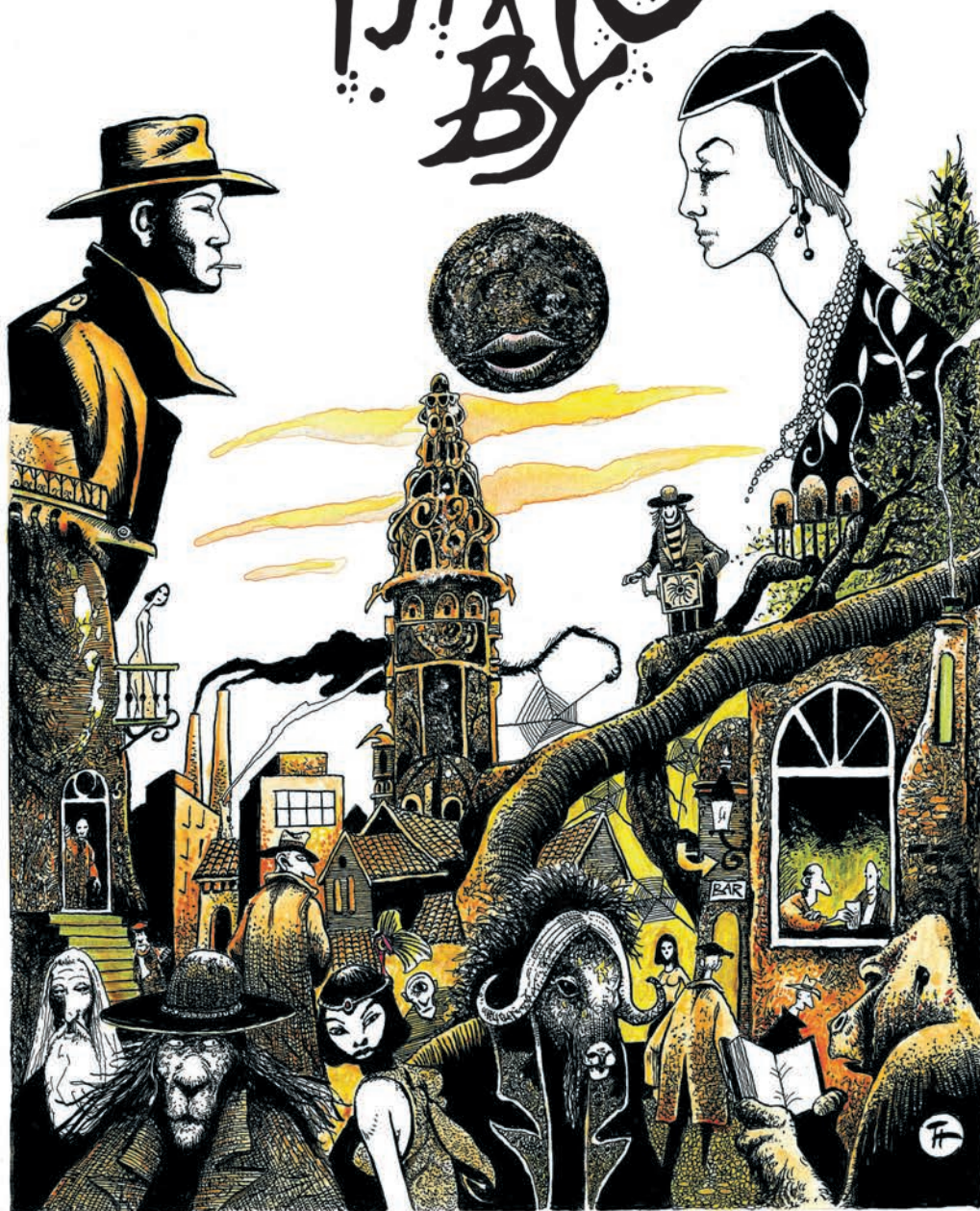


Ole Peder Giæver & Martin Bull Gudmundsen

# TRAS BY




*Ole Peder Giæver &  
Martin Bull Gudmundsen*

# IRAS BY

A Surreal Roleplaying Game





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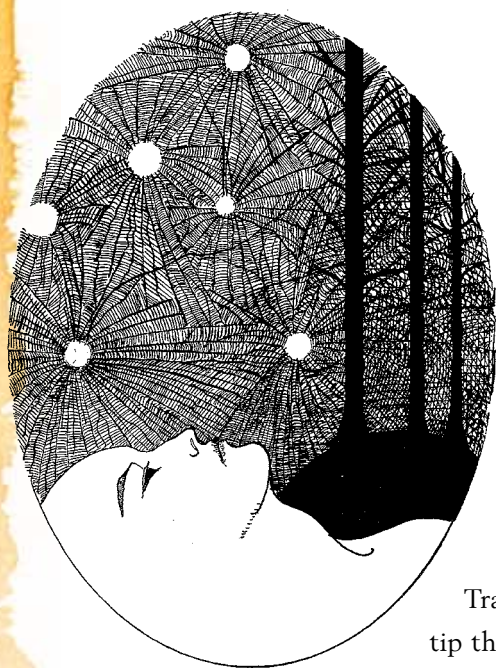
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# INTRODUCTION

*Sleep, sleep, little man  
Life is all a dream  
On dark waters, burning bright,  
Sail towards the land of night...  
Everyone's alone.  
— André Bjerke*

Trams rumble in the streets, men politely tip their hats when they see someone they know. Horses trot on paved alleys, but the automobile is about to make its presence known. Smoke climbs from the factory chimneys, paperboys sell the Morning Post. In the darkness of the cinematographer, silent movies flicker in black and white. Electricity is making its appearance in people's homes, but still, many live without. Along the roads at night, gas lamps are burning bright. There is no television, although some people have purchased, or built, a crystal radio.

But right beneath this everyday atmosphere, there is another side to the city. In the middle of town, the Moon Tower looms. In a park in the most refined neighborhood, there is a society consisting of talking apes. Downtown you'll find, or not, a street which only exists on Fridays. In **Itras By** you will meet cannibals and crazed scientists, giant spiders and brave adventurers. A network of chambers lies deep underground, collapsed temples and sunken buildings, populated by ghastly monsters.

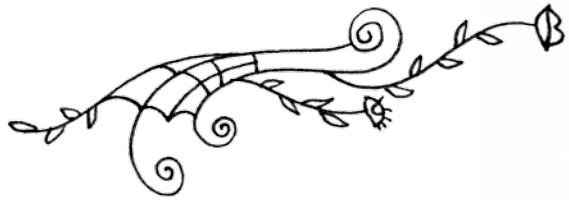
This book is the beginning of a journey away from reality as you perceive it with your everyday senses. Along for the ride are three or

four good friends, printouts of the chance and fate cards, and a room with dimmed lights. The road goes not outwards, but inwards. The landscape is that of the imagination, dreams and ideas, draped in recognizable garments – the big city.

The means are elements from surrealism; an art movement from the 20's which tries to portray the life of the subconscious. The method is roleplaying, a game where a group of people together create and partake in a story. The end is to free the thoughts from their usual patterns. The intention behind the game is to liberate the impulsiveness and creative power of the players, maybe even rendering them a slight bit wiser.

Over the next pages we will provide you with two things. First we will show you a place in which the unreal lurks just beyond the next street corner. We have also wandered these streets, but the city we present to you is not *ours*, it's not *our* journey. Therefore we will also give you a method for roleplaying, which you'll use to make the city come alive. This is where the book ends. Now you and your friends are the main characters.

Now you're playing **Itras By**.



## Lexicon

---

**Sentient Being:** All intelligent creatures. They may be talking apes, humans, grimasques and more.

**Gamemaster:** Creates the seeds of adventures, runs the events of the city and plays all characters which are not run by the players.

**Character:** The main characters in the game. Each player usually controls one character.

**Adventure:** A series of exciting events, scenes and challenges. The gamemaster creates the basic concepts for these, but the adventure only comes to life in the interaction between him and the players. An adventure can last for several episodes.

**Scene:** A short part of the adventure. Usually takes place in one specific setting or in a limited period of time. We use the word more or less as it's used with regards to movies and books.

**Episode:** One session of play. Usually lasts between three to six hours.

**Campaign:** A series of several episodes where the players control the same characters, a bit like in a TV series or a comic book with several issues.

**Supporting Characters:** All the creatures in the game which are not characters. Usually controlled by the gamemaster, but may also be under player control.

## The 20's and surrealism

---

If you were to arrive in Itras By (Norwegian for Itra's City), the place would remind you of a city in Europe in the interwar years. The noir city, the city of the 20's and 30's. Not necessarily the way it was, but the way our time remembers it; through books, comics and not at least movies. Movies like *The City of Lost Children* and *Delicatessen*, H.P. Lovecraft's horror novels as well as Agatha Christie's books are good examples.


You would find a spirit of the times characterized by modernity, belief in the future and optimism. The new century has come around, and the doomsday prophecies failed to come true. Science has created wonders which would have been perceived as magic a few hundred years ago: the radio, flying machines, household appliances and new medication. Art and architecture aestheticize the sterility of science, with sharp lines and firm glances. At the same time jazz and blues music are brimming with joie de vivre and melancholy.

Today, we view this epoch with different eyes. The modernity of yore is old fashioned to us. Radios are no longer impressive. Flying machines have become environmental problems. And this isn't all that shatters the illusion. The "roaring twenties" gave way to the depression of the thirties. The flowering economy has collapsed, and unemployment is widespread. Working class families live from day to day, from one tiny apartment they're evicted from to the next. One drinks in the dives and gambles in the joints. The downtrodden seek comfort in dreams of a different future. The alcoholic, lonely private detective has at least as much of a place in our vision of the thirties as the unwed flapper with the cigarette holder, in the idea of the twenties.

You will meet them both in *Itras By*, and when you and your friends visit the city, you should keep both images in mind: The old-fashioned modernity and the somber darkness. Use the emotions of the characters, let them be naïve or disillusioned, or both. Use the surroundings, and add the clichés and images you have; the cigarette holder, fur coats, furniture of the time, nice suits and short hair.

Another key to understanding *Itras By* is the term "surrealism". Surrealism is a school of art originating in our period. The basic idea is that the subconscious contains knowledge about a reality behind that which we can perceive. The surrealists wanted to awake us to this reality by utilizing elements from madness and dreams. By using free whims without demands for logic, they created distortions of reality, placed things where they didn't belong. They created something incomprehensible, yet strangely compelling; they lifted the veil of reality a fraction of an inch.

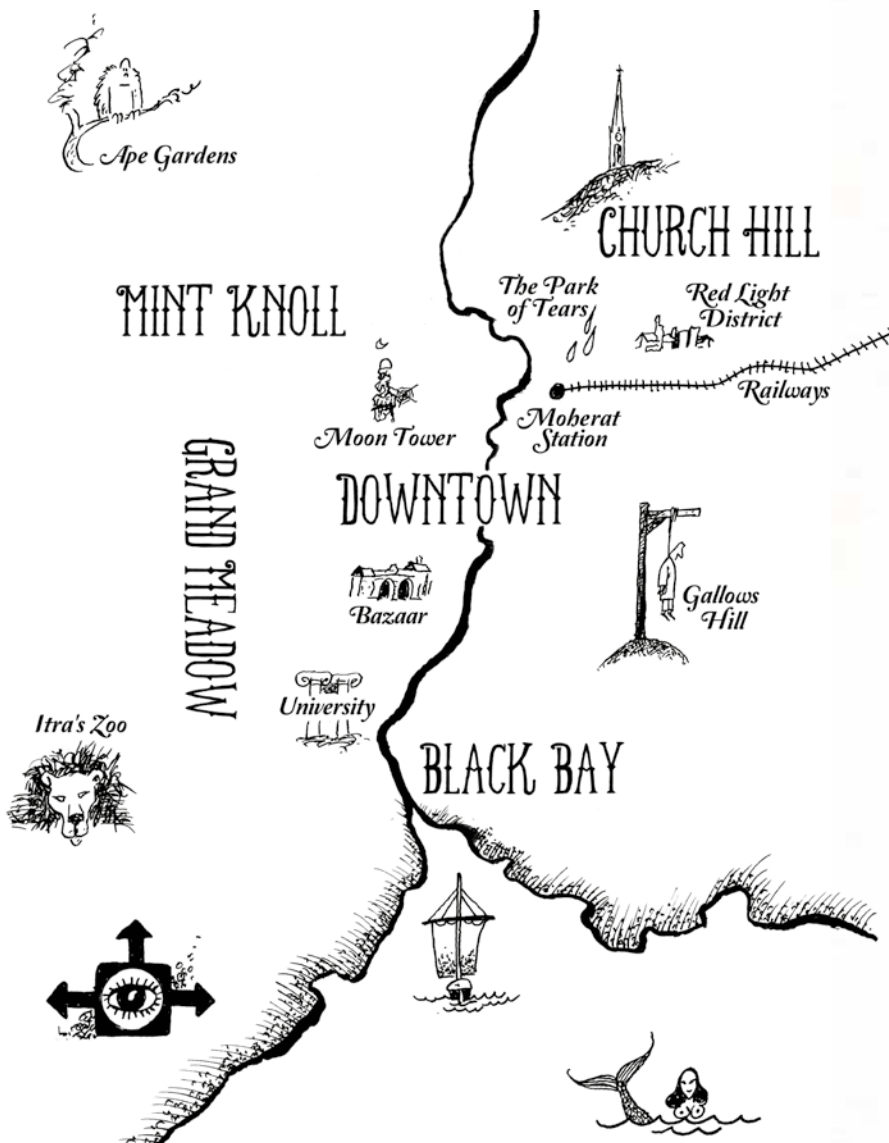




Both images of dreams and madness may gain physical shape in **Itras By**, but within its limits there is more of the dream, less madness. The surreal and the unreal is somewhat subdued. Monsters of nightmare popping out of nowhere, gorgeous women whose name you intuitively know, little shacks containing palace gardens on the inside, time starting to run backwards; all of these are rare. The monsters prefer to lurk behind the next street corner (and the one after that, when you reach the first one), the shack with the palace garden might have been turned into an attraction, and time is less reliable than the postman, but much more trustworthy than the fishmonger down at the market.

For the city's inhabitants, these little drips of unreality are perceived as natural. The man with the head of a musk ox is a nice, but somewhat clumsy character. But he's also a rarity. He's noticed and sometimes laughed at behind his back. Choose which unrealities are scary to your character in particular, which ones are odd, and which are completely normal. Just like some dreams are surprising, some are common and a few are nightmares.

Let reality be the basis when you're telling stories in **Itras By**. The hotel has solid walls. Humans are flesh and blood. Their thoughts, feelings, dreams and motives are mostly comprehensible. Describe them using the images you have from the 20's and 30's. Use your fancy and surrealism as spice, and save the most colorful effects. Madness is a part of the game, but it's a close, mumbling madness. Not screaming hysteria at all times.



## The City Districts

**Church Hill:** The home of artists, free spirits and other strange people. The Hill is covered in a perpetual, mysterious fog, but through the fog one will glimpse the warm lights of the Thousand Taverns.

**Black Bay:** Here you'll find workers, poor people, thieves, whores and outcasts. Black Bay is a grey blanket of worn apartment buildings, gloomy factories, slimy concrete wharfs and muddy canals.

**Mint Knoll:** The estates of the well-to-do, and fashionable blocks of apartments. The import nobility, business people and the richest men and women of the city reside here.

**Downtown:** Businesses, restaurants and boutiques. Right in the middle of the city stands the Moon Tower, the axis of reality. The tower is surrounded by tall, winding office buildings with tower rooms and bay windows.

**Grand Meadow:** Here the middle class members strut with their hats and umbrellas on streets of cobbled stones, between charming wooden houses and parks.







PART ONE  
ITRAS BY





# ITRAS BY

---

This book is the beginning of a work of living fiction, where all participants are co-creators. Be kind to yourself while reading the description of the city. Please skip back and forth, and read the parts you find most exciting at first. You don't have to read it all. The material is like a tool box, with many parts for you to utilize in your own games. It might be a good idea to make a note of thoughts you get while reading. Seize what you fall for, and make it your own. Twist and turn the ideas you're not quite satisfied with, dispose of the ones you dislike. Create your own districts, draw your own streets, and give life to your dreams. **Itras By** belongs to you.



*The light of your eyes is like  
the dust of angel wings, I said. —  
What utter nonsense, she replied.*

# CHURCH HILL

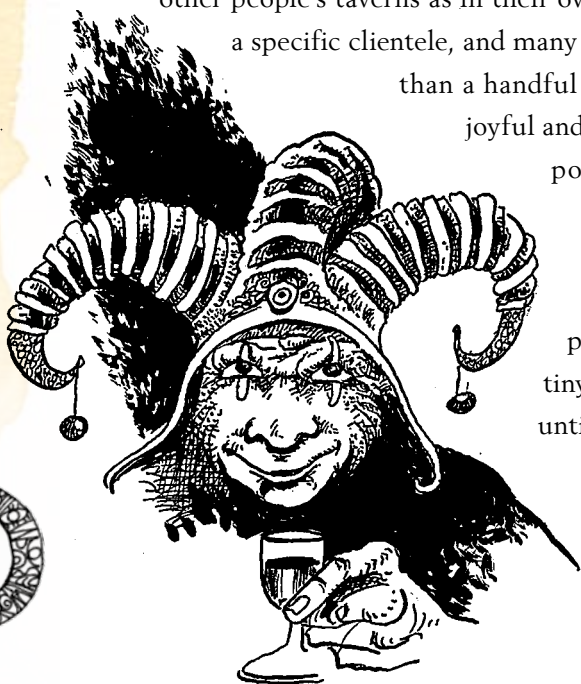
In the evening a thousand warm lights wink brightly, when the taverns of Church Hill open their doors. From afar the Hill appears as a ridge covered in romantic fog. The lights prevail through the fog, giving the hill an enigmatic, inviting character. If you look up, you'll see a lonely church spire which always seem to point straight at the Moon. Coming closer, you can smell the weak scent of tobacco and hyacinth. The whole hill is covered with stairs and small paths, and people stumble from one establishment to the next.

Church Hill holds a special attraction for artists and eccentrics, and most of the bohemians who live here consider themselves true individualists. On the hill you'll find actors, poets, jesters, bon vivants, drunks, holy women, jugglers, bird tamers, florists and inn keepers in a more or less harmonious co-existence.

## *The Thousand Taverns* \_\_\_\_\_

The small establishments which dot the hillsides are a special feature of Church Hill. The opening hours are often difficult to understand, and many of the owners spend just as much time in other people's taverns as in their own. Each tavern tends to have a specific clientele, and many places have room for no more than a handful of guests. The atmosphere is joyful and intimate. These are excellent

points of departure for those who wish to explore the hill, or connect with the people who live here. There is whispering in the corners, singing in tiny gardens and dancing on tables until the break of dawn.



## *The Churchillians*

---

**T**he Churchillians are a staple of life at Church Hill. They are rotund little men dressed in bowler hats, black suits and bowties, carrying canes and continuously puffing cigars. The viscous cigar smoke creates the mist which covers the hill. The Churchillians primary function is the enjoyment of life. Subsequently they're anarchists trying to sabotage the city's authorities with various odd activities. On Church Hill they've found a kind of free haven, where The Grey Guard, the city's police force, leaves them in peace (excepting the occasional race up Neckbreaker Stairs).

On especially cold nights, a thin layer of frost forms on the firmament itself. It appears almost like a vague fog, but if you climb up and touch it you'll feel an ice cold, rough layer peeling off in flakes. It is from these flakes the Churchillians roll their cigars.

An alchemic analysis of the smoke from the cigars will show that they contain a substance which liberates the mind of everyone who breathes it from its regular norms and patterns. This substance is called stellarin, and probably affects life in the district to a certain extent.

## *The Church*

---

**T**he wind makes complaining noises as it passes through the abandoned, gothic church on top of the hill. Its slender steeple seems to always point at the Moon. The church must have been quite elegant once upon a time, with its slim columns and pointed arcs. Today it gives off a gloomy and cold impression. Once a year, you'll hear the bronze bell of the tower ring, even though it disappeared at the same time as Itra did.

This is The Night of the Dead, 13th of October, when popular belief claims that the evil dead rise from their graves and hold a ball on top of Church Hill. According to the locals, the dead drag themselves through the streets of the hill, hunting innocent victims. Even though



"Your city, cut and paste, wash and iron, make it your own. Sure, sure!"

We talk about this chapter merely being a foundation, that you should use it as you wish and ditch the parts you don't like. But do we mean it? Is there really room for your ideas in our beautiful, nimble cobweb? "Damn straight!" as Kenneth Beauchump (Barbara's father) would have said. That's why we've made four exercises for you. This is the first one.

The first exercise is quite simple. You only need the book, a black felt pen of medium size (preferably one which doesn't stain through the paper). Read the chapter about the city. Find one or two paragraphs you dislike. Put a big, black cross over these. That's it! Quite simply! But, P.S: If you're borrowing this book at the library you might consider using a pencil instead.

they're difficult to see, you can hear them. The next day the earth on half the graves in the cemetery will be freshly turned.

## *Henkel & Menkel* \_\_\_\_\_

There are those who have doubted these stories. One of them was young doctor Jenina Henkel (mythologist at the University), who spent the year 1908 in a tent outside the church. She didn't observe much beside the odd sparrow, even though she brought both a spectroscope and a stenographer (a Mr. Hubert Menkel).

But on the 13th of October that year, the missing bronze bell of the church rang at midnight. Doctor Henkel and Mr. Menkel arrived at the tavern The Crazy Rooster in no time. Their hair had turned white as chalk, and both have refused to talk about their experience afterwards.

## *The Blue Dragon* \_\_\_\_\_

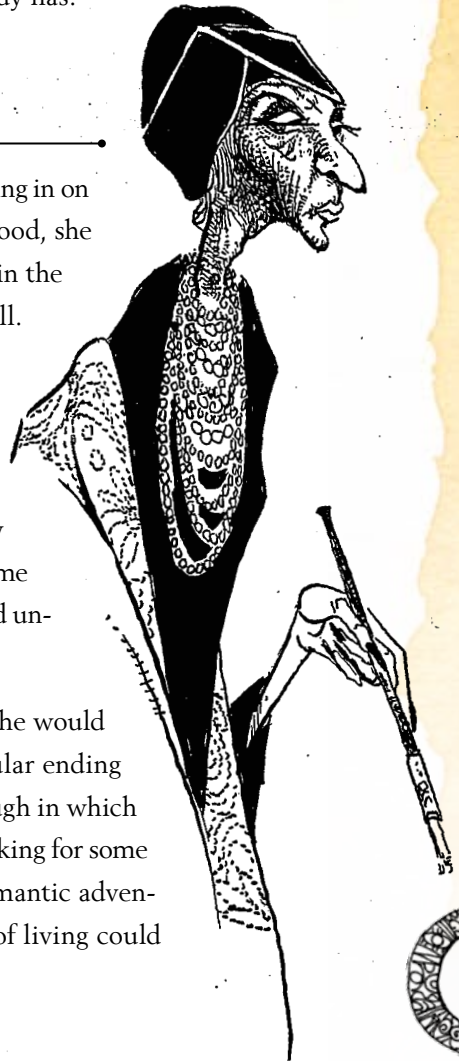
At the foot of the southern slope, where red paper lanterns dangle in the wind and the ladies of the night smile sadly, you'll find The Blue Dragon. This is an opium den with long traditions in Itras By. It lies in the area where the district of Church Hill blends together with Black Bay, the Borough of the Red Light.

Master Wu, the owner, is a short, old man with long white whiskers and a grey, braided ponytail. He wears blue kimonos with embroidered dragons. His nine daughters present the patrons with elaborately carved opium pipes. The drug is consumed lying down, either in bunk beds with drapes or on divans. Around the locale you'll find dandies, losers and well-to-do citizens lounging. The atmosphere is heavy, tired and mysterious. The red light of the paper lanterns breaks through a veil of opium smoke, and sometimes the daughters will play quietly on harps. It is said that the opium dreams one gets when smoking at Master Wu's have prophetic powers. Customers claim visions of things that will happen, or images of what already has.

### *Juliet Forbes*

Juliet Forbes, the Artist of Living, is closing in on eighty seven. Her eightieth year was good, she was happy and received good reviews, but in the following years it's gone down Church Hill. Her sex life has withered after her favourite lover passed away, she is no longer as fond of wine, and her legs are too brittle to promenade along the river. Her reviews from the latest years are characterized by phrases such as "endless repetition of the same themes" and "uninspired, inconspicuous and uninteresting; Mrs. Forbes has lost her élan".

Forbes knows she has few years left, and she would have wished death welcome as a spectacular ending to a glorious life... but not, not, in the trough in which she has arrived. The last year she's been looking for some kind of upturn, a scandal, maybe, or a romantic adventure, some kind of event she as an artist of living could



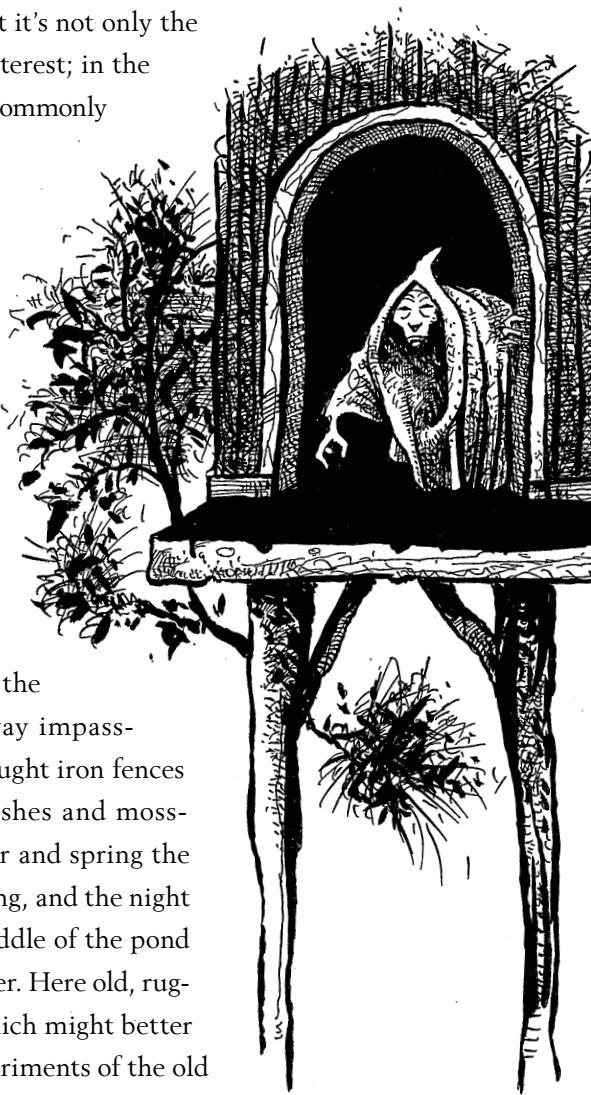
display for the world to see. But it's not only the critics who seem to have lost interest; in the art world on Church Hill, she is commonly treated as if she were invisible.

## *The Park of Tears*

The beck of tears chuckles gently, running as it does from the top of Church Hill and flowing into the lush, unkempt park at the foot of the Hill. It's said that those who drink from the beck will find their true love, but people say many things. In the Park of Tears there are halfway impassable, overgrown pathways, wrought iron fences wreathed in ivy, wild rose bushes and moss-covered statues. In the summer and spring the frogs, grasshoppers and birds sing, and the night air is mild and clean. In the middle of the pond lie huts built on stilts in the water. Here old, rugged men toy with a mystery which might better be left alone: dreams. The experiments of the old men lead to dreams sometimes becoming reality, taking shape in The Park of Tears.

### **The Hieroglyphics of Dreams**

Over the pond in The Park of Tears, thirteen huts are built on slender stilts in the muddy water. The huts are connected by shaky suspension bridges. Here one will find the Ka spirits.





The Ka spirits used to be the magical protectors accompanying the souls of the ancient Egyptians through their lives. Now that they are no longer needed in our world, some of them have found refuge here. They appear to be taciturn, old people with tight, brownish skin. An aroma of incense and sleep rests over the huts of the spirits.

Dreams may be understood as a set of ancient symbols and the hieroglyphs are a written language where these symbols can be transformed to signs on papyrus. The one who masters the hieroglyphics of dream masters the language dreams are made out of.

The hieroglyphs are activated when seen. They can be used to understand, manipulate and create new dreams.

### **Atu**

Atu has failed the other spirits. She has moved away from the park, and her hut stands empty. She has settled down in the city centre, where she now prospers on the sale of nightmares. She writes down the most horrible dreams for her clients, and when the unfortunate victim sees her hieroglyphs, he will inevitably be hit by these evil dreams. The problem is that Atu's dreams may also become reality. The other spirits would like to see Atu's activities stopped, but are afraid to leave the park.

## *Pax& Antiques* \_\_\_\_\_

**P**ax' Antiques is among Church Hill's most difficult to find, and the owner, Anthony, is happy with that. Some of his goods are of a shady nature. In the store itself one finds old furniture, paintings, maps and photographs, and the selection is not especially impressive. But in the basement he's stowed away forbidden objects, magical aids, secret books and scrolls containing ancient knowledge.

Anthony Pax is a gentle and nervous old man. He walks bent, constantly looking over his shoulder, whispering when he speaks. It's said



that he has visitors at night, past owners of some of the objects in the basement, keeping him awake with lectures about everything that can go wrong and harm him.

Despite his restless nights, Anthony has an excellent memory, and remembers everything he's sold.

## *A & -A Street* \_\_\_\_\_

Where The Beck of Tears makes a turn at the tavern The Crazy Rooster, a small street is barricaded with boards and stone. Here lies/doesn't lie A and Not-A Street. It has been there/not been there as long as people on the Hill can remember. Bohemians and drunkards will all give you the same advice: do not venture there!

A & -A-Street has the quality of both existing and not existing at the same time. Almost no mind is able to grasp this phenomenon, and many have lost their minds trying. Some of those who seek out the street achieve a special insight, but when you ask them to explain where the new lustre in their eyes comes from, or beg their insights for yourself, they're unable to answer. Their best attempts sound more like riddles without answers. Those who have returned from A & -A (as it is spelled on the street sign) with their senses intact spend their time at the taverns with calm, mild faces.

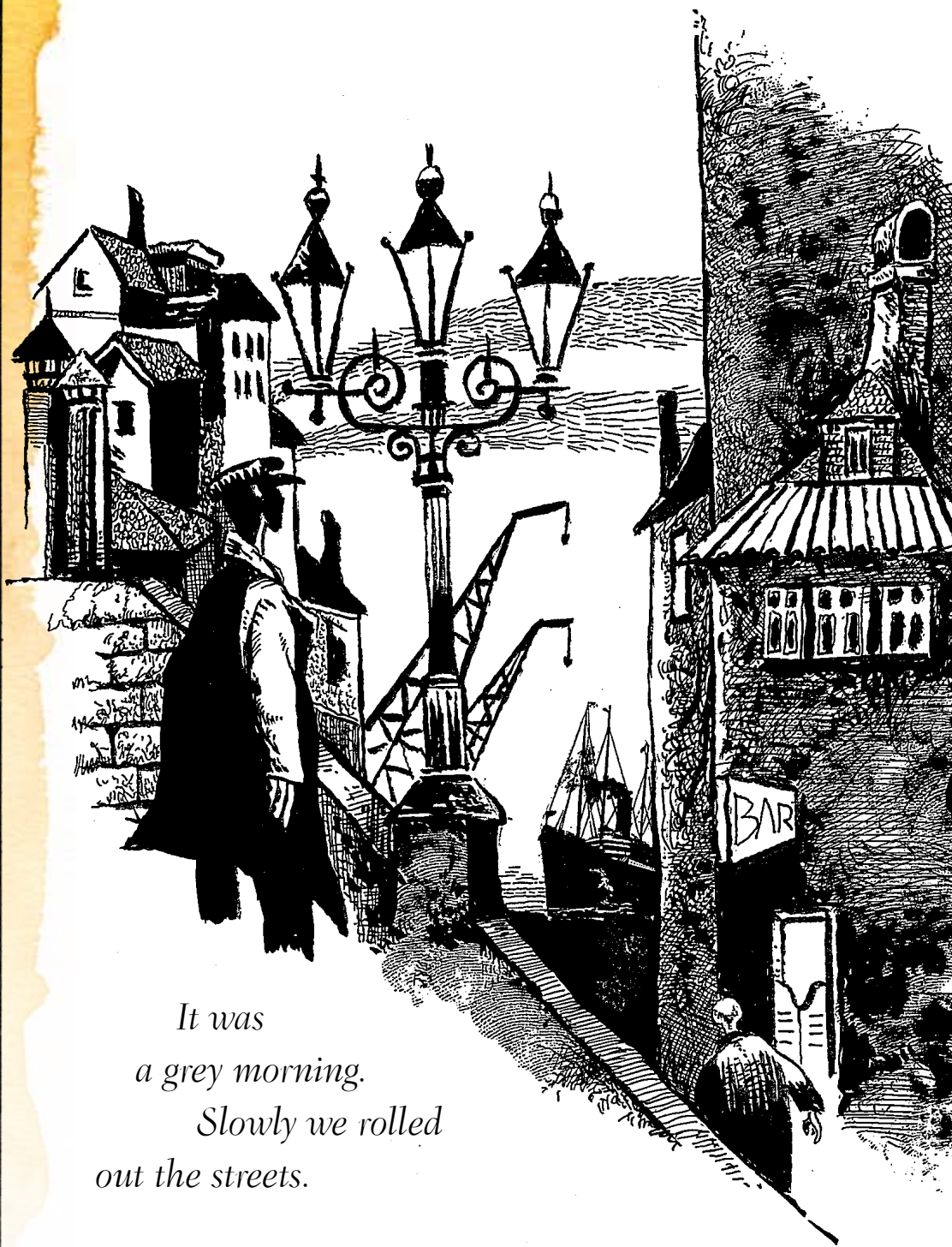
## *Phon* \_\_\_\_\_

In a poor, overgrown shack by the river lives the wizard Ramanuja. He sells lucky charms and balms, magical flutes and secretive herbs. Some of them work, some of them work some of the time, and many do not work at all. But the wizard has one product he is more careful with whom he sells to; phon. The substance is expensive and time consuming to produce. Only Ramanuja knows the ancient process.

Phon is smoked in hookahs with two mouthpieces. The two who smoke swaps bodies: the soul of one takes up residence in the body of the other, and vice versa. Old people about to die have fooled younglings to assume their frail bodies, while they themselves possess the young. In this manner, Ramanuja has been able to live since before Itra disappeared, by stealing the bodies of young men and women.

## *The Lighthouse* \_\_\_\_\_

At the bottom of the northern slope, not far from Babelsberg Film Studio, stands an old lighthouse. Almost forty years ago it was torn out of its foundations somewhere along the coast, and lifted into the air by a tornado. Together with great amounts of fish and other creatures of the sea, it plumped down in a very bohemian neighbourhood on Church Hill, and has been standing there ever since. In the lighthouse lives the lighthouse keeper, who followed with the tower as it fell from the sky. Even though it's almost impossible to see the ocean, even on a clear day from the top of the lighthouse, the 100 year old man insists on keeping the flame in the tower alive, "so that the boats won't hit the rocks". The lighthouse keeper brews a fiercely strong coffee, and over the years the first couple of floors have turned into a popular café, frequented by authors with writer's block and other artistic souls.



*It was  
a grey morning.  
Slowly we rolled  
out the streets.*

# BLACK BAY

*A sour, howling wind chases through the streets. Frank shakes while walking towards the pier. The grey blocks of flats along the way leans towards him like depressing faces. He passes the alley where his brother was stabbed last year, and shudders faintly. Frank thinks of his kids. Soon they, too, will get up to go to work in the factory. But later this evening they will play ball at a vacant lot nearby. The port area isn't for kids.*

*Frank pushes his cap down on his forehead, and rubs his fists together to keep them warm. Somewhere out at sea a fog horn hoots plaintively. One of the black import ships is approaching the harbour. Another day unloading crates lies ahead. Another day spent with drudgery for spare change. "Ok, that's enough. Quit this self-pitying whining", Frank thinks to himself. "You have a roof over your head, healthy kids and a wife who loves you. You don't need more, and you can't ask for more. At least not in this part of town."*

## Overview

---

Black Bay is spread out like a grey blanket over the south eastern part of Itras By. Here lives factory workers, maids, gardeners, city apes, grimasques, sailors, tarts, fortune tellers, pickpockets, beggars and assassins with daggers made of silver. The buildings are grey and worn, with simple facades. They are usually between six and seven stories. Large families live in small apartments. Most of the inhabitants rent their homes from house owners who live on Mint Knoll themselves. The roads in the district are ill-kept and muddy, with narrow alleys and choking traffic. The townscape features shouting and bawling, bad smells, rats, smoke from the factory pipes, ruthless truck drivers, outdistanced horses, brothels and laundries, grimasques and violence.

The harbour is bustling with activity by day, but has a dark and abandoned atmosphere at night. Here the import companies have their warehouses, and this is where the black ships dock by huge concrete quays. When the workday is over, the dives by the harbour wake with gambling and coarse songs until the break of dawn.



Even though it's tired and grey, the district has something proud over it. The workers place honour in their work, and usually treat each other in a respectful manner.



## Jonah

*“I don't care what they say”, Jonah grumbles. The scars on his face move in waves as he speaks. His teeth are clenched around the pipe. “They used to be bigger, and they had teeth”. You're standing by the dock, where a new shipment of whales has arrived. Jonah is cutting open the first one, pulling out its entrails which he leaves laying on the decaying wharf. It reeks powerfully and rotting under the autumn sun. With trained hands he pulls out the stomach, hangs it over the trestle. Something rattles in the stomach, lined shapes show through the glaring, tight skin.*

*“Why don't you open it?” You're involuntarily seized by curiosity, but regret the moment after. Jonah can become mad over stupid questions. Fortunately, he's in a good mood. “An idiot would have. People pay more for the unopened ones. Especially – “He points to the rattling stomach” – especially for ones like this, that look a little exiting.” He suddenly turns towards you, leans forward while his eyes are looking in another direction. “They pay for the dream, right. Not the contents.”*

*He spits. “That why there's always a demand. Even for the shit they sell in the bazaars. Never buy in the bazaars! It's all fake goods, old stomachs*

*filled with rubbish." You nod. "It's better to buy when you see where the stomach came from?" Jonah nods. "Only buy fresh."*

No one knows what the belly of a whale might contain, or how it ends up there. The whale has no teeth, and lives of krill and algae. Yet sometimes you find things amongst their entrails. Some people have found money and treasure. Others have found strange mechanical objects. Even though most stomachs are filled with half-digested sea sludge, there is always a market; always someone willing to pay high prices out of pure curiosity.

Jonah himself claims that he arrived in the city in such as stomach. Back when the whales were huge and had dangerous, sharp teeth, and steam burst from their backs. No one believes him, but it doesn't matter. He's the one with the best connections amongst the whalers, and he runs the stomach market with an iron hand. Secrets and dreams are his trade, but the means are pragmatic and tough.

