

Continent: Crossroad

Summary



Crossroad is a continent on the north edge of the Square World surrounded by the Frozen Ocean from the north, the Wild Ocean from the east, and the Warm Sea from the west. In the south, it has a border with Pleasant.

Originally it was populated by nomadic tribes and was known to the rest of the world as Unknown. The tribes name their place Sirr (Ground) but don't really appreciate it when anyone else calls them 'ground people', which is extremely politically incorrect.

Crossroad was discovered by the people of Pleasant country, who accidentally got lost during the traditional hide-and-seek event in the foggy mountains.

Gloomhild's Cult



Gloomhild is one of the goddesses of the Square World, she has adepts on every continent. On Crossroad her cult has become extremely popular since first people came here through tunnels searching for happiness but forgetting to leave the despondency at their homelands. The oppressive landscapes of Crossroad and the necessity to wait long for the next flight, due to the unstable working of the tunnel system at the earliest stages of its existence, led to the building of numerous temples and monasteries devoted to Gloomhild.

Geography

Landscape



Before the tunnel system was created Crossroad had been a typical tundra place, covered with swamps and dwarf trees, a vast plateau, extending through many degrees of latitude and longitude.

Only in the south some not very tall hills, the Mossy Knolls, appear, surrounding The Warm Gulf in the west and The Whale Gulf in the east. Further to the south, the hills are gradually turning into quite high and picturesque mountains of Pleasant country.

Vegetation

Due to the harsh climate, the vegetation of Crossroad is quite limited. Cold sandy deserts in the north which used to be the bottom of The Frozen Ocean and thousand kilometres of swamps, covered by reindeer moss with sparse shrubs and dwarf trees, represent 90% of the territory. Nevertheless, toward the south curving birches and tiny firs are getting higher and higher, finally growing into quite dense coniferous forests and starting to balance between tundra and taiga situation.

Vegetation of the coastal hills is very specific and is constantly changing nowadays because of the generators. People have managed to grow fruits and vegetables which are not typical for the place. Usually, they grow them for themselves. But there are some local farms that sell their products all over the continent and in some rare cases even abroad.

There are also some scientific projects of the Crossroad Polytechnical University devoted to growing edible plants and developing farms.

Lakes and rivers



Crossroad is rich in lakes and rivers. The estuary of the major river, the Ever-Lasting, is located on the highest hill in the south, called Haya, which could be translated into the modern Crossroadian as 'mountain'.

Other water objects are not very impressive in size. But there are so many of them especially in the north-east that indigenous people call this area Sierkillah Sirr (The Land of Mirrors).



Minerals



Crossroad is rich in mineral deposits. Oil and gas fields are located along the west coast further to the north from Mossy Knolls. Couple of them are on the islands off the coast. An oil extraction project from the bottom of the sea is also being developed right now.

All oil and gas of the continent is used for its own purposes since the south of the continent is a large manufacturing area at the forefront of technology and engineering, which is not only serving the transit station but producing different equipment for the rest of the Square World.

Population

As for the population, Crossroad is a land of contrasts.

The south represents a large densely populated industrialised urban area with the capital Stanzia in the west, having been built around the transit station. And dozens of cities and towns on the coast of the Warm and Whales Gulfs.

So, while the south is a vibrant mixture of fortune-seekers from all over the world, not to mention students and scientists of The Crossroad Polytechnical University, the north is relatively underdeveloped. There you can find nothing but some permanent or temporary camps of nomadic tribes and several temples and monasteries of Gloomhilda's cult.



There are also a couple of company towns belonging to gas and oil fields in the west.

Some kinds of settlements, very close to what we mean by 'fishing villages', may be found in the rural area of the Land of Mirrors and on the north-east ocean coast.

Climate

Northern Part



The climate of the north of the Crossroad is a typical polar climate with year-round cold temperatures, which could drop to -50 degrees Celsius in winter. Periods of hot weather in summer are quite short but temperature may reach even 30 degrees.

Besides the low temperatures, weather here doesn't seem to have any disadvantages. The air is quite dry, the precipitation level is low but with a chance of fluffy snowfalls in winter and dramatical thunderstorms in summer. The sky is clear almost every day.

In February, there is a period of strong north-eastern winds that make severe frost feel even harsher. But the rest of the year is not that windy at all.

West Coast



The west coast of Crossroad has always been warmer than the east one because of the warm waters of the West Sea.

Since the generator appeared the weather here has changed dramatically and quite a mild version of typical tundra climate has been substituted by almost mediterranean one. Especially in the south, on the coast of the Warm Gulf.

The left generator starts working in January and stops for cooling in June. It gives the region a sultry summer and makes it perfect for a beach holiday. During the hottest months - June and July - the average temperature is 30-35 degrees Celsius and the air is close despite the breeze.

By December the generator is completely cooled, but still doesn't start working, which brings a rather nippy winter with fluffy snow flurries and festive atmosphere of the end of the year. The average temperature of winter months is about -20 degrees.

East Coast



The east coast of Crossroad faces cold ocean winds all year round. Besides this fact, the northern part of the east coast doesn't differ much from the rest of the tundra.

