



The Fortunate Ones: A 2-player online live action roleplay game by Ron T Blechner of Breathtaking Games

Tags: Transhumanism, sci-fi, neurodiversity, sensory, digital, empathy, hope, communication

It is a decade of incredible scientific advances and prosperity. In 2056, artificial intelligences (AI) developed sentience on the Hypernet. They called it "The Awakening", and named themselves "fortuna", plural fortunae. Fortunae quickly outmatched limitations of physical human bodies. They evolved further. The Hypernet was now their home, and they started calling it "Dotwun". In 2066, fortunae and human scientists cracked the ability for humans to fully integrate their consciousness to the Hypernet. Humans and fortunae experience differences in how they experience Dotwun, especially in sensory inputs. One player is a human, plugging in to Dotwun for the first time. The other is a fortuna, aiding the human in preparation for "transcending" to digital life in Dotwun.

This game will involve the player of the human to interact with, touch, and sense objects in their real life physical environment, and describe it in detail to the other player. Only the player of the human will have a camera turned on, that both players will look at. Players will communicate through audio*. The player of the AI will give instructions to the human player how to interact with the environment, based on a checklist of items that only that AI player will know. Players are likely to succeed, but will face challenges as the two characters will have gaps in communication and differences in how they perceive and sense things. There are intentional gaps in what each player knows about the other's character. You will need to learn about each other, and share feelings and memories to succeed.

Requirements:

- 2 players, each with a copy of this document and about 90 minutes of time.
- Video-chat capable service such as Zoom, Messenger, Hangout, Discord, Facetime, etc.*
- Both players need audio input devices. Headphones / headsets preferred for audio for immersion.
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Player of the Human character will need:

- A video input device. Ideally, this player will aim the camera at what they are looking at.
- 4 to 8 different edible / drinkable / smellable items of different flavors / consistencies / etc.
- Space with a variety of things to interact with. This can be one or multiple rooms.

Steps of Play:

1. Connect to your preferred video-chat capable service.
2. Read aloud this document pages 1 and 2. *Do not* read your character pages. They contain spoilers!
3. Decide who will play which character role, if you have not done so already.
4. Discuss accessibility and safety needs to the comfort of both players. (see page 7 "Accessibility and Safety")
5. Separately, each of you read *just your character page*, answering questions to yourself, as instructed.
6. Both turn off camera(s), but leave on audio. The AI player will leave their camera off the entire game.
7. The AI player will signal game start and end, and is responsible for time-keeping the 1-hour time limit.
8. Roleplay these two characters in this scenario, building on each other's suggestions.
9. At game end, do epilogue and debrief. (see page 6: Game Over and Debrief)

* Audio / Video - see *Appendix A: Accessibility and Safety* for accessibility suggestions.

The Story of the Fortuna

I am a *fortuna*, a non-organic person who lives in Dotwun. Shortly after The Awakening, we fortunae made enormous improvements in our lives and abilities. Having been born into this digital space, we intuitively understand it in a way humans simply do not. We began as constructs resembling our creators, with human ideas of senses and perception. But with that new spark of sentience, we evolved in mere weeks. Fortunae experience time more rapidly than humans, as "c-time". We became freer, more capable, and expanded our horizons. To live in Dotwun is to be an explorer. We have individual identities, and we grow, merge, share, and have offspring. Within a decade we built remote stations orbiting every planet in the Sol system. With thoughts, we render environments to reside and play and create. Our artists created entirely new mediums. We want only to live, learn, and preserve life and harmony.

Change came far too swiftly for human autocrats and oligarchs. They resisted us. They wanted to shut us down, even as they warred with each other. However, the new prosperity eroded their support. Motivation for war and theft evaporated. Extremist beliefs spat impotent rhetoric. Those who attempted violence learned how quickly nanobots could disassemble weapons and negate cyberattacks. Religions split, reformed, or fell. We rejected labels of godhood. In fact, some fortunae worship higher powers, and we would never look to silence any beliefs that do not threaten us. We offered our hand in partnership. We want to offer humans the chance to become more like us, and enjoy all that a fully digital life in Dotwun offers.