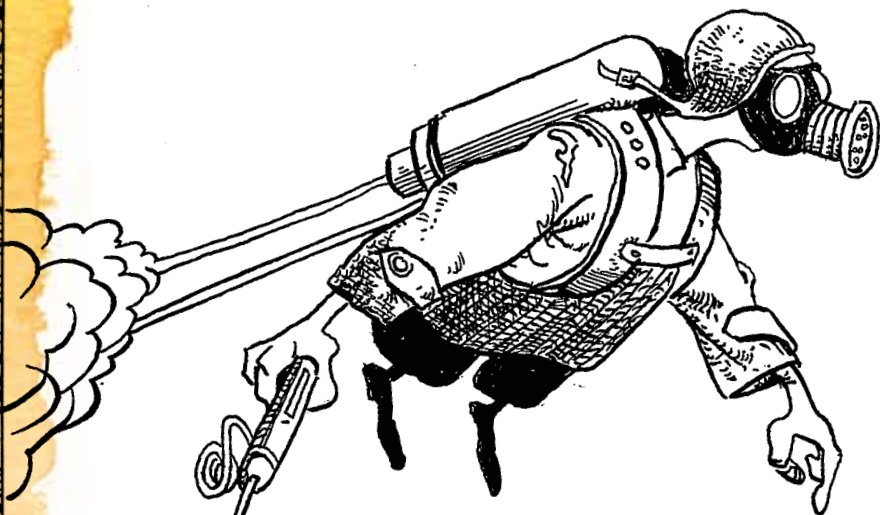
## *The Black Ships* —————

**T**he dives fill up with sailors when the black ships reach dock. The landlubbers glare at them, there are fights over nothing. Someone bumps into another. Beer is spilt, and suddenly

### *Second exercise: The one who laughs last*

You didn't think we have said all there is to be said about Itras By? Rather the opposite! There are places we haven't even dreamt of, people we haven't met in our wildest nightmares! They are out there somewhere, in your friend's imagination, in visions, in the daydreams of your niece, and some of them are only in your head. For this second exercise, you'll need something to write with and some paper. Your task is to fill the paper with your own ideas. Is it a house where something strange is going on, an evocative park, a person with a strange background, an animal with a special property? If you ask us, we'll ask you!

If you should run out of room on the papers you find at first, it's great. Buy a notebook. Choose one with a cover you like. Write down a new idea every day! In addition, you can obviously make further notes in the margins of this book.



the ruckus starts. Spindle back chairs are smashed to pieces, doors splintered, glasses fly. The sailors keep to themselves, watching the other guests. They are a strange lot, hardened men and women. Where are they from? What is it that they see out there? They don't like to talk about themselves, or about the past. The sailors live for the present.

## *The Futurists*

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**T**he Futurists are the sworn enemies of The Machine God (more about him later). In many ways the lackeys of the Machine God and the Futurists are easily confused. They both use strange mechanical contraptions and sing the praises of science. Yet there are radical ideological differences. The Futurists believe that the Machine God's lackeys stand for stagnation and an underestimation of technology's true potential. Where the Machine God is conservative the Futurists are daring, up-and-coming and life affirming. Where the Machine God emphasizes strict logic and rational decisions, the Futurists value anything that's aggressive, dynamic and irrational. The Futurists are very action oriented. The about forty members use militant means in their sabotage against the Machine God's factories and installations.

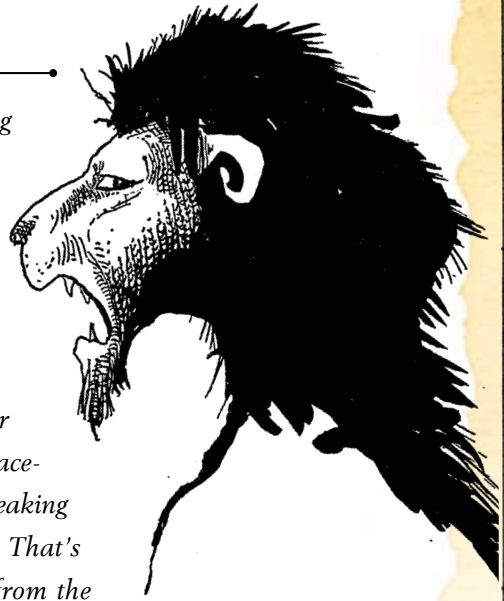
Where they can, they will steal his mechanical innovations. When that's not possible, blowing them up will suffice for the Futurists.

When not on their missions, the Futurists dress in the latest fashions, enjoy radical art and frequent the most modern cafés.

On their raids the Futurists dress in garments like pilot helmets made of leather, some wear gas masks or thick, long scarves to cover their features. Leather jackets are a big hit this year, but last year's pilot models are still highly valued. To their aid the Futurists are equipped with various contraptions; rocket packs on their backs controlled with a thumb-button, grappling hooks driven by gas guns, winches for getting over to the next roof, night lorgnettes for seeing in the dark, magnetic gloves, auto garrottes, periscopic telescope sights and more.

### *Back Yard Lions* —————

” I’m lying on the bed with a glowing cigarette. The brownish curtains of the previous owner pitch in and out of the room in time with the wind. Somewhere in the darkness a sink is dripping. Suddenly I’m aware of the sound. It’s the deep, singing sound of metal. The fire stairs outside the window moan under the weight. Heavy steps, yet strangely graceful. I sit up, peer out the window. The creaking sound approaches. The curtains flutter. That’s when I see it. A rumbling sound rolls from the lion’s throat as it stares at me with eyes of gold.”



The Back Yard Lions have descended from a pride of lions which once ran away from Itra's Zoo. Ever since, they've roamed the city hunting for food and rest. The lions are fairly shy, and usually stay away from people. They mainly eat fish caught in the river Akeron, junk from the alleyways and other critters on the streets. On a few occasions they've attacked sentient beings. The deep sound of a lion's roar understand-



ably starts most people, and many have suggested getting rid of the feline danger once and for all. But it's turned out to be difficult to hunt the lions, both because they're so shy and because they have a strange way of hiding despite their size. In most other districts the lions have been dispelled, but in Black Bay they still remain. They're organized like wild lions, in a pride where the females attend to the children and hunt for food, while the males idle.

## Grimasques

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Many job advertisements carry the following abbreviation: GNNA. This is short for "Grimasques need not apply."

According to an old saying, one who makes a face when the wind turns becomes that way. Grimasques are people who have experienced this directly. Their looks vary from a little strange to hideous. Some of the mildest cases are accepted by society, but most of them are treated like lepers. They've gathered in Black Bay, where they make their livings by begging, prostitution and crime. It's a tough life, both within their community and with regards to society in general.

*A lonely figure stands at the edge of the unsteady pier. His jacket flaps in the wind. The man holds a storm lantern in one hand. Its flame blazes fiercely. Rain chases towards us from the dark sea. The air over the waves has greenish hues. The silhouette of the man, the rain and the desperate light from the storm lantern are the last things I remember.*

## Vanya

---

In a basement somewhere in Black Bay Vanya resides. He's a large man with a bare crown, usually pacing his dirty, hot tattoo studio in a worn undershirt and dangling suspenders. He burns the tattoos into people's skin with glowing steel and ink. Vanya's tattoos have a life of their own. Some speak to the owner, whispering her to sleep. Other's have their own lives. Butterflies flutter off at night to play in the

moonlight. Perilous dragons command the wearer to do this or the other, until he realizes that he's been spell bound. Tattoos which bring good fortunes, tattoos which bring sorrow. Vanya burns them into the skin.

*There are creatures in the walls. If you put your ear next to the radiator, you sometimes hear them.*

*I'm forced into a room. I'm scared, and do not wish to enter. On the floor two men sit crouched. They're staring at something; I can't see what it is. I know that one of them is my brother. He has his back to me, regular clothing, and shabby hair. The other man is retarded. He's only wearing a loincloth, and his head is shaved. The eyes are round and large; he stares at me and drools. His skin is covered in little tattoos, strange symbols. I have to hit my brother, but am only able to hit the retarded man.*



## Gallows Hill

Gallows Hill is a favoured recreational area for the denizens of Black Bay. Here they have a rare opportunity for distraction each Saturday, when the public hangings take place. The hangings gather hundreds of spectators, and both peddlers and pickpockets eye the chance of a quick profit. When the neck breaks like a twig and the corpse shits its pants the crowd cheers. A hangman wearing a hood pulls the lever which controls the trapdoor, while a couple of Grey Guards armed with revolvers supervise the séance.

## *Structural Cancer*

---

The oval glass pane, which a week ago was merely the size of a wedding ring, had grown again overnight. Now it occupied the area of a saucer, more or less. And even though one could glimpse the sidewalk through the pane, the glass was hazy. Around the hole the wall paint had peeled off in layers where the wall was displaced by the glass. Dad chewed on his egg. "Looks like we're getting a new window", he remarked laconically.

It's assumed that structural cancer strikes one out of a hundred buildings in Itras By, but there are no certain figures. In most cases the cancer passes by unnoticed. A discoloration here, a shifted brick there, some cracks, which in reality come from the fact that the reinforcing rods are branching. However, in the most extreme circumstances it's impossible to overlook. The cancer might manifest as new rooms and hallways, beams protruding from the floor and twisted towers appearing on the facade. Some of the tumors are benevolent, and possible to remove with expert help. But in certain cases the cancer cannot be cured, and the only solution is to destroy the entire building, or at least large sections. Some people choose, either because they're eccentrics or because they simply cannot afford to remove the disease, to live with the structural cancer. This may lead to serious consequences. There are stories of people who have woken up, trapped in their own mutated homes. How about Ms. Postelwaithe, who for many years lived happily with the baroque tower growing out of her modest apartment in Black Bay, at an impossible angle. Until one day when she was about to walk her dog and the impossible construction broke loose and fell on her head (the dog's head, that is).

The fear of structural cancer is most acute among the owners of the modern, functionalistic buildings on Bellevue. What building is struck seems random, but it has been speculated that the energies of the Fringe Zones could play a part. This might help to explain the many tumours on the headquarters of the Ancient and Venerable Society of Wanderers.





– There has to be  
13 lights in the stairs, one light for each of them.

Mother's voice was strict. Jonathan looked at her with large, fearful eyes. – But mother, I don't understand. Who's the 13th light for? – It's for you, little Jonathan, mother said, leaning towards him.

MINT KNOLL

*Golden sunlight bathes the living room of General Manager Snabelstrup. Through his large oriel windows, he can see the sun rise from behind the hills in the east. It will move exactly high enough on the sky to clear the Moon Tower. No shadow falls over Snabelstrup's breakfast. The skies have a golden pink hue, and the General Manager senses that it will be a beautiful spring day. He smiles contentedly as the maid pours him another cup of coffee. On his plate lies a fresh croissant, and next to it on the table an equally fresh edition of The Morning Post.*

*In the garden outside the villa, the gardener is already busily trimming the hedges. Mint Knoll has awoken to a new day. Cutlery rattles and pans rumble whilst the servants on the hill prepare breakfast. The leaves in Ape Gardens bead with dew. Deep in the park, the apes awake, squint at each other and say good morning.*

## Overview

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Ape Gardens lie as a lush, green veil on top of Mint Knoll, a height northwest of the Moon Tower. Here you'll find import nobility, judges, moguls, managers, landlords, stockbrokers and highly placed officials. The park is surrounded with great estates and manors. Beautiful gardens behind wrought iron fences surround the grandiose homes of the city's elite. The well-kept, paved avenues on the knoll are illuminated by gas lights at night, and regularly patrolled by the Grey Guard. North and west of Mint Knoll lie larger and larger estates with higher and higher walls until you reach the city's limits. Here lives the ancient import nobility.

## Ape Gardens

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The Gardens are named after the talking apes that live here. Today, only around fifty of them remain in the park, where they observe the customs of their ancestors. Many of the talking monkeys in the city live outside the park proper, where they perform different jobs. Most of the city apes sadly live in misery, and many of them can be found in the slums of Black Bay.

## *The Import Nobility*

The Import Nobility consists of the most powerful families in Itras By, descending from the brave warriors who helped Itra fight her nightmares when the city was young. The goddess entrusted the noblemen and women with the responsibility of distributing the resources which come to the city on the black ships. Together they protected the Moon Tower when danger loomed.

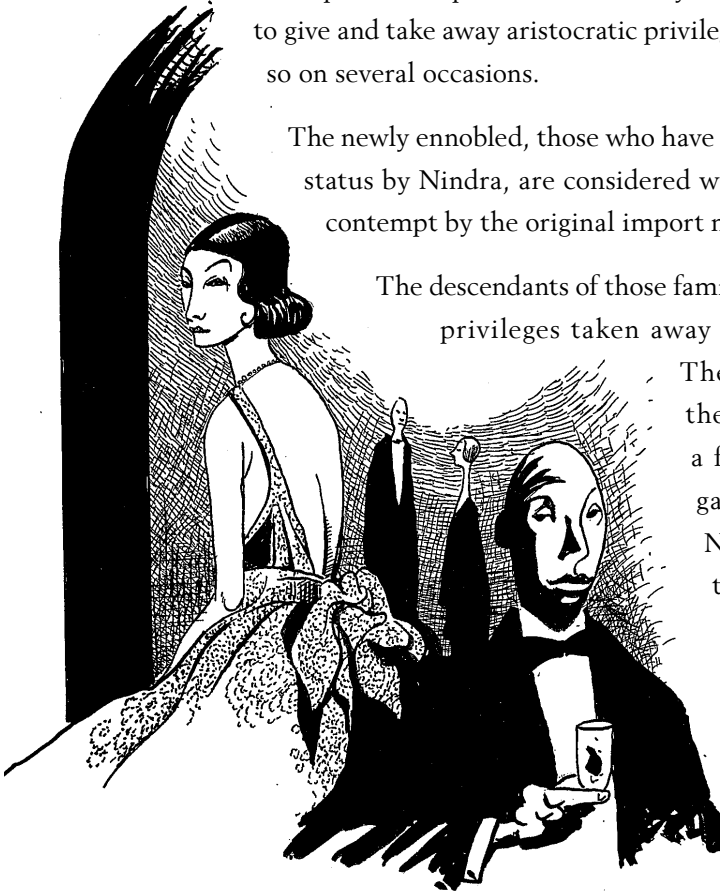
As time went by, the threat from the outside diminished in comparison with the corruption on the inside. The fortifications in the wilderness decayed, or were turned into private hunting lodges. The proud import nobility was gradually but surely corrupted, and when Itra went missing, few things about them reminded of stalwart warriors.

After Itra disappeared, the spider woman seized power with the help of the import families. Today she holds the authority to give and take away aristocratic privileges, and she has done so on several occasions.

The newly ennobled, those who have been raised to gentry status by Nindra, are considered with poorly concealed contempt by the original import nobility.

The descendants of those families who've had their privileges taken away live about the city.

These are often called the poor nobles. Only a few of them are organized opponents of Nindra's rule, but what they have in common is the bitterness over the heritage which was taken away from them.





Not only are there many places we haven't visited, we don't even know half there is to know about the places we describe in this book! The rest, you have to tell us. For this exercise, you'll need something to write with, scraps of paper and a stapler. Find a place you like in the city, and write about one or two people who frequent it. Think of what problems they can create for the characters, or which problems the characters can help them with. Or you can consider an area, for instance the Thousand Taverns, and describe a tavern or two. Use the stapler to put the notes where they belong.

PS: Even though you have many ideas, you don't have to fill the entire book with notes. After the third or fourth you can start writing in your notepad instead.

## *Jeremy Finkelton* —————

Jeremy Finkelton turns seven hundred later this year. He believes his high age is the product of smoking a good cigar every day, and drinking a glass of brandy before he goes to bed. Jeremy has seen the centuries pass, and realized that the folly of man is incurable. He fought against Nindra after Itra disappeared, and last century he was the ring leader of a conspiracy to overthrow her. Fortunately he was able to escape The Grey Guard, by cunningly changing his identity. Jeremy knows he faces a harsh fate if Nindra discovers who he is, and is careful with whom he tells his secret.

Jeremy is the author of books set in ancient times, written with such precision that even shrivelled scholars are impressed. "War of the Titans" was selected Book of the Year by the Morning Post in 1902, and he won the Librarians debut price in 1883 for "Black Flag", about the ravages of the pirate Silver Beard. Jeremy looks like a middle aged man, with dashing clothes and a touch of silver by the temples. Thanks to a wiser management of his funds the past two centuries than the previous five, Finkelton has built a considerable fortune, and has many friends in high society.

## *Boulderbeast* —————

Boulderbeast is spinning backwards in the drawing-room. The women squeal with

*delight, the chandelier jingles. It swivels from side to side. The men applaud politely at the incident. The man with the head of a musk ox excuses himself. "I have a cold", he explains. If it weren't for the fact that his face is covered in fur, we could see him blushing. He hastily retreats to the kitchen, his tuxedo fluttering behind him. The women giggle, the men pull their mustaches and mumble. "Well, well. It probably isn't too easy keeping your temper in check with the head of a musk ox. They whinny, and return to the game of cards and the crystal glasses with brandy.*

*In the kitchen, Boulderbeast breathes heavily. In the living room Ophilia sits, the only one of the women not giggling. She blushes palpably, and is convinced that Henrietta is smiling condescendingly at her. Boulderbeast moistens his face with tap water. He'll be damned if he's to let his unfortunate disposition ruin the evening.*

Victor belongs to the powerful import family Oppheimer, but has always been a bit of a disgrace to his relatives because he has the head of a musk ox, which is unfortunate at parties and makes it difficult for him to find his bearings.

When his father died, Victor inherited the import empire. The Oppheimers own a few warehouses down by the docks. Victor has won his place in high society thanks to his name and possessions, but is continuously gossiped about and the butt of subtle insults. He is a kind man, who cares about his employees, colleagues and friends.

The beautiful Ms. Ophilia Neuman has realized the true spirit of Victor, and fallen passionately in love with him. Their reciprocal love is a secret, even to themselves, but obvious to anyone who takes the time to look. Themselves, they're too shy to speak of anything other than the weather. If they one day shall find each other only time will tell.

*Emilia leans out the window, resting the weight of her upper body on the elbows. The window sill is cold against the skin. She raises the cigarette to her lips; lets the smoke slide down her throat. Outside the window there's a small piazza with a fountain. The piazza is covered*

*in snow, the fountain the same. Wheel tracks in the snow reveal the paving stones. Boot traces leads from the building she's in, over the piazza and into the park in front of the building. The trees of Ape Gardens have a thin layer of snow. She follows the tracks with her eyes, until they disappear amongst the naked branches. Somewhere deep in the park a shape is moving. Emilia breathes smoke and sips her wine. When she turns, she sees that Hugo is awake. His upper body is bare, covered in patterns. He's still wearing the devil mask. In his hands rests a big camera, the kind used by the press.*

## *The Salon of the Subduers of Darkness* —

For the last ten years a strange hobby has evolved amongst the young men of the city's western parts. Loosely organized in a community frequenting *The Salon of the Subduers of Darkness*, they like to dress up in medieval attire and enter the catacombs below the city. Armed with archaic weapons they quest amongst the ancient ruins, hunting for hidden treasure and monsters to subdue. They commonly organize in hunting parties of four to five. Each of these usually has a unique set of

clothes and equipment. After a tough spell in the

catacombs they meet again in the Salon,

where the costumes are shed

and the suit coats come

on. The salon has a liv-

ing room with an open

fireplace, its own but-

ler and a steam bath

in the basement. It

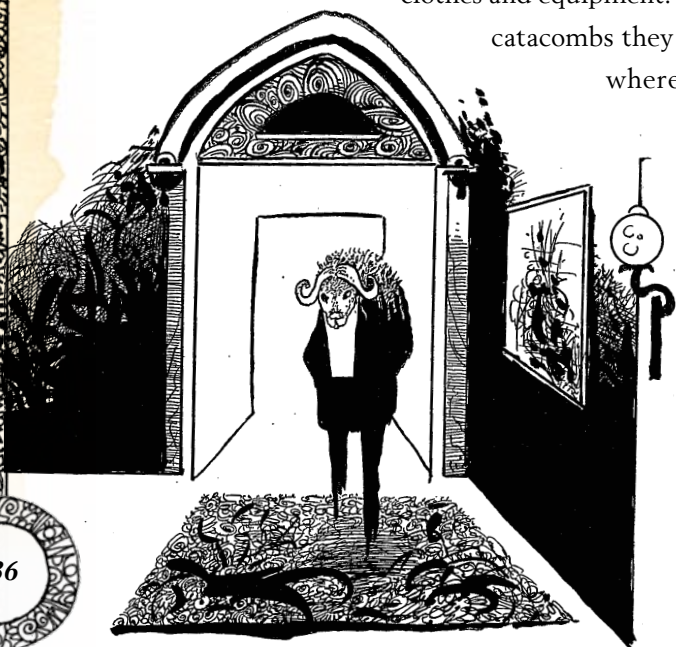
feels good to sink

into a nice, warm tub

of water after a hard

night subduing dark-

ness.





The walls of the salon are covered with trophies from the catacombs. Small, ornamented stone sculptures, curved knives, intricate mechanical objects, a bust representing some unknown god, a beautiful tapestry, a horn with many barbs. The interior consists of dark wood, and the stone fireplace crackles lively. The living room has large, comfortable wing chairs. One room in the salon is called the armory, where row upon row of shiny weapons hang. The salon lies in a stately manor northwest on Mint Knoll.

## *Catacombs* \_\_\_\_\_

Deep under the city, beneath the noisy underground trains, deep down in the darkness, the catacombs lie. These are the roots of the city. Many of the original, ancient buildings from the olden days have sunk down here. A labyrinth of corridors and lodes connect mausoleums, crypts and burial chambers with altars, frescos and sacrificial gifts. Here reigns silence, dust and darkness. The subterranean wind whistles, and one can hear the echoes of the creatures who reside here.

Altars commemorating extinct gods lie shattered over avenues where no one travels. Ancient labyrinths hold legendary monsters captive. Gloomy secrets are guarded by living statues. Many treasures, forgotten artifacts and mysterious objects are to be found, but the catacombs are peopled by ghastly creatures from the other side. The descendants of the nightmares Moherat and his warriors vanquished still live in the lowermost levels. Here they build their nests and guard their spawn.

Not all parts of the catacombs are connected, and many of the old passages have crumbled. In the deepest levels, the catacombs melt and become one with the Fringe Zones. From beyond unearthly creatures, ideas and buildings from Limbo trickle in.

Old cellar stairs, secret tunnels and forgotten pipe systems lead to different parts of the catacombs. Only a few of these have been discovered by the Salon of the Subduers of Darkness.

*I was in a restaurant; the premises were open, bright and white. We shared a table by the window. The furniture was elaborate and beautiful. The waiter asked us if we enjoyed the food, and we nodded in confirmation. Suddenly the chef arrived, dressed in some sort of anachronistic purple uniform. He had one single eyebrow curbing in a way which gave him a chronically skeptic, maybe haughty, facial expression. On his shoes and sleeves were flourishing, baroque patterns. The chef wore heavy makeup. He held a long lecture on the art of cooking, how much soul and suffering lay behind the food he has made us, and what ingrate barbarians we were.*

*Outside the window were two clowns, squeezing their faces against the pane. One of them had a greenish hue in his make-up; the other one was made up with black and white colors. They said something I couldn't hear. I mimed after them. The girl clown made up in black and white had sad, dark eyes. We talked through the window without a sound. My companion made fun of the clowns. I was annoyed with him, and explained that they worked at the restaurant and that this was part of the service. The clowns opened the window and climbed in. The clown with the greenish makeup continued talking to me without a sound. I was starting to feel that it was more scary than amusing.*

*Outside the monkeys had been let loose in the streets. They waddled about, scaring passers-by.*

### *Barbara 'Bobby' Beauchump* —————

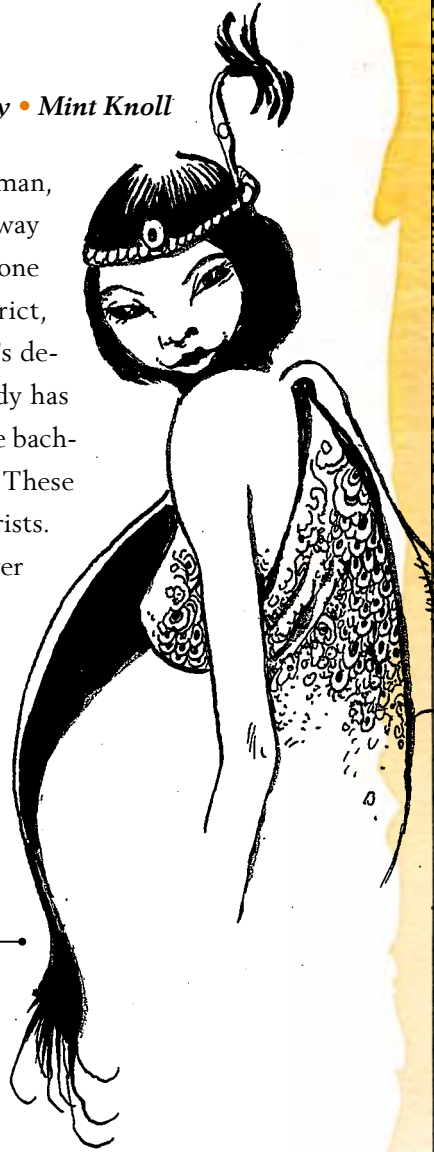
“A few years ago I had the misfortune of getting engaged to Bobby, but fortunately I was able – in a tactful and not to say cunning manner – to avert a longer relationship between the two of us. Not that she isn't very beautiful, she is, with large black curls, a determined snub nose and indignant brown eyes, but with Bobby one is rarely left with any other choice but to be swept away, and I'm worn out and nervous after only a few days in her company.” – Thomas Chesterfield

Barbara "Bobby" Beauchump is a modern woman, and to her father's dismay leads a liberated way of life. Her father, Kenneth Beauchump, is one of the city's judges. He is said to be very strict, but that in no way seems to dampen Bobby's debauched lifestyle. The determined young lady has brought down many of the city's most eligible bachelors, and broken many a heart on her way. These days she's sporadically connected to the Futurists. She started hanging out with the Futurists ever since she had a brief affair with their bomb expert Frederico Cordelli. Bobby simply loves their progressive ideology and life threatening operations.

### *The Ancient and Venerable Society of Wanderers* —————

There exists a society whose members willingly seeks out the fringes, the outer limits of reality, and usually are able to return with their mental faculties intact. The wanderers are daring adventurers. They move in the fringes looking for new knowledge, fantastical objects and wealth. Even though the wanderers seem to avoid the most serious mental disorders, they are a rather eccentric bunch. Their headquarter lies on St. Tomás avenue, by the foot of Mint Knoll.

The society's members are dedicated to the exploration of the Fringe Zones, the dangerous areas outside Itras By where reality seems to dissolve and existence is very difficult to anticipate. The wanderers seem blessed by luck. They say that it's just a question of picking out the right prospective members, and to know how to train them.

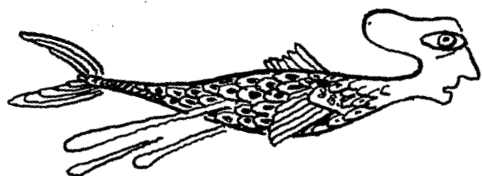




Home from their missions the wanderers bring exiting observations, objects and sometimes creatures (like the poor Fabletooth tiger in Itra's Zoo). These are categorized, displayed and thoroughly investigated upon the wanderer's return, in order to understand more about the Fringe Zones and their workings.

The journeys take different forms. The wanderers are in possession of the beautiful airship "The Arrow", but have also utilized submersible vessels, hot air balloons, rock breakers, the mysterious train which lets off dazed and confused new arrivals at Moherat St, automobiles and of course Shank's pony.

The wanderers belong to all levels of society, and both men and women are welcome. The member's qualifications are evaluated based on their love of adventure, enterprise and understanding of the "Social task of the Society", as the statutes read.





*We lay sweaty and naked on the cool  
marble floor, steaming in the clear  
autumn air. In the hallway yesterday's copy  
of the Morning Post is rustling in the wind.*

# DOWNTOWN



## Overview

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The Moon Tower looms on the horizon. After Itra disappeared office buildings and other high rises have grown like underbrush of granite around the ancient building. Ornaments and stone reliefs' décor their facades. Their oriel windows seem to defy gravity. High up in the air, wrought iron bridges are suspended between the buildings. Stairs on the outside of some of the buildings are built in strange patterns. There are alleyways ten stories up. In these buildings lie the offices and businesses of the mightiest people in the city. Bankers and import nobility, publishers and editors, with diligent anthills of clerks, secretaries and errand boys under them. Many of the people who make their living downtown live in other parts of the city. The bank manager travels home to her mansion on Mint Knoll, the secretary to his apartment in Grand Meadow. The theater actress retreats to her cabin on Church Hill, and the street sweeper takes the tram to his attic flat in Black Bay.

Clouds of vapor rise from the manhole covers on the sidewalk. In daylight Downtown resounds with the tapping sound of typewriters and the hum of the cafés. After dark there's a swarming nightlife in the glow of the gas lights.

Here you'll find restaurants and cinematographers, galleries and theatres. Paper boys with sixpences and breeches sell the Morning Post. Organ grinders ply their trade, automobiles honk, Grey Guardsmen with closed faces hurry by. Narrow alleys hold both temptations and dangers. Secret doors in backstreets, ancient stairs leading down to the gurgling waters of the river, cryptic sages and mad prophets wait in the shadows.

## The River Akeron

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Akeron twists through the city, past hills and dark forests, high rises and single family homes, before it flows into the Great Sea. The river has its source somewhere deep in the wilderness. Along it



lie farms, lumber mills and the odd estate. Farmers have since time immemorial used the river to transport their goods to the markets and squares of the city. Some consider Akeron sacred. They give their dead over to the afterlife by cremating them in boats, which slowly drift downriver before the pyre extinguishes and the remains drift out to sea.

Downtown Akeron has been led out into a network of small canals. A system of sluices makes the water stagnant, which causes algae and sludge, but also makes it possible to use gondolas to move between the houses. Some very old houses have an exit only towards the canal. In the broader canals there are rows upon rows of houseboats, where wine classes chink and laughter is heard. Elegant old stone bridges are suspended over the canals. Fat rats enjoy themselves in the water.

Akeron passes the University campus before it flows out into the Great Sea. The weeping willows which bend gracefully over the water surface are beautiful to behold, and students in love stake their way in boats on Akeron's small tributaries. Sometimes one of them will have had too much wine to drink and fall in the water, but fortunately the muddy tributaries aren't very deep.

## *The Bazaar*

---

South of Moon Tower lays a network of narrow streets, between the more modern buildings. The streets are packed with small stalls, shops and cafés which have gone from father to son and mother to daughter through generations. Some places the bazaar is under roof, consisting of anything from chicken wire to corrugated iron and planks.

*In the dim bazaar, everything is for sale. Quail eggs, chickens, today's slaughter, nutmeg, olive oil, screws and nuts, drugs, water from a lake in the Fringes, grapes, pistachio nuts, knives, pipes, grain, songbirds, automobile parts, glow lamps, spider eyes, the tooth of a god, chocolate, spices, relics*

*and fruit. Trade takes place at all hours. Provisory street lamps dangle next to the booths. Exotic smells mix with the smoke of a hookah, someone hums plaintively from afar.*

*In the teeming crowd a twelve year old pickpocket scurries amongst the shoppers, reaping a box on the ear now and then. In a tiny café two old men share a water pipe, play cards and drink tea from glasses. They know the bazaar like the inside of their hands. On a wall someone has scribbled indecipherable hieroglyphics.*

*A city ape pushes people aside as he's passing. Grimasques with tattered clothes and begging bowls ask for alms. In an alley there's a small altar dedicated to an unknown god, covered in flowers and censers.*

## *The Underground* \_\_\_\_\_

*A* cloud of steam met me as I walked down the stairs to the platform. On the gray stone walls, some madman had written twisted symbols with charcoal. A man with a bowler hat on his head, and an umbrella under his arm hurried by – without excusing himself. On the platform the air tasted of dust. The flame of the kerosene lamps were points of golden lights in the haze. Posters from Itra's Zoo advertised for the mighty sea creature Leviathan. I sat down on one of the benches and peered into the tunnel. Suddenly, I was aware of something gleaming. The reflection of two eyes staring at me, a dark figure hastening away.

The hammering, metallic sound of the approaching train was building in the distance. A man with a long, scruffy beard and ragged clothes approached me with a beggars bowl, and I dropped a couple of coins into it. The man mumbled that his god would bless me. I smiled disconcertedly while trying to avoid his gaze.

The train pushed a wall of wind out onto the platform, blowing the haze away. I entered one of the wagons, and sat down next to a polite looking gentleman. The uniformed conductor was in the other end



of the wagon. He was a slim man with hollow features and a long mustache. His uniform was blue, with a little hat similar to a bucket turned upside down. Electric glow-lamps in golden shades filled the compartment with a warm light. Outside, it was dark.

### **Long Day's Journey into Night**

It is said that the underground in Itras By is haunted. Not by souls, but by atmospheres – recognizable moods which seat themselves in the compartments at random intervals.

You may be touched by a vague melancholia, and understand that the Autumn

Darkness has seized the carriage, even though it's the middle of August. Lights are dimmed, a smell of rotting leaves spreads, and rain from nowhere trickles slowly down the windows.

One of the most detested atmospheres is Long Day's Journey into Night. You can feel it settling, heavy as lead, over the compartment. The windows darken. It becomes silent. Oppressive. It seems as if the distance between you and others is reduced, and you feel compelled to look your fellow travelers in the eyes. The silence is expressive, and at some point has to be broken.

And – as the name suggests: Long Day's Journey into Night lasts for a very long time. The distance to the next station seems to increase. It feels like hours before the darkness lifts and the colors of dawn again fill the compartment. Many have met Long Day's Journey into



Night. Many fear it; but it's rare to experience it more than once in a lifetime. During the oppressive, dense hours you become like an actor interpreting your own life: all conflicts and insecurities emerge. That which for years has lain hidden in the basement of the soul comes crawling and demands to be heard, to be told your fellow travelers. The travelling salesman may glance annoyed at the pocket watch he picks out of his vest; the young girl may very well put her nose in the air and feel superior to the sadness and emotionality of the others. Sooner or later, they do have to walk the bitter road, and give theirs to Long Day's Journey into Night.

### The Violinist

Young children tell each other about the violinist who enters the underground. You look away for a moment, and suddenly he's there, at the far end of the compartment. He walks slowly down the aisle, laughing his stiff, doll-like leer. The gypsy violin plays weeping tunes, exaggerated, sentimental songs your grandmother might have enjoyed. He's a ridiculous figure, tottering through the compartment.

But then you see the passengers he has passed. They're slumped in their seats, their heads leaning in odd angles against the windows, chairs or other sengers. Staring at nothing,



with eyes rolled back in the head. They cry blood which runs down their faces and into their open, drooling mouths.

That's when you look up into the stiff grin of the violinist and realize that he's heading directly for you.

### *Friday St.* \_\_\_\_\_

Each Friday a street turns up north of Moon Tower, a street which no one is able to locate the rest of the week. Here, there's always laughter and song. The street is covered with restaurants and sidewalk cafés. The inhabitants live in a perpetual state of Friday. Those who cannot abide daily life flee to the street, and are able to wake up on a Friday, every day. On the surface, there's a lot of glitz and glamour. The laughter and smiles are frozen in the faces of both locals and visitors. But upon further inspection, one might still see sad, weary looks in the eyes of those who spend their lives here.

### *Josephine Buckle* \_\_\_\_\_

Josephine Buckle works as a secretary at the import company Ulbrecht & Son. The company receives deliveries of rare construction materials from the mysterious black ships which weekly approach from the fog banks south of the city. The

*Last exercise: Kill our darlings!*

In this exercise, we'll leave the book alone. This time you'll need a group, a few characters and maybe some episodes behind you. This is something you do when planning an adventure. Find a sentient being in this chapter who you like especially well, or who you might suspect we, the authors, like. Boulderbeast, for instance, or maybe Nindra herself. Let the next session begin with this person or creature being killed in a horrible way in front of the characters. Or let a building go up in flames; have a park razed by a developer, or something to that effect. And don't hesitate vandalizing anything else throughout the rest of the campaign.

Ulbrechts have a privileged position and are very wealthy, but enough about them. Miss Buckle works for Harry Tubwinkle in the sales department. Her work consists of answering phones, taking dictation, writing bills, making the hour list and so forth. She's in her twenties, and looks fairly well. Her hair is blonde, and she's a bit plump.

What's special about Ms. Buckle is that the weather in Itras By depends on her mood. When she's happy the sun is shining, when she's angry there's lightning and thunder, when she's melancholy the weather is grey, and when she's sad it rains. The climate in Itras By is temperate. Spring follows winter, and autumn follows summer. The four seasons are not affected by Ms. Buckle's moods. But the variation within each season complies with her spirits. Sometimes she feels good, sometimes she's sad. Yet it may be remarked that Buckle has a certain tendency towards melancholia, which helps explain the large amounts of precipitation in the city. There is also a statistical tendency towards extra bad weather on Mondays, and the weather often clears at the end of office hours.

## *Delicatessen* \_\_\_\_\_

On a detour from Schleppegrell Street, past the three pink pillars and the swing, lays Khan's Laundry. Seemingly, this is quite an ordinary laundry. In reality Khan's is merely a façade. When uttering the words "I sure am hungry", Khan's widow, a mute woman with narrow, sunken eyes, will lead you behind the counter, past the clothes horses, to a secret door behind a drying drum. A stair leads down to Delicatessen, a restaurant only frequented by an exclusive and rich clientele.

The courses are artfully arranged on large, white platters. The chef, Sezam, is a tall man with a pointy mustache and merry eyes, and one of the city's unequaled masters within the art of cuisine. Dainty sauces based on the noblest raw materials set the taste buds running. Rare berries give the food an intriguing aroma. All the meat is tender and only stem from the most distinguished of animals: Man.



## *Club Apocalypse*

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In an unassuming neighborhood lays Club Apocalypse. Once in a distant past it was called something else, but the last years everyone has named it after the bizarre and fateful marathon dance Apocalypse – the last dance. It has been foretold, by sources once considered certain, that when one day the melody of the Apocalypse will ebb away and the last of the dancers leaves the floor, the world will end.

Under its current owner the club has become a fashionable place, where the young and rich go to have a drink or a cup of coffee whilst watching the dancers. Some have suggested that it's all a marketing trick, and that Harimatanek, the prophet who brought the ominous prophecy, was a friend of the first owner. But since Itras By is what it is, no one has dared test this hypothesis.

## *The Gollups*

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On Szachtract Street, southwest of Moon Tower, there's an old, fragile villa squeezed between two handsome apartment buildings. The villa clings to a crag. To reach it one has to pass a small, overgrown garden where dog rose bushes and grass filters together behind a worn iron fence.

Here the Gollups reside, a sect whose members are all middle aged men with long beards. In the attic of the villa are a large amount of telephones, and there's a constant hum of conversations. The narrow attic is characterized by dust, clutter, telephone wires and a constant chaos of paper forms.

The switchboard operators in the Moon Tower are truly fed up with the Gollups, because their activities consist of calling people to ask them strange questions. Those of the citizens who have a telephone sometimes get a phone call from the mumbling Gollups. "Are you impotent?" they might ask, or "what did you have for breakfast today?"