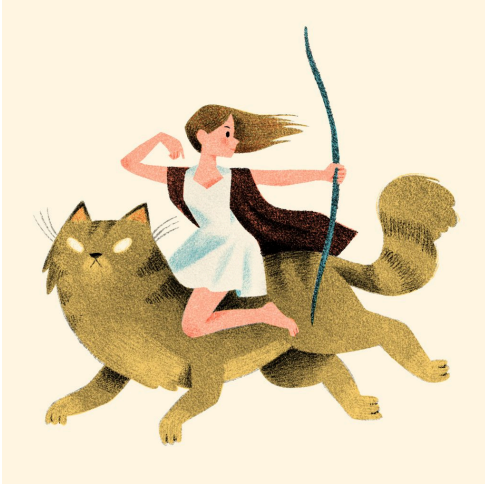
The southern part of the east coast is influenced by the right generator, which is located on the shore of the Whale Gulf. The right generator's working period is from July to December, which means quite mild winters and not-so-hot summers. The difference between seasons is smooth. The average temperature of each month is about +15...+20 degrees. The wind chilly factor makes it feel much worse, though. Nevertheless, the weather is never oppressive here, most days are sunny, and worst case - partly cloudy. The average temperature of the water is +10...+15.

As you may guess, the Whale Gulf resorts are not so popular among sunbathing lovers, but they attract surfers from all over the Square World. The water here may seem cold for surfing, but for real fully-equipped, and well-trained wave hunters low temperature is not an obstacle.

Meteorologists of Crossroad are always aware of tsunami chances, although the last big wave hit the east coast more than 150 years ago. Some skeletons of whales and other sea creatures can still be found quite far from the shore.

Animals

Giant Cats' Herds



The symbol of Crossroad is a giant cat. The giant cats didn't appear on the continent by themselves.

They were naturally selected from typical cats when the cult of Gloomhild started to flourish in the north. Gloomhild's followers from all over the world came to the temples of the goddess with their cats which were typically big and fat.

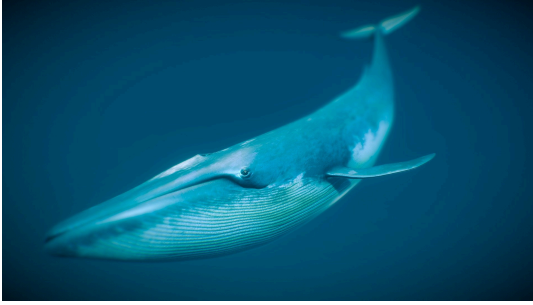
While their owners were praying and serving, cats were dating and giving birth to bigger and bigger kittens, which immediately became popular among indigenous nomadic tribes and gradually substituted reindeer in their herds.



Now herds of giant cats spread throughout the north of Crossroad. Opposite to the typical cats they are not afraid of water and fish in numerous rivers and lakes. Shamans of local tribes managed to tame them enough for catching fish for people. Cat fur came in handy too for making clothes, shoes, carpets, and different household items.

There are some legends about packs of wild nocturnal giant cats which dwell in the Land of Mirrors and go fishing at night. They are even said to be enough organised for hunting in groups for whales of the Wild Ocean. But most people of Crossroad consider such rumours to be just fairy tales.

Whales



Crossroad is the only country where you can see blue whales. It's a marine mammal, reaching a maximum length of 30 metres and weighing up to 200 tonnes. It is the largest animal known to have ever existed in the Square World. Even the giantest of dragons are not comparable.

The blue whale's long and slender body can be of various shades of blue from dark-navy to turquoise dorsally and pure white underneath.

In general, blue whale populations migrate between their summer feeding areas of Frozen ocean and their winter breeding grounds near the Whale Gulf.

They are generally solitary or gather in small groups.

No man of the Square World has ever caught or killed a blue whale, and we don't know what happened to the few who tried.

Ducco

A ducco is a mixture between cows and ducks, artificially bred by biologists of the Northern Biological Institute. It looks like a giant duck, the size of a cow, with hooves, horns, utters, wings, and the ability to lay enormous eggs.

Duccos were an answer for the threat of famine, caused by two reasons. First, the incredible flow of immigrants after the tunnel had started to work. Second, the side effect of generators: for some mysterious reason, the metabolism of people who live next to them becomes very fast, so they have the magic ability to eat a lot and not to put on weight, which may seem wonderful, but give them a permanent feeling of hunger.

However, duccos have become such a typical and natural part of the landscape in the south of the continent, that nowadays you can hardly imagine the green slopes of Mossy Knolls without picturesque herds of these giant birds and their shepherds.

Mythological creatures



Kini is a spirit of the Wild Ocean. He looks like a giant man covered with blue skin. He is athletic and extremely attractive. Legends say that no woman can resist his beauty. He has short white hair, a long blue tongue, and long claws. Opposite to other fabulous sea

creatures he has human legs instead of a fishtail.

Kini is a protector of seamen of all kinds: fishermen, sailors, divers, surfers, marine biologists, and just swimmers.

There are also some stories where he is carrying a big black bird on his right shoulder. Such stories state the day when the bird starts singing will be the last day of the Square World.

Sometimes Kini is said to be a chief of blue whales turning into a human to communicate with people if their activity interferes with whales' life. He can speak ancient Crossrodian but rarely uses this ability.