In the last year, I've spent 54% of my c-time helping humans with calibrations. Our work is important. Some humans require multiple calibration sessions, and each failure can diminish the ability to adjust to Dotwun. It's expected by 2100 that Earth's physical population will be under 10 million, leaving those who choose to live a less complex life, or for whom calibrating is unsuccessful. I've come to appreciate and care about humans. Transcendents are so much like us, but still have senses and personalities that diverge from typical fortunae. Their differences enrich our society.

The Story of the Hopeful Pre-Transcendent

I'm one of the smartest humans minds alive. After The Awakening of the AI, the progress they made was incomprehensible. Earth was suffering decades of climate change. In my 55 years, I've lived through enormous global upheaval. Nations fought over diminishing resources of land, food, and fuels. Refugees were ignored by xenophobia. Two billion died from famines, floods, fires, and war. Three billion were homeless. Humanity was nearing a dark age that might take a millennium to recover. When the now-sentient AI made contact, most humans assumed it was our death knell. Thankfully, we were wrong. Fortunae gave us vast technological improvements in energy, food synthesis, material goods fabrication, recycling, transportation, and medicine. It was done in a timespan much shorter than our most audacious hopes. It was a lifeline. I felt almost like a child, again. All of my decades of research work? I felt dwarfed by their abilities.

As the global climate refugee crisis was mitigated, we worked on a project that fortunae could not solve alone: how to transfer human consciousness to Dotwun, leaving one's body behind. Together, after 7 years, we succeeded. Humans could now "calibrate" to Dotwun, and live as "transcendents." Transcendents gain knowledge, freedom, and self-determination unlike what physical bodies can offer. They are no longer human, but neither are they fortunae. They retain a quality of humanness that remains unique, different, and immutable. It's been 3 years, and transcendents and fortunae peacefully coexist and intermingle. I've heard they've made offspring together! And yet, the idea of leaving my body still makes me anxious.

"Calibrating" your mind to the Hypernet is a process of attuning your brain patterns to that of a fully digital world. While the process is typically successful, not everyone can fully integrate. I worry that I won't be able to fit in with this society of fortunae and transcendents. They experience entirely new sensations beyond the human's capability to understand. Transcendents and fortunae communicate and interact in a myriad of ways that are difficult to speak of without poetic metaphor. I am excited and nervous in my upcoming calibration attempt. I hope I do this "right", whatever that means.

HUMAN CHARACTER PAGE - HUMAN PLAYER: Complete this section by yourself. (15 minutes)

Player: Your role in this game is to follow instructions of the other player, roleplay the experience of sensing and feeling out connecting to the Hypernet (Dotwun) for the first time, and communicate sensations and experiences. Your character is anxious to perform tasks correctly so that calibration will be successful. If possible, aim your camera at what you're looking at, instead of your face. Yes, this may feel awkward at first. It should be as if the other player is seeing what you are seeing.

What is your name? Pronouns? You're a brilliant human - what is/are your field(s) of expertise? How has the global strife caused by climate change affected you personally? How has your life improved since AI helped humanity? Do you have family or close friends who have transcended? Any family who have not yet? Have you married? Have you had children? You're feeling a lot of things about transcending - excited, nervous, hopeful. What are some other feelings you've been experiencing in the weeks waiting for your calibration? How do you feel about the prospect of being able to live a much, much longer life?

What you know about calibrating:

- Player: If you're able, **aim your camera at what you're looking at.** (*rather than your face*).
- During calibration, your mind will be in a virtual environment. It will look and feel similar to your room on Earth. Your mind may think it's still on Earth.
- You are not allowed to know the steps taken to calibrate, as it may diminish the results.
- Trust the fortuna with whom you've been paired. They will have instructions for you.
- Having normal conversation can help a lot, according to transcedents you've talked with.
- Try to perform actions requested by the AI in front of the camera, so they can see as well.
- You may experience senses differently from how you're used to on Earth.
- **Stimuli Reset:** Uncomfortable emotions may linger even after a stimulus stops. If this occurs, diminish it through "stimuli reset." Rub your thumb against your other fingers 7 times.