The Gollups are composing a huge statistic about the city's inhabitants, a massive bible where they gather all personal information they come across. They survey habits and philosophies, reducing them to numbers. The statistics are used to predict the future. There is a certain margin of error, but many of the Gollups' predictions have turned out to be surprisingly precise.

### *Mulholland Assorted Glass Jars Ltd.* —

This boutique lays in a basement on Flogiston Street, and is a tiny business run by old Jerome Mulholland. The wrinkled little man spends his days behind the counter in the twelve square meters which make out his shop. All the walls are covered with shelves, and on the shelves lay glass jars in strange shapes and colors. In each jar there's a body part in formalin. Most of Jerome's clients are mondaines who find the body parts to be fascinating art. They are displayed as finery in the best of neighborhoods. In reality, the body parts live. When one of the jars is opened or breaks, strange things happen.

### *The Morphiciary* —

*"Morph, morph, morph,  
Morphely strange change change  
Changely now now now  
But only how how how"*  
— *The work hymn of the Morphiciary*

From the superior morphistrates down to the lowest morphrentice, the Morphiciary of Itras By is a much feared institution. Even Nindra dares not interfere with this ancient collegium. The Morphiciary views themselves as the long arm and enforcers of the law of nature. To their mind, this law states that everyone should lead lives which one could tell

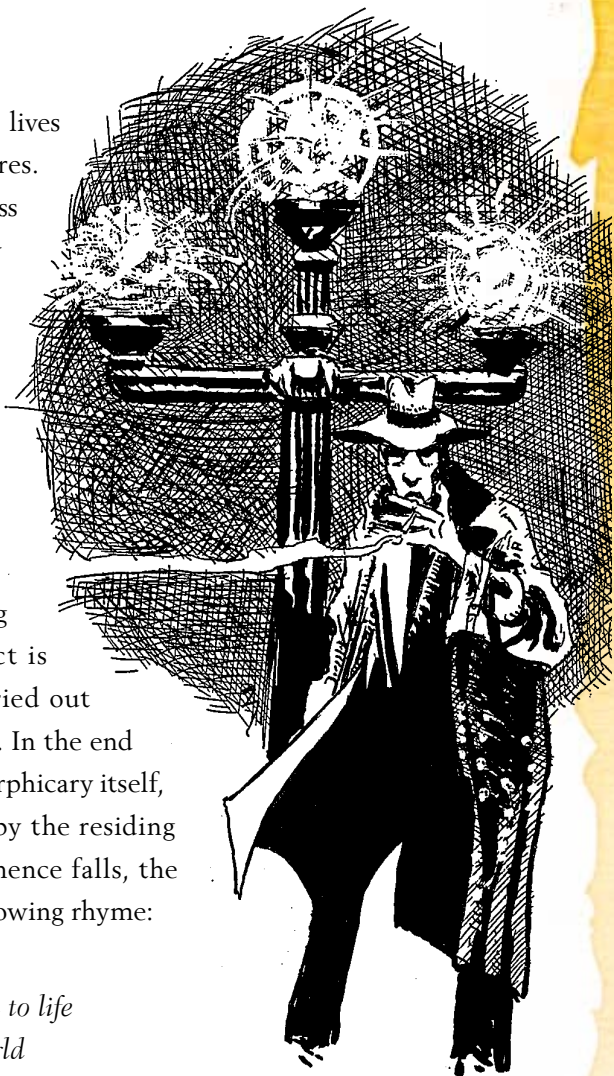
stories and sing songs about, lives which are exciting adventures. They realize that it's a hopeless task to get everyone to follow this law, that's why they focus on the worst cases.

A sentient being that the Morphiciary singles out will first be kept under surveillance and observed. Already at this point, many might realize that something is amiss. Then the suspect is brought into custody, carried out by advanced morphrentices. In the end she's brought before the Morphiciary itself, where she is morphenced by the residing morphiciary. As the morphence falls, the morphiciary speaks the following rhyme:

*I sentence you to life  
In this world  
By my word  
Each sentence like a knife*

After this, the defendant is allowed to walk, seemingly unscathed. But the ones who have been morphenced will soon realize that their lives have changed. Sometimes for the better, often for the worse, but always in a dramatic fashion!

The Morphiciary is situated in a fine building Downtown. The Morphistrate's serious demeanor is sharply contrasted with their uniform: Colorful clothes, gaudy capes and ridiculous wigs.





## Radio

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The radio is a new invention. Some have homebuilt crystal receptors, whereas others have purchased theirs in the store. A common night on the radio consists of reading from books, music and news. Direct sports events and concerts are becoming increasingly common. Radio commercials are, like all other commercials in Itras By, completely unregulated by rules and regulations.

### Radio Downtown

The first and biggest radio station bets on a varied offering of programs. Downtown plays a lot of music, and draws female listeners with its popular show host Runo Valle. Runo is a radio pioneer, and may be said to have accomplished a lot with a limited talent. In his program the "Hi Ho Club" he sings nasal ballads softly into the microphone. Valle says the key to his success is that he treats the microphone softly, "like a woman's ear". In addition Downtown covers the most important sporting events.

### Araxagras' Station

Transmits the monotonous mumbling of the wealthy guru Araxagras around the clock. He believes that he possesses the final truth about the cosmos. The audience numbers tell a different story. Araxagras resides at his estate northwest of Mint Knoll, and spends most of the day chanting about the "Return of the Light of Dreams" and "Moherat's twelve messengers". In especially winged circumstances he claims direct contact with Itra, the goddess no one has seen for three hundred years.

## The Shadow Patio

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The evening before the wedding I was feeling restless. I was sitting awake in the living room until over midnight, with the pipe in my hands. I filled it and emptied it, filled it and emptied it, without smok-

*ing a single puff. In the end I stood up and put my coat on. I didn't know where I was going; I just knew that I couldn't sleep in my own bed. For a while I thought I was going to Jenny, maybe to stand under her window and see if she was as restless as me, but as I found myself walking down Greybrother Avenue I realized. The time had come to spend a night at The Shadow Patio Hotel.*

In the middle of Greybrother Avenue, between two tall office buildings, there's a small five story house. This is The Shadow Patio Hotel, the only hotel in the city. Before it opened many people wondered whether a hotel was needed in Itras By, there are after all few people passing through. "No, not many people pass through the city", Oscar Furrow, the first owner, answered. "But show me the man or woman who's not on a journey through their own lives! These tired souls will find refuge in my hotel!" That way The Shadow Patio soon became a fixture of the city, a place to seek refuge when life reaches a turning point.

Currently the hotel has a more active profile. Under the management of Edward Furrow, Oscar's grandson, The Shadow Patio is marketed as "the place where destinies meet". The target audience is still people at crossroads in their lives, but now it's emphasized how they touch each other's lives. The guests are encouraged to meet, in the hotel bar and restaurant, in the corridors, on the patio upstairs, even in the rooms. And during these encounters they change each other's stories. The changes might be minor and almost imperceptible, or so big and sweeping that their effects ripple throughout society, but no one leaves the hotel unaffected.

Most people who check in to The Shadow Patio come there alone, but when Edward Furrow finds out that an especially interesting situation is developing, he might send out personal invitations to the main parties. These invitations come in the shape of a key, and are delivered by a messenger in red bellboy uniform. Everyone knows what the key means (and that they should tip the messenger amply, or else they may not expect very good service at the hotel; and if there's one place you

need service, it's The Shadow Patio). These special guests are given the best rooms, and pay with nothing but their presence. In return it's expected that they shall create quite ado before the night is over.

The Morphiciary hold their annual Christmas dinner in the hotel restaurant.

## *Nindra and the Moon Tower* \_\_\_\_\_

The Moon Tower stands in the middle of the city, reaching towards the skies like an organic, knotted mass. Enormous columns support bridges between towers and projections. The façade is decorated with strange statues and frescoes from forgotten times. Once upon a time the tower was as white and clean as the moon itself. Today it is grimy and grey with age.

On the top of the tower Nindra broods. The spider woman has ruled the city since Itra disappeared. She could have held the city in an iron grip if she wanted to, but for unknown reasons she overlooks a lot of what happens in the streets. Her thoughts are dark labyrinths. Who knows where she will interfere, and what her thousand eyes will ignore.

Daily law and order in the city is maintained by her corps, The Grey Guard. The grim guardsmen have a sinister atmosphere, but are usually considered fair in Nindra's bizarre way.


### **Nindra**

Itra resided in the Moon Tower. From the top of the tower the Dream Light shone, a ball of golden light which was the first thing the goddess created.

Nindra held a lower position in the court. She gave the residents advice in questions regarding the laws of the goddess. In those days Nindra appeared as a tall, beautiful woman with hair dark as night and twinkling stars in her eyes.







311 years ago Itra disappeared from the city and along with her: the Dream Light. The Light which for over a thousand years had comforted the population of the city was no more. The light which weaved the dreams from outside into beautiful patterns went dark. The goddess was gone, and with her some of the love disappeared from the city.

War broke out. Everyone who had once belonged to Itra's court felt they were the right person to carry on her legacy. The old temple was defiled by hatred. The members of the court who had stood closest to the goddess fought a battle which made buildings fall down and the earth tremble. A conflagration spread through the city, and the river Akeron boiled with blood.

While the court fought between them Nindra forged her plot. Because of her role as an advisor she retained the loyalty of many of the mightiest of the city's mortal inhabitants. They were the noble families who had done Itra great favors in Antiquity. When creatures from beyond the fringes threatened to destroy the city, their heroic ancestors fought on the side of the goddess. Their leader was Moherat, the Guardian of The Dream Light. As a reward for their efforts the nobles were entrusted with keeping law and order and distributing the resources which arrive in the city from the other side of the sea. Their descendants constitute the so called import nobility. It was with these families Nindra now found her support.

In shelter from the murders and blood feuds Nindra spun a web of iron. She told her lackeys that if they obeyed her, she would again bring law and order to the city. With the blessings and help of the nobility she created The Grey Guard, an army answering only to her. With the help of this force and a ruthless strategy, she was able to conquer her opponents worn out remains.

Nindra entered the Moon Tower, and climbed its stairs. Her feet touched steps forbidden to all living creatures besides Itra. Her jet black hair fell off in tangles, and spread over her body like a bristly, ink

black fur. Nindra kept climbing whilst thousands of black eyes sprouted from her forehead. In the room where the Dream Light once lay, she built her nest. Her body grew, and hideous, long limbs protruded from it. The spider woman assumed the form she has today, and the Moon tower resounded with somber hymns to her glory.

### **The Moon Tower**

*Rugged arcades no one ever travels make way for living hallways. If you climb the winding spiral staircase for three stories you'll reach the cavern of the mute, which again leads to the great hall, where everything may be bought, except for love. Brilliant chandeliers scintillate in time with the violin; the laughter is carried by a weak draught through the air vents in the narrow passages where unmentionable creatures spin threads of silver. An elevator hums, the bars slide to one side and three men in dark clothes get out. We briefly glimpse the sacrificial knife one of them carries.*

Hastily we escape to the elevator, and let it bring us down. On the eighth floor a woman gets on, her face set in a horrifying smile. We notice that she doesn't look the same in the mirror, and we cold sweat in our corner of the elevator.

The Moon Tower is a mysterious place, filled with half-forgotten halls and hidden passages. Most of the tower is utilized by Nindra and her lackeys, but here one also finds the hidden floors, the thumb passage, the abandoned tower, the people of the bridge, the sect of the faceless, the secret of the equestrians, the eternal party and many other things as well.

### **The Judges**

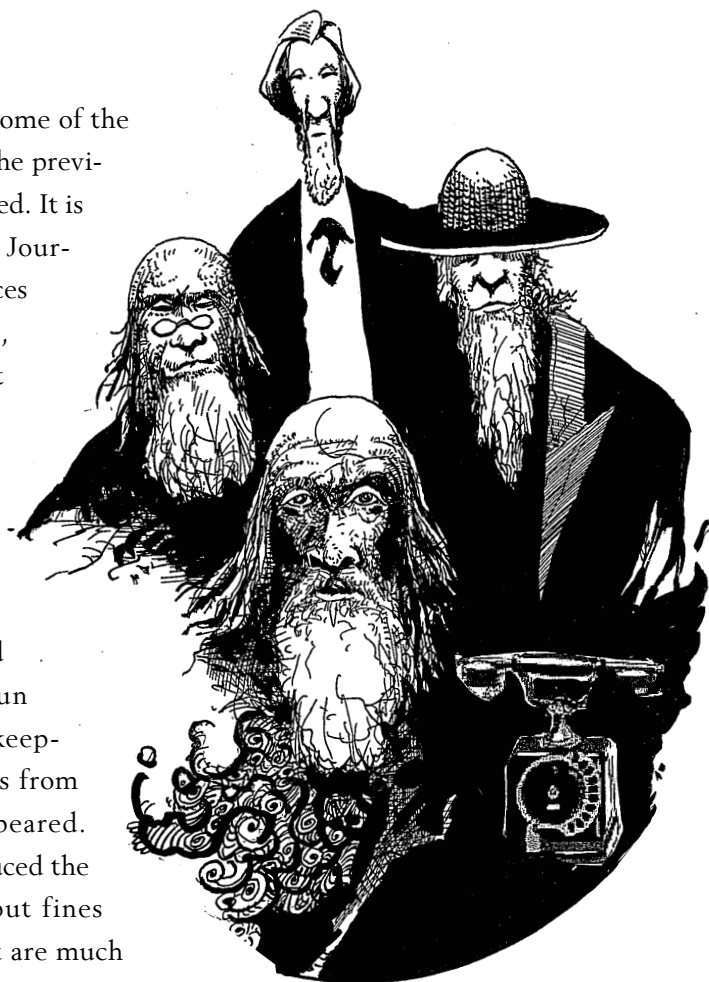
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The judges reside in a courthouse built in granite and decorated with symbols of justice: sculptures and frescoes of swords, scale pans and blind goddesses. The court house lies Downtown, in the shadow of the Moon Tower.

Each year a huge tome of the sentences passed the previous year is published. It is called the Judge's Journal. These sentences create precedence, and it will take a lot for a judge to challenge the assessment of another.

The parties to a trial have the right of an attorney, and some cases are run before a jury, in keeping with traditions from before Itra disappeared. Nindra has introduced the death sentence, but fines and imprisonment are much more common.

The judges consider themselves honest and uncompromising, and see it as their task to judge fairly according to the laws of Nindra and the Journals. Whether the laws and the journals are fair in and of themselves is not considered something for the judges to consider.



## *The Grey Guard*

*“The pool around the body had an oily veneer. The blood mingled with rain, cloudy streams carried it to the gutter. All of a sudden, the crowd turned restless. Soon it parted and made way for a figure. In the light of the gas light she was merely a silhouette, yet everyone knew who had ar-*

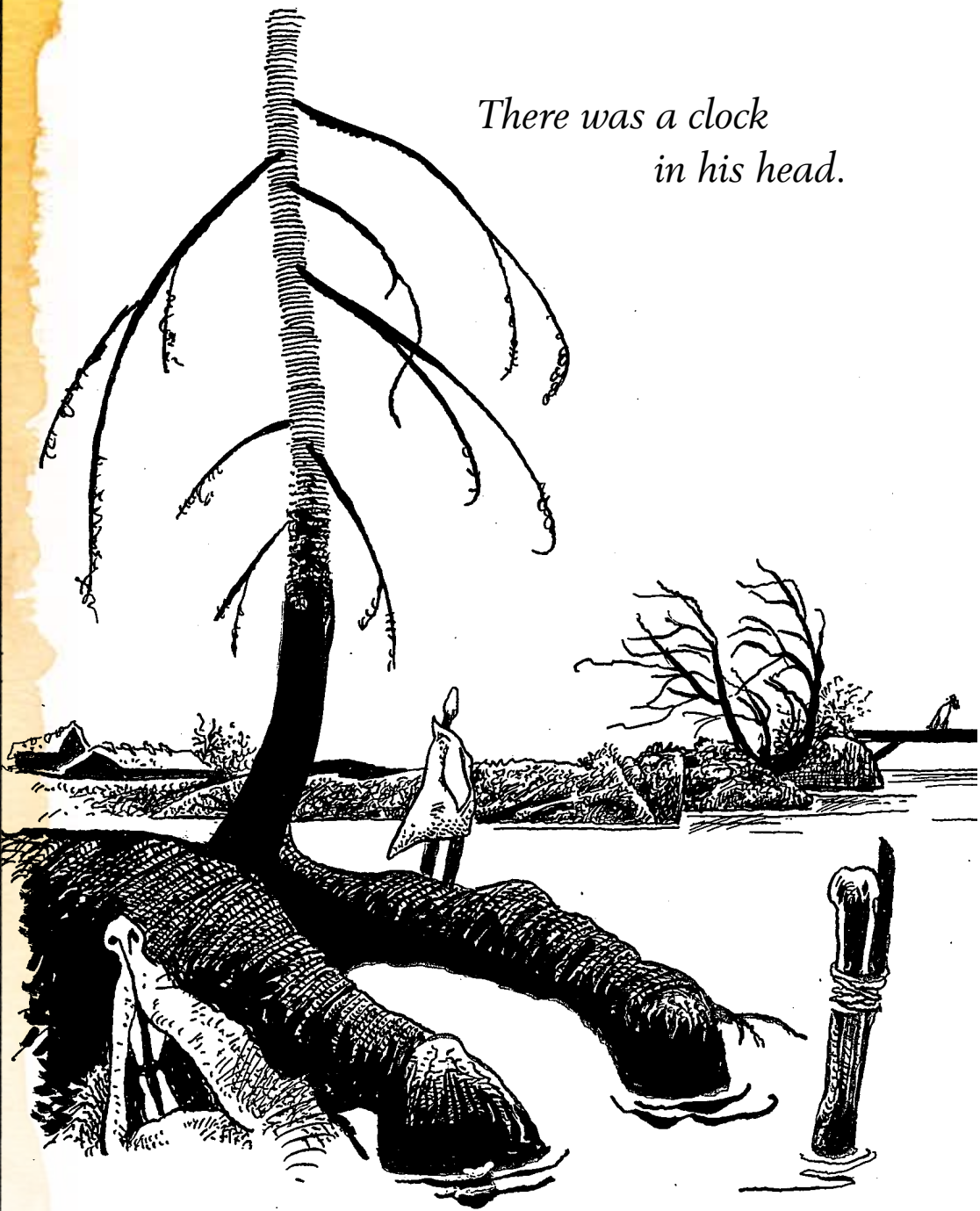
*rived. There was something about the attitude and the ash grey uniform. The vapor of sour cigarette smoke spread in the crowd. The Grey Guard had arrived at the scene."*

The Grey Guard grew out of the army Nindra used to win the Moon Tower. Their uniform is grey suits, grey coats and grey hats. Their automobiles are silver grey, and do not have license plates. Many people fear the Guard, and there are nasty rumors about its officers. In reality the guardsmen are like most people, but it's true that some of them may be overly dedicated to the service.

The Grey Guard has several stations Downtown. The officers do not have a reputation for kindness or service, but matters which are not instantly dismissed are actually given a thorough investigation.



*There was a clock  
in his head.*



# GRAND MEADOW

*It may have affected how  
he appeared to others,  
even though he in  
many ways was  
a charming man.*



Grand Meadow lies south of Mint Knoll. In Antiquity it was used for pastures. Today the green hills and ridges are occupied by the city's middle class.

The buildings are predominantly low brick houses encircled by little gardens with fruit- and flower trees. Pretty facades and tidy gardens have a high value to many of those who reside here. They are secretaries, merchants, clerks, housewives, bank officers, guardsmen, veterinarians, hairdressers and teachers, but also belong to the upper middle class such as doctors, editors, lawyers, morphiciaries and professors. The tallest buildings have four to five stories. These are usually well kept apartment buildings with spacious apartments. Dozens of little

parks with fountains lie like green oases round about the peaceful district. At night the cobbled streets are illuminated by gas light. On the street corners you can find grocery stores, tea houses, hair dressers, tobacconists, bookstores and cafés.

Two old institutions dominate the geography on their respective sides of Green Meadow: to the west lies the lush green area belonging to Itra's Zoo, and by the riverside in the east lies the city's university.

*The first autumn leaves flutter down the street. Professor Hans Schützel shoves his umbrella in the air to fend off the drizzle. On either side of the paved roads lie proper houses in red brick, surrounded by small gardens with abounding fruit trees and garden furniture about to be put away for the winter. From the chimneys drift streaks of smoke. Twilight is upon us, the gas lights along the road have been lit, and the moon is already hanging high in the sky. The professor trembles faintly, and grips his attaché case firmly.*

*In front of him lies Schnitzel's square. Only a few weeks ago old married couples sat here, feeding the pigeons, and the children were skipping rope around the small fountain. Now the square is deserted, excepting one bench. Upon it sits a man with a stern expression, coat and hat. There is something about him which doesn't fit with the atmosphere of the district, something hard and ruthless. The professor approaches cautiously.*

*"Did you bring the clay tablet?", the man asks. Professor Schützel rummages nervously through his case, looking for the tablet he stole from the museum.*

## *Itra's Zoo*

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Itra's Zoo is a large animal park dominating the western part of Grand Meadow. It was founded under Eighttor in 1714, and is today one of the city's most popular resorts. It spans a hundred acres and has over 200 different attractions.

### **The Zoo Keeper**

The Zoo Keeper is the boss of the area. He has absolute authority over both visitors and employees. Few people consider opposing his directions. He's a small, grumpy and bent man in his late sixties; he has white, messy hair, a long, thin nose and an unshaved chin. He doesn't wear glasses, even though he's somewhat nearsighted. People know him as an eccentric, with many strange rules and ideas, but he's filled with love for the park and the animals. He never leaves the zoo, and at night he sleeps in a cage which, conveniently, is always vacant. He believes this is because he has so many chores that he never has time to get home at night. In truth he's one of the attractions himself.

### **The Park Ape**

In return for payment the park apes supply a volunteer subject for Itra's Zoo. This ape stays in a cage for a year, before being replaced. Few of the park's patrons spend enough time by this cage to notice the difference.

### **Leviathan**

Leviathan is a relatively small fish kept in a separate room. The walls are adorned with old paintings, statistics, excerpts from novels and photography's of adventurers; everything is about the legendary species "Leviathan", which is supposed to live in the deep sea. There is also a wall chart describing this specific specimen. A long story explains how it was captured as a fry, tamed and fed on a special growth restraining diet in order to fit in the water tank.

### **The Fabletooth Tiger**

*"The fabletooth tiger is a large, striped cat with two large hardies, which lives in the Fringe Zones. It is wild and untamed, and defends itself ruthlessly against any perceived danger, but rarely attacks unprovoked. It doesn't eat food, but the raw stuff of dreams it absorbs by eating the semi real earth of the fringes. This substance gives the creature itself a mythical character.*

*Fabletooth tigers are rare, and difficult to capture. But they are not timid. If they feel confident that people's intentions are good they will approach*



*and try to converse or tell a tale. The fabletooth is a very intelligent animal, but has a limited organ of speech. When they speak it usually comes out as throaty snorts, monosyllables and telegraphic sentences.*

*There are never more than two fabeltooth tigers; a male and a female. They are mates. During their lives they leave a part of their essence in the fringes. When one of them dies the other one loses the will to live, and soon follows. Then, after a ten year period, they're reborn."*

This text could be found in encyclopedias only a few decades ago. Now, however, the situation has changed. One of the fringe zone expeditions of the Ancient and Venerable Society of Wanderers managed to capture the male tiger and bring him back to Itra's Zoo. Now he sits pining in his cage, whilst his mate wanders restlessly about the flatlands, longing for her love. The female tiger is still wild, powerful and impressive, but has a sad look on her face.

*Outside, the autumn wind blows fiercely. Black trees sway. As if in the rhythm of life itself. Children play with rusty skeletons which once were bikes. It's cold. A drizzle of rain. Brown colors on old facades. The children have drawn rugged hieroglyphics on the ground. For the game they call*

*"hopscotch" they use magical protective circles and the symbols of a different era. The stone they throw is rugged and flat. Mother watches the scene worriedly, before turning around, leaving the balcony and brewing another pot of tea. Father is in the grandfather chair, reading the newspaper and wondering why the children are screaming.*



## The University

Over the entrance gate is a granite arc. It has the following text engraved upon its surface: NOTHING IS WRITTEN IN STONE.

The University was founded in 1693, and owns a large, idyllic area east in Grand Meadow. Akeron's tributaries run slowly under archaic stone bridges. The grass is well kept, the trees are old and there are beautiful groves in small woods where a student and her friend might hide unseen in the twilight hours.

Professors with pipes and disheveled hair march past the young whippersnappers whilst mumbling to themselves about the mysteries of cosmos. The stronghold of knowledge is truly a good place to be. The university has four faculties, and under each of these are several institutes. The faculties are the Faculty of Art, Law, Science and Religion. Each faculty has its own student uniform.

*In the innermost room of the library the old ape lies. He is weakly and feeble. The glasses are an ill fit for his tiny nose.*

*The ape is ailing, yet works untiringly. Using a quill he fills notebook after notebook.*

*He's approaching the answer.*

*The solution to the mystery of the universe. He's been looking for so long. With his feet he peels a banana, while intently studying the pages of*

*a hundred year old logical thesis. He grunts, writhes with joy when he discovers a hole in the author's arguments. Sighs when the arguments hold*

*(Paragraph from the Morning Post 4th of February)*

### Finally, the Death Ray is here

With undreamt-of capacity of destruction, a functional Death Ray is now said to have been invented, after a series of experiments at the Institute of Humane Research. A glimpse of the machine's design and capacity was recently demonstrated at this year's Great Science Convention. Those who were privileged enough to attend have declared the experiment to be an astounding success. Dogs, cats and rabbits were immediately killed, as their blood turned to water when the Death Ray was turned upon them. It has been claimed that the machine is now brought under the control of the Moon Tower, until the day arises when such a defensive device might be needed.

*true, and butt against his own theories. Then, at once, the library is filled with a triumphant primal roar! Dusty librarians bustle dismayed towards the room. Men with leather patches on their elbows trade irate glances. In the room, they find the monkey. His tongue hangs limply from his mouth. The left foot is clenching a quilt. On the floor lies a half peeled banana.*

## *The Oneirotec*

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A stone throw away from the main buildings of the University lays the Oneirotec, the Library of Dreams. The building has tall columns, handsome cupolas and spires. Here the oneirotecharies are busy archiving, sorting and lending out written dreams. Shelf row upon shelf row extend for kilometers along winding stair cases and ancient galleries. There are sections for the dreams of historical figures, nightmares, dream interpretation, dream geography and more. The texts are sorted by different criteria. Some methods focus on the biography of the dreamer and his or her historical period. Others try to find patterns in dreams, special landscapes revisited by different dreamers and so forth. Others concern themselves chiefly with dreams that turn out to be prophetic. The study of dreams is taken deeply seriously in Itras By, and the oneirotecharies are the ones who make sure that the most important dreams of the city are preserved.

## *Domus Tempus*

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This unassuming apartment house lies in Grand Meadow. Once you enter Domus Tempus it looks like any other building, if a bit worse for the wear. There are cracked chess pattern tiles, squeaking water pipes, leaking faucets, radiators and a large boiler in the basement. The staircase is worn, and the wallpaper peeling. But as you move through the house, you gradually become aware that something is different here. Maybe you see the reflection of someone who was here

three decades ago. Maybe you'll hear the footsteps of someone who will first pass in a hundred years. In the house one can find notes and inscriptions begging for help, and trying to give advice. The inscriptions are dated in the far past and future, or maybe even yesterday. They are laments from the people who have gone astray in Domus Tempus and not found their way back out: "Dear wanderer, turn before it's too late. This is not a house, but a crazed time machine!"

### *Mr. Mogens' Monster* \_\_\_\_\_

Mr Mogens had a monster in his basement. In the evenings he could hear it rummaging, scratching the walls and breathing heavily.

Gilbert Mogens was a lonely man. He used to wake up alone in his small house in Grand Meadow, groom himself, get dressed and take the tram to his place of work. Here he would spend the days in an inquiry office, where he was sorting the mail to and from the company. Outside of Mr. Mogens' office was a sill. On it stood a stone sculpture of a hippogryph. It seemed like it was about to throw itself off the sill, but had been petrified before the flight could commence.

One night, a Monday night, it was raining quite a lot. Mr. Mogens lay in his bed. He was awoken by a presence in the room, but found that he was unable to move a single muscle. The room was dimly blue, the color of the early spring night at its darkest. Mogens was painfully aware of a tall, massive shape standing by the footboard of his bed. He didn't know whether it was only his imagination, but he definitely thought he could hear a heavy, hissing breath. He peered into the darkness, and thought it seemed as if the huge figure was moving. Thus he lay, rigid with fear, until the break of dawn, when the spring sun washed the shadows away. There was no one standing by Mr. Mogens' bed.

Some days after work, if weather allowed, he liked to stroll home. Sometimes he'd stop by a café for dinner. Sipping a glass of wine, he



would observe the other guests. On such a day, a Tuesday when the spring evening was especially mild and inviting, he was walking home after his visit to the café. He walked along the pavement of Grand Meadow, on tidy little streets. Inside the villas he could see bright lights, and families gathering for the evening meal. The gas lights hummed gently, and cast a warm glow over everything. The bushes were clad for spring, and gained a beautiful hue in the light. A suggestion of fog lay above the ground, curled, floated. In front of him on the path two lovers walked entwined, whispering cloying nothings. Embarrassed, Mr. Mogens passed them hurriedly.



Wednesday night, there was a terrible ruckus in the basement. Mr. Mogens awoke with a start, as the monster was howling and roaring and banging the walls. Startled, he sat up in his bed. He was wearing his pajamas and bedcap. He went over to the dresser and lit a candle. The monster shrieked heartrendingly, like a tortured child. With careful steps Mogens moved towards the basement. He opened the cellar door, and walked down the stone staircase. As he reached the cold basement floor, the monster was quiet. The candle light created flickering shadows on the walls, giving even the gardening tools an ominous look. At the far end of the basement was a heavy oak door with a barred window. In the darkness, the monster's eyes sparkled red. The howling had died down, but he could hear it breathe heavily. Slowly Mogens approached the door, holding the

candle up better to see. The hideous outline of the monster was faintly visible in the shadows, in a corner of the room. It didn't move. Mogens shivered. He left the basement without turning his back to the door.

Thursday Mogens met his only friend, principal Ebenhardt, whom he knew from his college days. They met at Café Parasol once a month, to exchange news and discuss the goings on in the city. As a main rule Ebenhardt had more exiting stories to contribute than Mogens. Today, however, the principal was the one to be surprised.

- You look a bit tired, my good friend, he told Mogens as they met. A waiter with a black vest and bow tie tried to keep one of the tables from drifting away.
- Yes, my monster has been keeping me awake, said Mogens.
- Your monster?
- Yes, the monster in my basement.
- Well, well, well... I can't remember you telling me about any monster. Why do you have a monster in your basement?
- Truly, I don't know. It has been there for quite a while, behind a locked door.
- So you're keeping it imprisoned?
- I wouldn't say that.
- But the poor creature is locked inside your basement?
- Well, yes. I guess that's true.

The conversation changed to other subjects, as conversations tend to do. Their table didn't fly away. It was a beautiful spring day.

Friday Mogens sat in his little office, in a corner on the fifth floor of a very tall office building Downtown. Outside the window were droplets of rain in the air, and over the sky, which he could barely glimpse, rolled heavy, grey clouds. The hippogryph looked sad where it stood, frozen in the rain. The letters blended together to Mr. Mogens. After a period of sectioning to mail code "A", he realized that he had put all the letters in the wrong pile, and had to start over. He sighed heavily.

Mr. Mogens walked home from the tram with an umbrella over his head. People he passed thought there was something very determined over this otherwise anonymous little man. The grey tweed suit, the little, yellow bowtie, the round glasses with the thick rims, were this afternoon carried with an aura of will none of his neighbors could remember.

Mogens shook his umbrella in front of the door, entered the hall and hung his hat on the hat stand. He was breathing a little more heavily than usual, but resolutely hooked off a key from a peg in the hallway. Then he went to the cellar door, opened it and went down. Down in the cold basement it was pitch dark. He could hear himself breathing. Mogens was also certain he could make out another sound, deep in the darkness. He fumbled through the darkness, almost tripped over a rake, and found the heavy door with his hands.

After a while he found the lock. He put the key inside the keyhole, and turned it.

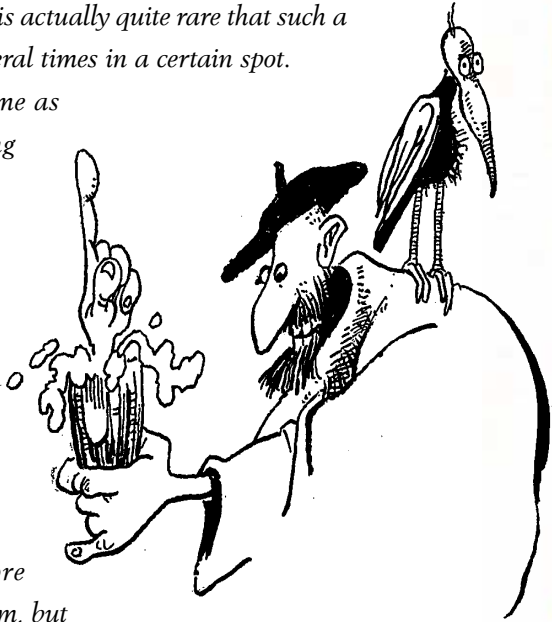
## *Cafe Parasol*

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“The outlines of the cobblestones are shimmering clear in the radiant summer sun. Waiters with vests and bowties scuttle about with a haughty air and their heads full of clouds, yet they’re lovably present for each guest. Personally, my favorite aspect of the café is the tall, old oak tree towering over the crocky building. Originally erected as a public house in the 18th century, when *The Travelers* made the city both dangerous and exiting, Parasol has developed to become a more sedate and traditional establishment (but roof beams, cellar stairs and foundations never forget, you should know. Stabs in the night, strange diplomats from foreign lands, the bearded watchmaker of Cuzimbar, the song of the twelve sailors, three excursions for Our Lord and the time the spider woman herself visited the inn. But that’s another story and shall be told another time).

One of the most exiting aspects of the spot on which the café is situated is obviously the fact that gravity is sometimes suspended. In itself neither


*unique nor remarkable, but it is actually quite rare that such a phenomenon repeats itself several times in a certain spot. And it surely does. It can come as a surprise to an unsuspecting client, but most regulars know that it's merely a matter of patience and thread. Usually the effect wears off, and people are rarely hurt. Once Baron Willifred Egg (the ceaseless lion hunter) and his coffee table travelled to the Moon and stayed there for rather a long time before anyone was able to retrieve him, but that story too, shall be told another time."*



## *Bellevue*

**B**ellevue is a ridge west of Grand Meadow, with a great view over the whole city, and especially Itra's Zoo, which lies at the foot of the ridge. For time immemorial the area has been used by people fond of the outdoors and climbers, and as pasture for sheep and goats. Cherry, chestnut and other fruit and nut trees grow here, flowering by turn throughout spring and summer. Towards the Great Sea Bellevue ends in a tall and dramatic cliff called Jebenhardt's Leap, named after one of Moherat's twelve men. The tallest point on Bellevue is called Eighttor. A few years ago progress reached this part of Itras By as well. Bulldozers and steam shovels have made it possible to construct an elegant and modern road which winds up the side of the ridge. An aerial cableway connects the height with the end station of line 12 on the underground, so that access to nature now is manageable to anyone in the city. Because of the extra cost of building in such rugged terrain only wealthy people have moved to this development. Here you'll find celebrities from silent





movies and cultural life, nouveau riche businessmen and entrepreneurs, architects, engineers and futurists. The buildings are made of steel and concrete, and have large panorama windows and roof terraces so that the owners can enjoy the view and the evening sun.

## *Institute of Humane Research, IHR* —

The institute focuses, as the name suggests, on human beings. It's known both for its efficiency and the breadth of the problems addressed. This has been achieved primarily due to a total contempt for the subjects of the institute. The lack of respect for ethical principles constitutes a great attraction to both mad scientists, and cynical employers.

A large amount of unfortunate test subjects, from various backgrounds, are kept under lock in the institute's dungeon. They may be convicts, homeless people, grimasques and volunteers who didn't know what they signed up for. What they have in common is that their names have been erased from all registers, that friends and relatives who search for them have a tendency to disappear, and that they are captives for life. If a subject survives one experiment, they're merely transferred to the next one.

On the outside the institute looks like an old dilapidated mansion. On the inside the style is different – white, sterile corridors; narrow dark laboratories with sound proof doors and bloodstains which never come off; and nice, clean offices.

The head of the department, Mr. Peter Horn, is tall and thin. His face is full of deep, joyless wrinkles, but his hair still is still thick and black as coal. He wears a couple of round glasses at the end of his nose. Horn is an emotion- and humorless man with a great thirst for knowledge. The only thing which has ever given him any joy is the confirmation of an interesting hypothesis. Horn does not care about anyone, and has no compassion. The institute is controversial, and has been the target of several organized protests and direct actions, but has yet to be forbidden.

## *The Machine God* \_\_\_\_\_

In a fortress under the ground the plans for a new city are being drawn. A city which is rational, efficient and mechanized. A city where people's lives have direction, and are controllable and meaningful. The Machine God is a visionary, and his vision is to see Itras By pulverized and rebuilt in his image.

In Itra's days The Machine God was a golden, beloved being, but he was badly injured during the battles that followed the disappearance of the goddess. He has relatively recently woken after his long slumber, and is today a bloated shadow of his old self. He has built a fortress in the heart of the catacombs. The chamber is almost impenetrable, and consists of a convoluted maze of corridors and shafts deep underground, entrenched with big cannons. The chamber resounds with the sound of assembly lines, hydraulics and hissing steam engines. Chains rattle and cog wheels creak. Thick, green cables, through which the Machine God receives his nourishment, run along the walls.

When the Machine God woke up, his creative power was gone. This is his big weakness. He depends on plagiarizing the ideas of others, sucking their creative abilities from them. This happens in a literal sense. Around the city his followers have rigged some very peculiar lamp posts. Unknowing victims who pass these are irradiated with a green, flickering light which sucks their creativity out, and leaves them as hollow personalities without imagination.

In the "lamp post" the dream stuff, the matter which reality itself consists of, and which can be found in its purest form in the human soul, is condensed, and led along the cables down to the chamber of the Machine God. He greedily laps up the dream stuff, and for a short moment it's as if you can see a sparkle of light in his dim eyes.

The city is becoming ever more dependent upon the inventions of the Machine God, and this is part of his plan for conquest. The automobile, turbine and time clock are all his creations. Rational life is the good

life, he believes. The Machine God works to manufacture ever more complex machinery and weapons, until one day he will be powerful enough to challenge Nindra, take over the Moon Tower and re-forge the city after his own image.

### Followers

The Machine God has great resources to offer those who serve him, and many scientists run his errand. There exists, amongst other things, a secret





lodge of professors in natural science, who meet to sing mathematical algorithms to the Machine God's glory.