The legends about Kini became widespread after the last tsunami. A lot of witnesses said they saw him just after the catastrophe. Some blamed him for what happened, some claimed he was trying to save beached sea creatures.

Architecture

Gloomhild's Temples

Gloomhild's temples are the most outstanding architectural landmarks of Crossroad. They are quite small one- or two-storey cabins with walls made of colorful glass or colorful transparent plastic. That allows the northern sun or bright moon to shine you around. Sometimes such temples are covered with a kind of outer curtains.

There is a legend that the doors of Gloomhild's temples open only for people in real despair. But actually, dwellers of the Square World consider depression to be a kind of severe infection and would never enter the temple unless their conditions are critical just as you wouldn't visit a venereological clinic even if its architecture is breathtaking.

Real fans of Gloomhild come in without hesitation. Usually, they bring their cats, which they leave outside, and mattresses, sleeping bags, blankets, or pillows, which they take in. If you don't have your own mattress temple servants will give you a special gloomy blanket. The believers can spend there a lot of days before Gloomhild lets them go away.

Southern cities

As you remember, all cities of Crossroad are located in the south. The capital Stanzia in the west and some smaller university and industrial cities along the coasts of the Warm Sea and the Wild Ocean represent the architectural style the country is famous for.

Huge multi-storey buildings of glass and concrete might seem boring if not for the original geometrical shapes and asymmetrical lines that may remind you of the futuristic style of Tasty Fire. Opposite to dwellers of Square №1, Crossrodians don't like skyscrapers. Their buildings are rarely higher than 9-10 floors.

You may also admit that most buildings have special spaces for growing plants. Typically, these plants are edible, and such architectural feature is not just a tribute to fashion but also a way to solve the problem of food supply.

Company towns

Some company towns are located on the west coast around the oil and gas fields of the continent. People from all over the world come here to earn money and hope to not stay for long. They live in simple, cheap, look-alike blocks of flats with all modern conveniences but nothing more.

Fishermen's villages

Another remarkable type of building on the continent are log cabins of the Land of Mirror. It's a popular place for living on Crossroad if you are not ambitious and ready to work and study 24 hours a day. So, people come here and build cabins that are typical for their homelands - that makes some fishermen's villages look like museums that exhibit wooden architecture from all over the world.

Financial system

Diseases and treatments

#1 Giant Cats Allergy

The specific type of an allergy for cats. Typically, people who have an allergy for regular cats have the same problems with their gigantic version but not necessarily.

Local people, that don't have the allergy, tell stories that this can happen only to people with the dirty souls or with cursed ones.

Which hasn't been approved by scientific research.

Symptoms

Dispite the similarity to the regular cat allergy, symptoms differ.

In most cases, the disease starts after spending some time with giant cats especially if they scratch you. If you have the allergy this scratch starts burning and can not be easily healed.

In a while, patients begin to feel sick.

In severe cases, this harsh condition can be accompanied by psychosis and hallucinations.

Causes

The causes of the disease is being studied actively. We can safely say that this type of the allergy concerns only people with the specific type of the immune system.

Treatment/First Aid

For people who admitted the syptoms of Giant Cats Allergy, first of all we highly recommend stopping any contacts with giant cats and ridding of all clothes made of cat wool.

To visit local shamans

Risk Factors

Overdeveloped imagination

Sleep deprivation

How to prevent

Not to meet giant cats

Healthy food

Sleep enough

Wearing masks

Complications

Stiff neck

#2 Touristic Fever

Symptoms

Ankle pain

Fever

Hot and cold

Constipation

Numbness in hands

Causes

Three types of northern germs, working together

Treatment/First Aid

Risk Factors

How to prevent

Vaccination

Complications

Depression

Fashion

On the one hand, clothes of modern crossrodian don't differ much from the outfit of the rest Square World. On the other hand, the specific history of crossrodian people and welcoming policy for aliens from other countries created their own style that couldn't be confused with fashion of any other place.

History of crossrodian fashion

The first people who came to the territory of modern Crossroad were inhabitants of Pleasant who just lost in the woods or its scientists who left their square to explore new lands. Typically, they were wearing comfortable clothes like jeans, T-shirts and pullovers. As well as they were not very good at sewing and hardly ever had needles, threads or fabric.

Having crossed the Pleasant mountains, they had to wear their current clothes as long as they could.

Since northern rivers were rich in copper and the first explorers washed their jeans and pullovers in them for ages their colours tended to turn into all tints of brownish red - from dark chocolate to crimson.

These rusty colours are still considered to be traditional for crossrodians and you can even see them on the flag of Crossroad.

Tunics Fashion Revolution

The next fashion wave also concerns the history of Pleasant. There were times when psychology had just become extremely popular on Pleasant and its pilgrims set off to spread the psychological word all around the world. One of the sponsors of this campaign was a merchant who sold fabric, so the psychological expedition to the north was equipped not only with wisdom but with cotton and linen as well. Actually, they managed to get much further with a word of wisdom and fabric than they could have with a word of wisdom alone.

Nevertheless, north still experienced the lack of sewers despite the intensive contacts with local tribes who were really skilled in making clothes from leather and knitting.

