good things happen to a character.

Misfortune

We shall first deal with misfortune (Scoring symbol: **M**). A misfortune is any mishap, adversity, harm, danger, or threat which happens to characters as a result of circumstances over which they have no control; it happens to them through no fault of their own. A misfortune differs from the consequence of an aggressive act, since in an aggression there is an intent by one character to harm another character. There is no such intent in a misfortune. A misfortune also differs from a failure, as was pointed out in the last chapter. In a misfortune a person is not trying to do anything; rather, something "bad" happens "out of the blue." The six subclasses of misfortune are listed below.

M6: A character is dead or dies as a result of accident or illness or some unknown cause. Death because of murder is categorically excluded because it is coded as an aggression.

"I went up to the coffins and opened them. Lying in one box was my mother, in the other my sister, and in the third my brother. They all appeared TO BE DEAD."

"I was attending my FATHER'S FUNERAL."

M5: A character is injured or ill. This class includes pain, operations, any bodily or mental defects, insanity, amnesia, blindness, etc. Plastic surgery is not counted as an "operation" because it is elective surgery.

"Her baby boy had a serious congenital HEART DEFECT."

"My mother LOST HER MEMORY."

"A TOOTH BROKE OFF in my mouth."

"He had a CLUB FOOT."

"My boyfriend had a STOMACHACHE."

M4: A character is involved in an accident without suffering physical or mental injury; a character loses a possession or has one destroyed or damaged; a character has a defective possession.

"As I was driving down the mountain, my car CRASHED BECAUSE OF THE ICY ROAD."

"The DIAMOND CAME OUT of my engagement ring."

"The LIGHTNING DAMAGED our house."

"My boyfriend's car had a FLAT TIRE."

M3: A character is threatened by something in the environment. A threat of falling is classified under the next heading.

"The wall began to crack and bulge out and I thought it was GOING TO FALL ON ME."

"The waves were very high and I was afraid the boat we were in WAS GOING TO CAPSIZE."

M2: A character is falling or is in danger of falling.

"I dreamed that I WAS FALLING AND FALLING and never hit bottom."

"As I stood on the edge of the cliff, the rocks began to move and I WAS AFRAID I MIGHT FALL."

M1: A character encounters an environmental barrier or obstacle: a character is unable to move; a character is lost; a character is late or is in danger of being late. This class of misfortunes includes situations which produce frustration for the character who confronts them. In some cases, the frustrating agent is clearly environmental in origin as when a road is washed out; in other cases, where the character is lost or late, it is possible that the character has made a contribution to the difficulty he or she encounters. However, since the character has not consciously or intentionally produced the difficulty and views the problem as external to himself or herself, it seems more appropriate to treat it as a misfortune that bears upon the character, rather than as a failure in achievement or as an intropunitive aggression. Having encountered the obstacle which warrants the M1 coding, it is possible for success or failure to be coded if the character makes an effort to overcome the barrier and the outcome is described in the dream report.

"When we reached the river, we discovered that the BRIDGE HAD COLLAPSED so we couldn't get to the picnic grounds."

"As the truck bore down on me, I tried to run but found that MY LEGS WOULDN'T MOVE."

"I started toward home but the streets became more and more unfamiliar until I finally realized that I WAS LOST."

"As I entered the office, I saw that I WAS LATE FOR WORK."

Good Fortune

Good fortune is the opposite of misfortune. A misfortune is coded when "something bad" happens to a character; a good fortune is coded when "something good" happens to a character. The "something good" is not the result of an *intentional* beneficial act by another character. That would be coded as friendliness. Neither is the "something good" the result of any purposeful striving by the character. That would be coded as success. A good fortune is coded when there is an acquisition of goods or something beneficial happens to a character that is completely adventitious or the result of a circumstance over which no one has control. A good fortune is also coded if the dreamer is in a bountiful environment. In a word, it might be said that a good fortune is coded whenever a character becomes "lucky." Good fortunes are rather rare in dreams. As the result of their paucity, we have not attempted to subclassify them and code for only one class of good fortune. The coding symbol is **GF**.

"I dreamed I FOUND A LOT OF MONEY."