The cult members who meet in the chamber of the Machine God carry white laboratory coats as their ritual garments, and dedicate their lives to his service. Others are ignorant of each other and work alone in basements, institutes and secret laboratories. The orders from the Machine God are stenciled on spirit duplicators and transmitted to his agents through an intricate system of pneumatic dispatches. They consist of series of numbers, written in code language.

Sometimes the Machine God's worshippers drag people to the lamp posts and tie them up as a sacrificial gift, whilst waiting for the Holy Consumption.



## *Reclaim the streets. A repetition.*

You may have noticed that some of the places and creatures in Itras By, like Nindra, the Machine God and the wilderness, have deeper roots in the city's history than others. But should that come in the way of making them your own? To change them as you find best? Why? If you should feel any hesitation to change the story for yourself and those you play with, try a combination of exercise one and two: cross out the elements you wish to change, write the new ones in the margins, or on scraps of paper you staple to the book!





*We let loose the anchor  
and drifted skywards.*

# INTO THE WILD

The Moon Tower is the heart of the city, and in the surrounding Downtown area reality is at its most stable. The further away from the tower you get, the more inconstant reality becomes. The Fringe Zones surround the world like the surface of a soap bubble. No matter which way you travel from the Moon Tower, no matter whether it's up in the air or down in the ground, south or north, east or west, you'll eventually wind up in the fringes.

Reality ends about a week's journey away from the Moon Tower, but dissolves dangerously long before that. A good pointer is the light from the Moon Tower. When it is no longer visible it's often too late to turn around.

## *The Ocean* \_\_\_\_\_

Daily fishing boats disembark and return with fresh hauls for the city's plates. But the fishermen fear the most distant waters. The weather is unstable, and there are many stories about what lives out there. Tales of ghost ships. Stories of hateful, scanty isles where the populace wants nothing to do with city slickers. Fishermen who spend their entire lives on the ship. Pointy islets jutting out of the sea. The creatures of the deep, huge monsters from the oldest tales, who once every century resurface to chew up a trawler. Sunken treasures guarded by giant octopuses. Pirates who live according to their own rules.

Outside the safe banks closest to the city the danger of loss and the chance of gain are the biggest. Some of the largest trawlers venture out there, looking for the big catch and the rare goods the food lovers know to pay for. After all, they think: the strange cargo ships which bring goods to the export companies come from the Great Sea. How dangerous can it be out there?

Pretty dangerous. Out there, you'll find the rippling, unreal depths of the Fringe Zones and the creatures that inhabit them.



## *The Black Ships*

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**I**n the beginning, when Itra had just given her city shape, a man came to her from across the sea. A black sailing ship rallied towards the marble harbor, which sparkled invitingly at the threshold of the new reality. The captain of the ship was a tall man with a big, grey beard that reached him to his knees. His eyes were blue like the ocean. Itra was confused; she couldn't remember having created neither ship nor man. On the other side of the sea were only the limits of her dream? The man's name was Murlon, and he offered to bring goods to Itra's world, goods which didn't exist there. As payment he demanded, according to the legend, that as long as the city existed the inhabitants should celebrate a great feast in his honor. Murlon's night is celebrated each year on the 26th of July, with a big carnival and parades in the city.

The years went by, and Murlon's black vessels each week reached the harbor with new commodities. After Moherat and his twelve men fought the creatures from outside, each of them was granted monopoly over different kinds of merchandise the ships brought. Their descendants are the import nobility, the richest men and women in the city.

The ships evolved in time with the technological development in the city, and today the large crafts have turned into black steamers. They're manned by stern strangers, sailors who belong nowhere. The black ships are the only vessels that can safely travel in the outermost fringes. The sailors aren't very talkative, but if asked they'd tell you that the goods are collected at a foggy quay beyond the end of the world.

## *Mermaid Shoals*

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**E**very twenty years the mermaids come to Shell Island to spawn. The mermaids are beautiful creatures of the sea, with the upper body of a woman and the tail of a large green fish. The shoals sometimes wilder into fishing nets or get pierced by fishing hooks.

They take revenge by singing enchanted songs that tempt the sailors to throw themselves in the sea to be with the mermaids. This has made fishermen fear them, and there are examples of mermaids who have been pulled aboard being tormented to death. The result of all this is a bitter hatred between the mermaids and the fishermen.

The rumor of raging Sea Elephants is incorrect.

*(Paragraph from the Morning Post 27th of August)*

The Morning Post yesterday conversed the Grey Guard's Chief Inspector of the harbor to inquire as to whether there were any results regarding the investigation started due to the claims of Sea Elephants having been observed northwest of Shell Island. The Chief Inspector was able to tell that these claims were baseless, as well as the fabrication of drunks and liars. The Sea Elephant population by Shell Island was exterminated over sixty years ago, thanks to the heroic effort by big game hunter and adventurer Bartholomeus Finkel. Some of Finkel's trophies from these sea safaris actually decorate the walls of the Regatta Club, and the big regatta trophy has been carved from a single piece of sea elephant bone.



## Archipelago

Outside the coast of Itras By, southwest of Grand Meadow, in the Great Sea, but before the sea turns to thunderstorms, fog thick as pea soup, leviathans, ghost ships, floating islands, the last harbors, creatures not meant to exist, isolated and scanty fishing communi-



ties, undertows, societies of ships tied together and so forth, lies the Archipelago.

The Archipelago consists of a sprinkling of islets, skerries and islands, and lies so close to the city and the Moon Tower that reality there is relatively stable. In the center of the Archipelago lies the Pearl Islands, said to be made from the tears of joy Itra shed when she saw the city for the first time, after weaving together her dream threads in the beginning. Among these lies beautiful Shell Island, venue of the yearly Shell Island Regatta. The Pearl Islands have for the last century become very attractive holiday properties for the rich men and women of the city. Here handsome villas and hunting lodges tower on crags and projections, surrounded by the abounding birches and wild flowers of the Archipelago.

On the small islands outside Pearl Islands there are cozy, red houses and farms. The wind strokes gently over the wheat, farmers tend to the soil of their ancestors, and fishermen pull their nets like they've done for time immemorial.

Closer to Black Bay lies the holiday camp Farsight, where the Black Bay Workers Guild send naughty boys and girls for summer camp. They're dressed in khaki uniforms, and taught discipline and walking in step under the authoritative leadership of "The General". So that they will one day turn into useful cogs in the "societal machinery", as "general" Pludwell-Howell cheerfully declares in interviews. The boys, as a sort of warning, also have a view of the prison island "The Pen", where large, rusting old tubs lie anchored, filled with prisoners. The convicts work in "the Machine", a baroque factory spreading across the whole of the island, and sleep in their cells on the ships. "That's the destiny for naughty boys and girls, who don't want to know their place in the system", Pludwell-Howell explains to the children at Farsight.

## *The Wilderness*

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“The automobile coughed heavily while struggling up the hill. The lights of the Moon Tower twinkled with gold in the rear view mirror. I adjusted my hat and rolled the window slightly open as to ventilate the heavy cigarette smoke Uma was filling the car with. She looked nervously. “I’ve never been this far outside the city”, she whispered, while staring at the black, rugged trees along the side of the road. The forest we were passing through was wild, untamed. She nervously fiddled with the metal lighter. We were getting close. The ridge appeared. I squinted, waved the cigarette smoke aside. There, an old house was clinging to the hillside. A ramshackle, wooden house with tall windows and turret wings. A light shone in one of the windows, a bluish, intense light – and Uma whispered: “That’s where we’re going.”

There are many rumors about the wilderness and its inhabitants. Most of them are true. The sentient beings who choose to live in the dangerous wilderness around the city are loners, criminals, lunatics and monstrosities of all shapes and sizes. There are also those who are born and raised here, and who know no other life than the sleepy rhythm of the farm or the strict demands of the sect. Scientists carry out forbidden experiments in hidden laboratories. Isolated communities eat their own children and mate with their siblings. Persecuted cults flourish and win new adherents. Old castles cling to the edges of steep cliffs. Somber factories pump the sky full of poison whilst the turbines hum the deep sounds of alien songs. Cackling laughter fills the gorges. The wilderness is the home of the outcasts.

## *The Estates*

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Closest to the city lie the magnificent mansions of the import nobility. These are huge properties of several hundred acres, which once upon a time were given to the noble families by Itra. The center of the estate is usually a manor house or a castle. A few noble families live permanently on the estate, but most live on Mint Knoll and use the estate as a country house. After the war the wilderness

grew more dangerous, and most estates are guarded by armed men. The ones furthest away from the city have been abandoned by the nobility, as they're too dangerous to live in. In ancient times, these castles were advanced defensive positions in case intruders yet again would threaten the city. They were occupied by the stalwart warriors of Moherat's order. Today gloomy castle ruins rest on the top of tall cliffs, and wolves howl at the Moon.

### *Dr. Kinkelbraun* \_\_\_\_\_

**D**r. Kinkelbraun used to be employed at the University, where he researched speculative modular ontology. His theory maintained that there was a particular substance outside of reality, which everything originated from. Kinkelbraun thought that by understanding the laws controlling this substance, one could further science to unknown frontiers.

Other scientists laughed at the doctor's strange theories. In the end the Institute for Physical Models of Perception discharged him. Kinkelbraun had long been unstable, but this drove him over the edge of insanity. He used his last means to

build a laboratory in the wilderness. Here he continues his bold experiments. He feels that the results of his work have been even better after he moved to the wilderness. He's built a brass monster of a machine which he



uses to collect what he believes is the “Original Substance”. It has to be admitted that there have been certain unfortunate side effects to the use of this machine. Creatures, objects and phenomena not covered by Kinkelbraun’s theories have appeared in his laboratory. Meeting these bizarre characters has driven the doctor further into madness, but still he tirelessly works to tame the Original Substance.

*My coat flutters in the wind. I look across the march, at a house. It has a cheerful, blue sign fitted on the façade. I know it belongs to a sect. A woman approaches me. She walks along the path leading from the house to the road. We sit down next to the pillar boxes and enjoy the sun. She’s wearing a summer dress. It’s getting hotter. She wants to seduce me. Wants me to sleep with her. She unbuttons her dress, and I can see there’s a hole on her stomach, crawling with tiny bugs. I pull my hand back, and shake of the small insects. They fill the woman. She smiles at me, pulls the dress together. I follow her into the house, up the stairs to a loft. She starts to undress. The insects call out to me. They buzz inside her. Pulsate and whirr around the hole in her stomach.*

*I am the woman. The bugs ooze from my mouth in a thick, crawling stream.*

## *Moherat's Wall* \_\_\_\_\_

After Moherat and his twelve warriors had defeated the creatures from outside; they built a gigantic wall on the cliffs and ridges where the Fringe Zones begin. The wall was supposed to serve as a bulwark against intruders. It was guarded by the Order of Moherat, an order of knighthood which only admitted the most competent and just men and women from the import nobility.

During the war the walls were razed. The remains of the guard towers today are homes to wild animals and monsters, and the granite boulders from the destroyed wall lay spread across the landscape like small mountains. Outside the wall reality falls apart, and the Fringe Zones begin.



## *The Chain Clouds*

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**I**n the Fringe Zones you can see them on the horizon. They drift slowly forwards, carried by winds which cannot be felt on the ground. Huge, iron grey clouds floating high above the mountains. Long, heavy chains hang from them and drag across the ground. They look like jellyfish. The sound they make is squeaking, rattling, slowly rumbling, while burdening the landscape with metal.

From afar one can see small shapes hanging from the chains. These are the chain riders, who climb up and down the kilometer long threads. There are different tribes. Some of them only use the clouds as a means of transportation, and never venture further than a few meters, maybe a few tens of meters, over the ground. But one or two tribes climb further up.

Inside the clouds there is machinery propelling them forward. The rumbling, shrieking noise of cog wheels and gears is deafening. You can feel it physically. The clouds are not made for humans to be inside, there's no room. The cloud climbers have to find small corners to sit in while carrying out their work. This work consists of chopping holes in the clouds, so they can get outside to live. They make balconies, ladders and small houses outside the Chain Clouds. Like little parasites they sit on top of the clouds, invisible from the ground.

They have developed special tools to deal with life up there. Fisheye periscopes are used to investigate other clouds from below, so they can see if there's anyone inside. Seagull nets are used to catch birds for food. They also maintain the clouds, oil them and look after them so they can use them to their own ends. Some families have found ways to control the clouds, and may raise or lower them at will.

Their legends speak of the Aulurians, who many centuries ago had a sky empire spanning hundreds of Chain Clouds. The aulurians became megalomaniac, and steered the clouds in from the Fringe Zones, towards Itras By. Their goal was to attach to the Moon Tower and seize

the city. The guardians of the Dream light prepared for battle atop Moherat's Wall. But the clouds turned to vapor as they approached the city. They may only exist in the fringes.

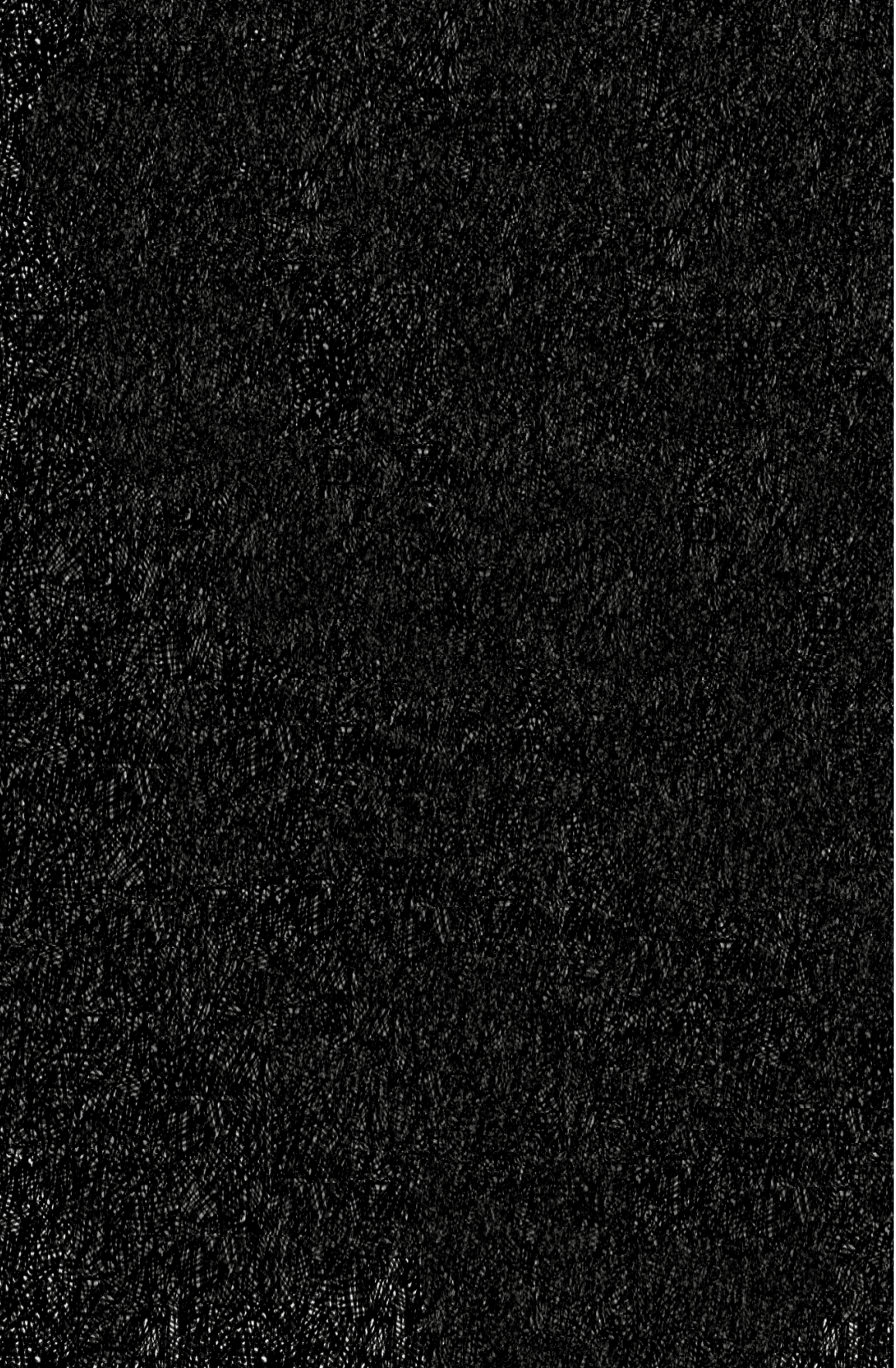
## TIMELINE

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### *Year*

1	Itra creates the city
180	Moherat's order of the Guardians of the Dream Light fight the creatures from beyond
900?	Harimanatek's prophecy about Club Apocalypso
1279	Jeremy Finkelton is born
1300?	An attempt to move the apocalypso almost ends in disaster
1450?	The cloud empire of the aulurians ends
1600	Itra disappears
1603	Nindra enters the Moon Tower
1693	The University is founded
1714	Itra's Zoo is founded
1782	The Grey Guard puts an end to the piracy outside the city's coasts
1840	The Machine God rises from his slumber
1881	The Salon of the Subduers of Darkness is founded
1911	Present





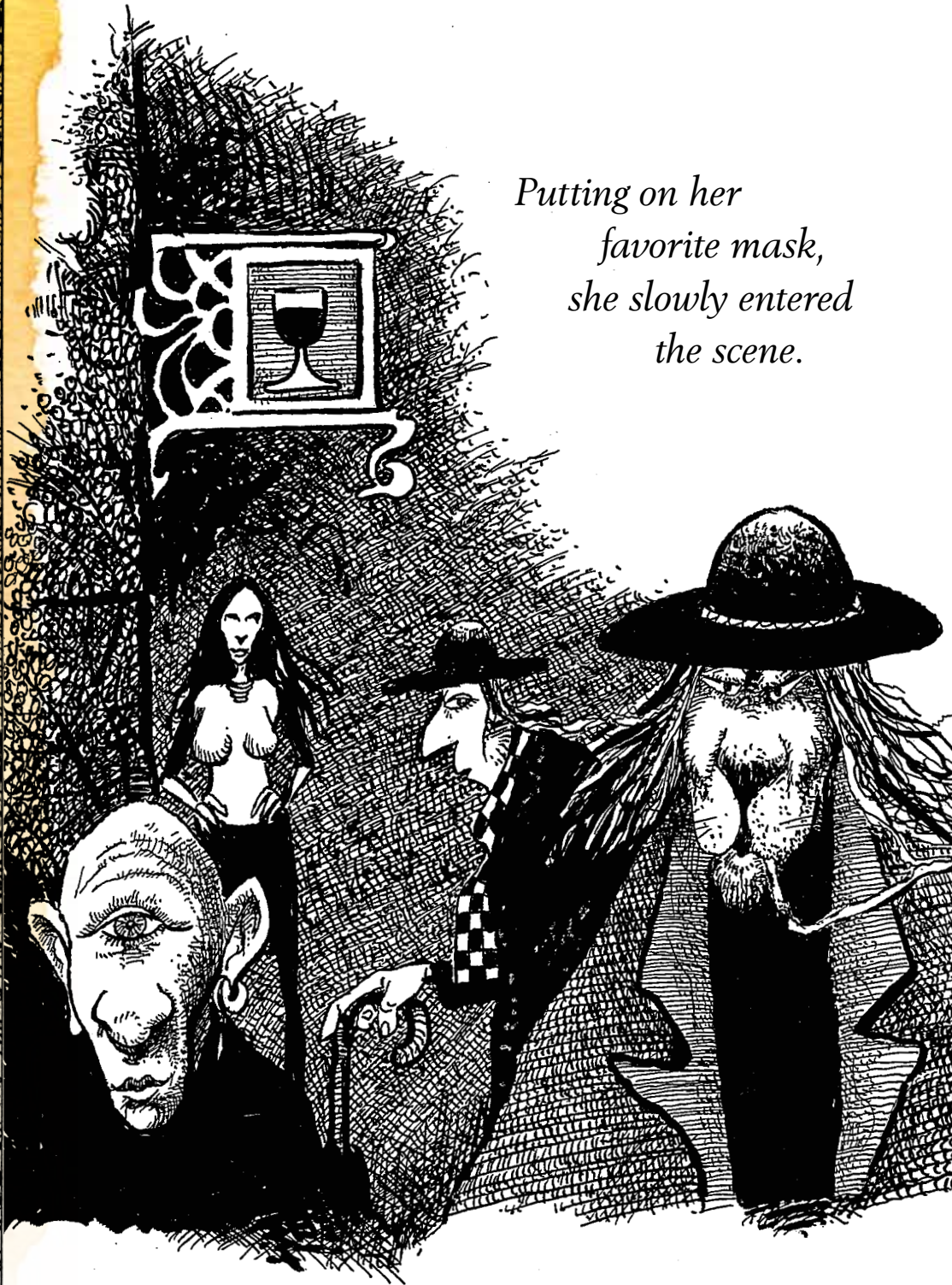


PART TWO

THE GAME



*Putting on her  
favorite mask,  
she slowly entered  
the scene.*



# THE CHARACTER

The main characters of Itras By are controlled by the players. Their actions drive the story forwards. Their senses are the player's spy holes into the city. It's you, the player, who'll decide your character's origin, qualities, personality and what she does during the game. This chapter will tell you what you need to know about the character, and how to proceed in order to invent this information. The process consists of nine parts:

1. Idea
2. Background
3. Dramatic qualities
4. Personality
5. Intrigue Magnets
6. Supporting characters
7. The other characters
8. Other details

You will probably wish to work back and forth between these items. You'll invent something for one item, get ideas for another one, go back and change a bit on the first and so forth. At the end of this chapter you'll find examples of characters.

### **First: Speak with the gamemaster and the other players.**

Before you start making the character it's important that you and the other players agree on what kind of campaign you wish to create. The characters should be able to work as a group. There may very well be conflicts, but not worse than that you're able to cooperate. A character who's a Grey Guard will not necessarily fit in a group of criminals from Black Bay, unless she's for instance infiltrating them, or is corrupt.

The campaign is a series of adventures where you play the same characters. They might be loosely connected, or there might be one big intrigue which pushes you along. It's during a campaign you really get to see the characters develop, change, reach their goals and discover new ones.

The exact concept for the group and the campaign is worked out in unison. Neither the gamemaster nor the players can decide this on their own. The characters could for instance be a group with a specific goal or a circle of friends who come across adventure. The story of

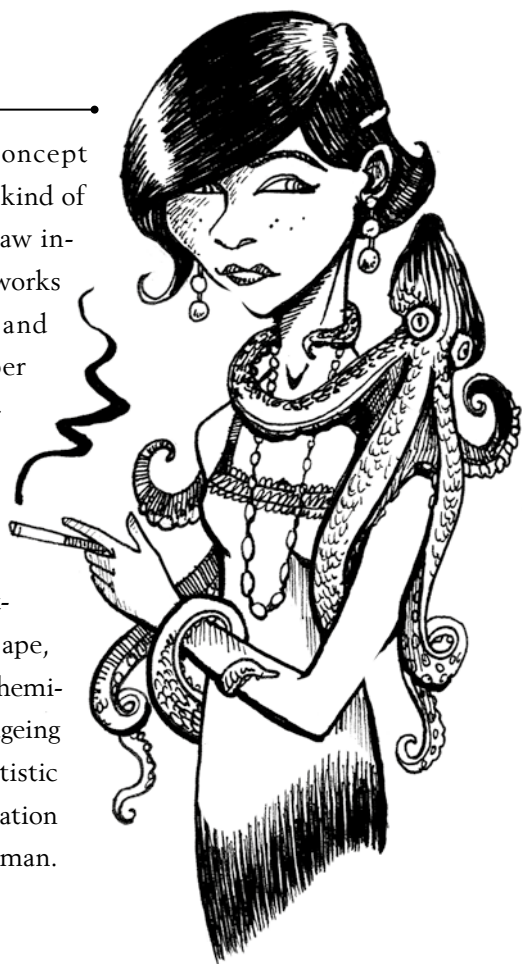
how the characters got to know each other can be worked into their backgrounds. No matter how you invent them, you ought to have some ideas about the mood of the campaign and some important supporting characters. See the chapter **The Campaign** (p.144) for more about creating a campaign.

**Campaign Concept Examples:** Gentlefolks on Mint Knoll, fugitive grimasques, crime fighting city apes, explorers of the Fringe Zones, hardboiled librarians, romance and cold steel, philanthropic private eyes, a haunted art collective, investigators of mystery, a group of everyday people suddenly finding themselves together in a room deep down in the Catacombs, rugged and salty sailors, vindictive florists.

## *Part One: Idea* \_\_\_\_\_

**B**ased on your campaign concept you start figuring out what kind of a character you want to play. Draw inspiration from this book, other works you've seen and read, dreams and your own experiences. Remember that good ideas are there to be stolen. Write down a few keywords about the idea you've chosen.

Sample character concepts include: gruff factory worker, liberated house wife, conservative park ape, hardboiled detective, anarchist bohemian, butterfingered Boulderbeast, ageing dilettante, psychotic professor, artistic nightmare, dissatisfied personification of an old idea, enthusiastic guardsman.





## *Part Two: Background* \_\_\_\_\_

**F**ind out a little bit about what has happened before play begins. How did your character get to Itras By? Is she born there, or has she recently arrived? What has her life been like? Is she a regular human, or a stranger creature? Has she experienced something important which still affects her? What has she been doing the past year, or the past few weeks? Write down the background in the form of a brief paragraph or some notes, whichever suits you best.

## *Part Three: Dramatic Qualities* \_\_\_\_\_

**T**he dramatic qualities are a few defining properties the character has. They may be skills, personality traits or special circumstances surrounding the character. They can be useful, annoying or merely entertaining. The idea is to give the character a distinctive stamp and a niche in the campaign. Dramatic qualities are different from other defining traits in that they're used in play more often, and when they're used, your character takes center stage.

The example character Thomas Chesterfield (see the end of this chapter) has a goat's hoof. It's not something the player plans to use in play or emphasize, it's just one of his many traits and therefore not a dramatic quality. If the player wished to generate a lot of play around the hoof, for instance by saying that everyone who sees it becomes wanton and wants to drink and party, then we would be talking about a dramatic quality.

Thomas also has the more pedestrian trait that he's very likeable. This may not be as strange, but is something the player wishes to use actively in the game, and for others to emphasize, therefore it's a dramatic quality.

The difference between dramatic qualities and other traits shouldn't be viewed as a straightjacket – it's not meant to infer that the player in the example above should avoid mentioning the hoof or use it in play.



Describe one or more dramatic qualities your character has. The qualities you choose should help further and build the concept you have chosen for your character, and arrange for dramatic situations. Write down the name of the quality and a few cues as to what you think it means for the character. Some of them can be to the character's advantage, some may be flaws, and others could simply be characteristics which make stuff happen.

Some qualities could obviously make the characters very powerful or skilled. This need not be a problem; it will only lead to them facing equally great challenges. Yet it's important that no quality is so dominating that a single character renders the others superfluous. If, during the game, one finds that this is the consequence of a dramatic quality one can change it so that it's given certain limitations. The limitations could for instance be "works once a day", "only works in special circumstances", or something to that effect.

You can have as many dramatic qualities as you wish, between one and four is a good starting point.

Towards the end of this chapter you'll find examples of dramatic qualities. You should give your character at least one dramatic quality which is not mentioned as an example in this book.

## *Part Four: Personality* \_\_\_\_\_.

**T**ry to understand the behavior and emotional life of your character. Figure out how she perceives and relates to existence. Feelings and behavior are constantly in flux, but your personality and values are more constant.

Write down some adjectives which describe the character's disposition and spirits, like "happy and naïve", "grumpy" or "kind, but morbid". You could also think about how the character handles particular situations like stress, joy and danger. Which values does the character live by? Is she full of impersonal conscience or characterized by care? Is she first

and foremost concerned with herself, or does she focus on the people she loves? Does she have a strict moral code to be lived by, or does she adapt to the situation?

“Silent and introvert” is by the way a character concept which might work in movies, but rarely does in roleplaying games. Since the game is based on conversation you’ll make it very difficult for yourself and others by playing a character which rarely speaks.

### *Part Five: Intrigue Magnets* \_\_\_\_\_

**B**ased on what you now know about the character, you’ll find two to four Intrigue Magnets. These are concrete agendas, characteristics or events which help draw your character into adventures. It could be goals the character wishes to reach. Does she have someone to avenge? Missing parents, children or a lover? Is she a member of the Futurists? Does she have dangerous enemies? Building the adventures around such Intrigue Magnets is the best guarantee for involving both the players and their characters in the game.



The goals of the characters can be abstract or concrete, short term or long term. They may also change during the campaign. If you wish, you could write down your preliminary goals for the character's development. What will actually happen is impossible to predict before the game starts, though. All good stories have unexpected twists and turns.

*The character is under investigation by the Grey Guard for a crime she didn't commit, has crossed a mighty import noble, is in love with her cousin and has a rival, poses as another, was the only witness to the robbery of a cursed mask, has been declared persona non grata at Mint Knoll due to a scandalous trial, her life depends on a certain watch being wound at all times, has been attacked several times without understanding why, has been morphenced to a dramatic life by the Morphiciary, sees through the eyes of a killer every time she falls asleep, has been told that in her future she will win great riches in a terrible manner. Wishes to: find the brother who never returned from the laboratory, win the love of the rich man's unachievable daughter, become the most well-known explorer in the city, fight the red spot epidemic in Black Bay, investigate why the vibrations in the spaltricular Flibbertigibbertstaff gives off chronometric fluctuations by variations in the tenth column, stop the Futurist's assassination of doctor Garibaldi the younger, become a better woman, gather great riches, fight evil in all its forms, seduce as many women as possible, tame a Backyard Lion.*

## *Part Six: Supporting Characters* \_\_\_\_\_

**W**rite down at least one person your character knows. These could be family, friends, colleagues, rivals, contacts, customers, allies, employers, enemies, fellow cultists, competitors or others. Make up some names and relations which could either be developed in further detail or left to the gamemaster. Interesting supporting characters are the backbone of any campaign, and players will often be more interested in interacting with the one's they've helped create. You can also use the characters described in this book as contacts.

## Part Seven: The Other Characters \_\_\_\_\_

Talk to the other players, and write down some keywords about how the characters know each other. It's important that there are enough ties between the characters so that everyone may be involved in the same stories. Write down some keywords about how you know at least one other character, and make sure that everyone knows at least one of the others.

*A&B might be friends, family, neighbors, lovers, former rivals or colleagues, B&C suddenly realized that they had to adventure together, were shaken together by circumstance or are hunting for the same alchemic substance, while C&A might be mutated by the same chemical compound, have grown together at the waist or are hunted by scissor men.*

## Part Nine: Other Details \_\_\_\_\_

- Name, Age, Appearance
- District and home
- Subsistence

## Overview \_\_\_\_\_

Now you know most of what you need to know about the character, but before you put down the pencil you can ask yourself the following:

- What makes the character alive and colorful?
- What makes her exciting to play?
- What do you like about your character?
- What gives the character new challenges?

If you can't answer these questions, you may wish to go back and re-write parts of the character.



## *Dramatic qualities*

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Here are some examples of what the dramatic qualities might look like.

**Attractive:** Atlas Towers is, besides being the best known cricket athlete in the city, exceptionally handsome. His steely blue gaze is firm and brave, the black hair thick and polished, the jaw as if chopped marble, the nose straight and without any unsightly hair growth. Standing a full head taller than most other men obviously also contributes to the maiden's hearts beating out of their chests when in his presence.

**Tolliver's Death:** Tolliver's Death visits him from time to time. Mr. Death is a small round man with yellow hat and a striped suit. When he visits Tolliver it's usually an unsettling experience, for instance in situations when Tolliver is about to, well, die. When he's not with Tolliver his death spends his time by the river, playing chess with the old men.

**Photographic Memory:** "Hang on, gentlemen! Isn't the fellow on the other side of the street the very same thief we caught while he was about to steal the irreplaceable antique mug from the museum? Very well, he's dressed as a clown, but his silvery mustache and long nose have been burnt into my memory!" Edith has become an invaluable asset to the gentlemen of the Union for Protection and Acquisition of Monuments of Antiquity, whether separating junk from antiques, remembering the answers to the puzzles of the past, or, as in the instance above, identifying thieves.

**Old and Grey:** Gregory is beginning to age. He's 64 later this year, and feels that he's not the same youngling he once was. It's become ever more difficult to climb tall walls, run away from the Grey Guard in rainy alleys or, for that matter, satisfy a woman. Sometimes he even mixes up names and dates. But it is to be said: Gregory has seen and experienced many things, and understood a few things which his younger colleagues have yet to learn.


**Trouble Magnet:** There's something about Tim's face. It's not that he's especially pretty or ugly. But for some reason, his face always gets him into trouble. Some feel he looks arrogant, and want to fight because they think they mock him. Some mistake him for someone else, and thinks he's a known fugitive, or someone who owes them money. It's not just easy, being Tim.

**Temper, temper:** Wilhelmina has a powerful temper. If things go against her, people are insubordinate, or – for that matter – the underground runs late, she doesn't hesitate hitting the ceiling, telling people off and throwing objects about. A few times she's even physically attacked those who get in her way. "Short tempered" is a nice way of describing her. "Hag" is a less nice.

**Dog's Head:** Craig has the head of a dog. This gives him a strong sense of smell, a powerful bite and sharp hearing. On the downside, he has a tendency to slur when he speaks, snarl when he's scared or angry, and his breath isn't the best (though this may also be due to the cigarettes).

**A Name Among Mad Scientists:** "By the sixth potency of the infamous equation, aren't you Dr. Audvåg Lorang the younger, the inventor of the Flibbertigibbertstaff?" The bespectacled professor squints at one of his three captives. His hands retract from the blinking control panel. "And here am I, about to subject you to a common cryostasis fluid! I beg your apology, Ms. If I knew with whom I was dealing I'd obviously have thought of a more refined plan for your demise."

**Cold-blooded:** It takes a lot to unsettle Mina. In situations where others might do a dodo in fear she stares down death while a mocking grin curl her lips. The walking corpse which makes her accomplices run away, she barely registers. Where others respond by sorrow and wailing, Mina makes a level-headed analysis of the situation without breaking a sweat.



**Channel to Limbo:** Alan scratches his chest. The wound is still aching. Not strange; it's still open, but without blood. You can see directly into Alan's body through the bullet wound. But that's not why he keeps it hidden. He hides it mostly to forget it himself. Sometimes he has to tear open the shirt and pull the tie aside, when something comes out. It's often things he finds unpleasant. They wake half dead memories in Alan. He doesn't understand where the things come from. Anything can emerge from the hole. A shoe. The head of an older woman he feels he recognizes. Money. The revolver he still carries came from the hole in his chest. As he was dragged through Limbo, with a bleeding wound where the heart should be, a thread of potential fastened to his chest, and became a bridge to that which lies outside the Fringe Zones. Sometimes, when Limbo billows and throbs, the dream stuff presses against Alan's ribs, and is filtrated through his person. That's why everything which manifests is always connected to him in some way.

**The Consultants:** Harold's positive and negative sides are manifested each time he has to make a difficult decision, and try to convince him to do what day think is best. Harold's dark side looks like a black dog, and tries to make him hurt others, be egotistical and make a mess of things. Harold's good side looks like a white lamb, and speaks in favor of charity and mercy. The good and the bad side are controlled by two of the other players, who decide themselves when the lamb and the dog will appear. Only Harold sees the personifications.

**The Oracle of the Stomach:** Theodor has a large mouth on his belly, which from time to time mumbles to itself. Usually it speaks in incomprehensible fragments, or says things which have no meaning to Theodor. But certain times, the mouth will utter coherent, important messages. The mouth has made correct predictions, sometimes it speaks unpleasant truths about others, and sometimes it will point to aspects of Theodor's person he'd rather forget. The Oracle can be a great burden in social life.

**Master Thief:** Sir Gregory Finkelbottom has a secret. At night the ageing earl will dress up in black attire, bind his grapple hook to a solid rope, and start his quest across the rooftops of the city. While his silvery mustache wags contentedly under his unusually long nose the earl will rappel down walls, sneak through air ducts and cut open windows with a diamond knife. Many wonder how a noble family which was bereft of its import privileges early last century can afford to maintain a manor at Mint Knoll. Only Sir Finkelbottom knows the answer, and so far no one else has come near to discovering it.

**Addicted:** George Ulbrecht doesn't wish to admit it to himself, but it's more than just the beautiful Xia which involuntarily draws him to The Blue Dragon. If he doesn't get his daily dose of opium he's seized by powerful abstinence pains. In this terrible condition he has visions, hot flushes, shivers and soils himself. The opium dulls his senses and makes him carefree with the misery of both himself and the world.

**Rajalingam:** In Allan's fridge lives Rajalingam, a guru who knows everything. He utters cryptic sayings and prophecies which are almost always true, but Alan never listens to him. To Alan, it's almost as if Rajalingam doesn't exist.

**Voice from Beyond the Pale:** When Jonathan lies in bed at night they whisper to him. Sad, slow voices from the other side of the grave. Usually they seek closeness and comfort, but some of the dead have gone insane. An imprint of the personality they once were haunts the city, never to find rest. For that, Jonathan must suffer. He doesn't always understand what they say, but it's so quiet at night. The city is quiet, and the dead speak.



# SAMPLE CHARACTERS

The following characters have rather long descriptions. It's also fully possible to create your character using key words only. You'll figure out what suits you best. The characters will work just as well whether you write them long or short. The main thing is to use the procedure outlined earlier in this chapter, so as to have many inspiring aspects for play.

## *Julie Maria Wood* \_\_\_\_\_

**Idea:** Cabaret Artist Extraordinaire

**Appearance:** Plump and feminine, perhaps a bit too feminine. Long golden hair and flamboyant dress. Yet something seems a bit off, if closely studied. Something about her face, and her hands, maybe?

**Background:** Julie Maria Wood is a woman. Let there be no doubt, and anyone who would suspect otherwise, may his tongue be silent. Such insults are beneath a true lady. Andrew Wood does not exist, and if he did - he is long dead!

Julie Maria likes to dance and sing, and she does it so well. She entertains in smoke filled cabarets hidden down dimly lit alley ways, where her name is near whispered by crowds of young men. She is a star, and the candles on the tables flicker in jealousy when she dances.

Julie Maria is not a fallen woman, but she knows plenty, and knows not what the future holds. Yet for now, she stands tall and proud, and sings.

She is also an explorer, both of the underbelly of the city with its dives and secrets, and also of more hidden pleasures. She seeks experience that lies beyond the body. She seeks to transcend. The current mode is but the chrysalis stage, and a butterfly waits to be released.

**Personality:** Julie Maria is a diva, with sables, marvelous dresses, long gloves and magnificent taste in shoes. If only she had the physique to match. It seems her fate, to be trapped in a world and body that does not correspond. Julie Maria is eternally depressed.

**Intrigue Magnets:** To find a cure for this “condition”, put quite simply. Whether the solution lies in science, dream or alchemy.

### Dramatic Qualities

**Gender Ambiguous:** While Julie Maria’s mind is entirely female her body is not likewise. The casual onlooker would be hard pressed to discover her “short comings”, on the other hand a closer examination would be catastrophic to the lady. Her ambiguous nature is no real secret however, and may even be to her advantage in the appropriate setting. While she doesn’t advertise it, she knows what she once was and still might be taken for.