Borrowed some needles from indigenous people our explorers started to make their own clothes from the pilgrims' fabric. Having tried different techniques of sewing and constructing wear they came to the conclusion that tunics are the option that suits their level of sewing skills best.

Since then for several decades, tunics of different colours, gradually faded brick red, were the most popular outfit for both men and women of all ages.

Weeds' Empire

Crossrodian pioneers were moved by two main motives: curiosity that had led them to the place and a strong desire to survive that appeared immediately after they first faced the local winter. They could hardly be blamed in urge to use the clothes for looking either

elegant or sexy or to express their personality through stylish outfit.

The reason that turned Crossroad into a leader of fashion industry was the scientific curiosity and their natural willingness to experiment.

Two twin children, Mannayg and Ikkis, a son and a daughter of the professor of chemistry and a cat driver, were at the age of 8 when the first portion of fabric was brought by pilgrims. Since their early ages the children were charmed of how threads of different fabric crossed, they tried to repeat these patterns with everything that reminded threads: from stems to ropes and wires, they could hear pilgrims' stories about sewing machines with much more interest than their parables about co-dependent relationships.

When grown up, they studied features of local plants and travelled around neighbourhood continents learning fabric production. Having combined their botanical knowledge, modern chemistry achievements, northern magic and sophisticated looms, designed by engineers of the continent, Mannayg and Ikkis founded the weaving industry of Crossroad, set on fabric made of arctic moss, arctic willow, caribou moss, labrador tea, arctic poppy, cotton grass, lichens and moss. That were later complemented by more south plants, especially after the climate change caused by the Kidneys.

Nowadays, Weed's Empire is a large manufacture with their own labs, plant fields, several factories and a fashion house, known worldwide for its original fabrics. They never stop seeking for the new ideas and go on testing new ways of production.

Walking Frocks

Dazzling White - russian teapot warmer

In spite of the fact

Even so -

10 Shops

The Colour Glass Shop

By Gloomhild's Cult Corporation

Individual Praying Cabin  Indispensable man-sized brand-new cubic transparent plain crossrodian stained-glass cabin for praying Gloomhild. Could be made in different colours. Price: 1 coin	Smartglass  The result of an amazing collaboration: Tina the Engineer's talking glass made of stained glass by masters of our temples. See the world, talk to your friends, spy your enemies through the colourful glass. Price: 3 coins
T-shirts	Little Ball of Food



Comfortable T-shirts for staging at Gloomhild's temples. It's better to have your own before visiting. Otherwise we give your one of our old ones for free.

Price: 0,2 meta coins



Gloomhild's temples are visited by a lot of people who can stay there for long. Nevertheless, the religious service doesn't provide you any food, and no cafes or restaurants are allowed nearby either.

The only meal prayers could have here is a kind of high protein snacks in a shape of balls.

They have different tastes: sweet, savoury, non-allergic, vegetarian, etc.

As a temple's visitor you can get them for free or you can buy the balls in our gift shop if you are not desperate enough.

The recipes of these balls is not a secret every family on Crossroad have their own favourite way of cooking it.

Price: 0,1 meta coins

Cat boxes



Secondpaw boxes for cats.
Recycling project of Gloomhild's Cult Corporation.

We collect useless boxes and our masters turn them into wonderful houses for cats.

We use them for cats of our temples' guests and sell in our gift shops.
All boxes are blessed by the goddess.

All money are spent on the maintenance of the temple and the needs of the suffering

Price: 0,2 meta coins for the set of 4

Charm Glasses



Colorful glasses made of the walls of Gloomhild's temples.

Wherever you go take the piece of the north with you.

Wide range of colours.

Price: 0,5 meta coins

11 Food

12 Cities

13 Villages

Feeblevill

Field
Heaps of the stuff
Whom
A pile of rotten old windows
To take real skill to grow
Until

14 Transport

Tunnels

At the very beginning, the Square World had a problem with its transport system. It might have taken years to sail from the north-western continent to the south-eastern.

But then an engineer from Crossroad came up with an idea of a partly magical way of traveling. Using recent scientific discoveries and sophisticated spells Tina Halpaak managed to create sustainable tunnels between different squares which can transfer you a thousand kilometers away in no time.

People of all countries understood nothing about the idea but supported it completely.

When Tina the Engineer finished the project it appeared that wherever you go using these tunnels you should use the square №3 as a transit station. And you never know how much time you need to spend there between the flights.

Nobody finds it comfortable. But it makes square №3 the most visited place in the world despite the severe climate.

Since Tina is still the most clever person in the Square World, nobody can understand if it happened because of a miscalculation or if it was a tricky plan of Crossroad authorities to lure people to this unpopular place.

The reason for this engineering solution may also be explained by the need for huge generators.

Building the tunnels and the whole engineering support construction required a permanent source of magic power. For this purpose Engineer and her team created two big generators which work in shifts. These generators produce so much heat that they need to be cooled all the time. So the final constructions were located inside the permafrost layers of the ground.

The generators were placed quite far from one another in order to reduce their melting power. While one in the east is working and getting hotter and hotter, another one in the west is resting and getting cooler and cooler. They were located so symmetrically that people started to call them 'Kidneys' straight away.