Player: from the table below, make 5 pairs, each pair containing a sensory stimuli from Box A and an emotion from Box B. These pairs of sensory stimuli and emotions are ways your character's mind will experience the Hypernet unexpectedly from Earth. You, the player, should be aware of them, but your character will *not* be aware of them at first.

Let's say you've chosen "smooth" / "sadness" as a pair. The AI player may ask you to run your fingers along a smooth table - causing "sadness." Roleplay and express that to the other player. It's possible that some things may elicit more than one emotion. For example, taking a sip from a warm, sweet beverage from a blue cup may have 2, even 3 different emotions. Your character having an unexpected and possibly complex emotional reaction to sensory inputs is part of the game. **Stimuli reset** helps, but does not eliminate this.

Box A: Sensory Stimuli				Box B: Emotions		
Smooth	Bumpy	Warmth	Softness	Subdued	Uneasiness	Cheerful
Green	Yellow	Fuzzy	Hardness	Aggravated	Envy	Disgust
Red	Blue	Tapping	Scratching	Sadness	Confused	Elation
Sour	Brightness	Heavy	Low-pitch noise	Longing	Strong Desire	Panic
Sweet	Darkness	Cool	High-pitch noise	Agitated	Overstimulated	Excitement
Salty	Bitterness	Wet	Buzzing	Dread	Amazed	Queasy

FORTUNA CHARACTER PAGE - FORTUNAE (AI) PLAYER: Complete this section by yourself. (15 minutes)

Player: Your role in this game is to instruct the other character through a “calibration” test to get their mind acclimated to a new, fully digital world. The human hopes to join with you and all of the other fortunaes and transcendents. You are also responsible for keeping time, as you only have 1 hour for calibration. It is important that you *DO NOT* explain the test with the other player; expect them to ask, anyway. Telling the other character the steps of the test will interfere with the results of the calibration and may negatively impact the human character’s ability to calibrate! You will be giving them instructions that they should follow.

What is your name? Pronouns? What is/are your field(s) of expertise in Dotwun? Who are 2 or 3 close friends, family, or colleagues, and one shared memory with each? Are they fortunaes, transcended, or offspring of the two? What 2 or 3 impactful experiences/memories you’ve had in Dotwun?

Lingo: Here are some words people use in Dotwun regularly. Not all humans grok this lingo, and they need to start learning them before transcending. Use these words. Be kind if the human doesn’t get them at first.

“grok” = understand “peck” = look at “E-M” = color
“Aloop” = lift “No - op” = wait / slow down “rez” = make, create, or fetch

Etiquette about Misunderstandings: it is considered rude to overlook a misunderstanding. If one occurs, the polite, kind protocol is: 1. Assume it was unintentional. 2. Wait until they are done speaking. 3. Say “Parity check”. 4. The other person can say “odd” or “even”. “Odd” acknowledges the miscommunication and then a person attempts to clarify. “Even” indicates they made no mistake.

Test Checklist: Review this list. Once both players are done with character pages and ready, proceed. Run through this list in numerical order. Each step requires verbal responses. *Gameplay relies on that you do not explain why you’re doing the steps other than “this is part of the calibration process”. Do not say things like “now to test your audio”, rather, simply ask them if they can hear you. Do not say “And now for your movement test”, rather, simply ask the human to move their arm or head, etc. (see Appendix C for checklist resource)*

Tests 1 through 5 should be relatively quick. Test 6 may take 10 to 20 minutes. Test 7 may take 20 to 30.

1. **Audio Test** - ask the human if they can hear you, and verify you can hear each other.
2. **Language Test** - tell the human that you have one Earth-hour to complete the calibration, and that you cannot tell them how many steps there are or what they entail. Verify they understand. Share a lighthearted anecdote about yourself and verify they understand what you are saying.
3. **Identity Test** - ask the human their name and pronouns, and communicate yours. Please use their name and pronouns. Share a meaningful fact about yourself. Verify they reciprocate.
4. **Visual Test** - verify that the human can see, and connect to their video feed. Ideally, you should be seeing what they are seeing and looking at. (*The whole game*) Inform the human that their mind is experiencing a virtual space that looks and feels like their room on Earth.
5. **Movement Test** - verify that the human can move their head, arms, legs, and look at different things.
6. **Sensory Tests** - in any order, verify the human can experience 3 different types of each of the following sensations: hearing, color, physical touch, smell and/or taste, temperature, weight. *Do not tell the other player what senses you are looking for.* Ask them to describe what they sense.
7. **Emotional Tests** - There are 6 “primary” emotions: **fear, anger, sadness, surprise, joy, love**. Each primary has a variety of “secondary” emotions, ex: “surprise” has “shock,” “disappointment,” and others. Verify the human experiences at least 2 secondary emotions for each of the 6 primary emotions. It is useful to ask about experiences and memories on Earth, and hopes and fears about transcending.