**Admired:** Julie Maria has admirers. Men court her and bring her flowers, and some would do anything for her. Her sultry gaze, her commanding voice and her stage presence can win nearly anyone over.

### Connections

The owner of the cabaret she performs in, Stanton DeVillon is patron of the arts, and caters to a crowd with that special thirst only a woman like Julie Maria can quench. While he is a gentleman at heart he lives in a world of dubious pleasures.

Baron Franz Von Scheider is an adventurer, and eternally bound by his pledge of chivalry. His heart is as pure as his gray moustache is impressive, and he has a soft spot for Julie Maria. He can be called on for assistance should circumstance occasion it.



## Bob

**Idea:** Fortune Hunter

**Appearance:** In the beginning of the first session Bob comes walking in from the Fringe Zones with his jacket over his shoulder. He looks dusty and disheveled. He's wearing a white shirt, black pants, a vest and a bowler hat. His hair is large, black and curly. The smile is charming.

**Background:** Where Bob comes from is something he doesn't speak of. Maybe he doesn't know. Maybe he has no past, and comes into being as the campaign begins.



**Intrigue Magnets:** In Bob's jacket pocket is a yellowed, rolled up high society magazine. On the cover is an illustration of a charitable ball where the fifty most important families in the city gather each New Year's Eve. Bob's goal is as follows: next New Year's Eve one of the fifty families shall be HIS family. From the outset a rather impossible dream in the class based city, but Bob is enterprising.

Throughout the campaign Bob will try to climb in the societal hierarchy. He will use almost any means to get ahead (except, hopefully, murder). He wants to get to know the right people, and then climb over them to get to know even better people. He will try to get a foot inside some important company and quickly climb past those who have worked there for years, he wants to actively seek out anyone who can help him reach his goals, and when they need something, he can fix it.

**Personality:** Bob is impulsive and seizes any chance when he sees it. Usually it, miraculously, ends well, but sometimes everything goes

wrong. If Bob has used someone and it has cost them dearly, he's good at ignoring it or rationalizing it away. Usually he's friendly, generous and in a good mood.

## Dramatic Qualities

**Liaison:** In the beginning Bob doesn't know anyone, but he will soon know a thousand people you haven't even heard about, in all segments of society. And what's more: they usually owe him a service. Procuring favors is Bob's way of getting ahead. He doesn't like to work himself, and he doesn't know much, but you can bet he knows someone who does. And that he, at some point, fixed something for them. And when Bob has fixed your problem, you obviously owe him one.

**Humbug:** Bob is sparingly equipped when it comes to knowledge, but he's good at pretending to possess it. He can discuss most things with most people. His main technique is playing along. Superficial and easily fooled people, that is to say most, tend to like Bob, and think he's trustworthy. Bob would easily be able to manage an executive position without doing anything at all. Someone else would be doing the job, Bob would claim credit, and his boss would be pleased.

**Self-appointed Judge of Character:** Bob isn't especially emphatic, but there are two things he's quickly able to decipher: what someone really wants, and who they really detest. He thinks other people are easy to understand, but that's only because he never bothers to look for anything besides these two things.

**Vulnerable to Temptation:** If Bob sees an opportunity, he will have a very hard time not seizing it. If he was about to embezzle a million, and the employer he wants to swindle leaves an unguarded money bill on the table, Bob might risk the million for the bill.

## Supporting Characters

None at the beginning of the campaign.



## *Mamdadda (Moira Digger)* \_\_\_\_\_

**Idea:** Exotic

**Appearance:** Big, black, smiling, curly and shining black hair, lots of boobs and everything else, towering three heads over a tall man and twice as broad. Colorful silk gowns and hats with large ostrich feathers! Every day of the week has its special boa.

**Background:** Mamdadda had her childhood at Gallows Hill, living in the shadow of death, with her father working at the cemetery and her mother and older sister being nurses at the hospital. All of them happily dead now, and working as her representatives amongst the dead.

**Personality:** Mamdadda is strong and effective. She doesn't dawdle or hang her head. When on leave she loves drinking, singing and making love to all kinds of men. She has a bunch of kids, none of them with the same man, and she loves them unconditionally. She loves to take them to the Ape Gardens and the Cemetery on Sundays (she never works on Sundays).

**Intrigue Magnets:** Mamdadda is a medium, but not the sort of medium you expect; she is the medium for ghosts that want to tease you. Her clients are not the living, but the dead. She is the one playing pranks for the dead, on their living relatives. And she does so with a message; "Do not fear the other side! It is fun to be dead!"

Her laughter is a bellowing furnace of humor, ready to wash over you whenever she has fulfilled the prank wished upon you by one of her clients; a relative, a friend or a former enemy of yours. And then she hand you a beautifully written card, telling you about the fun of death.

### **Pranks**

- Having dug up your mother's grave, Mamdadda has installed a contraption that will raise a hand from the grave the next time you visit. Whoa-ha-ha!
- There's a note in your postbox, stamped yesterday, from your long dead friend, stating that he has finally found the time to

write you, telling of the many sights to be seen in the Kingdom of Death. Love and kisses! Hi-hi-hi!

- Mamdadda throws a pie in your face on the bus one day, and hands you a note from a dead enemy of old, saying; “By this pie I forgive you! Live short! Die happy!” Ho-ho-ho!
- The voice of your father follows you around for days, in some mysterious way, saying the things he used to say: “Do not stay out late!” and “Your turn to set the table!” and “Help me wash the car, boy!” etc. And then, after a week of “inner voices”, you find a note in your pocket, in your father hand: “Love you more than when I was alive! Paps” Ha ha ha!

## Dramatic Qualities

**Disturbing:** The pranks are normally performed when they least suit the living, and are prone to make life a bit more complicated. The dead love complicated lives!

**Thought-provoking:** The notes always contain some surprising message from the dead, about fun, joy or love. Sometimes the notes have questions like: “Would you like to be happily dead?”

**Treasures:** Mamdadda lives in a great mansion. She dresses in marvelous silk gowns and ostrich-feathers. She is loaded with money! Her clients tell her of hidden treasures as payment for her services.

**Hedonistic:** Mamdadda loves to make love! She is a larger-than-life person! She gives of herself, with no strings, to the dead and the living.

**Strong Mother:** Anyone threatening or hurting her children, will have to face her rage, and will be haunted into an early grave by her clients...

## Connections

Her children, her many lovers, the dead, her private chauffeur Mr. Bones (long, bleak, formal, uniformed, and totally loyal to “The Missus”).

## *Thomas Chesterfield*

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**Idea:** Dandy from a parallel reality.

**Background:** Thomas belongs to the old, influential family Chesterfield. They are gentle people with a good name.

Thomas' mother was pure, good hearted and innocent. When she was fifteen she had a personal crisis ("Many sentient beings suffer! I don't suffer! Oh, the woe!"), and fled to a convent.

How it happened is a bit unclear. Some say that one day a large he-goat entered the convent and seduced her. Others claim a Devil visited her one night. Anyhow, she became pregnant a year later and was thrown out of the convent. Thomas grew up with his mother in a hut in the wilderness. She knew a little magic, and protected and fed them with these powers. The first eight years of his life were completely carefree and indescribably happy. The mother lived for Thomas, and the ties between them were as powerful as they can be between two people.

Eight years later the mother died, and Thomas was adopted by his aunt Augusta, and raised to the dandy he is today. He was treated well by his new family, but has always felt that something was missing in his life.

Three years ago he met the seventeen year old rich man's daughter Molly Bullhurst, and fell head over heels in love with her. She was kindhearted, beautiful, polite, and all in all something about her took his breath away. But over the next few months, as he became a frequent visitor at her family's residence, and came to know her better, he realized that she was his own reincarnated mother.

Since then, he has been a less frequent visitor at the Bullhurst's, but he can't keep away completely. He torments himself with the fact that this is his one true love, but feels that it's a form of incest, and therefore unthinkable. Molly remembers nothing from her previous life, and only knows that she's very attracted to Thomas.

A year ago Thomas came across a snow globe, the kind one usually has gnomes, snowmen and such inside. This one contained an exact copy of Itras By, and if you studied it with a magnifying glass, you could see that the model city changed all the time to reflect the reality outside. One day when Thomas was very depressed, wondering if he should shoot himself, he lost the globe so that a small piece of glass broke off. Thomas was sucked inside.

He fell from high up, slipped down the Moon Tower and landed in a gigantic layer cake in Confectioner's street. After fleeing the confectioners, he found himself down by the harbor at dusk. From behind, he witnessed a person who looked very much like him, shooting himself in the head and disappearing in the dark waters.

**Personality:** Thomas is mostly calm and agreeable, generous with compliments and interested in people. He speaks ironically about most things, but is far from blasé. Rather the opposite, his joking manner is only a thin veneer over a very sensitive being. Thomas is easily delighted, sad, angered and scared, but jokes about everything. Thomas does no regular work. Instead he spends his time visiting people, playing tennis, experiencing adventure and dangers, competing with his friends, trying to spread love and joy, fighting monsters and such things.

**Appearance:** Thomas is a beautiful man with blonde hair, blue eyes and a friendly face. He dresses in light suits and is usually clean shaven. His left foot is the hoof of a goat.

**Intrigue Magnets:** The big question for Thomas now is what really has happened: 1) Was the glass globe only an image of the city? When he fell through the globe and turned up in the real skies over Itras By; was it merely a form of teleportation? Or... 2) Did the globe contain an alternative reality, another city, identical to the one he came from with the exception that the globe didn't exist here?



Thomas hopes for theory 2, and tries to get it confirmed. If it turns out that he's now in an another Itras By, and the man who shot himself by the harbor is this city's version of him, well then this city's Molly Bullhurst won't be his reincarnated mother, but rather the reincarnated mother of this city's deceased Thomas Chesterfield. And then a relationship with her wouldn't be incestuous.

Thomas hopes that is how it all fits together, but has to be certain before he dares declare his love to Ms. Bullhurst. So far, Thomas has only thought of one way of proving the second theory: He showed the glass globe to one single friend, Adrian Goodfellow, and this friend since disappeared in the Fringe Zones. If Thomas manages to track down Adrian, and he does not remember any glass globe, it will prove theory number two.

## Dramatic Qualities

**Pleasant:** Everyone instinctively feels that Thomas is an ok guy. Most people will like him, especially if they themselves are sympathetic people. Women may feel attracted to him, and men think he's a jolly good guy. It feels natural to confide in Thomas, and ask him for help. It's difficult for Thomas to deny such requests. Note that there are those who dislike him too. People will not like Thomas no matter what he does. If, for instance, he refuses to help someone they'll immediately hold him in less regard.

**Mediocre:** Thomas excels in no particular field at all. He succeeds "just about" in almost any task he tries his hand at.

**Monetary Joker:** Money holds no significance to Thomas. He owns little more than a small apartment and a few suits, but food, housing and suchlike are never a problem. Usually he lives in luxurious surroundings as a guest with rich friends, and he always has a little money he has come by this way or the other. He has never done an honest day's work, at least not for money, and will never need to.

**Meta Attention:** Thomas knows that he's an invented character in a roleplaying game. This does not affect how he thinks and feels, and

rarely how he acts, but at certain times, when it seems fitting, he might come with Meta comments or address people in the real world directly.

## Supporting Characters

The only living members of the Chesterfield family are Thomas himself, an old hard-nosed aunt who is the mater familias, a somewhat pudding-like cousin, and a female cousin who's in love with Thomas.

### *Geraldine Ilyanon* \_\_\_\_\_

**Idea:** A dream woman, unsure of whether she is in a dream or not.

**Looks:** She is such a frail little thing. Her soft freckled skin, those big blue eyes looking out from beneath sun bleached blond hair. She is always barefoot, and clad in a summer dress, as if the weather can't affect her, or she doesn't feel it. Sometimes when the sun shines, those dresses look so white they nearly lose all contour, becoming blinding and indistinct.

**Personality:** Geraldine is melancholic yet innocently curious, though at times bemused and laughing at the wonder of the smallest marvel. When she does the room brightens.

**Background:** She was walking down a white sandy beach. Famished and parched, and it seemed like forever since she last had something to eat or drink. She wasn't sure whether this was a nightmare or just a twist in an otherwise quite pleasant dream. It was a quite beautiful beach.

Then, just when her thirst was getting really uncomfortable, she met this strange little man who introduced himself as Dr. Humphries. An Explorer of Reality he proclaimed. Geraldine didn't pay much heed, but she was grateful for the food and water. The food was surprisingly bland.

She joined up with the strange little man and listened patiently as he tried to explain to her that this was far from a dream. At first she was bemused, but as days stretched into weeks she got a little worried.

Dr. Humphries brought her back to Itras By and gradually her resistance crumbled. As she gazed upon the marvels and horrors of the city she had to admit that it was the longest and strangest dream she ever had. Then one day, waking up, she accepted, or mostly accepted that is, that she was indeed in Itras By and not in some dream.

And then she was sad.

**Intrigue Magnets:** Geraldine wants to wake up, or failing that, go home. She misses her family very much. But so far her attempts to do so have met with little success and some of her attempts have sent ripples of strangeness through the city. Rumors have that the Guard is looking into this, and that even Nindra herself has taken an interest.

Dr. Humphries and his colleagues at the University have taken it upon themselves to protect Geraldine, and keep her well out of trouble. Though grateful for their concern, she feels a little hemmed in from time to time.

Then there is Professor Angelstein of the Dream Ministry which is looking to examine Geraldine in depth, whether she wants to or not. Survival is optional.

## Dramatic Qualities

**A Tenuous Grip on Reality:** Does she dream or is she a visitor in your dream? Sometimes she isn't so sure. Sometimes her grip on reality seems to slip and she becomes insubstantial, like a ghost. This isn't painful, and would seem quite useful, but more often than not this ability seems to have a life on its own, which can be downright embarrassing and bloody inconvenient.

**Such a Frail Little Thing:** Her white summer dresses, her big blue eyes, her soft freckled skin and sun-bleached hair all seem to bring out the big, brave hero in any gentleman that sees her. Much to her annoyance, because she likes to take care of herself, most men get overly protective

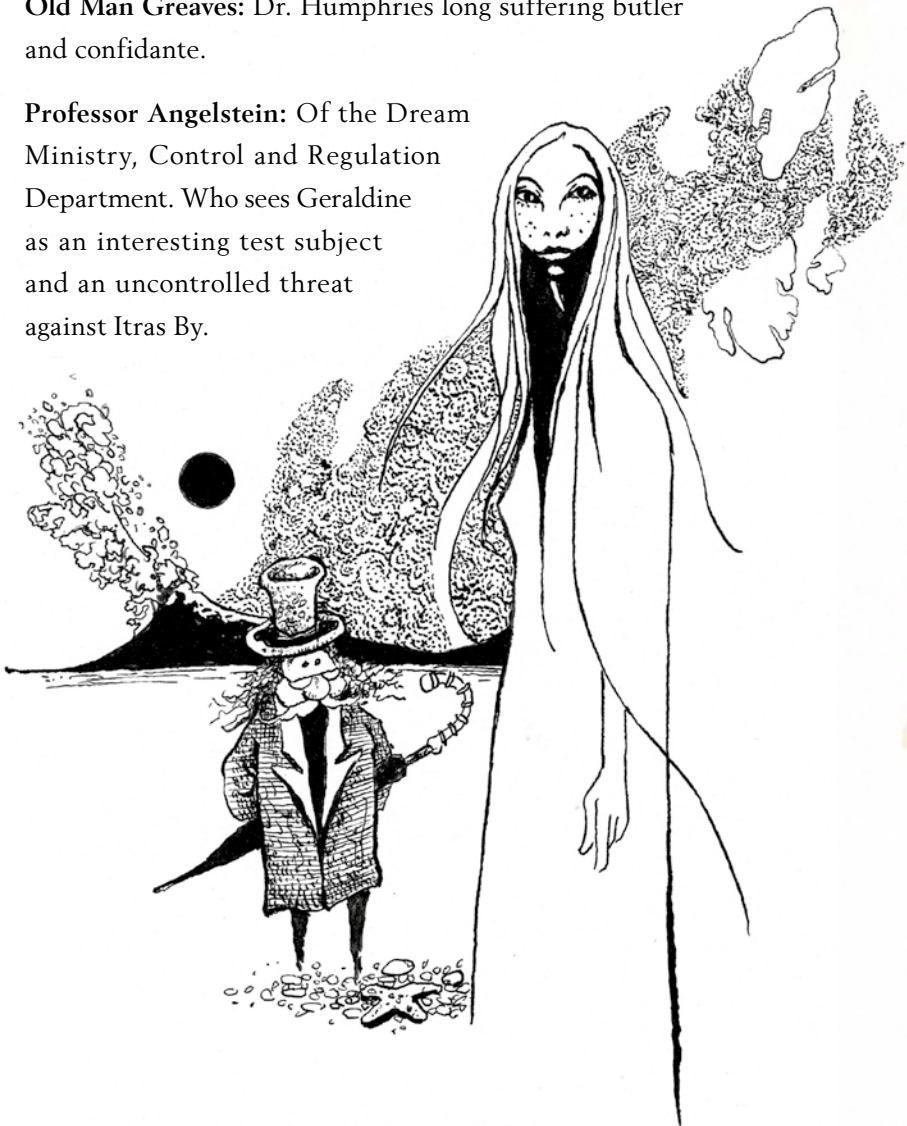
around her. Always puffing out their chests and stepping up to defend her. Though, at times she must admit that this can be quite handy.

## Connections

**Dr. Humphries:** Of the Ancient and Venerable Society of Wanderers, and guest lecturer at the department of Studies of Curious Anomalies at the University. He is a friend and protector and also kind enough to lend Geraldine his attic and let her have the run of his house.

**Old Man Greaves:** Dr. Humphries long suffering butler and confidante.

**Professor Angelstein:** Of the Dream Ministry, Control and Regulation Department. Who sees Geraldine as an interesting test subject and an uncontrolled threat against Itras By.







# ROLEPLAYING

Roleplaying is very much like a children's game of "let's pretend". It also shares similarities with theatre, improvised theatre, board games and other pursuits. But it's ultimately a unique thing all to its own. In this section, we'll explore how to be a player in **Itras By**.

### *Getting to Know the Character* \_\_\_\_\_

The best way to get to know your character, after creating it according to the chapter "The Character", is to play it. That sounds pretty obvious, but you'll probably see what we mean after playing a few sessions in a campaign. The character tends to take on a life of its own and develop as it interacts with the setting. That's part of the joy and fun of roleplaying.

You run a character in an interactive story, a story created on the fly between you and your friends. At its best it's more engaging and fun than the best movies and comics you'll ever see.

You don't have to be an "actor" in order to play, even though you'll use many techniques that are similar to acting. In fact, much of this section is inspired by a school known as theatrical improvisation. But relax; there's no audience, and the point is to have fun with your friends. There will be no grades or reviews.

Some people like to "immerse" in their characters, feel what they feel and adopt their mannerisms and speech patterns during play. Others prefer to treat their characters more like pieces on a chess board, in order to create cool and engaging stories. Both preferences are equally applicable to **Itras By**.

### *Play Well with Others* \_\_\_\_\_

This is a collaborative game, which means that listening to and taking an interest in the other players and their actions is essential. Everyone should get a chance to be in the spotlight now and then. Make sure you have an idea of who the other characters are, preferably by reading their descriptions. What kind of backgrounds

do they have? What are their basic concepts? What are their intrigue magnets? What are their dramatic qualities? Knowing the answers to questions such as these will help you help others have a good time. And when they do, you will too.

In short: Find out what buttons the other players have, and make sure you push them. If the unhappy love life of one of the other characters is central to his player, maybe you could try to arrange a blind date between him and his love? Or, more comically, constantly set up blind dates with people he doesn't love at all, in a failed attempt to be nice. If the character has a dramatic quality which says she's afraid of spiders, insist you'll go visit Nindra.

Make sure you're listening to what the other players are doing, and give them room when they're doing their thing. Don't hog the spotlight.

And finally; trust the other players. Trust their ideas. Go along with theirs, and they'll go along with yours. Then you can really take chances together.

## *Talk to Her* \_\_\_\_\_

Take time to chat about the game before and after. Find out what you all want from it. Maybe one player wants to see a lot of action? This should be evident from the background, intrigue magnets and dramatic qualities she chooses, but might not be. The simple act of expressing your wishes (or your intentions, if thou wilt) has a tendency to increase the chance of having them granted. In the same manner, after a game you should make sure to tell the gamemaster and the other players what you thought was especially exciting and fun. Try to focus on positives, rather than what didn't work. It creates a better atmosphere, and increases the chance of you seeing your fellow players excel in the same way again.

## Improvisation as Fuel

Let's try a semi-hopeless metaphor: the characters are the engine of roleplaying, improvisation is the fuel. Most of what happens during a session is made up on the spot. It's pretty amazing to think about. How do we accomplish the extraordinary task of making up these incredible stories together as we go along? Thankfully, it's pretty easy, once you get into the groove.

## Don't Block

It might not be too pedagogical to start by telling you what you're not supposed to do (and as most naughty children, you'll hopefully break all our rules at one point or the other), but this one's quite important, so we'd like to stress it. "Don't block" also translates to "don't be a jerk". Check it out:

**Player 1:** *Guys! I heard this rumor about grimasques smuggling cursed antiques down by the docks. What say we go investigate?*

**Player 2:** *No, I don't want to have anything to do with grimasques, they're horrid.*

Sound like fun? No. See what Player 2 is doing: he's blocking, or denying, if you will. He's refusing to accept the input of fellow players (including the gamemaster). This, boys and girls, is NOT the way to have fun while roleplaying. But it's a great way of making sure nothing happens and that we're all very bored. So what should we do instead? Easy (or Hard):

## Build

In addition to being the system of the game, the resolution cards described in the previous chapter are intended to socialize players not to block.



You remember how the cards work. None of them just say “Yes” or “No”. They all go “Yes, and...”, “No, but...” and so forth. This shouldn’t just be the mode of play while using the cards; it should be the mode of play at all points. In many roleplaying games, there’s a fairly strict divide between player and gamemaster authority. We like to blur this line somewhat, and that’s what the cards do. But that doesn’t mean you can’t add to the story when not using the cards. Rather the opposite.

Let’s look at the example from the previous paragraph.

**Player 1:** *Guys! I heard this rumor about grimasques smuggling cursed antiques down by the docks. How about we go investigate?*

**Player 2:** *Well, I must admit that I find the grimasques rather horrid. But we do have a family secret I haven’t mentioned. My uncle Harry actually turned into one, and I know he now keeps company down by Black Bay. He might now something about this.*

You see what Player 2 is doing? He’s adding to the story! Building on what the other players have said and moving the story forward in interesting and (maybe) unexpected directions.

Try to make sure what you build is in keeping with your character (whether he is an assassin from Black Bay or a snob from Mint Knoll) and what has previously been established in the story, and you’ll do fine.

Does coming up with ideas on your own, rather than just shooting down the ideas of others sound difficult? Don’t worry, just:

## *Be Like the Water*\_\_\_\_\_

At some point in the game, you might draw a card – whether a resolution card or a chance card – and have absolutely no idea what to do with it. Or you might be stuck in a situation without any

cards, but still not have a clue. This is the hardest advice of all, but the answer is simply: don't try so hard. Be obvious. Be boring. Just do the first thing that pops into your head.

**Gamemaster:** *You're surrounded on all sides by the shrieking scissor men. They cut in the air and howl rustily.*

**Player 1:** *I... I... I surrender!*

See? That wasn't so hard. It was an obvious choice, but it was at least a choice. Poor Player 1's character will probably be hauled off to the Machine God and tied to some horrible death trap contraption, but you know... this is a secret, so don't tell her we told you, but... the gamemaster's on your side. It'll all work out in the end.

(And if it doesn't, relish your character's death! Go out with a bang, not a whimper!).

### *Gamble*

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In real life, most of us tend to try to avoid death trap contraptions, because we don't want to die, even in very creative ways. This however, is a game, and the objective is to have fun. You'll have more fun taking some chances with your character, and the gamemaster will be there to save you. You might end up in jail, but who's to say you won't be able to climb the local jail hierarchy at "The Pen" and stage a wild prison riot in order to escape?

**Example:** *Why say "If you give me a tenner I'll gladly accept it", when you can say "I'll bet you a tenner I can fool that ape into drinking kerosene"?*

By taking risks and doing stuff, you create your own plots. The game-master will be there to catch you if you fall. Don't be afraid to make mistakes.

## *Add*

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**W**e've talked about building, now how far can you go? With the resolution and chance cards you can obviously go very far, then you're in control, but how about regular play when the gamemaster (supposedly) has the main authority over the setting? You might want to discuss this within your group, but we think you should be able to go pretty far. If it's in keeping with your character, why shouldn't you be able to invent a distant relative who accidentally turned into a grimasque?

**Gamemaster:** *You see that someone has left a dirty jacket on the chair.*

**Player 1:** *It looks like Jonah's, the guy who sells whale stomachs down by the pier. Should we go and hear if it's his?*

**Player 2:** *Yeah, I think he usually hangs out at The Cruton Club at nights. Let's go look there.*

**Gamemaster:** *As you enter the Cruton Club you see Jonah swaying at the bar. He seems to have gotten into a quarrel with one of the sailors.*

Player 1 just made up the fact that the jacket looked like Jonah's on the spot. Player 2 chose to accept and build. The gamemaster didn't seem to mind (we don't know if the jacket is Jonah's yet, but now Jonah has been introduced to the story, and he might know).

A lot of stuff has happened to your characters "off-screen" before and during the campaign. These things you can make up underway, and introduce into the game. It gives depth to both the character and the scenes.

**Player 1:** *Should we go get a glass of wine?*

**Player 2:** *How about the Café Parasol, where we met that Wanderer last week?*

Is the scene moving slowly? Try to say something about one of the other characters, to which the player has to respond. Be specific.

**Player 1:** *I think you seem a bit under the weather today?*

**Player 2:** *I had the worst night of my life yesterday. Let me tell you...*

At the same time:

### *Be Consistent* \_\_\_\_\_

If it's been established in-game that your character is squat and lazy it would seem strange if he suddenly is able to run the five kilometer with the Grey Guard on his heels.

### *Reincorporate* \_\_\_\_\_

If you re-use the concepts you introduce to the game, they'll seem more real, and that will strengthen the illusion that is the road the roleplaying game drives on (just to try to continue using our terrible automobile-metaphor).

The grimasque uncle might become a recurring character. The wanderer you met at Café Parasol will turn up in a later episode. Player 2's horrible night will come back to haunt him. And so forth.





## Status

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**T**oying around with people's status is a very efficient way to create drama. Most audiences (and in this case you're your own audience) love to see a self-satisfied, successful manager like Mr. Snabelstrup brought low (and maybe turned into a grimasque), or a rag to riches story where a poor City Ape becomes professor of Logics at the university.

Try to meet supporting characters with your character's status in mind. How to you act towards the character's employer? How do you act towards his manservant?

Some status techniques:

### High status:

- Keep eye contact
- Take up a lot of space
- Be relaxed
- Speak directly

### Low status:

- Break eye contact
- Make unnecessary movements; touch your head and hair
- Take up as little space as possible

Status might also be reversed during a single scene. A simple example could be the manservant pulling out a shotgun and pointing it at your character, screaming "I've had enough from you!"

Check out Graham Walmsley's "Play Unsafe" ([Lulu.com](http://Lulu.com)) for more tips on improvisation and roleplaying.



# THE METHOD

**R**oleplaying is nothing new. We've all done it at one time, whether we called it "cops and robbers", "mother, father, and child", "I'll be Luke, you be Han Solo", or even "doctor"; we have all played games.

To play, to take on different roles, to create stories together and bring imaginary worlds to life, this comes naturally to people. It is rooted in our very humanity. It responds to a fundamental need.

So if this is your first roleplaying game, don't worry. You already know how to do it. It lies in your fingertips. Floats in your blood. Is coded into your DNA. Resides in every fiber of your being. In your earliest memories. And if you think you are long past playing and fooling around: Have you ever tried spending fifteen minutes with a three-year-old?

The method we are about to describe will be a type of playing, but it might be bit more structured than you are used to. This allows the game to go on for a longer time, and the players to learn even more in the process.

But if it seems difficult, unusual, or unfamiliar: Don't worry.

Remember: It's the most natural thing. And it's easy!

Welcome to the playground.

## *The Players and the Gamemaster*\_\_\_\_\_

**A** group of people playing **Itras By** consists of one gamemaster, and several regular players. They work together on creating a story, but they have somewhat different tasks. The gamemaster has final say over story and intrigue, while a player's main task is to control one of the central characters, a protagonist of the story. The gamemaster also has the responsibility of describing the story's surroundings, places, moods, objects, supporting characters, etc., although players are encouraged to make their own contributions. Finally, it's the gamemaster's job to keep the story together and to make sure everybody's focus is on the game.

For the most part, you do everything together. When everybody participates, and the game floats along, there is little difference between player and gamemaster. We are all in the same place, the same imaginary world. We listen, receive, respond, then pass the ball along; we are building **Itras By** stone by stone. It's when we depart from this ideal state that the gamemaster has special responsibilities, and special powers. Tips and ideas for the gamemaster will be found in a later chapter.

The job of a player is primarily to bring a single character to life, by making up action and dialogue. The characters are the protagonists of the game. In an adventure, the characters are the driving force, the ones moving the story along. Players, however, can also contribute to the description of the surroundings and the supporting characters, on their own initiative or prompted by the gamemaster: They can tell the backstory of the masked man at the barrel organ, bring a previously unknown friend onto the scene, make up a certain useful object there on that table, and so on.

In summary:

- The gamemaster's main tasks is to start and end the scenes, prepare for the adventures between sessions, encourage participation, keep account of everything that goes on, bring the world to life, and to make a lot of problems for the characters. He or she has final say over everything concerning the adventure: The intrigue, the opponents, the secrets, and so on.
- The players' main tasks are to control their own characters, and to tell about their thoughts, feelings, words, and actions. They can also contribute to the description of the surroundings and the supporting characters; in fact, they are encouraged to do so.
- The chance cards and the resolution cards, to be described next, overrule the authority of players and gamemaster alike.



## *Do you make it? Draw a card!* \_\_\_\_\_

**A**t certain times during a session, the players have the possibility to draw certain cards that will have their effect on the game. There are two kinds of cards: The resolution cards, and the chance cards.

The resolution cards are used to see if the characters are able to succeed at an attempted task. The text on the card decides how the attempt turns out. The chance cards add to the surrealism of the game, by forcing strange things to happen. These cards can affect the situation that the characters are in, the characters themselves, and sometimes even the way you play.

For the most part, the game is made up by conversation alone, helped by the advice on improvisation in the previous chapter. The gamemaster describes the surroundings, and usually plays the supporting characters. The players take initiative by declaring their characters' actions, and engage in dialogue with people they meet, or among themselves. But sometimes, you may want to make it even more exciting by adding an element of chance. That is when you call for a resolution card.

These are the resolution cards:

### **Yes, and...**

The character succeeds, and achieves more than she expected. Perhaps even a bit too much...

### **Yes, but...**

The character succeeds, but something unrelated goes wrong, for the character or someone she cares about.

### **No, but...**

The character fails, but another positive thing happens instead, unrelated to what she was aiming for.

**Yes, but...**

The character succeeds, but the consequences of the success are completely different from what was expected.

**Yes, but...**

The character succeeds, but there's a tiny detail that doesn't go quite as planned.

**Help is needed**

The character ends up understanding that she needs help from someone not currently in the scene, in order to achieve this aim.

**No, and...**

The character fails, and something unrelated also goes wrong.

**Yes, but only if...**

The character can get what she wants – but only if she chooses to make a certain sacrifice.

*How to Use the Resolution Cards* \_\_\_\_\_

When you call for a resolution card, declare what you are attempting to do. Do not, however, explain how you are going to do it. Rather appoint either the gamemaster or another player to draw the card. Whoever you choose will read the text aloud, and then decide how it should be interpreted. The interpretation can include things that happen to your character, to some relevant supporting character, or in the surroundings in general. Everyone else must go with this interpretation.

When you are the one to interpret a resolution card, feel free to ask around the table if you are uncertain about what it means, or if you are stuck for ideas.

### **When Should You Draw a Resolution Card?**

A good time to draw a resolution card would be when

- You have decided a certain action that your character will attempt.
- The action has a considerable risk of failure, without being outright impossible.
- The outcome of the action will have an impact on the rest of the adventure. Think about what is at stake. If it doesn't really matter whether the action is successful or not, there is no reason to draw a card.

While the decision to draw a card rests on the player controlling the character, the other players, as well as the gamemaster, can make some strong suggestions if they think it would be appropriate.

- Maybe you should draw a resolution card?
- I think this situation calls for a resolution card.
- Jumping Jezebel! Now would be the time for one of those cards!!!

### **When Should You Not Draw a Resolution Card?**

If you are used to roleplaying games that make frequent use of dice, you may feel as if you should draw a card whenever your character faces an obstruction. In *Itras By*, however, most of the action is based on improvisation. Resolution cards should only come into play when something important is at stake. Here are some guidelines:

- Draw no more than one card per scene.
- Don't draw a new card until you have resolved all consequences of a previous one.

While the cards can be interpreted quite freely, you should try not to let the entire adventure ride on the outcome of a single card. If you call for a card to see if your character can "discover the identity of the mysterious enemy," and you end up with a yes, there will be little left to do for the rest of the adventure.

### Examples

Your character, a neatly dressed man, recently laid off the Grey Guard, with an opium addiction and a cat for his only friend, tries to sneak into the house of a well-known Churchillian to steal said Churchillian's diary. Will he make it? One of the other players draws a card, and makes the decision.

Card	Interpretation
<b>Yes, but...</b> The character succeeds, but something unrelated goes wrong, for the character or someone she cares about.	You manage to get your hands on the diary, but at the exact same time, the Churchillian breaks into your own house and steals your cat.
<b>Yes, but...</b> The character succeeds, but there's a tiny detail that doesn't go quite as planned.	You manage to get your hands on the diary, but as you run from the scene you drop your Grey Guard badge.
<b>Yes, but...</b> The character succeeds, but the consequences of the success are completely different from what was expected.	You manage to get your hands on the diary, but instead of revealing the secrets of the Churchillian, the book turns out to contain a detailed narrative of your own life.
<b>Yes, and...</b> The character succeeds, and achieves more than she expected. Perhaps even a bit too much...	Not only does the diary reveal the secrets of this particular Churchillian, it also contains a map to the Churchillians' well-hidden training facility.
<b>No, but...</b> The character fails, but another positive thing happens instead, unrelated to what she was aiming for.	As you search in vain for the diary, a certain futurist comes flying through the window... one you happen to have been looking for for a long time.



<b>No, and...</b> The character fails, and something unrelated also goes wrong.	As you search in vain for the diary, you hear someone at the door. The Churchillian has returned to his home.
<b>Help is needed</b> The character ends up understanding that she needs help from someone not currently in the scene, in order to achieve this aim.	The Churchillian's drawer is locked with a simi-lock, a code that can only be entered by a talking ape. You'll have to find an ape willing to help you.
<b>Yes, but only if...</b> The character can get what she wants – but only if she chooses to make a certain sacrifice.	You spot the diary at the top of a closet wet with paint. You can get hold of it, but it will ruin your expensive, new suit.

You can find the resolution cards in the back of this book, or as download at [vagrantworkshop.com](http://vagrantworkshop.com). Make a copy from the book, or a print from the PDF. You can also make your own resolution cards.

## Chance cards \_\_\_\_\_

While the resolution cards help decide how the characters fail or succeed in their endeavors, the chance cards are there for the surrealism. The chance cards challenge the players and the gamemaster to interpret and improvise, and provides the game with the element of unpredictability so characteristic of the city itself.

### How to use the Chance Cards

Each participant, including the gamemaster, may draw one chance card per game session. You decide for yourself when, and if, you want to draw a card; it is not required, but it will make the game more interesting.

The person who draws the card is also responsible for the interpretation, unless the card specifically says otherwise.

Sometimes you might feel like the card doesn't quite fit the situation. You may have to work on it a bit, but every card can be incorporated into the story. After drawing a card, read it to the other players, making sure everybody is paying attention. Once you have drawn a card, the instructions must be followed – you are not allowed to change your mind if you don't like what it says.

If a specific card doesn't appeal to you, or if you get tired of it after a while, you can all agree to remove it from the deck before the next game session. You can also make up your own chance cards and add them to the deck.

If you draw a card that and get stuck for ideas, you can:

- Ask the other players for suggestions, and choose the one you like the best.
- Take a short break, if it doesn't slow down the game too much, and try to come up with something.
- Go with the first idea that comes along, so the game can move along.

### **When Should You Draw a Chance Card?**

This largely depends on your personal whims, and on the tone of the specific adventure. Each group should try to get a feel for what works for them. One situation where a chance card would be exciting is when you have reached a dramatic point, but you are not quite sure how things should turn out. A chance card may well turn the game 90 degrees around.

### **When Should You Not Draw a Chance Card?**

You can draw a chance card any time you like, though it might be a good idea to save them for more dramatic moments, when they will have a larger impact.

You can find the chance cards in the back of this book, or as download at *vagrantworkshop.com*. Make a copy from the book, or a print from the PDF.


Place the chance cards and the resolution cards in separate decks at the table before you, and make sure not to mix them together.

Card	Situation	What happens
<b>Cut Scene</b> Jump forward three hours. Describe what conditions the characters find themselves in. You're not allowed to describe what has happened in the meantime.	The day of the pre-screening, the characters arrive at the studio. They are happy to see that the studio owner has been distributing a lot of posters for the movie <i>The Grimasque</i> , based on a script by Bridget Bartholdy, the famous revolutionary. The card is drawn during the following conversation.	Three hours later, you are back in the studio. The Grey Guard is about to arrest the crew as they prepare for the viewing. They've long been after Bridget Bartholdy, and now they have seen the poster.
<b>Nemesis!</b> This card awakens the character's Nemesis. In some way, this arch enemy affects the situation. Exactly how is up to you. Doesn't the character have an arch enemy? Well, now she does.	One of the characters is deeply in love with the delightful Molly Bullhurst. The player draws the card as the characters approach her house.	A car drives by and stops right in front of you. In the car, you catch a glimpse of the fat old jeweler from before. He is sitting close to Molly. Much too close in your opinion.
<b>What's in its pockets?</b> The character has something in her pocket which might be useful. What could it be?	The gamemaster describes: "As the camera moves on, you see the sun set below the horizon. Suddenly, the area is covered in a thick mist. You think you are alone, but then you notice someone behind you. As you turn, you face the hypnotic gaze of one of the actors, and you see a set of sharp teeth in his wide open mouth. The vampire attacks!" At this time, the player draws a card.	The player interprets: "I discover some garlic left in my pocket, and shove all of it into the vampire's mouth. With a terrible scream, it pushes me away before disappearing back into the shadows."
<b>Good Advice</b> You may ask someone for an advice. It may be anyone (PC or supporting character) and it could be someone who's dead or otherwise normally impossible to consult. Pick one of the other players to be the advisor and decide how you are communicating. If you follow the advice given to you, you will succeed. But if you don't follow the advice you will fail, no matter what.	The character is a Churchillian anarchist sitting in his comfy chair, where he is plotting to take over the city. The player draws the card, and picks another player to act as the counselor.	From under the chair, we hear a voice with the following message: "To take over the city, you must marry into one of the rich families, climb the ranks within the import nobility, and befriend some of the leading judges". Should be easy, right?