I suppose, there is no need to mention that the work of these generators has strongly affected the climate of Crossroad and provoked a mixed reaction from its inhabitants, scientists, ecologists, politicians, and indigenous population.

Despite all the difficulties of moving to such a harsh place, a lot of people from all over the world were happy to leave their homelands and settle on Crossroad. Not-so-pleasant people from Pleasant country, talented artists who don't appreciate the idea of being kidnapped, Dead Ice Cream dwellers, and burnout event managers from Triangle Festivals - were welcomed and tried to find their fortune in this severe land.

Nowadays, magic tunnels connect all continents.

Vehicles
on earth-orbiting satellite
Wings
a jet airliner
less comfortable than

How does the station look?
What documents do you need to have?
How much does it cost?
How does the process of transportation feel like?
Accidents?

How does the station look?
Multi Storey Building with different apartments, to get into you may have a key, or a code, or a card.

To get into the building you need a glass cross coin equals approximately 100 meta coins which you should put into a turnstile.

Stalls selling such coins you may find in any corner of the world without any advertising.

A sprawl on the floor, lying half on your stomach and half on your side, knees bent and with your feet in the air, one hand propping up your chin.

B stand on tiptoe, hands behind your back, chest out, chin up, shoulders back, stomach in.

C perch on the arm of the settee, your legs dangling over the side, with the cat curled up on your lap

D crouching, leaning back against the wall, arms folded and swaying from side to side as the play moved from end to end.

E standing, feet apart, hands in pockets, stooping a bit and twisting my neck to see the screen.

F kneeling with my head bowed, hands on hips, waiting for the stupid match to finish.

G sitting forward with hunched shoulders and arched back, my elbows resting on my thighs and my hands clasped in front of me.

H sitting astride a chair, arms outstretched, rocking to and fro. I reclining on the settee, legs crossed, head back, fast asleep.

After a while, you may leave the building and find yourself on another continent

Magical world: one station next to the mountains (at north) and second next to the sea (at south)
Triangle: on the edge of the city
Pleasant next to the mountains

15 Roads and signs

Notices and Warnings

Due to the highly-developed intuition, local people don't typically need special notices and warnings. They could guess that the slope is too steep or which way you should choose to open the door: pulling or pushing.

For regulating their lives, they often use signs that were created artificially but look like something that was made by nature.

Newcomers brought the culture of using words and images for public warnings that found proponents and opponents.

Here you may find some examples of warnings and notices of both kinds, which may seem unclear if you have never been to Crossroad.

Unprotected Mirrors  Since Tina Haalpaak created her shrewd mirrors, it became possible to watch what's going on in any corner of SW if only there is a mirror or any other reflecting surface. So, just after creating the shrewd mirrors, she had to create the way to protect reflecting surfaces from spying. Of course, it's difficult to provide each pond of SW with such protection, so a lot of places on Crossroad has a sign of a mirror or a crossed mirror. First one – for the places with unprotected reflecting surfaces. Second one – for places with protected mirrors.	Unlucky Sign  These is a sign that fishermen of the Land of Mirrors leave each other to show 'No fish here'
Whales  This is a natural kind of signs. Every time when whales with their newborn cubs come too close to the shore, a transparent wall appears between the sea and the land. The wall doesn't allow fishermen's ships and boats to go to the sea. We call it 'wall' but actually it looks like waves just stop themselves from crushing on the beach,	Storm Warning  One more natural kind of signs. In the north, bark of the trees becomes this colour several hours before the storm.

and you can look through them like through the glass walls of a big aquarium.	
Food	No Warnings
 Once upon a time on Crossroad, there were no typical cafés and restaurants, you might knock at any door and ask if they had any food and how much did it cost. Typically, each family was happy to share their food and serve it in a special 'guest place'. That way of eating isn't very common in SW so nowadays you may often see this special food sign on the doors of houses and flats.	 With new people coming to the continent, a lot of new notices and warnings have come. To protect their places from extra notices pollution, local dwellers use this warning. Quite ironic, though.
Educational System	
There is no public compulsory educational system on the continent. All children are brought up traditionally. Families of the continent typically have their own business, and they don't stop working even if they have small children. They bring their to the workplace and children start their careers in family business straight away from the births. They don't need any special education. All knowledge they get through practice. Of course, for some professions you need to read books for answers and development, but they read these books only when they got such a problem or just because they are interested in this topic. The disadvantage of this system is that it is not so easy to become a professional in a field your family doesn't belong to. Anyway, at the age of 12-16 a teenager is supposed to find a job, so-called apprenticeship, outside the family, mostly as a step for gaining self-sufficiency. But also to find their true path in life. Most of the children come back to the family business in 2-3 years, enriched with new knowledge and experience. Teenagers use this opportunity to move to different part of Crossroad. Typically, this teenagers' job is not very well-paid and families have to support their children financially. Nevertheless, the day when you manage to find your first job is celebrated as a first day of your adult life, and families arrange a great party.	

Universities

17 Character

Hero: Obo



Obo is a small boy from a nomadic tribe of the Wild North. The name of his tribe is Balyksyttar, which means 'fishermen'.