"My girl friend WON ONE OF THE DOOR PRIZES."

"I was out hunting when a LARGE HERD OF DEER JUST SEEMED TO APPEAR from out of nowhere."

"I dreamed I WAS LIVING IN A MANSION, HAD CLOSETS FULL OF NEW CLOTHES, AND WAS DRIVING A NEW ROLLS-ROYCE."

Coding Procedures for Misfortune and Good Fortune

The coding procedure is essentially the same as that followed for success and failure. A comma is placed after the coding symbol for the misfortune or good fortune, and then the coding symbols for the characters are shown. Multiple characters are joined by a plus sign.

"I LOST MY WATCH over the side of the boat."	M4, D
"My buddy and I FOUND A BRAND NEW BOAT that had drifted up on the beach."	GF, D+1MKA
"My teenage brother and my new baby sister both CAME DOWN WITH THE MUMPS."	M5, 1MBT+1FTB

Coding Rules

1. Score each misfortune that happens to the same character when the misfortunes belong to different subclasses.

"My brother's car WAS WRECKED and HE GOT CUTS ON HIS FACE and <i>broke his arm</i> in the accident."	M4, 1MBA
	M5, 1MBA

2. Score each misfortune or good fortune -- even those that belong to the same subclass of misfortune -- if they happen to the same character at different times in the dream.

"I was hungry and began to scratch my nose. All of a sudden A STEAK SUPPER APPEARED in front of me. I ate this and after awhile I scratched my nose again. Suddenly I WAS DRESSED IN THE FINEST OF CLOTHES. I began to wonder if my nose were magic."	GF, D
	GF, D
"I was skiing when I ran into a tree and CUT MY LIP. I went back to the lodge and put a Band-Aid on it. Then I started out again. This time I SPRAINED MY ANKLE when one of my skis came off."	M5, D
	M5, D

Coding the Consequences of Misfortune and Good Fortune

In the last section, it was indicated that consequences can occur which would modify the initial achievement outcomes. In a similar fashion, the coding system for misfortune and good fortune includes provisions for consequences which alter the initial fate bestowed on a character. Three subclasses of consequences have been developed. These consequences are either a form of social interaction, an achievement outcome, or the opposite type of fatalistic event. They are also coded independently of their coding as a consequence. Their coding as a consequence is indicated by enclosing the relevant coding symbol in parentheses following the coding unit. The purpose of coding as a consequence is to preserve the sequence of events in order to answer certain dynamic questions which might be raised. Such questions might ask, "How often does a character struggle to overcome a misfortune and succeed?" or "In what percentage of good fortunes does fate intervene and turn an initial blessing into some misfortune?"

It should be noted that many researchers using the Hall/Van de Castle scoring system do not bother to record consequences of success and failure, since they occur so rarely; also, they can make a bit of a mess of your scoring sheets!

Consequences of Misfortune

1. The misfortune is transformed into a good fortune.

"My mother was very sick but ALL OF A SUDDEN SHE APPEARED WELL AND HEALTHY."	M5, 1FMA (GF)
	GF, 1FMA

2. The character suffering the misfortune tries to cope with the misfortune and succeeds.

"The door was locked and wouldn't open. After trying several times, I finally used a bent hairpin and MANAGED TO GET IT OPEN."	M1, D (SU)
	SU, D

3. Another character intervenes in a friendly fashion and dispels the misfortune.

"I was hopelessly lost in the woods and wandering around in circles. Suddenly a man I had never seen before appeared and SHOWED ME THE WAY OUT OF THE WOODS."

M1, D (F)
1MSA F4> D

Consequences of Good Fortune

1. The good fortune is transformed into a misfortune.

"I found a lot of money but on my way home IT DISAPPEARED." **GF, D (M)**

2. The character to whom the good fortune occurs tries to press his or her luck and fails.

"I dreamed I had found a lot of money. I invested it in order to make more money but THEN I LOST IT ALL." **GF, D (FL)**

3. Another character intervenes in an aggressive fashion and intentionally destroys the good fortune.

"My teenage sister found this real cute puppy but my father said SHE COULDN'T KEEP IT." **GF, 1FTT (A)**
1MFA A3> 1FTT

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