# THE ADVENTURE





The gamemaster is part instructor, part director, part storyteller, part actor. It's mainly your job to make the city come alive to the players, by playing supporting characters for them to interact with, describing the things they see in the city, and planning nefarious plots for them to encounter.

While planning the adventure, in order to support improvisation, the gamemaster creates ideas, sketches and notes up front. As the game itself is collaborative, the players control the action of the characters and most of the action is invented on the fly, it's both impossible and undesirable to plan in detail what will happen during an episode. Part of what makes roleplaying so exiting is that neither the gamemaster nor the players know what will happen.

However the improvisation can be enhanced and supported if the gamemaster has created a few ideas in advance, a sort of scaffolding for the story you're building together.

Your task as the gamemaster is not to prepare a linear series of scenes for the players to experience. Give the players freedom to explore the fiction through their characters!

And while playing the adventure:

- Build on player initiatives (see previous chapter).
- Don't block (see previous chapter)! Maybe the player's idea is even better than the one you originally had in mind?
- Be ready to skip or change planned scenes and throw your plots out the window.
- Try to keep up with the players!
- Don't force the players through a bunch of stuff you've planned if their characters take a different path.

There are as many ways of planning an adventure as there are gamemasters. Below, we'll be looking at some methods you can use when planning for a new episode. It's not meant as a recipe to follow every time, but rather a few concepts and ideas you can use.

## *The Scaffolding of Adventure*

### **Ideas**

**S**tart by figuring out what you think the adventure will be about, and what place it has in a larger context, the campaign. You can also come up with some ideas about mood, tempo and range. Should the adventure be light or dark? Is the action sudden or gradual? Is the adventure played as a mystery, romantic drama, mission, exploration, flight, or something else? Will it shake society up, or does it have a more personal scope?

You have many potential sources for ideas when creating an adventure:

### **Goals and Wishes**

This is the most important driving force in the game. An adventure should ideally be prepared with the characters in mind, and contain elements that motivate them to get involved. Read the character descriptions thoroughly. The elements that constitute the character are your keys to getting the players and characters involved in an adventure. They're the main characters in the story, so the adventure should matter to them personally. If a character hates grimasques because they were supposedly connected to the death of his father, the adventure can provide new clues. If the player wants the character to overcome his prejudice, the gamemaster can challenge him by creating a peaceful and sympathetic grimasque. There are many ways to figure out what the characters and players want.

### *Daily Life*

In addition to adventure and excitement, a good way to pace the game, develop the characters and to make them come alive is to let them have a daily life besides all the drama. Establishing a sort of normality also makes introducing drama easier, by letting you set up normal, complacent situations which can then be messed with. How does Thomas' love interest react when he's spent a week in the Fringe Zones? What does Principal Harold Ebenhardt think of him spending so much time running the orphanage in Black Bay? What's a merry chat at Café Parasol like? Things such as these are also part of life in Itras By.

You should read through the character descriptions, but you can also ask in advance. Or you might simply start the game and leave the initiative to the players.

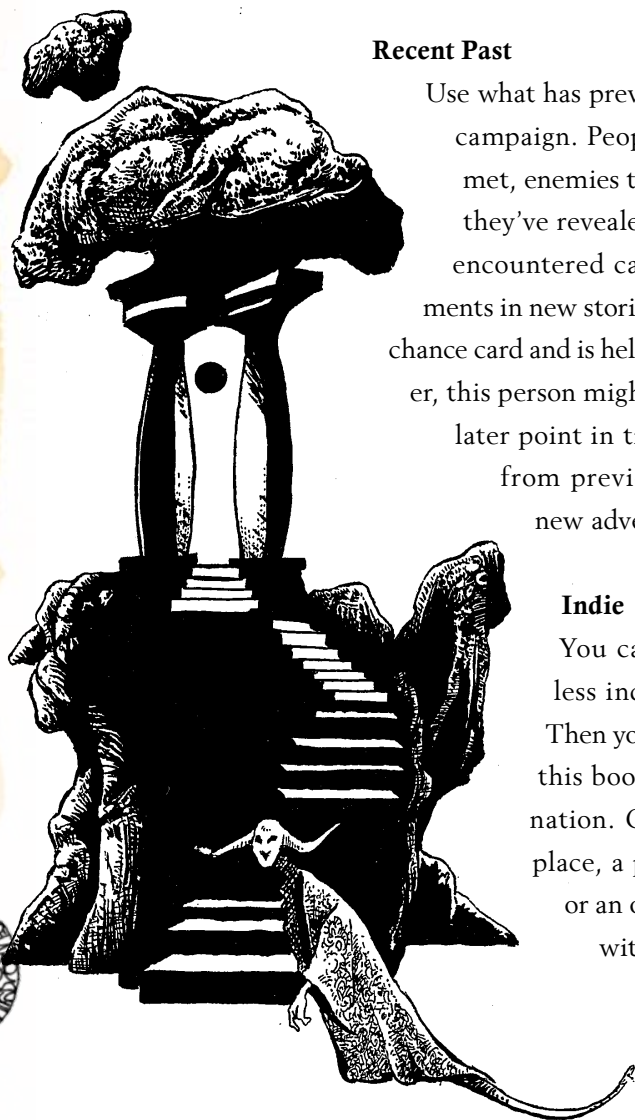
No matter how, you have to make sure that all the characters are able to pursue their goals during the campaign, either together or by turn. Have a look at the example character Thomas Chesterfield: the player clearly signals that he's interested in finding out more about the nature of reality, in order to get together with Molly Bullhurst. This gives you as the gamemaster an idea about what kinds of events and clues will excite the player. Use this material for what it's worth when planning adventures.

### Recent Past

Use what has previously happened in the campaign. People the characters have met, enemies they've come by, secrets they've revealed and injustice they've encountered can become exiting elements in new stories. If one player draws a chance card and is helped by a random stranger, this person might herself need help at a later point in time. Check your notes from previous sessions, and plan new adventures based on these.

### Indie

You can also create more or less independent adventures. Then you'll get inspiration from this book and your own imagination. Choose (or make up) a place, a person, a phenomenon or an object you want to work with, and ask how this can



involve and create trouble for the characters. How do the futurists relate to the characters in your campaign? Has someone ordered a nightmare for one of the characters from Atu? Maybe one of the characters is radiated under one of the Machine God's lamp posts? How will she get her creativity back?

### **Session vs. Adventure**

An adventure is not the same thing as a session of play. Sometimes you can plan several adventures for the same evening of play. The characters might have more than one project running. The different tracks can be more or less independent, or they could be intertwined and end up in a common finale. Adventures can also span several sessions. Sometimes the plots occur and develop more or less in the background whilst the characters focus on their daily lives (see text box p. 133).

## *The Elements* \_\_\_\_\_

### **Scenes**

**P**lan a few cool situations you'd like to see the characters in, and try to think about how you can use them in the adventure. Obviously you can't force the players into scenes, but making a few contingency plans can be helpful. Maybe you'd like to see a battle on the rooftops. Then you could make the bad guy of the story hide out in an attic, and have him run out through a window once the characters arrive.

Sketches for scenes can also be preparations for encounters with specific supporting characters, events where the characters learn something important, confrontations with their adversaries and so forth.

Define the scenes loosely, and be ready to drop or adjust them in accordance with the character's actions.

**Key Questions for a Scene:** *Who's present? What's happening? Where are we? After that, add an element of risk to the characters.*



## Triggers

Try planning for open-ended situations. Things that the characters have to confront, but where the outcome isn't given in advance. A good method is to make sure that something's at stake for the characters, or that there's a conflict to begin with.

## Examples

*Henry awoke late one morning with a hand of metal. He could move it, and it was hard as iron. Very useful, Henry thought (but as the days pass by he notices the metal spreading. His wrist turns into metal. He sees iron shavings on his forehead. And his heart is feeling strangely cold).*

*The Door We Never Open is suddenly one day ajar. Inside is a naked room, where a thin man with a broad grin and a bowler hat sits on a chair, smoking and reading this morning's edition of the Morning Post.*

*The doomsday device closed with a clink. Everyone heaved a sigh of relief. At the same time the moon tumbled down from the sky. "Good evening", said the voice on the telephone. "I call regarding your soul. According to our files, you haven't paid the rent for 12 years, and it's time for us to reclaim it."*

## Supporting Characters \_\_\_\_\_

Supporting characters are among your most important tools. In the same way the players interact with the city through their characters, you interact with the characters through the supporting characters you control. In **Itras By**, you'll get to portray everything from speaking apes to mad scientists and spider goddesses.

When preparing for an adventure, you can come up with a few concepts for supporting characters. Just jot down a few keywords about each one ("Bobby's father. Strict, but just"). Constructing crafty plots

can be a challenge, but merely knowing the goals and motivations of a supporting character can get you a long way. Actually, this might in some instances be all the preparation you need. Create a few supporting characters who are connected to the characters in one way or the other, and make sure that each of them has a specific agenda, preferably one which will affect the player's characters.

Many of the supporting characters you'll also get for free by looking at what the player's wrote under the heading "supporting characters". Other's you can deduce. If the character works for the Grey Guard, he probably has a lot of interesting co-workers and mean bosses you can develop, for instance.

Write down five to six supporting characters, figure out what they want, which resources they have, and about how close they are to fulfilling their wicked plans. To get a simple visual overview on a sheet of paper, write down the names of the supporting characters and characters and draw arrows between them where you fill in what kind of relationships they have.

Many supporting characters also come into being during play. Either you make them up on the fly, or you can ask the players to describe them when needed ("this wife of yours, what's she like?"). Or the players can introduce them themselves ("I assume the prankster is Lord Blubberham. We've been giving each other silly phone calls for years").

It can be a challenge to remember all the supporting characters you come up with, and separating how they act. It can be a good idea to make a note of their names and mannerisms as they pop up.

Many supporting characters will only show up once, but a good way of making them feel more solid is to reuse them. Not necessarily in every episode, but often enough that the characters will get to know them.

You will also often see a group of core supporting characters who's featured in almost every episode (family, close friends, the local bar

keep), and another group who are more peripheral. Try to notice which supporting characters the players respond to and notice, and make these recurring characters in the campaign.

Remember that the supporting characters are main characters in their own stories, even though they play minor roles in yours.

In the description of the city you'll find several supporting characters. Some of them are detailed; others are mentioned in subordinate clauses. Use them! Change them! Twist them! Introduce them to the characters! It's what they're there for.

## *Locations*

---

The psychic real estate of Itras By offers you many malleable places to use for your purposes. In addition to thinking about the action of a scene, you will want to consider where it will take place. You can use the locations you choose to create atmosphere and support the action. Locations can be the starting point for entire adventures in themselves, take for instance “Domus Tempus” in the setting chapter.

When describing locations, think through details which make them come alive; mood, sounds, smells et cetera. In addition you can consider the function of the locations. Is there anything particular about it? Is it dangerous? Very safe?

If you want you can sketch maps of the locations, to make it easier for you and the players to visualize them.

## *Other Elements*

---

Other things you can consider if you have the time: objects, newspaper clippings and organizations. As with the locations you need to consider their function in the adventure and how they look.

How does the element fit in Itras By, and what part should it play in the adventure, what information value does it have, and which dangers, opportunities and limitations does it offer the players?

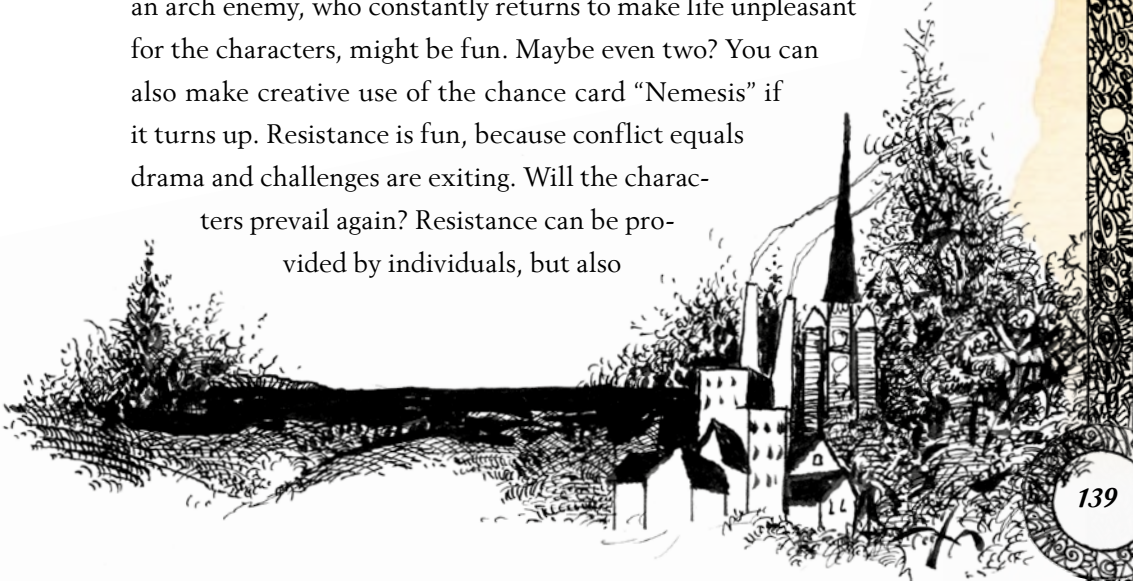
### **Behind the Scenes**

A good way to prepare is by imagining the backdrop of the adventure. What has been going on? Write down a few keywords about what has led up to the adventure, who's been involved, and what they're planning. This is the only time during the game where you as the gamemaster have complete control. No unexpected capers from the players can change what has happened (unless they get a hold of a time machine or use a card in a clever way). If you have a vivid picture of the background, it will be easier to improvise stuff, such as clues, the motivations of minor characters, results of what has happened and so on. Often a thorough preparation of the background is all you need.

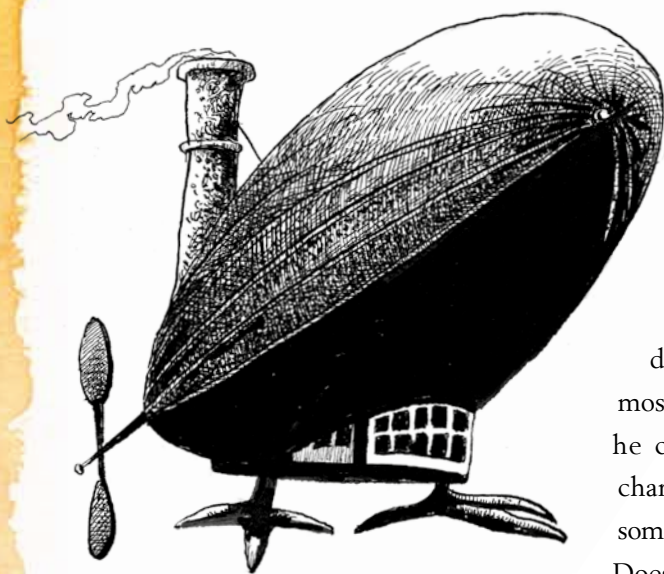
Some items:

### **Resistance**

Maybe there is a specific antagonist in the adventure? You can create a new one, choose one from the book or pick one the characters have met earlier in the campaign. Equipping the characters with an arch enemy, who constantly returns to make life unpleasant for the characters, might be fun. Maybe even two? You can also make creative use of the chance card "Nemesis" if it turns up. Resistance is fun, because conflict equals drama and challenges are exiting. Will the characters prevail again? Resistance can be provided by individuals, but also







by organizations, weather, disease and other events.

If it's a single person, what kind of person is he? Where does his loyalty lie? And, most importantly, why does he create trouble for the characters? He probably has some sinister goal of his own. Does he simply resent them?

Do their interests contradict each other (maybe both are heirs to the mysterious bust?) Is he forced by circumstance, like bad dreams, blackmail or is it simply his job? The motives of the antagonists may seem alien, but as the gamemaster it's good if you can put yourself in the place of the adversary and understand his or her actions. The henchmen of evil have the strange habit of thinking they're doing something good.

### **Resources**

Figuring out which resources the adversary possesses might be useful, such as friends and allies, dramatic qualities, power and influence, weapons and possessions. It's a good idea to give him a few weak spots. For instance: Yung Ban-Ya is the leader of a sect. Many cultists are loyal to him, but at the same time he's very poor, as there has been a decline in the cult market recently. Powerful opponents are exciting, but overpowering ones who are impossible to defeat (or trick) can soon become tiresome.

### **Former Events**

You can let former events intersect with the adventure. If the guardsman who's after them once had an affair with the mother of one of the characters, or if the woman who's supposed to help the group went

mad last year, it's good if you know. Then you can give small hints and clues before slapping the players over the head with the Truth.

### **Intrigues and Conspiracies**

The characters may be surrounded by intrigues they themselves are not involved in. Both enemies and friends have their own plans, projects, animosities and alliances. A good source of new ideas can be to keep updated on side plots throughout the campaign. This will enforce the illusion of the city being a real place; stuff is going on even when he characters aren't around. But don't spend time on things which will never be used in actual play. Be pragmatic when preparing an adventure, the important part is what happens during the session.

### **Timeline**

Another way of strengthening the illusion is to make a list of events that go on behind the scenes. You can put such ideas down to specific times and places. For instance: By midnight grandmother will rise from her grave, or Terrence usually arrives at his office before noon, so the burglary should take place before then. This timeline could also encompass the plans of the antagonist. Such plans are not cast in stone, and have to be adjusted according to the character's actions once the adventure has begun. The players are always able to affect the outcome.

### **Effects**

When planning the adventure you may also want to try some new narrative techniques or effects. Maybe you want half the adventure to consist of dream sequences? Maybe it's not the dreams of the characters, but those of the antagonists and the characters play a part in these? Other ideas; flashback-scenes to the character's past, let the players control a few supporting characters each, let players establish all the scenes in the game, perform a small ritual before commencing and ending play. Later in this part of the book, we'll provide you with many ideas for effects and techniques to utilize.

## *Adventure in one-two-three!*

**D**o you have little time to prepare for the next session? Fear not! An adventure can be planned in one-two-three!

Pick up some paper and a pen.

1) Start by skimming the character descriptions, and your notes from previous sessions. When you create ideas for scenes, supporting characters and plot complications you can read through these lists until you have an idea.

While reading the notes you might stumble over loose threads you're not certain how to use. Make a note of these at the bottom of the sheet, in the form of short sentences.

2) Write down the names of new supporting characters who might turn up. If you want, add a few keywords about profession, personality or dramatic qualities. In addition to the supporting characters you can name of objects, places and organizations. You don't have to make up too much information about each. That will give you more room to adapt them to player input during play.

3) Write about five scene sketches before play. Every sketch consists of a title, time and location, as well as four to five sentences about things that might happen or what the various supporting characters might do in this scene. Ideas on how to start the scene will also come in handy.

Things to consider when writing sketches for scenes:

- Which plots and motivations have seen little use, and are to cool to simply let lie?



- Are there any characters that have received fewer spotlights than others, and deserve more in this session?
- How will the different supporting characters react to what happened last session?
- What problems might face the characters?

When you're playing these "prepared" scenes is a form of fallback. Mainly the session will consist of scenes which appear by themselves, often instigated by the players. But if the action needs a kick start, or you've run out of ideas, you can look at your sheet of paper and use one of the scenes you've prepared in advance. You can also combine events and descriptions from different scene sketches. The order can be changed, events replaced or different sketches combined.

Your sheet will then contain the following:

- A list of names, with new supporting characters, locations, objects and the like.
- Sketches for a handful of scenes.
- Loose ends and unanswered questions.





The campaign is a series of interconnected adventures. The players play the same group of characters each time, and some of the same supporting characters will show up in every adventure. A campaign can be compared to a TV or radio series or a monthly comic book.

This chapter presents some ideas for planning the campaign.

## *Brainstorm*

---

Discuss what kind of a campaign you want to make. Some sample concepts are given below. You'll also find a few ideas in the chapter on the character. It's ok if one of the players suggests a concept of his own, but the final decision has to be made with all the players present.

A typical mistake is for the players to design their characters in a vacuum, and ending up with groups which don't work together (as in: "the grey guardsman, the criminal grimasque and the Machine God's lackey on new adventures"). The gamemaster and the player should find out why the characters hang out. Preferably you should meet and create the characters together, maybe during the same session where you plan what the campaign focus will be. Obviously you could also plan and communicate via telephone or mail.

The characters might have connections to places, groups or supporting characters mentioned in this book. This makes it easy to start play, and the characters are quickly drawn into the intrigues of *Itras By*. Find out why the characters spend time together, and what ties them to each other, and you're off!

## *The Length of a Campaign*

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### **One shot**

The one shot is a single episode, more reminiscent of a novella or short movie than a chapter in a book. Read what's written about creating and running an adventure in the previous chapter for more on planning

such an episode. Since it's a standalone it might be extra dramatic, with a sharper dramatic structure and a lot at stake. Maybe even some of the characters will lose their lives? A one shot is superb if you just want to test the game, if you're taking a break from another game, using a pre written scenario or playing at a convention.

Towards the end of the book, you'll find a sample one shot adventure, "No. 13", about a strange block of flats in Black Bay.

### **Mini Campaign**

The mini campaign lasts between two to twelve episodes. Before you begin you'll decide roughly how many episodes it will last, and plan based on that. Campaigns get a different dynamic when playing towards a given "deadline". In the mini campaign you might want to test weird concepts that wouldn't suit longer campaigns. The mini has a tight, compact tempo, where each episode is central to the campaign as a whole.

### **Full Campaign**

A full campaign has no set end date. In a full campaign, it will often feel as if the story takes on a soul of its own, almost becoming a character in its own right. Full campaigns can afford themselves a slower pace, where the characters get time to mature and develop. Every single episode isn't as crucial as in the mini campaign, but together they make up the parts of a whole.

## *Plan the Campaign Based on the Characters*

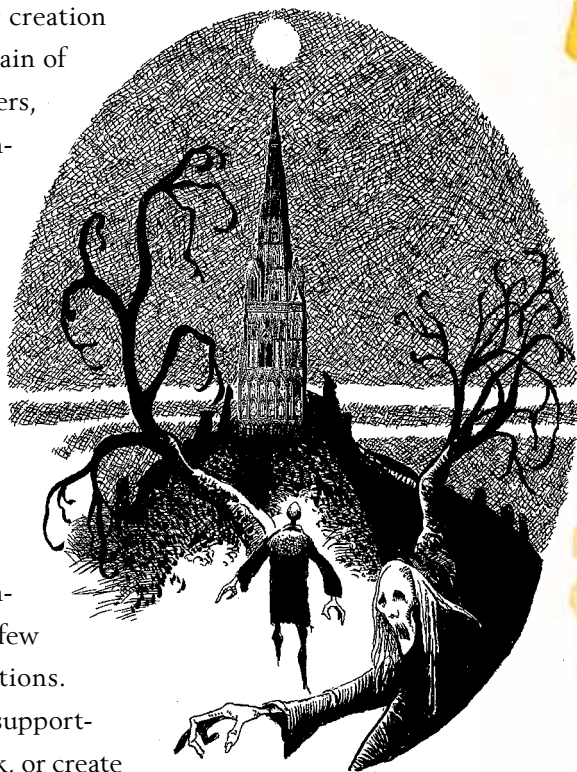
When the characters are written down, the gamemaster should take time to read them thoroughly. Our method for building characters is also made with the gamemaster in mind, to provide him with lots of good ideas for how to connect the characters to the story. Before the campaign begins, you could sit down and make a note of the most interesting aspects of the characters, using ideas from intrigue magnets, background and important supporting characters. Every



single item in the character creation list is designed to be a fountain of ideas. Based on the characters, you can start creating sketches for adventures. This way you can integrate personal events and situations for these specific characters in your campaign.

### *Preparations* —

**F**igure out which supporting characters will appear more often in the campaign, preferably choosing a few from the character descriptions. You might also want to use supporting characters from this book, or create your own to fit the campaign concept.



You may also want to describe a few locations which will be central in the campaign, like the home of the characters, their workplace, the villain's lair, and so on. If you want to use locations from this book, you can read them again and come up with a few details of your own. See the chapter **Itras By Revisited** (p. 163) for some ideas on how to expand the setting.

### *Play Regularly* —

**W**hen you decide how long the campaign is going to be, it is good to have a realistic idea on how much time you have available. When is Gary going to Germany for studies? How long does the summer vacation last? Can everyone play once a week, or should we stick to monthly games? Regular play helps keep interest in the campaign alive.

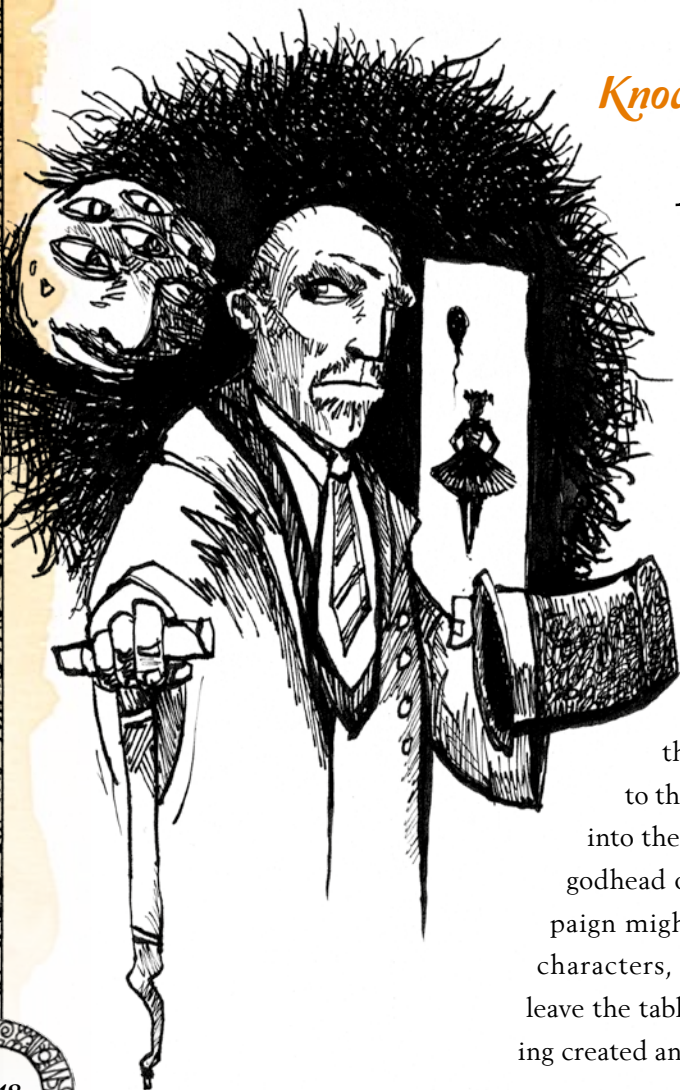


## Take Notes

During and after each session, you should take some brief notes, write a short summary, and send it to the players. Don't make it a chore or a huge task, but make sure you have some keywords about each episode. These notes will help clarify what happened later on, maintain interest in the campaign between sessions and provide you with a rich source of ideas when preparing new episodes.

## Know When to Stop

A good campaign deserves a worthy finale. Try not stopping halfway, or making a flat ending. The last episode should tie together a few loose ends and contain some kind of climax for the characters. Do they reach their goals, or do they fail? The finale might be a final struggle against the arch foe, the marriage to the chosen one, the insight into the mystery, unity with the godhead or some such. The campaign might end tragically for the characters, but the players should leave the table with the sense of having created an enthralling story.



## *With and Without Focus*

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**Y**ou can easily create campaigns without a specific focus. Use the character's motivations in the way described above; use their supporting characters, this book and your own campaign notes to create the adventure sketches. Throw a few events in the way of the characters, and see how they react. If the players take an interest in something, plan more around this. It can be a satisfying kind of campaign, as it's focused primarily on the wishes and initiatives of the players.

Another approach is to agree upon a common focus for the campaign. This can be prepared somewhat in the same as you'd prepare an adventure, with ideas for primary places, supporting characters, conflicts, opponents and intrigues. The questions you'll ask yourself in advance are: What are the characters doing? What's this campaign about?

The brainstorm for focused campaigns might be as follows:

### **Background**

What's happened before the campaign starts? Which characters are involved? What intrigues are underway? Which conflicts are there?

### **Characters and Supporting Characters**

What kind of people do we meet in the campaign?

### **Mood**

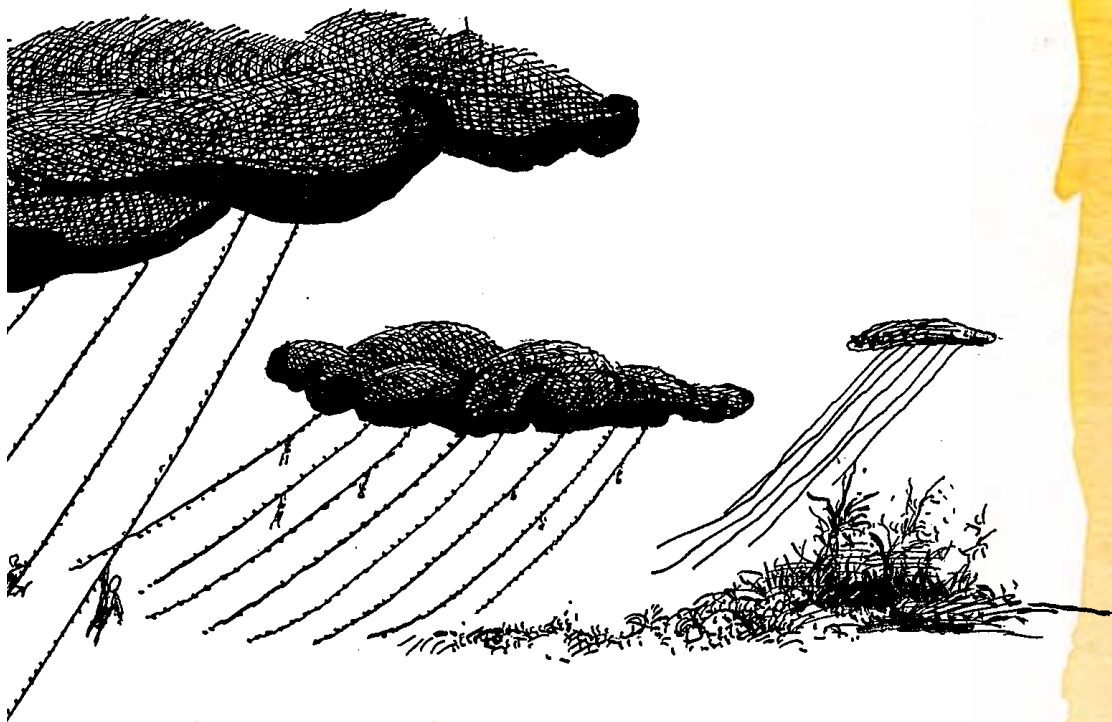
What kind of vibe does the campaign have? What kind of locations does it take place? Is it a humorous campaign, or an especially dark one?

### **Guidelines**

What separates the campaign from others? How do you portray friendship, violence, supporting characters? Is it realistic or highflown? Mel-low or baroque?



# SAMPLE CAMPAIGN CONCEPTS



## *The Dream Factory*

**Background:** Babelsberg studio is the city's first and only movie studio. It's situated on a large lot north of Church Hill, and appears a maze of workmen's huts, studios and outdoor movie sets. Here's a stable, there's a forge. There's even a small mountain made with paper mâché and plaster. By day the lot is swarming with life. Hundreds of people hurry in all directions, new set pieces are made and torn down continuously, and no one has a complete overview of the place or what goes on there. At night the lot is empty and deserted, and then Babelsberg is an eerie place.

**Characters and Supporting Characters:** The studio is owned by three men: Samuel Goldfish, Dr. Ernst Metro and Victor Oppheimer (also known as "Boulderbeast"). The studio's goal is to produce at least one movie a month to satisfy the demanding audience in Itras By. Babelsberg was originally founded to shoot the erotic movies Samuel always wanted to make with the chorus girls at the variety show. After a great success in the beginning Goldfish bought a large plot of land north of Church Hill to build the first movie studio in the city. Despite the constant threat of bankruptcy, movie productions still thrive at Babelsberg.



The characters are involved in producing the revolutionary talking (!) movie “The Grimasque!” They may be actors, script writers, stockholders, film directors or suchlike.

**Mood:** Bohemians, artists, bel-esprits, movie people, talking fish and the corrupt glamour of the studio system.

**Guidelines:** Strange events, lots of humor and a touch of thematization of social conflicts. The character’s goal is to complete the film The Grimasque!

## *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* —

**Background:** Doctor Herman Fuselbart the Third has recently started a bold experiment to explore the depths outside Itras By. The submersible vessel The Nautilus is a baroque object consisting of light steel, copper tubes and colorful glass, and dived down into the Great Sea just three weeks ago. The first week the crew transmitted radio signals to Fuselbart, reporting of subaquatic grottos, strange creatures of the sea and wrecks. Nautilus moved further and further away from the city, closer and closer to the Fringe Zones. Then, one day, the radio signals came to an end, and since then no one have heard from the Nautilus or her crew. Now Fuselbart is planning a new expedition to figure out what happened to Nautilus, and, if possible, rescue the crew.

**Characters and Supporting Characters:** Scientists, explorers and sailors, all brave men and women who work for Fuselbart by tracking his first vessel. They’ll meet strange marine creatures, shoals of mermaids, crazed sailors, isolated communities, and, as they travel deeper and further out, their own wildest nightmares.

**Mood:** Adventure, isolated islands, gleaming horrors of the deep, mystery, bubbles, desire, claustrophobia, heroics and treason!

**Guidelines:** With a campaign concept like this, the gamemaster can construct many limited single adventures which are connected: the submarine grotto, the meeting with the sea people, the inbred island

community, the forgotten valley, meeting the metal monsters, and so forth. In the foundations of the campaign lies the mystery: what happened to the first expeditions? Probably, there will be clues. A part of the vessel. A radio message. A corpse. A light, deep in the night black sea...

## *The Salon of the Subduers of Darkness: Right Ho, Jeeves!*

---

**Background:** The Salon has discovered a sunken castle deep down in the catacombs. It's inhabited by squat, slow lizards with an awkward tendency to belch loudly. The castle is obviously a great location for subduing, but the misery of the world is such that the vapor of the lizards clings to hair and skin, and is nigh impossible to wash off! Now, the members of the salon, young and fit men from Mint Knoll all, have been invited to a ball the coming Saturday. But they all stink! How to balance the demands of honor; subduing darkness, with the demands of the gentleman; not to stink at the ball? It's set for silly excuses, frustrated females and the battle to rid oneself of the stench of stinky lizards!

**Characters and Supporting Characters:** Simple souls from the higher classes, their manservants, fiancés and eccentric uncles. The characters are fond of sport cars, golf and dressing up to subdue darkness. They are admired amongst the maidens, envied by the fellows and constantly get entangled in betrothals and the mix up of cream jugs. It's a complicated life in the upper classes, but thanks to resourceful butlers most things work out in the end.

**Mood:** P.G. Wodehouse meets Dungeons & Dragons.

**Guidelines:** A relatively short, light hearted campaign. No one gets hurt for real (even the lazy lizards are able to escape, and if they lose their tails they can always grow a new one), the intrigues are extraordinarily convoluted, most people belonging to the upper classes are simpletons or eccentrics, and the servants are scheming.



## War

---

**Background:** War has broken out in the Fringe Zones, and the young men of Itras By are called out to do their duty. At first the mood is exited, heroic, and nationalistic. There hasn't been a war for all the time anyone can remember, and the young men look forward to being "hardened in the fire", as one Church Hill poet puts it. Many artists join the ranks of the soldiers, hoping to receive inspiration at the front.

But when the war begins, the men find themselves stuck in trenches, fighting a mysterious enemy hidden in fog. They never gain ground, disease consumes as many as actual battles, and the enemy is unknown and never seen.

After the war many return shell-shocked and damaged. The economy in the city gains a great boost in the post-war years, and the veterans rot away under the glamour of the new city lights.

**Characters and Supporting Characters:** Soldiers, officers, medics, chaplains and other functions of war.

**Mood:** The mood in the campaign varies in three stages. Before the war it's hopeful and exiting, during the war it's desperate and dark, after the war, it depends on the individual characters and what they experience during the war.

**Guidelines:** During the campaign the gamemaster cuts back and forth between scenes before, during and after the war, in order to create contrasts and explore how the mindsets of the characters change according to their experience.

## *The Morning Post*

---

**Background:** Two months ago editor and owner of the yellow paper The Primate Scream (P.S!), Jonah James Johnson the Younger bought the traditional newspaper The Morning Post.

For as long as anyone can remember, The Morning Post has been the largest and most influential news media in Itras By. It's a conservative, proper publication with a tradition of addressing the most important social issues. During the last couple of years, however, P.S! has challenged the newspaper, until the acquisition was a fact. Johnson has pushed former editor Christopher Jensen aside, degraded him to an assistant and taken his place. Johnson wishes to shape the Morning Post in his own image, that is to say; the image of P.S!, a newspaper which knows what sells; scandal, murder and abandon. The substantial news journalism of Itras By has dark days ahead.

In reality P.S! holds the speaking apes of the city enslaved. Johnson has kidnapped their king, the import nobleman Lord Greyspoke, who as a babe became a grimasque and was put out in Ape Gardens to die. The speaking apes took him in, and treated him as one of their own. Three years ago the henchmen of Johnson kidnapped Lord Greyspoke. With him as hostage they've enthralled a lot of speaking apes. Not only do they report the news for him... they make the news themselves! It's no coincidence that the reporters from the Primate Scream are always the first ones to arrive when a murder has been committed. They commit them too, on the orders of Johnson!

**Characters and Supporting Characters:** Journalists of the Morning Post, sources, editors, competing media, talking apes, Jonah James Johnson the younger.

**Mood:** A somewhat surreal take on the newspaper industry. The campaign will start with the characters having to compromise with all their journalistic ideals, before they might start to unravel the mystery of the murders and the talking apes.

**Guidelines:** The first few sessions could be played out as a "day in office life" and give an interesting perspective on many aspects of Itras By, with the characters having to cover them as journalists. Then, after a tour at the offices of P.S!, the journalists start sensing something is deeply wrong with their new owner and his business model.





# RUNNING THE GAME

The gamemaster's tasks are both challenging and rewarding. The guidelines in the section "Roleplaying" are equally, if not more, important to you as the gamemaster. Please go back and read the paragraphs "Don't Block" and "Build" again. Here are a few more tips which are more specific to the gamemasters task.

### *Learning by Doing* \_\_\_\_\_

In this chapter we provide much advice on how to run a roleplaying game, based on our experience and that of others. However, the most important source of gamemaster skills is your own experience. After having played for some time you'll discover your own instruments. How do you like to create atmosphere? How does a scene feel when it's progressing too slowly or too fast, or has good pace? Use what's written about gamemastering here and elsewhere as a platform to run the game your own way. Enter the character of the gamemaster.