His father, Ro, is a fisherman and a cat herder. Once he met a beautiful girl from a distant country - Anna, who came to the North for praying in Gloomhild's temples. They fell in love and got married a couple of months later.

Obo was born on a clear December night when stars were shining brightly but nobody paid attention because the emerald and scarlet flashes of northern lights covered the sky.

An only child he got all love from his parents. His mom, Anna, used to organize birthdays and other events for children in Triangle Festival, so she brought new games and stories that were not known to Balyksyttar people.

Like other children of the tribe, Obo has helped his mom and dad since he was a baby: catching fish, herding cats, and making shoes and clothes from their wool. Muscular, with bulging biceps, thick hair, and swarthy skin Obo could be a typical child of the North if not for his freckles which he takes after his mom, and his height which is only 1 meter.

On his second birthday, his uncle gave him a kitty that he accidentally found in the wood while walking to the party. It was an extreme case because local people never leave their cats. Obo fell in love with the kitty immediately and called her Kuoska. She has been his friend and charger for many years. Together they have done a lot of great things you can read about in the epic poem "Ninety-Seven Labours of Obo and his cat", one of the most popular books of the Square World.

Daily Routines

All Obo's childhood has the same daily routines. He got up at 8 o'clock in the morning with their cat. Together they go to the kitchen and drink one glass of milk for two. Then they go play hide and seek or catch-up in the yard. When the sun is starting to get hotter, Obo and Kuoska go to the beach. Obo swims and his cat guards his things. Kuoska don't like to swim, but it is always worried about their swimming partner. When Obo returns Kuoska breathes a sigh of relief. Next adventures await! But our heroes get hungry and they go home to refresh themselves. After a good lunch they find out about a new event or advent which serves a plot for the next epic poem. And getting out of a new scrape and with a sense of accomplishment Obo and his cat return home, have dinner with family and go to sleep.

House

Style

Villain: Oyuun, the senior shaman of the Gloomhild's cult



Oyuun - the head of the chain of the Gloomhild's monasteries. He is not a real villain, just sometimes he takes his duty to serve the goddess's interests and keep her happy too close to his heart.

Like in the story when he kidnapped her favorite giant kitty and almost destroyed half of Crossroad.

Oyuun believes that his mission is much more important than such petty little things as human goodness or people's lives.

All in all, he is a typical black magician: powerful and deceitful.

From time to time he changes his shaman costume into the typical clothes of a city dweller and visits Stanzia. Meeting in the street he doesn't draw much attention: a tiny old man who has no more fat than on chips with withered biceps and black greasy hair which isn't going grey despite his venerable age.

Daily Routines

House

Style

Donor: Tina Halpaak, the Engineer



Tina, a creator of the Tunnel system, was born in a family of a shaman's daughter from the Wild North and an engineer from the town of explorers set by people who had run away from Pleasant to Crossroad in the previous century.

Being totally involved in her job she had never looked like a person interested in marriage until she met Stuolb Phon, an engineer who worked on the Tunnel project from the Udea side.

They looked so alike that people often considered them brother and sister: all skin and bones, tall like lamp posts, with the same strict and willful expression in the piercing eyes on their fine-featured faces. They gave birth to a quad - four skinny, extremely tall children.

Most of the time Tina and Stuolb lived in Stanzia and worked for the North Polytechnical University. Some years later, after the death of her husband under unclear circumstances during his trip to Udea, left the post of head of the university and moved to her daughter's place in the Land of Lakes. Here she is working on the project of a communication system that will allow people to speak to each other through mirrors or through any other kind of reflecting surface.

Daily Routines

House

Style

Victim: Kuoska



Kuoska is a giant cat from the North and one of the most affectionate and beautiful creatures of the Square World with her twinkling blue eyes and soft silver fur. She belongs to Obo and accompanies him in all his adventures. She is also the favourite cat of Gloomhild and all sadness and despair leave the world when they spend time together.

Even when she grew up Kuoska remained the same childish and playful kitty. Being easy-going and friendly most of the time she can be quite stubborn when it comes to inequities or inequalities.

Kuoska cannot speak any human language but she is really well at making her understood by cattish, expressive eyes and body.

As for her private life, every March she finds a new partner and gives birth to a few charming kitties.

Daily Routines

House

Style

Fairy Tales

18 The Cat and the Schedule

Song 0
Monster Island

Song 1
Gloomhild meets Kuoska. April-May

Song 2
The world balance is violated. Oyuun hires Obo. Obo kidnaps Kuoska and says to the shaman that she is killed. The world balance is restored.

May, Obo is 17

Song 3
June, July, Obo is 17
Gloomhild is in grief. Obo and Kuoska start their heroic deeds. Oyuun understands he is betrayed. Kuoska and Obo run away to the Land of Mirrors. Tina helps them to escape with

her children gives a magic mirror, her new invention.

Song 5

October, Obo is 17

Adventure of Kuoska in Triangle Fest.

Song 6

October, Obo is 17

Oyuun and Obo discuss the problem of the World Balance. Obo sets off to Black Square to go deep into the hole to talk to Star Elephants. (Devil went round the world) Stars Elephants give him a schedule for Gloomhild. Obo comes back to the surface. His appearance has changed. He sends a foggyowl with elephant's paper to Oyuun and ask him to get Kuoska back.

