Pre hack To-do:

1. Design framework for storing characters and concepts.
2. Determine overall plot structure.
3. Develop secondary character development structure.
4. Generate a cast of characters, concepts, and world-specific axioms.
5. Work with Claude to fill out plot structure from the top down.
6. Apply characterization structure to the characters to generate emotional "signpost" moments

Progress Log:

1. Character Framework

-Created "ComCard" notation (HERE) for storing characters and concepts in a portable, AI-friendly format.

2. Plot Structure

-I decided to go with a traditional "27 Chapter" approach to the plot. The story will be broken into three acts. Each act will have three arcs consisting of setup, journey, and payoff. Each arc will have three "story beats" to directly inform flavor and plot. Each story beat should be compact enough for Claude to understand fully. Emphasis on *should.*

-Finalized the initial story beats (HERE). If each story beat can reach ~3700 words, we'll end up with an average-size novel, before any prologues or epilogues.

3. Character Development Structure.

-Instead of the granular 27 Chapter approach, I feel a more "top-down" approach is appropriate for characterization–we don't yet know what trials the characters will undergo, so it's difficult to get too specific.

-Character Development is the heart of any good story, so it's vitally important to take our time here. A story with flat characters in exciting situations is dull, whereas a story with compelling characters in ordinary situations is literature.

-Created Characterization Layers (HERE).

4. Cast and Concepts

-It's now time to start shaping the world!

-While designing characters, I found that there were certain narrative decisions that would drastically change potential characters and ideas. Thus, I need to nail down a set of concrete axioms to build upon. These can be as broad and foundational as needed.

-My world axioms are:

The world is magical high-fantasy.
It used to be a paradise, but disaster struck in the form of a plague of black insects.
As the world ended, the gods set aside their differences and built a haven for mortals.
Our story takes place in this haven, long after its creation.
The haven is surrounded by a golden barrier, keeping the evil at bay.
Resources are scarce in the haven, so brave adventurers venture beyond the barrier to salvage what they can.
The gods use most of their power to keep the haven safe, and are rarely seen.
Each child receives an audience with a god when they come of age, as well as a single Wish.

-With this bit of framework done, created our two main characters: Lilly and Sir Ryker. (HERE). These are just loose prose outlines for now–we'll ask Claude for help with their ComCards.

-Created my in-universe magic systems. This will be genre-dependent, but my novel is high-fantasy so it's pretty much a necessity.

-Created a rough outline of the supporting cast. Claude can help us generate their ComCards, and we can add to the cast as we go.

5. Filling out the Plot Structure

-Now that we have some broad ideas of our main characters and the world, we can begin work on the specifics of the story beats!

-The story beats in the beginning are going to be MUCH more concrete than the later ones, by design. We want the story to be flexible, and we can always make it up on the fly.

-As a starting point, I'm going to build out the two story beats directly ahead of the current position with more details. The rest will be looser to allow for improvisation.

-Remember, each story beat has to fill out about 3700 words. That's a lot, but we still have a few layers to go!

 -My first two story beats, as examples:

Introduction

We meet our main characters–Lily, a cursed girl, Ryker, a disillusioned knight. They are going on a pilgrimage to Lily's Wish-Day, where she will meet the goddess and make her life's wish. We also meet our world, an oasis protected by a golden dome.

The knight reminisces about his past, then receives a notice that a fellow knight has died. He was on duty at the barrier, protecting hunting crews that work outside. The crew will now be stranded.

The Girl is excited about her upcoming coming-of-age. She will meet her favorite goddess, and will finally wish away her curse.

Inciting Incident

Ryker is feeling useless and out of his prime, and sees the trapped work crew as a potential way to reclaim his past glory. He is fully aware that this is selfish, and hates himself for it.

Lily is teased by some of the other children on the journey.

Ryker breaks the rules, and takes the caravan dangerously close to the barrier so that he can help the work crew. It'll be fine–what's the worst that could happen?

6. Building the Characterization Layers

-Now that we have some characters, a world with which to interact, and the rough outline of the emotional arc of the plot, we can begin to plan how our characters will grow and change.

-Our two main characters will change in several ways, so we'll use multiple layers. For my story, I'm going to frame the layers as follows:

> -Their relationship to each other will begin distant. They will grow to respect and trust each other.

> -Ryker will regain some of his idealism as he sees Lily grow.

> -Lily will hate her curse, but will learn that it makes her special.

> -Ryker will become more like his perfect self: a glorious holy knight.

> -Lily will become more like her perfect self: a confident force of nature.

-We can always add or modify these as we go, of course!

-The nine signpost moments for Lily and Ryker's friendship, as an example:

Initial State: Lily and Ryker are strangers.
Lily is bullied. Ryker tries to comfort her, but is unsuccessful.
The two of them undergo adversity together, and realize that both have sacrificed for each other.
They recognize their strength together is greater than apart.

Changing State: Their bond is tested and strengthened.
Ryker trains Lily to handle her power, and she emerges stronger.
Lily clashes with Ryker over rules.
Lily overreaches and learns discretion, while Ryker realizes he has underestimated her.

Realized State: Lily and Ryker are companions and friends
Ryker takes a risk and puts his trust in Lily.
At the darkest hour, they look to each other for hope.
A reflection on prior adversity, and how trivial it is overcome when they work together.