### *Setting the Scene* \_\_\_\_\_

Scenes are demarcated parts of the story. Often they focus on a single time, place or event. If, for instance, the characters find themselves in the kitchen of an old witch, that's a scene. The next scene can be in the taxi on the way home. Or maybe nothing exciting happens in the taxi, in which case you could just set the next scene at home. Your powers to set and cut between scenes are wide-ranging. Sometimes, you'll want to let the players set the scenes themselves: "Where are you now?" or "What does it look like where you are now?" are good questions to pose.

You can also cut away from scenes if they're getting dull, or have played out their functions. For inspiration look at how this is done in movies and books. Scenes don't have to drag on forever. Be like a film director. Cut down and shorten in order to preserve the drama. If the players seem bored, it's time to introduce a new element or surprise them (throw something at them, to speak figuratively). If the players

are talking amongst themselves in character and seem engaged in the story, you'll probably want the scene to last a little while longer.

## *Descriptions*

---

**I**t's your job to make Itras By come alive to the players. Make sure that what you say is relevant to the characters. Speak from the character's perspective; "you see", "you hear". Give short, comprehensible and coherent descriptions of what's going on. Make sure everyone knows where their character is at a given time. Avoid questions like "But I thought we were still down by the harbor?"

Mostly the descriptions should be short and precise sensory impressions. That is, after all, how we meet the real world. And use all six senses! Sight and hearing might be the most accessible, but a living world also consists of the smell of tobacco, the taste of strawberries, and the sense of cold against the skin. Longer descriptions, if at all necessary, might be prepared in advance. A "good description" doesn't mean "the gamemaster performing a monologue." Find a balance. Good and long descriptions are not the same thing.

Use voice and facial expressions. The way you speak and carry yourself is a good way to establish atmosphere in the game. If the situation is tense, speak in a hushed tone, maybe whispering. On the subway one has to shout when the train enters the station. Vary between calm and flustered, but let the calm mode dominate. If you pour such "effects" on every scene they will soon lose their power.

## *Fairness*

---

**G**ive each player an equal amount of time in the spotlight. Change between who you address directly. Don't let anyone hog all the attention. In any social context some people will be talkative, others more reserved. We need the chatty ones, but they have to be curbed sometimes. Help the shy beginner have a say. Let your supporting char-

acters address his character directly. Part of your preparations can be figuring out situations adapted to specific characters. Let each of them have at least one unique situation every session. These are a chance for their character to shine, develop and experience personal sub-plots.

## *Preparations* \_\_\_\_\_

Usually, a session lasts between three and six hours. It will enhance the experience if you've prepared a little bit in advance (see the chapter on preparing the adventure). But don't bog yourself down in details you won't use in actual play. Preparations are an aid, but flexibility is at least as important. If you spend too much time preparing specific encounters and plots, you might end up blocking the players when they inevitably do stuff that makes your intricate web crumble.

## *Save the Big Guns* \_\_\_\_\_

**I**trast By works best when the bizarre, mysterious and strange keep their dreamlike quality. Don't use supernatural creatures, monsters and weird events all the time. Make room for ordinary people with ordinary reactions, everyday occurrences and a pinch of humor.

## *Accepting* \_\_\_\_\_

**A**t one level the gamemaster will direct the game strictly, on another the players have almost complete freedom. The gamemaster is the prime mover, but listens to the players all the way. In some cases he sets the scene, in others he will ask the players; where's your character now? What's he doing? What does he see? What is he thinking? The rule of thumb is to do what feels right then and there, and follow what whims strike you and the players. Encourage the players to take initiative. If a character says something, it will almost always be true in the fiction (unless he's consciously lying). The character's actions should be built upon and expanded.



## *Special Effects*

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**B**elow are some ideas and effects that you can try out. Some of them might become part of your repertoire, others are best used sparingly. Try them out, and experiment with your own techniques. Choosing which methods to test can be part of your preparation for play.

A scene like this can often work nicely without the gamemaster interfering at all, and gives you time to consider the next scene and how to tie up loose ends.

### **Time Jump**

The scenes between or within an episode don't have to be chronological. There's nothing wrong with jumping a few days, weeks, months or years forwards or backwards in time.

### **Pacing**

Try to keep a relatively tight cut pace. Don't let scenes drag on forever, and establish characters in a new scene when the previous one has served its role. You can also cut between different scenes (for instances if two characters are in the wilds and two are in the city, you can jump back and forth between these).

### **Dream Sequences**

Dreams are an important source of inspiration in *Itras By*, so what would be more natural than to act out some of the character's dreams? And who knows, maybe something from the dream will stay with them when they awake, physically, mentally or spiritually?

### **Show Them Who's in Charge**

Be irrational. Stop scenes in the middle and say what the characters think and do in the meantime. Be an enlightened autocrat. Please observe: this technique is useless unless you combine it with a lot of freedom ordinarily. The players have to trust you in order to allow such use of power.

## Forward and Rewind

Forward the action if players seem bored. Rewind when the scene went wrong and it has to be told anew. It's no point playing character 1 taking the bus to meet character 2 and having a long discussion where they agree upon calling character 3. If the players say "can't we just meet at the tavern The Rocking Slingshot?" you can just establish the next scene there. Or let one of them do it.

## Player Plots of Land

- The players are free to decide anything regarding the city's popular culture ("Do you know what I read in the Morning Post today?" "Have you seen Jæger's new silent movie?").
- The players have a limited say over elements of chance ("I meet him on the street", "luckily Hübert remembered the clock").
- The players can freely introduce supporting characters, but the gamemaster controls them unless you agree otherwise ("I telephone my good friend Abelkaft Snestrup. He always has good advice with regards to the hay-fever").

## What Do You See?

The gamemaster asks one of the players to describe what his character sees. It might be another character, an event on the street, the weather, a façade, or anything else.

The gamemaster can share control over supporting characters and other elements in the setting according to his own assessment. One player might be asked to describe the dreams of another's character, or control parts of the supporting characters in the other character's memories. You can also point at players whose characters are not in the scene and ask them to play one of the supporting characters who are ("now you're the barkeep").

## Example

**Player 1:** *Hm. Maybe we can find a witch doctor that can break the curse? I'm going to look for one.*

**Gamemaster:** *(This wasn't planned, what to do?) You've heard rumor of a witch doctor in the city, and you now find yourself outside her house. What does it look like?*

**Player 1:** *It's a swamp with lots of croaking frogs, down by the river mouth. In front of me there's a tattered tent which smells strangely.*

**Gamemaster:** *Ok. You (points to Player 2) play the witch doctor. You want to sell souvenirs and prophecies.*

## **Using Movie Metaphors**

“Zooming in on”, “Cutting to”, “The camera slowly descends over the city, before it lowers itself down into the street, where we can see [the characters]”, “Slow film”, “Black and white”.

## **Fill in**

The gamemaster says to player: “On the street, you meet someone you know. Who is it?” or “You’re greatly disturbed by the letter. What does it say?” or “You touch the strange object on the floor. What does it feel like?”

## **This Morning I...**

Every player describes, by turn, what their character is doing in the morning. This can be done at the start of a session. The description is from outside, you don’t say what the character thinks or feels to avoid the players starting to plan the episode.

## **The Ritual**

Create some small ritual before and after play, to start and open the session. It can be a countdown, lighting and extinguishing candles, closing the eyes for a little while, playing a certain tune, toasting. The point is to create a ritual setting around the game.

## **Epilogue**

When the last scene is over you can ask the players for one epilogue each, a brief narrative about what their character does after the adventure.

## **Foreshadowing**

At the beginning of each episode, you can go around the table and have each player describe the beginning of a scene, for later use. These “scene triggers” are later on utilized in the episode.







**A**t the beginning of the book we wrote how it is a living piece of fiction, and that the material is like a tool box. Here are some ideas on how you can make **Itras By** your own.

You can agree beforehand whether you want only the gamemaster to read this chapter, or if it's ok for all the players to read it, as it contains some information which might be used for mysteries or surprises in your adventures.

### *The Churchillians* \_\_\_\_\_•

**T**he squat men roll their liberating cigars from flakes of the sky, they say, but anyone with the tiniest knowledge of the natural sciences will realize this to be twaddle. The sky is too far away, and besides; it's not a dome which you can touch and feel, is it? However that may be, it does occur, on the coldest of nights, that a long ladder is raised against the side of the church on top of the hill, and the guests at the taverns below notice a short, chubby little man wriggling up. What will happen if the characters were to climb this ladder? Is the sky a dome? What's outside of it? Can you reach the moon by ladder?

### *The Blue Dragon* \_\_\_\_\_•

**I**n a deep basement under the opium den lies an unfortunate lucky dragon in chains. Master Wu's great grandfather found the dragon's egg in the wilds. The dragon has been held captive since it hatched. Blue dragons were never meant to live in captivity, and this one is crazy with fear and anger. It lies crouched, shivering in its dungeon. Every seven days Wu comes to pick scales from the dragon's body. These are ground up and mixed in the opium he sells. The scales give the intoxication a special richness and grants prophetic visions. The dragon in the basement has had several generations to ponder his revenge. How will the characters fit into his scheme?

## *The Hieroglyphics of Dreams* \_\_\_\_\_

Six nights in a row, the characters experience a terrible nightmare. Blood streams down the walls. The sky is pitch black, and the moon doesn't shine. The city lies in ruins. The seventh night they sleep well, without a shadow of bad dreams. When they awake and open their eyes, they see blood streaming down the walls. Outside the window the sky is pitch black, and the moon doesn't shine. The city lies in ruins. What has happened? Can the Ka-spirits help? Is Atu involved?

## *A & -A Street* \_\_\_\_\_

The characters are following a scoundrel who runs into A & -A Street. If they follow him, you can describe how the characters cease to exist and the players suddenly find themselves in a very strange city. The characters already both exist and do not exist. They are in your heads, but not in any physical reality. Now the same is true for the players as they sit in front of you, confused prisoners of Itras By.

## *Phon* \_\_\_\_\_

The characters are tracked down by an old, ugly man. He claims he's their old friend, young Peter Tolbert. The old man babbles on about evil wizards and water pipes. But Peter was at the party last night, with everyone else? He seemed very merry, almost as if he'd been given a second chance...

(A different twist to this plot is if the gamemaster secretly makes a deal with one of the players that he should play the evil wizard Ramanuja, who's come in possession of his character's body. Will the other characters be able to discover the deception, when an old man approaches them, claiming he's their friend?)

## *The Backyard Lions*

**B**aron Willifred Egg is ceaseless in his hunt for the lions. He's obsessed with killing their leader, Amber Eye, who took his leg on a hunting trip. The leader of a criminal gang of grimasques, Seymour, has a pet lion that always follows him. Blood Tooth was cast out of the flock as a child, and Seymour cared for him.

## *Grimasques*

**H**arry Engel was a young, well-to-do man from Mint Knoll. In principle he's a world-weary and blasé fellow. He thought everything was rather boring, and wanted change. One day he was smiling wryly at someone about to make a fool of themselves, something terrible happened: the wind changed, and Harry turned into a grimasque. Harry was a friend of the characters before the accident happened, and now finds himself an outcast in Black Bay.

## *Uanja*

A tattoo that...

- ... always looks like the thoughts of the wearer.
- ... shows symbolic images of the future.
- ... needs human blood (or else it will drain the carrier).
- ... makes the wearer irresistible to the opposite sex.
- ... has its own consciousness and possesses the wearer by full moon.
- ... is a portal to another dimension.
- ... crawls over to others at contact of the skin.

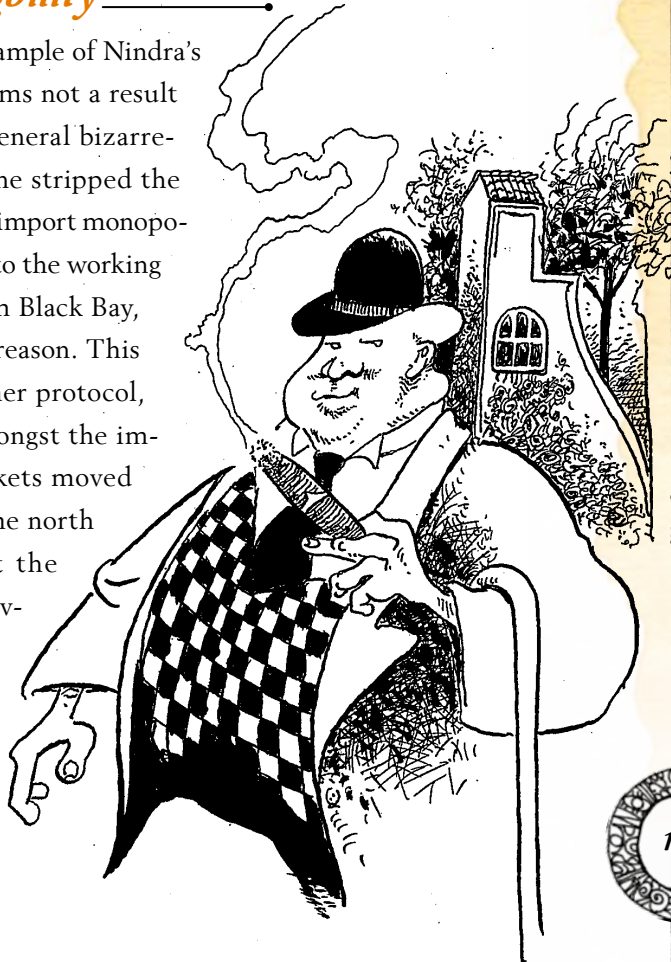
## *Wherefore Art Thou Snabelstrup?*

**O**n the surface Mint Knoll seems idyllic, but under the surface many conflicts smolder. The original import nobility looks down on those who have been ennobled by Nindra. There is a struggle to become a member of the exclusive societies and clubs. Business rivals thirsting for revenge or shares sometimes take drastic measures.

Marriages in the district are often arranged, almost like business deals, and sometimes made between members of the same families in order to preserve land and money on family hands. This tradition creates heart ache and intrigues. The servants of the various households live in apartments on the property of the employer, unless they commute from Black Bay. In many cases whole families of servants have been attached to the same house for generations. Upon discharge of these, many bitter emotions come to life. The connections between the servants and their employers are also spiced by romantic affairs, broken heartedness and jealousy. A good way to create an overview is by drawing a relationship map, and then connect different people by arrows, with key words such as “in love”, “jealous of”, “has a bastard child with”, “despises” and so on.

### *The Import Nobility*

The most recent example of Nindra's social changes seems not a result of politics, but rather general bizarreness. Three years ago she stripped the Türms of their lucrative import monopoly of jewelry and gave it to the working class family Bucket from Black Bay, seemingly without any reason. This is a break with all former protocol, and has spread fear amongst the import nobility. The Buckets moved into Türm's stately home north of Mint Knoll, whilst the poor Türms have been living from hand to mouth amongst their old friends, raging with bitterness and bile.





## *Ape Gardens*

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The Society for the Protection of Moral Virtue, consisting of gentle ladies from Mint Knoll, has committed itself to a final solution to the chaos of Ape Gardens. The hedges shall be pruned, the trees styled and the grass cut. It must be much nicer for the apes as well, if it's airy and clean in their park? A dirty old forest is fertile soil for all kinds of pest and diseases. Ugh!

## *Boulderbeast*

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The family of one of the characters, preferably a rich one, arranges a marriage between the character and Ophilia (if they don't marry they'll obviously be cast out and disinherited). The character is a close friend of Boulderbeast.

## *The Ancient and Venerable Society of Wanderers: The Arrow*

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The Arrow is a steam driven zeppelin. She's owned by The Ancient and Venerable Society of Wanderers. The captain is the wanderer Fritz von Heppstein. The Arrow is 420 feet long, and the gondola has room for a crew of twelve, but with provisions and supplies for an expedition to the Fringe Zones there's not room for more than half a dozen. The vessel is built with sturdy canvas, balsa wood and steel. It's enameled in lively colors. The furniture and household effects are made from luxurious wood and brass.

The balloon is filled with hydrogen gas which is very flammable. Von Hepstein insists, however, that it's completely safe to enjoy a pipe or cigar aboard the airship. There's a galley with equipment to cook all kinds of meals, a lookout, cabins and a bridge with a lot of cryptic maps and measuring apparatus.


The Arrow is mainly used for expeditions to the Fringe Zones. She's had eighteen missions of different duration past Moherat's Wall, and each

time she returns there have been big or small changes to the vessel. A library turned up during the seventh mission, but it had to be removed as it made the vessel highly unstable and not very airworthy. Since the fourteenth mission the number of measuring apparatus, buttons and levers on the bridge has been increasing perilously. Most of them bear instructions and texts written with indecipherable letters. Von Heppstein wants to tidy up the instruments, but is afraid to destroy something. And who knows? One day a certain button might turn out to be useful.

### *Bellevue* \_\_\_\_\_

**F**ederico Cordelli is one of the city's most famous Renaissance men and party animals. As inventor, author, freelance scientist and guest professor at the University he's built a considerable fortune during his young life. He lives in a gaudy, ziggurat shaped villa in Bellevue. The building is white, with long, straight lines, and built so high on the cliffs that Cordelli can look almost straight into Nindra's nest. Here he seduces his manifold lovers (Cordelli doesn't believe in love and finds marriage to be a bourgeois perversion), organizes cocktail parties where the latest of haute cuisine is served by the pool, or elaborates his theories of this and that.

But there's a hidden side to Cordelli besides his public life as a playboy. In the cliff under the villa he has built a secret laboratory, which may be reached by an elevator hidden in the statue "The Death of Reason!" in his studio. Here he goes to transform into The Mask, one of the futurist's foremost ideologues and their decidedly foremost bomb expert. Dressed in a pilot cap, gas mask, welder's goggles and different leather outfits with a uniform look he leads the futurists in their strikes against the Machine God and his lackeys. Cordelli is terribly fond of the sound, look and effect of explosions, and uses any ideologically defensible opportunity to blow things up. Since the operations are usually directed against the Machine God the futurists have been able to steer more or less clear of the Grey Guard, but there have been the occasional symbolic arrest.



Cordelli's latest idea is to break into the Moon Tower to steel the plans for the Death Ray. Cordelli hates anything old, and would preferably live "one second into the future". He's a warm admirer of speed, technology, youth and violence. Technological developments hold a deep fascination to the futurists, and Cordelli's secret laboratory is filled with propeller driven automobiles, one man gyrocopters, recording devices, telescreens and suchlike. Many of the inventions are barely prototypes, and several are lethal.

### *Akeron* \_\_\_\_\_

One of the characters is having a good time in one of the houseboats along the channel downtown, when he becomes aware of a bloated corpse nodding on in the water surface. On closer inspection it turns out to be his own corpse.

### *The Bazaar* \_\_\_\_\_

An old man shows the characters a small green bottle and says it contains a demon. His eyes are sunken; he's bearded and lacks several teeth. If the characters, or someone they know, purchase the seemingly empty, green bottle their lives will slowly but certainly turn into a living nightmare. They'll get sick, lose their jobs, their teeth and so forth. If they seek out the old man (who is in better shape and has gotten his own sales booth) he'll laugh and tell them that the only way to get rid of the curse is to sell the bottle to someone else, but at the same time explaining that it contains a demon. The bottle is unbreakable, and will always find its owner if it's thrown away.

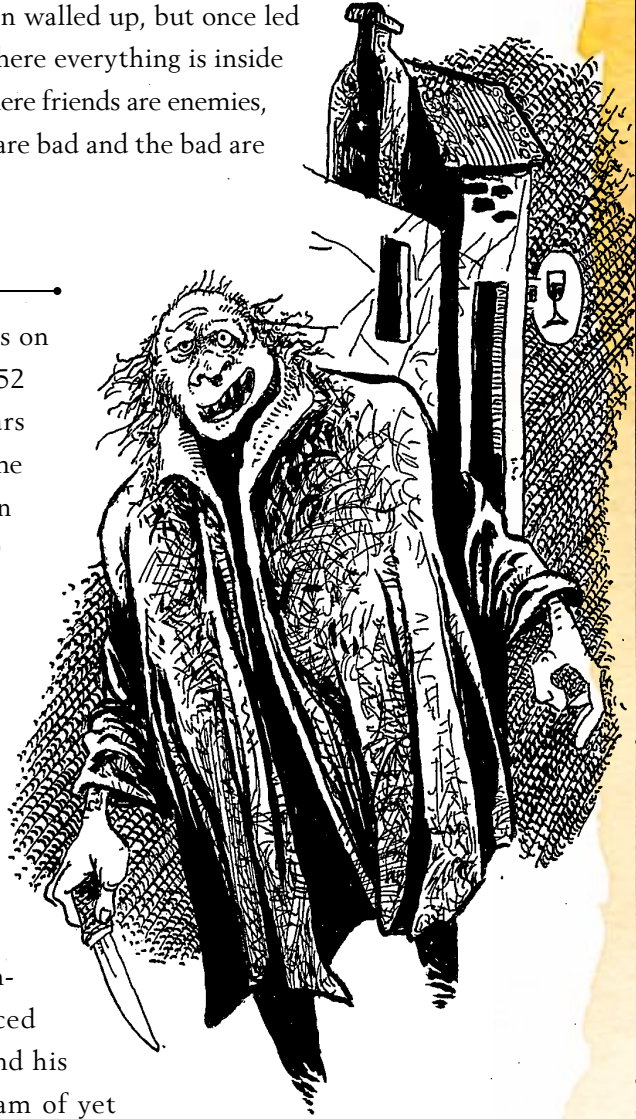
### *The Underground* \_\_\_\_\_

Station B was closed twenty years ago, and hasn't been reopened since. The train passes the station, and a few times when the sparks fly high from the metal wheels, one can see the abandoned platform, with its yellowed posters and old-fashioned lamps. The stairwell from station

B and into daylight has been walled up, but once led to the B-side of Itras By, where everything is inside out. A version of the city where friends are enemies, enemies' friends, the good are bad and the bad are good. A disturbing place.

### *Friday St.* \_\_\_\_\_

Since the street only exists on Fridays each year only has 52 days. Therefore seven years outside the street are the same as one year inside. Unathan Bismuth has lived for 350 years, but doesn't appear to be a day over 70. He was a young man when Itra disappeared, and found his way to Friday Street to wait for the goddess' return. Here he's spent the last 300 years watching fashions, hairstyles and news flicker by in an astonishing tempo. He sacrificed city life, family, friends and his old job to follow his dream of yet again seeing the goddess. Now he's getting desperate, and frequently asks the guests in his café: "Is she back yet?" His friend, confectioner Blum, has a more prosaic agenda: he's put his fortune in a high-interest-bearing account for a 100 years, and looks forward to one day starting the life of a wealthy man, which he's always dreamt of. He just wants to wait a little bit longer. Once every ten years he leaves Friday Street to go check his account, and laughs all the way back the week after.





Like in your dreams, a lot of what seems strange in Itras By will be completely natural to the people who live there. Just like with the peculiarities of our own world, people will enroll them in their lives and make them commonplace. Unathan Bismuth and confectioner Blum are examples of this: They've found a logical way to use the characteristics of Friday Street. Which logical continuations can you think of? Sit down with pen and paper, and come up with a few suggestions.

## *Josephine Buckle* \_\_\_\_\_

- One of the characters is Josephine (or another version of her). His or her moods control the weather.
- Heavy rains create a deluge threatening to flood Itras By. People walk around in tall boots and row to work in boats. What's causing the terrible weather, and what can the characters do to stop it?
- Josephine and one of the characters become lovers and he or she experiences the strange connection between their relationship and the changes in the weather.

## *The Gollups* \_\_\_\_\_

**P**repare a few questions with deep, personal significance to one of the characters. Let the Gollups call him and pose the questions. Some of the questions are of an existential nature, and might make him reconsider his self-perception. Others remind him of important clues he's overlooked, or makes him change his mind about something. The Gollups may also be used to plant foreshadowing hints; if you know that a future adventure will be featuring the character's father, you might have them ask a few cryptic questions about the character's relationship to his parents.

### *Mulholland Assorted Glass Jars Ltd.* \_\_\_\_\_

The characters happen to break one of Jerome's jars. The jar contains a hand, which immediately scuttles away. Later strange things start happening around the characters. The hand won't leave them alone until they help it get inside a particular house on 12th Street.

### *The Morphiciary* \_\_\_\_\_

A very dull friend of the characters has just finished recounting how she was morphed by the strange Morphiciary the day in advance. At the same time the window behind her shatters as an air ship crashes into the house.

### *The Shadow Patio* \_\_\_\_\_

The characters each receive a letter with a key and an invitation to the hotel. Their most bitter enemies and rivals from former adventures have received the same kinds of invitations.

### *The Grey Guard* \_\_\_\_\_

The guardsman outside the door looked very stern. "Are you Mr. Fusel?" Mr. Fusel couldn't do anything but nod. "We want to ask you a few questions regarding the death of your wife".  
"Albert?" Mr. Fusel's wife said from another part of the house.  
"Who's at the door?"

### *The University* \_\_\_\_\_

Some of the subjects taught at the University might seem strange to us. Players are encouraged to create their own special fields: take a word which sounds Greek or Latin, add the suffix -ology, and write a few lines about the new subject. Dendrontology (dendron, tree, and ontology, the teachings of reality) might be the subject about how reality consists of trees. Minilogy could be about small things. Inven-

tions can be made the same way. Take a word, add -scope, -meter, -ator, -vision or something else. A divinoscope lets the operator gather and interpret prophecies. A cancellator might cancel a bad purchase. Interesting inventions are also relevant in other hands, like in those of the futurists and the Machine God.

### *Domus Tempus* \_\_\_\_\_

Moving in this house in certain rooms means moving through time, in others exposing oneself to the effects of time in strange ways. The mysterious effects of Domus tempus vary from room to room, stairwell to stairwell and hallway to hallway. In some rooms time moves much faster, others have slow-moving time. You may experience exiting the house older or younger than when you entered. Inside the house it's possible to meet people from the past and future, see yourself wandering around, or hear voices from the depths of time.

### *Cafe Parasol* \_\_\_\_\_

Who were the mysterious Travelers, and why does no one travel through the city any longer? In the café basement are secret clues, written into the roof beams, bricked into the walls.

### *The Institute of Humane Research* \_\_\_\_\_

The controversial Institute of Humane Research is secretly owned and run by the Machine God and his lackeys. The gamemaster's task at IHR is to convey the horror of the institute to the players. They should feel the uncomforted. It's not necessarily the strongest effects which make for the greatest impression. One motif could be the calculating evil of the researchers, dry, impartial. It's not that they enjoy suffering; they just don't see it as a problem. "Please make a note of this, Johnson. Day 9. Subject no. 34 does not respond to the usual dosage. Increase the voltage by 10." A festering whisper can be more powerful than a piercing scream.



## *The Machine God* \_\_\_\_\_

**I**n a secret factory in Black Bay the Machine God's mechanical assassins are being built. The Scissor men have black eyes and faces drained of emotion. They're always dressed in long black coats and hats. This human exterior is in reality a shell. The brain of the scissor men has been transplanted to their stomachs and is protected by metal shields, whereas the upper body is a collapsible flower of scalpels. When they attack their face and upper body parts in the middle, and hundreds of long, thin knives fold out, chopping at the victim.

## *The Estates* \_\_\_\_\_

**T**he characters are invited to a party at one of the old forts in the wilderness, but come to realize that something is very wrong: they're the only living creatures at the party!

## *Moherat's Wall* \_\_\_\_\_

**T**he wall was built to keep Itra's nightmares outside the city. They were guarded by noble men and women who cared less for their own lives than honor and the community. Now the walls have collapsed and the descendants of the noble men are decadent fools. Draw your own conclusions.



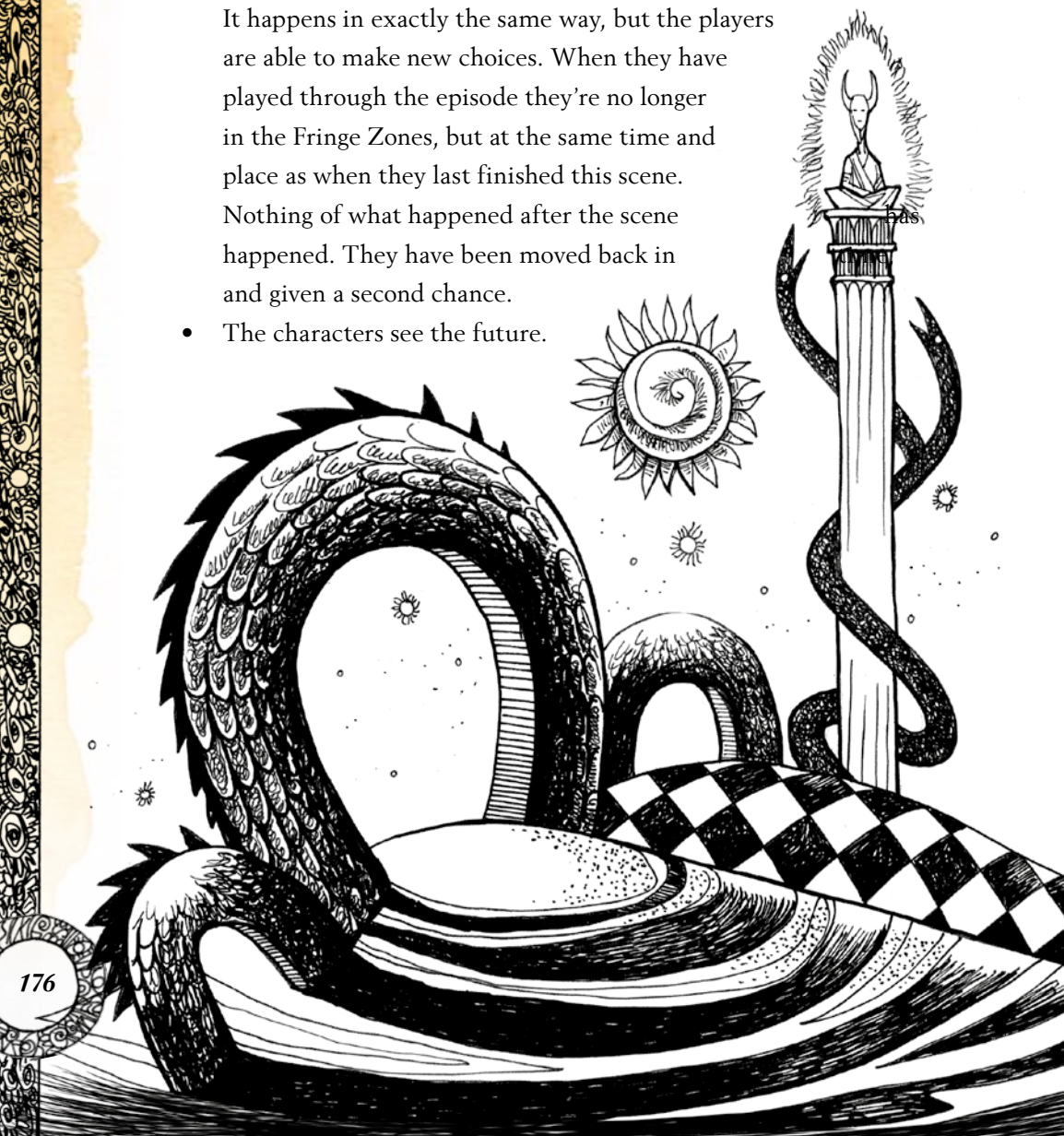


## The Fringe Zones

The fringe zones are the limits of Itra's dream. Here reality dissolves completely, and you are free to introduce the strangest effects and events. Here are some suggestions.

### Effects

- The characters relive a scene you have played before. It happens in exactly the same way, but the players are able to make new choices. When they have played through the episode they're no longer in the Fringe Zones, but at the same time and place as when they last finished this scene. Nothing of what happened after the scene happened. They have been moved back in and given a second chance.
- The characters see the future.



- The characters wind up in a familiar fairy tale/novel/myth/tale.
- The dreams of one character become reality to all.
- Time and space breaks apart. The character's might for instance relieve the same scene two or three times, be asked to play the ending of a scene first and the beginning later, or something similar.
- The greatest wishes of the characters become real.
- The greatest fears of the characters become real.
- The character's memories/dreams/fears/hopes/personal qualities/feelings/thoughts/nightmares take on the shape of people/animals/symbols/buildings/landscapes.
- The character is changed in some way: a parasitic, stuttering and very talkative demon grows attached to her back, she becomes identical to another character, turns into an animal or half animal, half human, or gets a characteristic quality or body part blown out of proportions. For instance.
- The gamemaster asks the players to describe the surroundings.
- The gamemaster casts the scenes according to random things the characters are talking about.
- The characters reach a window/mirror/room where they find the players and the gamemaster playing.
- The characters find a telephone they can use to call the players.

### Places

- A boiling pool of mud floating in the middle of the air.
- A mountain shaped like a woman with a waterfall flowing from her breast. The giant woman is alive, and has been sleeping for twelve hundred years.
- A ruined landscape, half clad in sand, an eternal starry sky sparkling over it, a company of Bedouins riding on camels in slow procession through the desert.
- Twelve pillars with a kilometers distance between them. On top of each pillar lives a prophet, every prophet is wiser than the last. The last prophet isn't human.



- An angel with a flaming sword guards the entrance to a beautiful garden.
- A winding, organic rock swallows everyone who passes into a massive system of intestines where thinking water feeds on words.
- A flowery meadow where each flower grows from the eyes of a living infant.
- God in the shape of a massive temple, filling the heaven and the earth.
- A labyrinth made up of the player's past.
- A palace which is a brothel where lascivious orgies take place all through the night, but by day all men have to vacate the brothel, or they'd discover that the women really have maggots in their eyes and have been dead since before time began.
- A throne in the wasteland grants omnipotence to the one who sits on it.
- Itras By, exactly as it was in antiquity.
- A glass dome covering the world, which is the utmost limit of reality.

### Creatures

- Moherat and his twelve warriors, on their way to fight the creatures from outside.
- A clay golem who has wandered the Fringe Zones for seven hundred years, looking for his lost love.
- A snake which tries to tempt the characters to eat from a pear tree on a cliff.
- Judas.
- The numeral two.
- A Cyclops who holds a beautiful man captive in a mountain cave.
- A just man, an evil man and a stupid man on their way to ask the woman of women for the hand of hands.
- A snake encircling the entire world, eating the sun every night.
- A woman who wishes to destroy the earth.

- Dead relatives and friends.
- The Man in the Moon.
- The character's enemies as children.
- Hercules on his way to his 13th labor.
- A tentacle monster from the other side.
- The characters reach an inn in the forest, where they meet themselves. This might be themselves from the future, the past, or another version of themselves. Maybe it's their own evil incarnate, or maybe the characters turn out to be the other character's evil incarnate, and the strangers are the actual characters?

## *Nindra*

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**N**indra is, in many ways, inscrutable and distant. She sits on the very top and controls a lot. But she's a spider, her motives are unintelligible. She controls indirectly and through partially conflicting channels. This opens for many contradictory interests, intrigues and manipulations in the bureaucracy under her. A system which is impossible to have a complete overview of, and which is almost organic in its complexity, a system which opens a room for the character's actions and makes sure the Grey Guard isn't super-efficient. Nindra is so deep-seated and wrapped up that a lot of things she simply doesn't care about, and the strange rules which guide her attention and apathy are transferred to those who work for her.

Nindra has a lot of time. The characters are a breath of wind, a fly buzzing on the window frame while she's rebuilding the house. And she also thinks differently from humans. Where humans think "I want power this way", Nindra thinks "Bzzzt klikk bzzzt klklkl xchchchczxx."

It's not certain that the characters will feel much of Nindra's presence in the daily life of the city, or even in the daily political life. The city runs itself. The Grey Guard is reminiscent of a normal police force, albeit with a dark (and rarely mentioned) heart. But Nindra is always present as an important resonator in the campaign.





THE SURREALISM

OF ITRAS BY

## Chapter 10: The Surrealism of *Itras By*

*Leonara Dahl supports herself on the railing. Only 32 years old, she feels almost like a pensioner. The sound of peeling telephones and chattering typewriters are still ringing in her ears, even though the work day is over. Dahl sighs deeply as she fishes out the keys to her little apartment in Grand Meadow and locks herself in.*


*It's only when the door closes behind her she notices something is wrong. Call it female intuition, call it paranoid thoughts. To Dahl it feels as if the air is trembling. She starts at the sight of her own reflection in the mirror. Moving with careful steps towards the living room, she first sees the divan. The second thing she sees is the round mahogany table she inherited from grandmother. The third is the giant salamander crouching on her living room floor.*

*The skin of the salamander is more reminiscent of emeralds than lizard. Its eyes are burning with flames of gold. A cleft tongue darts in and out of its mouth as it hisses: "Leonara Dahl... the hour hasss come... to pay what you owe usss..."*

Surrealism is french for "higher reality". Roughly summarized the surrealist movement builds on the idea that our psyche contains more than what we're conscious of. Between us and comprehension lies a barrier of habitual thought patterns, what we call reason. If one bypasses reason, one might achieve a deeper insight into reality. The surrealists use many different techniques to liberate themselves from the barrier of reason, like free association and automatic writing.

The result is a seemingly meaningless chain of ideas which yet follow their own laws, in an unreal, dreamy state. Recreating this atmosphere in *Itra's Ciy* is a challenge to both the player and gamemaster.

Part of the key to making the surrealism of *Itras By* work lies in taking the incredible for granted, relating to it without ever asking the question "why". This question kills surrealism, both the question and its possible answers. The book "The Metamorphosis" is an excellent



example. The main character awakes in the morning and has turned into a giant beetle. His primary concern is how to get to work, next how embarrassing the situation is. The family never asks the question why, but have great trouble adapting, and are worried that the neighbors will know. Take the surreal premise in the situation as a given fact, and relate to it in an everyday fashion.

In this chapter we'll look at tools one can use to create a surrealist atmosphere. Surrealism is an attack on rationality and logic. It blows apart the artificial borders reason gives us, and lets us experience the world with new eyes. Reality is not what you think, the dream is omnipotent.

### *As in a Dream*

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**Y**our most important source of inspiration are your own dreams. In dreams one experiences the hallmark of surrealism: the laws of reason are cast aside, and a new kind of logic emerges.

Itras By is located in the middle of the chaotic primordial soup of imagination, Limbo. Outside the city thoughts and ideas flow without borders and barriers. Inside this unruly mass Itra created a bubble of reality. It's not water tight, and influence from Limbo keeps trickling in, but conditions are largely livable. Exactly how stable they are depends upon where in the city you find yourself. Downtown, where the Moon Tower stands, the situation is almost as stable as in our own world. The other districts are also relatively shielded against chaos. In the wilderness and the areas around the city the laws of nature become more slippery, and as you enter the Fringe Zones dream logic takes control.

In the center of town, where normality is high, the surreal is more subdued. The diversity of creatures and cultures make for a colorful, but relatively stable, backdrop, and days can pass before you experience something truly unusual. In the wilderness the gamemaster can use more powerful effects. When you reach the Fringe Zones, anything

is possible. Here you can realize your wildest imaginations, and the characters can only hope to return with their reason intact.