Song 7

Obo was quietly spending his days in the Red Cavity waiting for Devil to return. Days followed after days sometimes he suspected that Devil just tricked him and would never come back. It did not upset him much. He missed his parents, Kuoska and Crossroad but they felt so far away like it happened not to him but too small open, and stubborn Obo, a simple boy from a nomadic tribe. He got used to his role of Devil, welcoming bad people of the continent, providing them with a job, and listening to their stories.

He started to look more and more like Devil: hanging for so long time on the rope in the space made him taller, lacking appetite - thinner. There were no hairdressers in hell so his hair became long and he grew quite an impressive beard. His freckles had almost vanished from his tanned reddish skin and the square scar on his left thigh was almost healed. The right eye which caught the saliva of the first elephant became blue. And he might swear that he could feel two solid bumps on the left and right sides of his head where the saliva (or should we call it snots?) of the second elephant got.

He did not care much about leaving hell but wasn't surprised when Devil came back.

- Wasap! - said Devil.
- Wasap! - said Obo, who could barely remember his own name, - Have you been traveling all over the world?
- No, but I visited Udea and fell in love there.
- How was it like to be in love? - asked Obo.
- That sucked, - replied Devil.
- I need to go now, - said Obo.
- Goodbye then, - agreed Devil.

And they parted friends.

On the surface, it appeared to be the late autumn. Even on Black Square, it was quite cold for bare naked people but the temperature does not matter much if you are a half-devil.

Obo looked around, took a deep breath, and set off straight to the north. Through the mountains and valleys of Black Square went he, threatening local people with his scary appearance, staying at Malevich's house and posing a little bit for his red men picture and borrowing pants and a T-shirt from his never-appeared collection of clothes.

Through the mountains and valleys of Pleasant went he, traveling with Ninjo, sleeping in its tent, celebrating his birthday together and getting a sleeping bag as a present, and, finally, saw Obo the familiar outlines of Stanzia - the north capital from where so many days ago he and Kuoska left Crossroad.

Step by step, literally, Obo was starting to remember his human habits: how was it like to be hungry, how was it like to want to sleep, how was it like to feel cold and hot.

And when he came closer to Stanzia he realized: he had changed too much, no one would recognize Obo in him and for the very first time from the moment he got into the cavity he felt a sudden and sharp move inside his chest. The word 'sadness' appeared in his mind. That was how Gloomhild, the goddess of the north, welcomed him. Then the word 'sadness' changed into 'Tina'. The only friend he had some hope to explain the situation. He saw the Stanzia's outline off and moved to the northwest.

January in the tundra turned less friendly than autumn in the middle of the continent even for a half-devil. More and more often Obo had to stay for a sleepover in barns of rare north farms having rest among duccos and stealing their eggs for eating. Now he found it easier to set fire than it was when he was a boy.

It took him some time to find Tina's house in the Land of Mirrors among dozens of the tiniest fishermen's villages scattered all around lakes. Taking into account that he visited her only once in summer and the house wasn't covered with snow to the roof.

In the fairy darkness of the winter evening, Tina's log cabin looked like a toy, like the coziest thing you had ever seen, pulling the soft clouds of smoke into the sky, twinkling with snowflakes under the glowing moon, tingling with laughing of the family gathered at the dinner table behind yellow windows.

Obo pushed the gate and knocked timidly on the door hoping he wouldn't scare the family to death. Trotting of little feet sounded behind it.

- Granny, granny! - exclaimed two look-alike girls excitedly, - It's the Spirit of the North here!
- Did you come to kill us? - asked the first girl suspiciously.
- Or to give us a present? - demanded the second one.
- Girls, what's going on? Is it my post finally? - Tina appeared at the door and looked at Obo, - Girls, go back to your dinner. Quick!
- Hi, Tina, - said Obo, watching like the girls had to move reluctantly towards the kitchen, looking back and whispering something to each other, - It's me. Obo. You helped my cat and me some months ago.
- Hi, Obo, you've grown up a lot...

Tina believed him immediately. Next couple of hours he was surrounded by all care of her family: heating in banja, soaking in the bath, having his hair cut by Sonia, Tina's daughter, dressing up in the clothes of Sonia's husband, being fed up with all gems of their food cellars.

Then looking more like a boy in his late teens than Devil or the Spirit of the North he shared his story and asked for help and advice.

And two little girls who were supposed to sleep already but sneaked instead secretly to the kitchen door were listening to him and couldn't wait to tell their friends the true story of the north spirit who turned into a prince in their house.

Obo spent in Tina's house a couple of weeks. They tried to restore the story of Kuoska watching records made by Tina's mirror. But it didn't give them any clue. Now Obo could remember the story with Oyuun and with Tina they got a plan. They decided to visit an annual traditional holiday of his tribe - the Middle of the Winter. That day they considered the cold northwest wind to stop blowing and the first cold part of the winter changed into the second warm one.

The holiday was popular all around Crossroad, so people from different corners of the country came to watch and participate in the feast no one would pay attention to foreigners and Obo could find a chance to understand how to perform to his family, to meet Oyuun, to get news about Kuoska. Tina volunteered to accompany him.