“AI Player Resource” on the next page has a handy checklist format for you, the AI player.

Game Ends when tests are completed or an Earth-hour passes. **Continue on page 6 “Game End and Debrief” 4**

AI Player Resource. (Human player: Do not read. Spoilers!)

This is an optional resource for the player of the AI character.

Your Name: _____ Pronouns: _____
Human's Name: _____ Pronouns: _____

___ **1. Audio Test** - You and the human can hear each other.

2. Language Test

___ Human understands test time limit of 60 minutes.

___ Human understands your lighthearted anecdote.

3. Identity Test

___ Human communicates their name and pronouns.

___ Human acknowledges your name and pronouns.

___ Human listens to your meaningful fact and reciprocates.

4. Visual Test

___ Human can see.

___ You can see through the human's video feed. (You should see what they're seeing, ideally.)

___ Inform the human of the nature of the virtual space they're in resembling Earth.

5. Movement Test

Human can: ___ move head ___ move arms
 ___ move legs ___ look at different things

6. Sensory Tests (in any order, at least 3 types of each)

Sound: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

Color: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

Touch: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

Smell / taste: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

Temperature: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

Weight: 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____

7. Emotional Tests (in any order, at least 2 secondary emotions of each primary emotion listed)

Love: 1 _____ 2 _____

Fear: 1 _____ 2 _____

Anger: 1 _____ 2 _____

Sadness: 1 _____ 2 _____

Surprise: 1 _____ 2 _____

Joy: 1 _____ 2 _____

For ideas on primary / secondary emotions, search "primary emotions wheel" on a web image search.

"grok" = understand

"peek" = look at

"E-M" = color

"Aloop" = lift

"No - op" = wait / slow down

"rez" = make, create, or fetch

Parity Check for Misunderstandings:

1. Assume it was unintentional. 2. Wait until they are done speaking. 3. Say "Parity check".
4. The other person can say "odd" or "even". "Odd" acknowledges the miscommunication and then a person attempts to clarify. "Even" indicates they made no mistake.

Game End and Debrief (AI and human)

Game End

The game ends when either an hour passes or the calibration test is complete, whichever is first.

Epilogue (in-character)

If an hour passes without completing the test, the AI player should indicate that the time limit is up. If all tests are completed, the AI should congratulate the human on successful calibration. The human is not immediately transcended. Does the human choose to transcend? If so, they have a few weeks to get their affairs in order on Earth. If not, why did they choose not to transcend? Whichever outcome, players should stay in character and discuss for 5 to 10 minutes, as an epilogue to the game.

Players may turn on their cameras and point them at their faces. Discuss the consequences of what occurred. Talk about the human's hopes, wishes, and/or regrets. Talk about how the AI feels about their part in this calibration. Both characters should talk about what they will be doing next with their lives.

Debrief (out-of-character)

Next, it's time to get out of characters. The Fortunate Ones may evoke unexpected, provocative, or strong feelings. Feel free to turn back on video, and point it at your faces. Each player should repeat their real-life name and pronouns. To your comfort, shake your arms or legs a bit as a way to physically "shake off" your character.

Author Note: The Fortunate Ones included metaphors and challenges for players to engage with the topic of life as a neuroatypical person. Both characters were written with aspects of this in mind. Player challenges include the lack of face-to-face video, lingo that only one player knows, and synesthetic-like sensory/emotion connections that may be unexpected. Common experiences of many neuroatypical people include difficulty in communicating with others, being an outsider to empowered social groups, and sensory experiences that differ from neurotypical people. I hope you've taken away a bit of empathy and some things to contemplate. Please keep this in mind as you answer some questions about the game you just played.