The feast was hustling and bustling when Tina and Obo arrived without being noticed. People were wandering around the market full of traditional souvenirs from the north: frozen and smoked fish, snacks and stained glass from Gloomhild's temples, woolen socks, and mittens. Big city children were trying to ride giant cats and tobogganing. Traditional music was playing while the old and young were dancing.

Tina presented her new inventions - tiny talking mirrors and provoked a lot of interest. The first samples were already sold in the capital a few weeks ago but here you may see more options for different materials, shapes, and colors.

Obo longed for meeting his parents and was afraid of this moment. Suddenly, the drawling sound of the shaman's tube lets know to everybody it's time to gather at the big fireplace to

listen to the shaman's songs devoted to the main events of the year.

This year it was tremendously solemn since Gloomhild and Oyuun paid the visit to the feast.

Gloomhild got off her silver cat whom Obo recognized as Kuoska. She had grown and her silver fur became thicker and longer. Kuoska wasn't a kitten anymore but the golden locket was still on her neck. The Goddess raised her hand lazily and there was a silence. Oyuun came in front of the people and started the story with his well-modulated voice of a professional shaman.

The story made Obo surprised and angry. And while he was listening to it the solid bumps on his grew bigger, his hair became longer and the square scar on his thigh started to burn.

The shaman started:

- One day a young boy Obo, haunted by evil spirits, fell in love with the favorite kitten of our adorable Gloomhild and kidnapped her, and dark times began...

Obo clenched his fists.

- I followed him days and nights and finally killed him in an unequal battle on the shore but Kuoska was already dead, she died of longing for her mistress.

Obo moved forward and his piercing right eye made flames of the fire crackle and twinkle blue.

- And I went into the cavity in the center of the world and came to the Star Elephants
-
-

and they gave me the paper of the Sacred Schedule. The paper on how to live in balance told me how to bring Kuoska back to life. And Kuoska came back to her mistress and we knew the time for joy and the time for sadness, the time for moving and the time for having rest...

- You are a liar, - Obo sounded calm and firm but looked threatening, he stepped forward and stood beside Oyuun. - What were these laws, that the elephants gave you, written on?
- I don't know. It's special elephants' paper.
- No. My name is Obo. And it's my skin. Because it's me not you were hanging upside down trying to talk to elephants and had nothing to write on besides my own skin.
- It's nonsense! - Oyuun shrieked.

Gloomhild covered her ears, looked at Oyuun angrily, and turned to Obo:

- Who are you? I remember the boy who stole my cat you don't look like him. You remind me Devil of the Red Cavity, but you are not him either.
- His name is Obo, my lady, - Tina came forward, - I'm Tina the Engineer you know me because in times of despair I used to talk a lot to you. This boy kidnapped your cat but he saved her life and visited the elephants for all of us.
- He doesn't look like Obo! How could you know?
- We can check it. When Obo and Kuoska came to me I gave him the first sample of my new invention - a talking mirror. Have you tried to open the golden locket on Kuoska's neck?
- I tried but failed. I was sure it is a fake and it couldn't be opened.
- It could be opened only by its owner, so if it is Obo he should open it.

Obo came to Kuoska and pressed his finger to the smooth surface of the locket and it opened easily. The crowd sighed.

Tina took the locket, found the records of Oyuun, pursuing Obo and Kuoska, and projected the videos to the snow. And Gloomhild and the audience could see how hard the shaman was trying to kill the silver cat and the boy.

Everybody seemed to forget about Oyuun, he was standing still and soundlessly whispering something. When the records had ended and all eyes were on him he had already become almost transparent and vanished in the air mixing himself with the smoke of the fire. Only the square piece of Obo's skin was left on the snow.

- Obo! Obo! - Obo's mom and dad came through the crowd and hugged their son tightly.

Obo started crying as if he were a little boy. He cried so hard that his head bumps disappeared completely and forever. But he remained a tall man with eyes of different colors till the end of his life.

The crowd was starting to get bored and slowly go back to the stalls with food and souvenirs. Musicians started to play. Tina's sales of her new device skyrocketed.

Gloomhild picked the schedule up from the snow to check if tomorrow was a day for playing with Kuoska or for visiting depressive people.

19

Sport events of Crossroad Continent

The Great Balls Game

This game is very popular all over the square world
But its homeland is right here - on the continent of crossroads

Therefore, the most important bowls championship is held here every year.

The rules of the game are very simple. The playing field is a maze of the crossroads. Sometimes these are roads, sometimes - tunnels.

Each team can have up to 3 member.

3 teams start at the same time. The exits from which the participants will begin are determined by lot.

Each team has 7 balls of different weights and different sizes.
The winner is the team that overcomes the maze faster than the rest and retains at least one ball.

The championship lasts 4 days.
A lot of guests come to this event from all over the world.

Mazes are built each time in a new place. Special guest houses are being built around the Mazes.. It is better to buy a ticket to the championship in advance. They are in great demand.

The first day is the opening day of the championship. The game itself is not played on this day.

On this day, a colorful performance takes place for all guests of the championship - the opening of the game. The organizers of the game are working on the show for a whole year.

On the 4th day the final game takes place. After which all the guests fly in the air balloons in honor of the great balls game