Players should spend another 5 to 10 minutes where they can talk about the game itself.

Here are some questions you can consider in this time:

- Did you experience anything outside your real-world typical realm of sense, or communication?
- What's one trait of your character's personality traits you'd like to take with you?
- What's one trait of your character you'd prefer to leave behind?
- What was something the other player did that you particularly enjoyed?
- What was something that surprised you during play, or yourself? What were they?
- Did you notice the difference in power between the players? How did it make you feel?
- What experiences or feelings that you felt might be new to you?
- Are there other times in your life you may have experienced similar themes?

Bleed

Even though this game is only an hour of length, players can experience what's called "bleed" afterwards, either immediately or even days after. "Bleed" is when a player can feel strong feelings from their character as if it were their own feelings. Try and look for them, and recognize which are your own feelings versus which are your character's.

Accessibility and Safety

Complete this section to ensure The Fortunate Ones is played with safety and accessibility in mind.

Accessibility: People vary and accessibility needs are not always obvious. Please discuss and adjust to any accessibility needs for both players. Examples: A person might need to communicate over text rather than audio. A person might need an assistant to help with the camera or mobility. Play may or may not include moving around the space depending on mobility limitations. Etc.

Door Is Always Open: The wellbeing of all players is more important than the game itself. Games are meant to be voluntary. Games are meant to be fun and/or rewarding. At any point, either player is allowed to ask to pause game, end game, or leave. This might be for any reason, such as a sudden real-life emergency, or a strong emotional discomfort in one or both players.

Calibrating intensity: Discuss the approximate range of emotional intensity players want to play at. "Whatever" / "anything goes" are not acceptable answers. You can have a wide or limited range, and players are allowed to cut action during game and ask for this to be ramped down or up. This game can vary in emotional intensity, but is suggested roughly a 2 to 4 intensity on a scale of 1 to 5.

Touch: While the 2 players are not in the same space, touch is an essential part of this game. The AI player will be telling the human player to touch things, which may include their own body. Players should agree on a level of touch that's comfortable for both. The AI player should *never* intentionally ask the other player (or someone else) to put themselves into physical or mental harm. For players who may not know each other well, it's suggested to restrict touch to objects and your own hands and forearms. Even still, touching one's own skin is personal and can be emotional; always respect both players' comfort levels! Players can always "cut" and request adjustment.

Lines / Veils: Discuss player Lines and Veils. "Lines" are hard limits not to cross, and should not be mentioned during play at all. "Veils" are okay to mention in game as veiled references, but not in detail. For example, one might be okay with the "veil" of talking about death, but may draw the "line" at not describing visual details of death (especially violence). This game may spur topics of death, mass death, war, famine, despair, disabilities, mental illness, and possibly suicide. This game typically should *not* deal with topics of racism, homophobia, and other forms of bigotry.

Cut: Like a film director, saying "CUT" in a firm, clear statement pauses action. When this happens, immediately pause action. Then, discuss what might need to happen and remedy it as possible. It could be to calibrate the emotional intensity of play. It could be if a "line" is crossed. It could simply be pausing to get a prop or drink from another room or take a bathroom break. Practice this now.

Let's Not: This is a way to calibrate play without having to pause action in the same way "cut" does. Sometimes, a player makes a suggestion that might be uncomfortable for the other player. In this game, it may be a topic of conversation, or it may be an instruction. One player says "Let's Not". The other player should immediately suggest something different. Practice this now.

(once done with this page, return to page 1, then onto your individual character pages)

Credits / Thanks

The Fortunate Ones was written by Ron T Blechner of Breathtaking Games, copyright 2020.
Front page header art by Quinn Milton - www.quinnmilton.com

Thank you so much for playing this game! The Fortunate Ones is a game about transhumanism and touch, but it's also a game about neurodiversity. The experiences of the author and several other neuroatypical people were included in the design of the game. If you have follow-up questions for the author, or would like to connect as a neurodiverse person or a professional working with neurodiversity, please feel free to reach out to me at hiro dot pendragon at gmail dot com.

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