## *Inspiration* \_\_\_\_\_

**R**oleplaying is a lot about being able to improvise. To make for good improvisation, it can often be good to prepare a little material beforehand. This is also true for the surrealistic elements in the game. The line between thought-provoking strangeness and boring nonsense can be thin.

One idea can be to build an arsenal of small and large effects to use underway. Get your inspiration from dreams, stray thoughts, strange experiences... in short, anything which might be a good element in the game. Read through the techniques below and see if you are inspired. Write a sketch of the surreal elements you're planning to use. Is it an event, a creature, an object? What makes it surreal? Is it subtle or blatant? Will it affect the story, or just serve as a distraction? Which details accentuate the surrealism? How does it all fit together? Remind yourself that neither the gamemaster nor the players can decide in advance exactly what will happen in the game. The story comes alive in the interplay between all of you.

The surrealist elements can be noted down together with your other notes for the campaign.

Three particular places to look for inspiration:

### **Hypnagogic Hallucinations**

Hypnagogic means something like "that which leads to sleep" or "entering sleep". Right before we fall asleep we'll sometimes hear sounds and see images in our heads which are a kind of dreams in a (half) awake state. If you have a small notebook by your bed (not to mention boring meetings or lectures), you can scribble or drawn these ideas and impressions. Sometimes they won't be comprehensible later on,



but try to consider how the hypnagogic inventions of your brain can be used in your **Itras By**-campaign.

### **Dreams**

Dreams contain forceful and exciting symbols, and often things happen in dreams which we wouldn't have come up with awake. In your notepad you can also keep a diary of dreams. Anyone can train themselves to remember their dreams. Try writing down what you've dreamt right after awaking. Many of the dream experiences can be twisted for use in **Itras By**.

### **Automatic Writing and Drawing**

Sit down in front of the keyboard or notepad, empty your mind of thoughts, and write freely. Don't plan what you're going to write, don't worry if the result is good or bad, don't think about whether it makes sense or not. Just write. The result can be things like this: "The world is burning as sexual rituals take place in a private closet in the room below, a tree grows and consumes the world from root to top, there's dancing in an abandoned ballroom where everything slowly consumes the dance of the mosquitoes on the walls." All the central concepts of **Itras By** stem from an automatically written text (see the end of the book). The principle is the same for automatic drawing: sit down with pen and paper, empty your mind and draw freely, without thought of what it's going to look like.

### *Descriptions* \_\_\_\_\_

A lot of the power in **Itras By** lies in the contrast between the normal and the surreal. If you're sparing with the use of surreal elements, they gain greater weight in play.

First and foremost, you wish to give the group a festering sense of mystique. Sketch an image of normal people leading normal city lives. Emphasize the details. It's the little things – impressions of the senses,

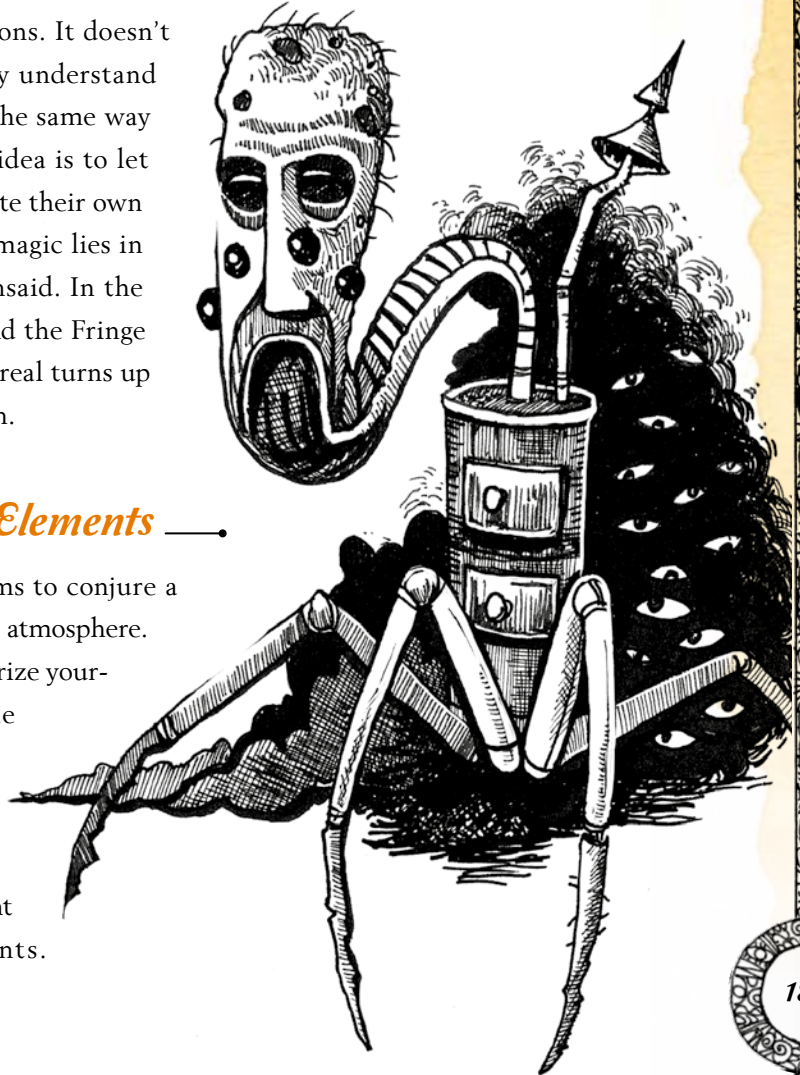
newspaper headings, and everyday dramas of no concern to the characters – that create life.

And when everyone is accustomed to a lot taking place outside of the spotlight, you can start adding small suggestions about more unusual stuff. Restrain the grand effects. That goes both for dream elements (see below), and those of the city's strangest inhabitants who aren't directly involved in the action. Once or twice during a session you can pull out something really weird from behind the wings and show it to the characters. You don't have to explain too much. Just describe what happens, but let them draw their own conclusions. It doesn't matter if they understand the element the same way you do. The idea is to let everyone create their own images. The magic lies in what's left unsaid. In the wilderness and the Fringe Zones the surreal turns up far more often.

### *Dream Elements* —

**I**tras By aims to conjure a dream-like atmosphere. Try to familiarize yourself with the hallmarks of dreams.

Dreams can be as different as fingerprints.



Yet they share a few characteristics which separate dreams from being awake, which make them more dreamlike.

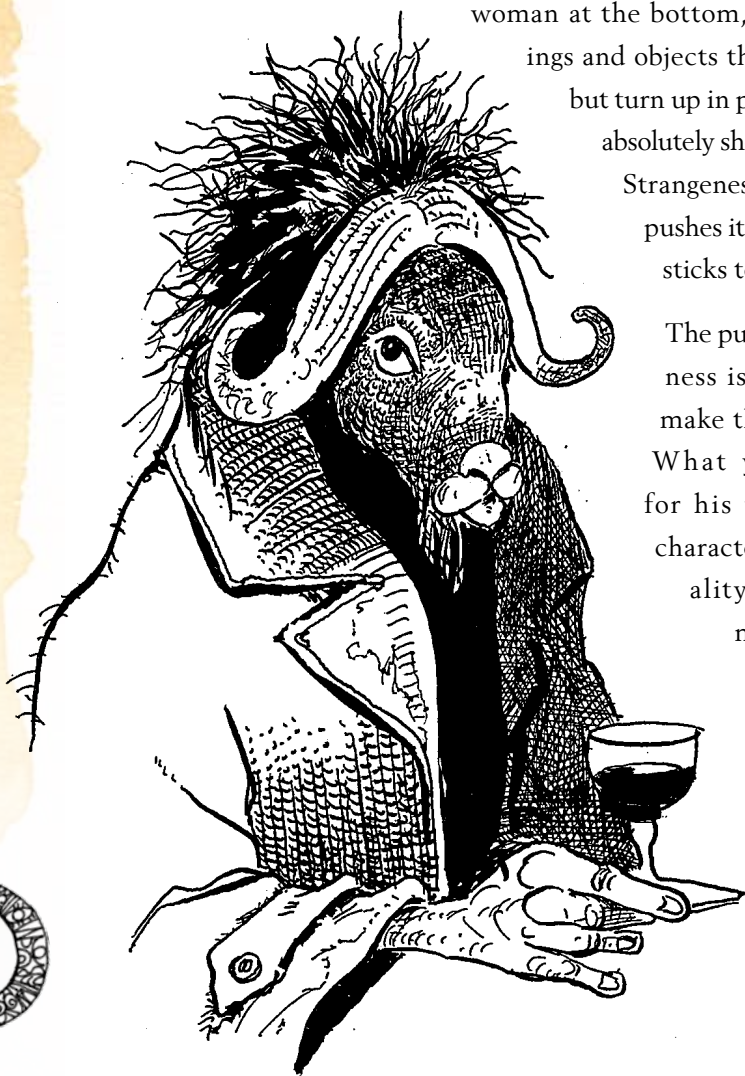
**Free Association:** This is the classical method to circumvent rational thought. In addition, it's a regular element in many dreams. Generally it's about noticing the first thing that pops up in your mind, without considering whether it seems relevant or not. You can use this while preparing, but also during the session. A stray thought enters your mind? Use it! Trust your subconscious mind and intuition.

**Strangeness:** Unusual events, objects and sentient beings, or unusual combinations of these, for instance a mermaid who's a fish on top and woman at the bottom, or sentient beings and objects that seem normal

but turn up in places where they absolutely shouldn't be found.

Strangeness like this often pushes itself forward, and sticks to the memory.

The purpose of strangeness isn't foremost to make the others laugh. What you're aiming for is tearing up the character's image of reality enough to remind them that they're never completely safe. Aim for priceless, rather than cheap, points.



**Shifts in Time and Space:** This is one of the most common features of dreams. Places are often a mix of different areas, and you can move from place to place without anyone noticing. The perception of time in your dreams is highly subjective. You might fall for several minutes from a tall cliff, only to wake up and find that you've rolled out of bed. In the game such experiences can become forceful effects, but don't use them too often; if you lose the coherence completely, the illusion might break apart.

When distorting time, the gamemaster might say that "it's been four hours since where you just found yourself. Through conversation between the characters you'll figure out how you got to where you are now." You can also describe scenes from the past (which the characters have experienced) or the future (where the gamemaster can decide for himself or, even better, ask the players), replay the same events, et cetera.

**Naiveté:** Another characteristic of dreams is that everything seems natural. You might become indignant when your great grandmother visits, even though she's dead, but you're rarely directly surprised. This "gullibility" also characterizes the inhabitants of *Itras By* to a certain extent. A lot that would seem strange to us is normal in this city. Sometimes even the truly incredible is accepted without question. The gamemaster can say "you find nothing unusual about this situation", or the player can react as if nothing has happened. This should be used with great care. Such experiences increase the feeling of dreaminess, but might be at the cost of mysteriousness. After all, nothing is mysterious if everything seems normal.

**You Just Know It:** This is a particular form of naiveté; you know something without being able to explain how you learned it. In dreams only you know that the boy is your brother (even though you don't have a brother), or that you're a secret agent who has to reveal a conspiracy before it's too late. In the same way, inhabitants of *Itras By* might know a great deal about objects they meet for the first time, or lack all knowledge even of their own selves. Memory is fallible in real life – in *Itras By* it can be truly flexible.



**Symbols:** According to those who believe in such things, our dreams are full of symbols. They can be about anything from hidden desires and deeply personal experiences, to several thousand year old themes and archetypes. In *Itras By* the characters might dine with their darker side, and the hanged man of the Tarot cards might be dangling at Gallows Hill one Saturday evening. Just as often personal and cryptic symbols (a friendly man with the hoof of a goat) might be more interesting than overt symbols (four riders with War, Famine, Death and Plague tattooed on their foreheads). Symbols can help reinforce the dream-like quality of *Itras By*. They can also help emphasize central topics in the campaign.

**Themes:** Themes are a particular kind of symbolism. When we sleep we'll sometimes experience recurring dreams. To a dream interpreter these represent particularly important topics. Such phenomena can be written into the game as events or circumstances which always turn out the same way, or almost the same way. As usual temperance is important. The effects lose their power if they become commonplace.

**A Simple Example of a Recurring Motif:** "As you cross the street the same horse carriage, with the same black horses, passes. The coachman tips his hat and says 'good morning, Mrs. Posteltwaithe!' You wonder who this Mrs Posteltwaithe is."

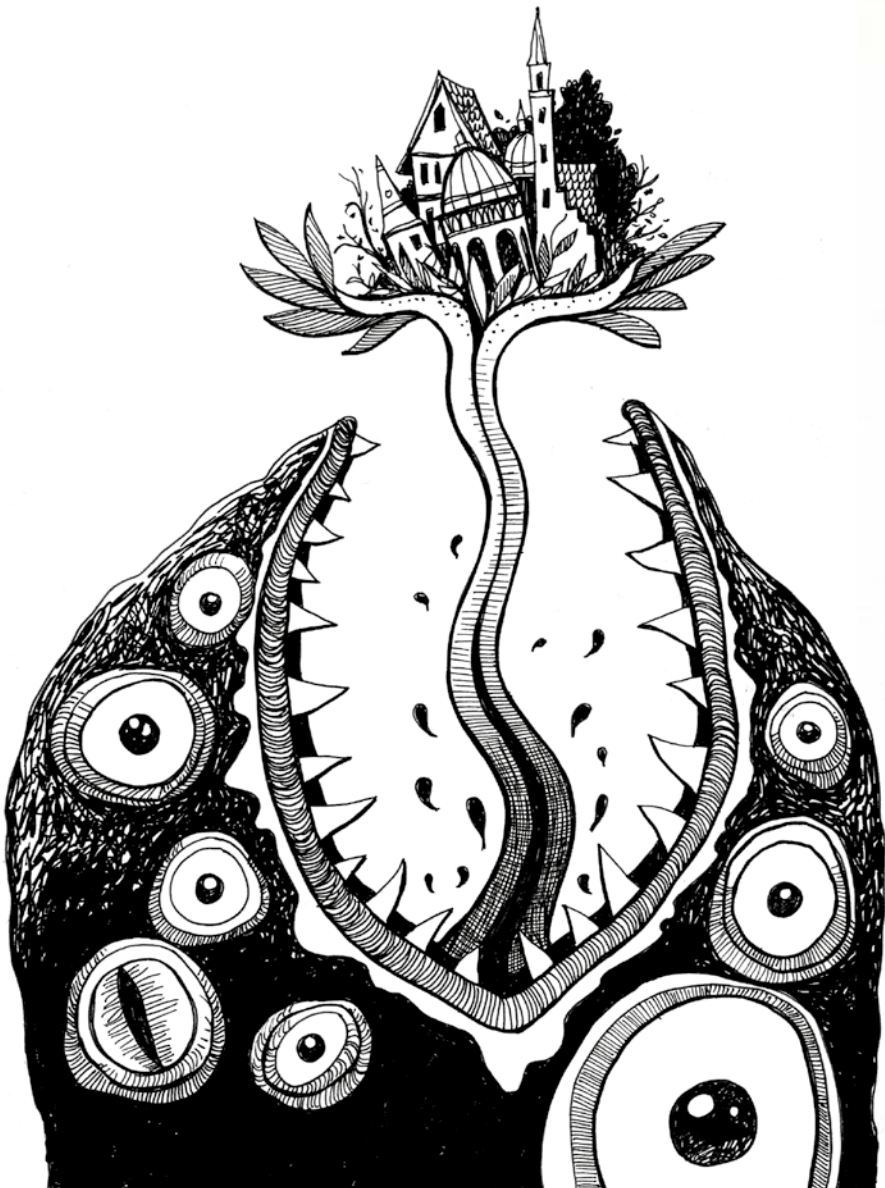
## *The Laws of Fiction* \_\_\_\_\_.

**I**n *Itras By* the laws guiding a good story sometimes intersect with the more general laws of nature in the city.

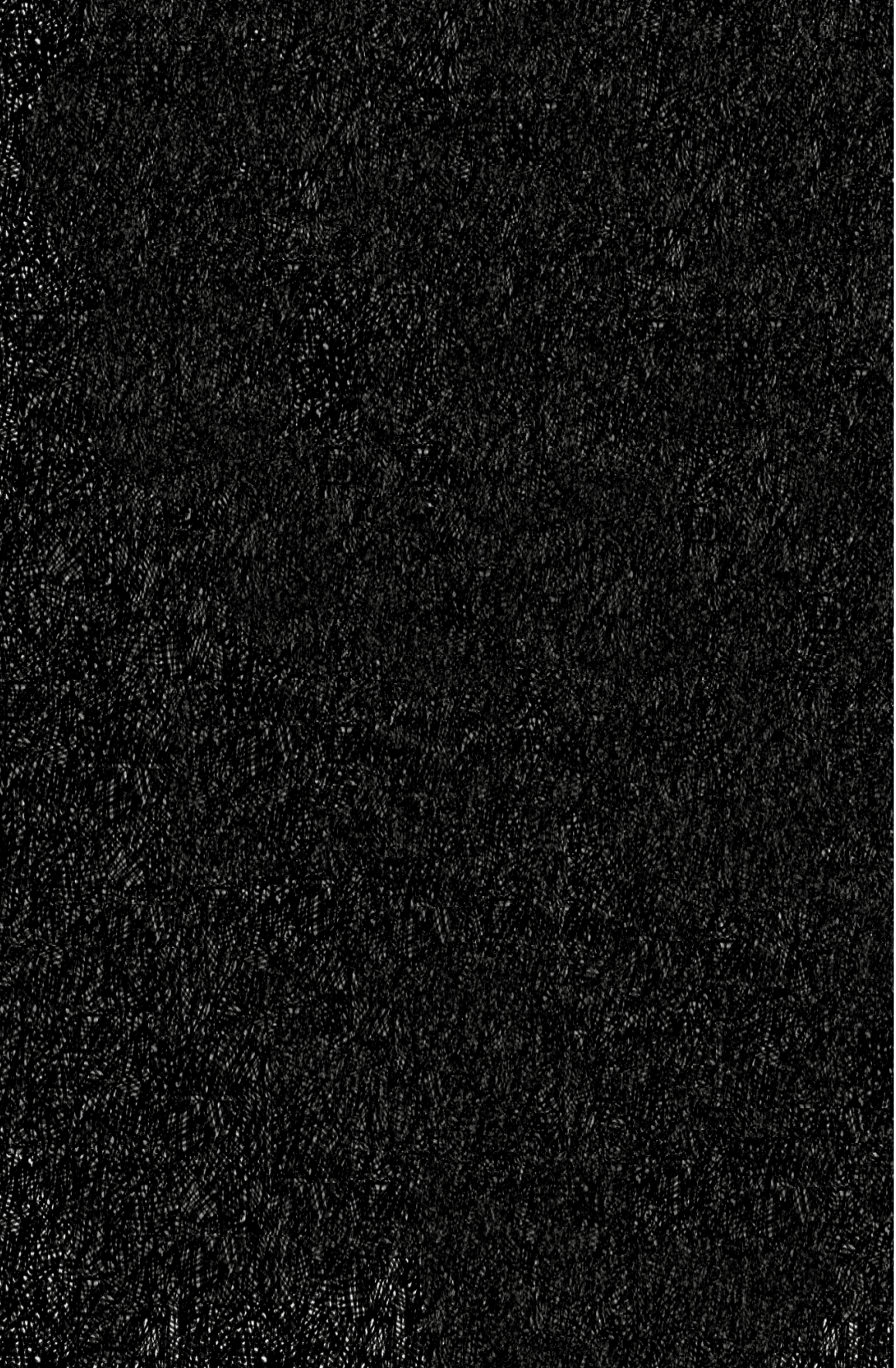
This is a good tool for setting the atmosphere, but also a tool to create good stories. If you want to describe an opponent in *Itras By* who's truly evil, and besides has a physical defect and a kind twin brother, it doesn't matter that normal people usually have more complex personalities. If one of the characters is looking for the others, they'll usually find each other even though it's a big city. Gamemasters who have some good

plot elements in store don't have to worry whether they're realistic, as long as they make for a good game.

**Coincidence:** *Itras By* allows for coincidence more often than statistics would call for. You could for instance notice a hatch in the roof just as the scissor men barge up the stairs, meet an old acquaintance who has an important message, or discover your nemesis on the other side of the street at the moment he notices you. Such coincidence can particularly be used to start or finish a story.









PART THREE  
SAMPLE  
SCENARIO



# No. 13

*And far into the night you can hear No. 13's song. It is so loud and gay, but underneath there's something wrong, an undertone of terror from the morning soon to come.*

— Rudolf Nilsen

No. 13 is seemingly like any other brownstone in Black Bay, but it's different in one respect: No. 13 is *sinking*. A loft hired at twenty has become a basement by the time you reach sixty. We've become accustomed to this – the building is supposedly built on clay – but we've probably all spent the occasional sleepless night nursing the peculiar notion that there are *secrets* behind these walls.

## Overview

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The key to roleplaying in **Itras By** is improvisation. The point of all the text in this scenario is to jumpstart you and your players' imaginations, and let you create the fun on your own. Read the text well, to get a good overview, but don't be afraid to alter or add elements. Be open to suggestions, both from the players and yourself.

There is a special rule that applies to this particular scenario: all the drama is played out in No. 13. Nothing that happens outside the brown stone is played out. Should the characters leave the tenement to work, go drinking or anything else the scene cuts to the next time they are back in the building. You may of course discuss what has happened while they were away, and both the gamemaster and the players may freely come up with their own stories. Be sure to notify the players of this special rule before playing the scenario.

This scenario is structured somewhat tight, compared to what might be usual for Itras By. It is expected that the game will follow certain steps, and it is your job as a gamemaster to nudge the players in this direction:

At the beginning the characters should get to know one another, and the tenement, and they should be driven towards attempting to discover the brownstone's secrets. All the characters are tenants of No. 13.

Within short the characters should find themselves descending the sunken floors, through the centuries, and eventually reach the ground floor and the exit door.

They exit the building just as the construction of No. 13 was started, the birth of Itras By is under way and the scenario reaches its climactic conclusion. The rule that all action is played out inside No. 13 is broken.

The characters have built in motivation to seek downwards in No. 13, hunting for answers. The game should have an exciting climax containing the answers to the characters' questions, but exactly what and how is up to the group. Perhaps the building will cease to sink. Perhaps it collapses. Perhaps the characters disappear into the abyss forever. Perhaps there is a great action sequence and the mysterious gate keeper has to be vanquished.

Don't make your mind up in advance. Let the action unfold as you go along.

### *Establish these concepts*

**The players need not know much about Itras By in advance, but if they are new comers you should take care to establish these concepts early on. Possibly at the midsummer's night party in the beginning of the scenario.**

**Itra is the goddess who created the city. She's been gone for three hundred years.**

**Itra lived in the Moon Tower. When she disappeared, so did the soothing and mild Dreamlight from the top of the tower. The Moon Tower is the tallest building in Itras By, and can be seen from the loft in No. 13.**

**Nindra is the spider goddess, who rules Itras By in Itra's absence. She has taken over the Moon Tower, now in darkness.**



Here is the description from the chapter about Black Bay:

*Black Bay is spread out like a grey blanket over the south eastern part of Itras By. Here lives factory workers, maids, gardeners, city apes, grimasques, sailors, tarts, fortune tellers, pickpockets, beggars and assassins with daggers made of silver. The buildings are grey and worn, with simple facades. They are usually between six and seven stories. Large families live in small apartments. Most of the inhabitants rent from house owners who themselves live on Mint Knoll. The roads in the district are ill-kept and muddy, with narrow alleys and choking traffic. The townscape features shouting and bawling, bad smells, rats, smoke from the factory pipes, ruthless lorry drivers, outdistanced horses, brothels and laundries, grimasques and violence. The harbour is bustling with activity by day, but has a dark and abandoned atmosphere at night. Here the import companies have their warehouses, and this is where the black ships dock by huge concrete quays. When the work-day is over, the dives by the harbour wake with gambling and coarse songs until the break of dawn.*

*Even though it's tired and grey, the district has something proud over it. The workers place honour in their work, and usually treat each other in a respectful manner.*

## *When the Moon Tower was Built*

There is a tale that no one in Itras By remembers any longer, but it is true. At some point during the course of the scenario the players should hear it. It goes as follows:

*In the heart of Itras By the Moon Tower stretches towards the sky, and the Moon Tower is the oldest building in the city. This is how it came to be built:*

*At a time when everything was newly born, and the city did not yet exist the goddess Itra sought a dwelling. She requested help from her friend Nindra, and Nindra found a master builder lured to the Elysian Fields by Itra's Dreamlight. "Erect the tallest and most splendid tower ever built!" she bade him, and he in kind built the Moon Tower. Itra was very pleased with the gift, and placed her Dreamlight at the very summit.*

*The builder thought life in the Elysian Fields was comfortable and decided to dwell there. Eventually he decided he wanted a tower for himself, even taller and even more splendid than the magnificent Moon Tower. Nindra came to him and enquired.*

*"What are you building?"*

*"I am constructing the tallest and most splendid tower ever, and I shall take it for my own dwelling place." the builder replied.*

*"Your pride is much too great," Nindra said, as she desired her gift to Itra to be the tallest and most splendid. "From this day forth your tower shall sink. For every new floor you add, one shall burrow beneath the earth, and your work shall continue through eternity, as long as your tower is lower than the Moon Tower."*

*And that is how it became.*

## No. 13

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Currently No. 13 is a brownstone of five floors, and a large backyard in the middle. It is the home of factory girls, dock workers, seamstresses and paper boys, often an entire family crowded into a single room.

Yes, the building does sink, but new floors are added constantly, it's not as if the tenement will disappear. People have other things to worry about.

There are several hundred people living in the building, divided between six different sections, and everyone knows everyone – at least to a certain degree. All the characters live in the same section, and share important links with each other, apart from that however they are not a natural group – just neighbors. The fact that all the exciting events of this scenario occurs to them is by accident: should anything exciting happen all the characters will somehow be around to experience them, while other tenants are otherwise engaged. Itras By has a tendency to adapt to the needs of the scenario in this manner.

### Sam Babs

Babs, the gatekeeper, is a short and somewhat heavy set man with a dull gaze and constantly grumpy, depressed facial expression. He is a man of few words, and no one really knows him that well. When com-



munication is absolutely required he prefers to do so by grunting and pointing, or simply posting a notification about it. If there is no other way out Babs may mumble a modicum of short sentences. Most of the time however, he spends constructing the new floor.

Samuel Babs is as old as Itras By itself, and he was to one who built the Moon Tower. The only point of his current existence is to keep building No. 13, which he loves and hates. His goal is to reach a height at least as high as the Moon Tower, but No. 13 sinks as fast as it is built.

Babs knows that No. 13 needs tenants, as a house without people cannot live, but he does *not* like them. Most of all he wishes people would stop bothering him. When a tenant reaches a certain age, and their rooms have disappeared below street level he locks them up to keep the building from withering from underneath. He tells the other tenants that the person has died, and was taken away. However, no one who lives in No. 13 has ever died of old age. No matter how many centuries they have sunk beneath the ground.

Anyone who bothers Babs too much is a threat to his project, in particular if anyone should seek the truth about No. 13, and Babs will try to remove such a person as expediently as his schedule allows.

## *The Course of Action* \_\_\_\_\_.

**T**his chapter is a list of ideas, nothing less nothing more. When the players drive the plot forward and take their own initiatives this list is not very important. However, when you and the players need a nudge you can use these ideas to your advantage. Read the list in advance, and make some notes should any ideas of your own pop up. Don't be afraid to change the content and feel free to add your own supporting characters.

Always follow up on the players' initiatives. It is more important that a character's actions have consequences than pushing the game in a

planned direction. Should, for instance, the characters seek to kill Babs after thirty minutes of playing there should be a real possibility that they will succeed. Should they actually do it some possible courses will be lost, while others appear: make them wonder who Babs really was and why no one, not even the oldest tenants can remember his predecessor. Or maybe the above ground floors collapse, trapping the characters in the basement leaving *descent* as the only way forward.

Aim at their hearts. Know the characters well, and try to engage them. Kalsen for instance might be engaged by the loss of his son, tales of the high sea, or his daughter's prostitution. Olga on the other hand can be engaged by any threat to her relations with Lars or her father – or if she should run into a person who's led a luxurious life in the depths.

No character should be kept out of the action for significant spans of time. In other words, they should all survive any dangers they encounter – at least until they are almost at the end of the scenario.

The suggestions below are divided into three parts: first part (the surface), second part (the descent) and the third part (exiting No. 13). Each suggestion has a box so you can mark it off as you go along and easily know what's in play.

Read the characters now (at the end of the scenario), before you continue with the rest of the text.

### *Some Secrets*

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**Tiny John:** Kalsen's four year old son is not really dead. The boy caught sight of Babs opening a trapdoor and climbing down into the bowels of the brownstone, and Babs consequently poisoned him with sleeping medicine, had him declared dead and spirited him away into the lower levels. In the four months since he's been wandering around on his own. He's managed to get into several apartments and spoken to their tenants. When the characters start their descent Little John is

well on his way down, and the characters will find his tracks in the dust or speak to old people who have met him. It is however very unlikely that they will catch up with him before they reach the bottom floor and the exit.

**Dal's pipe:** The green pipe leading down from Dal's apartment continues downward, and the characters can occasionally find it – allowing Dal to continue using it for his morse spiritism.

### *One: They say 13 is an evil, unlucky number*

The scenario starts off with a midsummer's eve party in No. 13: nearly all the tenants are gathered in the yard. For once they eat well, sing, dance and talk. It's crowding with people. Even though the sun disappears behind the roof tops the sky is bright with twilight into the night. Introduce the characters one by one, let them find vacant seats at the same table (the rest are taken). Let them converse, and after some time has passed introduce Evensen (below).

- Kalsen's platoon of kids (Olga's four remaining siblings) nag and shout at Kalsen, embarrassing Olga in front of Lars (let them point out the runs in her stockings, or how she keeps gazing at Lars). They can also pester Maid Olsen.
- The confused old Evensen is Dal's next door neighbor, and the two of them have been close friends since childhood. Evensen however has become senile, saying nonsense like "I found a hole! And on the other side of the hole I saw my dad!" (Though this is actually true. See part 2.)
- The morning after Evensen's apartment is boarded shut. The neighbor, Mrs. Hygen on the ground floor, says Evensen evidently died during the night and was taken away. His apartment has also sunk so far beneath the ground that is no longer safe. Berta Hygen is the kind of woman who relishes in tales of disease,



death and other people's weak points – and would love the gossip with Maid Olsen. (She heard about the death from Babs. There will also be a funeral, but the coffin will be empty – Evensen after all is far from dead.

- Babs the gatekeeper has begun the construction of a new floor above Lars. The incessant hammering disturbs Lars when he is reading. From his window Lars can see the Moon Tower.
- Dal receives a morse code message from the spirit in the pipe: "Where is Samuel?" Should Dal connect this to Sam Babs and confront him about it, he will be brusquely rejected. Dal is obviously a senile old goof; with no idea what he's talking about – according to Babs anyway.



- Kalsen overhears a nursery rhyme, reminding him of his youngest son Tiny John, in the stairs. He can't properly make out where it's coming from and the sound vanishes as soon as it came. (Tiny John starts his descent, and the characters will have a hard time catching up with him).
- Dal is also shut in, and the others receive the news that he has passed. Mrs. Hygens' theory is that Evensen's death weakened him. The entire basement is now shut off with a heavy board and a padlock. It's impossible to make it to his door.
- Dal discovers his own door boarded up and wonders if he might be dead. Is this what death is like?

Sooner or later these strange occurrences should prompt the characters to decide to break down the door, and start travelling down the floors.

## *Two: The Stairs of Time* \_\_\_\_\_

The journey down the stairs should be a gradual shift from the familiar (but unsettling) to the wildly unknown. The first ten floors are consistent with brownstone, but after that the styles vary. Through history No. 13 has been constructed in a variety of styles to fit in with the surroundings, and all thinkable manner of people have lived here, noble as well as impoverished. The building has served a multitude of purposes from castle and jail to mad house. As the architecture changes, the troglodyte oldies become increasingly old fashioned both in terms of dress and way of thought.


During the course of time the floors have been shut off with boards, planks, bricks and even concrete, but Babs has reopened most of them to let him travel around down there to carry out various small repairs to the structure. All the apartment doors are still shut off, but can be broken down.

All exits and windows are sealed with bricks and mortar. Should the characters pry one open soil and clay will meet them outside. Unless

of course you have different plans, and let them discover something else entirely.

### Possible Events

- **First Sublevel:** If the characters break into Evensen's apartment: Evensen is face down on the floor with his head in a closet, and doesn't move. He looks dead. Scare the players! He's not dead, but actually looking down into a hole in the closet. Underneath him is another old man, looking back up. He's smiling with a wrinkled face and waves his hand at the character looking down. It's Evensen's father.  
Evensen and his father are like little children, smiling and laughing – but totally senile. They probably won't come with the characters, but they have had a visit from Tiny John.
- **Fourth Sublevel:** In Maid Olsen's childhood home her parents are seated at the dinner table, getting ready to eat fried mackerel. Olsen's father is a strict man, and her mother is cowed. Evidently they have no concept of the time that's gone by, as they command Maid Olsen to sit down – and point out how she is very, very late for dinner. The other characters are not invited. The father seems hostile too Maid Olsen – accusing her of being immoral and spending time with men. This is supposedly where she's been now. With men. Perhaps he will even flog her with his belt.
- **Fifth Sublevel:** Dal's childhood home. Familiar furniture and odor. Dal's parents are firmly asleep in a tight pile and much too small bed. They will not wake up, regardless of any attempts to rouse them. There is a path of a child's feet in the dust, leading to the bed and back out again.
- **About Ten Levels Down:** The stairs spirals down along the wall, with a large, open shaft in the centre. Even though everything looks much older, it also looks a great deal more exclusive and expensive. The banisters are carved and the steps are carpeted.



In the middle of the shaft an old piano is suspended in a thick rope, presumably in the process of being hoisted up. The ropes join up in a gear a few meters above the piano and continue towards the wall, where they are fastened together on a hook. When the characters have travelled a bit further on the stairs Babs will attempt to kill them by severing the ropes. One of the characters might spot a shadowy form up there just before the piano plummets. An action card or a chance card might change the situation, but if you remain in control of events you can let the piano crash down on the stairs, and destroy them completely. The characters will survive, but their way back up is irrevocably blocked.

- Should the piano trick fail Babs will likely try to block the character's retreat by some other means. It might be good if the characters have no way to return to the surface.
- **About Fifty Levels Down:** The stairs wind down along a white marble wall. There is a vast swimming pool down there, in the center of the hall, and several hundred oil lamps create a dancing light. They meet an old man with a handlebar mustache, elaborate clothing in red and black, knee high boots and a large brimmed hat with feathers – even a rapier. This is Pierre. Pierre is able to hear the sounds from Dal's green pipe, but sound is not carried as well upwards and he needs to tap his replies. Learning Morse code has made everything so much easier. He wonders where his servant, Samuel has gone off to. (Samuel is, of course, Babs.)
  - Pierre is a lady-killer, and will attempt to charm both Maid Olsen and Olga.
  - Pierre guides the characters further down from the pool level to a series of large interconnecting halls. The rooms are filled with old people in extravagant clothes and an abundance of luxuries – and they have been partying for centuries. The food is as tasty as if it was prepared the day

before. Still, one might perceive that the partiers are sinking along with the building, but internally. For each new twisted delight they find to entertain themselves, their morality is slowly degraded. This could be a challenge to Olga and Maid Olsen in particular.

- Kalsen is introduced to Pierre's abundant collection of wine.
- Samuel might show up. It is evident to the characters that the servant is Babs, but he is dressed in clothes from the fifteenth century. He will try to convince the revelers that the characters are spies and should be dealt with accordingly – that is to say killed.
- As the stair continues it is made of wood, and quite treacherous. After a little while it will give and send the characters flying. You can leave it up to the players to explain why and how they are not instantly crushed when they land.
- **Far, Far Down Below the Earth:** A vast library with multitudes of books. All the knowledge Lars seeks is here. Could he be tempted to brick himself in? Escape into the books? How so, and how physical would this escape be? Is Lars' bookishness of any practical use down here in the Fringe Zones? Could the library be where the characters learn of Babs' tower? Is there anyone here, perhaps patiently making use of the centuries to read this infinity of books?
- **Even Further Down:** Floor after floor with dungeons, where ancient people with yards of white beards howl like mad dogs.
- **Even Further Down:** Someone who's voluntarily let themselves get bricked up to spend eternity with an undying love?
- **The Final Floors:** This far down is as silent as a tomb, and only a path of a child's feet break the thick cover of dust on the stone stairs.



- **The Very Bottom:** The exit. (Should the players insist on counting you can tell them that it's 191 floors beneath the surface, or any other number you would prefer.)

### *Three: The Elysian Fields* \_\_\_\_\_

Once the characters step out the door, the rule that all events are played out within the building is broken. They are in the Elysian Fields, before the city was built. They can see grass covered hills, bright sunshine, some grazing sheep and further away a magnificent white Moon Tower with a shining beacon and the top – the Dreamlight. The building they have exited is Samuel Babs tower, and it is currently five floors tall, with a scaffolding clinging to the walls.

Whatever happens now depends on what has happened earlier. The players should be presented with a climax consistent with their earlier adventures, and the things they care about. Here are some elements you can present to them:

- A man and a woman are talking just outside the tower. It is Samuel Babel, but he is young, strong and self-assured. He is talking to Nindra, a young, beautiful woman with dark hair. They are dressed in white. Replay their lines from the story “When the Moon Tower was built” above. The characters can readily interrupt them or wait for them to finish. Babel can be here even if the characters have killed him at an earlier time.
- Dal notices that his bones are no longer aching, and he can breathe freely again.
- A white clad, glowing person is seated on a stool with her back facing the characters, next to her is a milk pail. Around her, seated in a semi-circle, are sheep, shepherds and other strange creatures. It is Itra. Someone (perhaps Samuel Babel or Tiny John) might tell the characters not to look at her face. “If you do, you can never return home!” Characters who do will feel as

if they go home – they die, or perhaps something else happens. The other characters will see them lie down with their heads resting on a sheep, with a mild blissful smile on their faces. They will no longer react to stimuli of any sorts, and they can never leave. To Dal, this might be a happy ending.

- Tiny John is seated in the semi-circle with Itra, but a little to the side so he can't see her face. Or perhaps he is playing with the sheep.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### *Dal*

**Idea:** Sick old man

**Full name:** Oskar Dal

**Floor:** The basement, almost underground

Your windows no longer open, as they are covered in soil and clay on the outside. Only at the very top can you spot a small trickling of light, and perhaps a foot or two as they pass by. When you moved in you could see rooftops and birds through that window, and high above everything else; the Moon Tower.

You are a romantic at heart, and something of a trickster. You enjoy wild adventures and surprising people. Preferably you would like to be viewed as exciting and dramatic. You like telling (and being told) crude and lewd jokes, but you've reached that age where women just laugh tolerantly when you pinch their behinds. It was better in the olden days actually, when they were infuriated. You're simply no threat any longer.

Your health is failing. One of your lungs has given up, you don't breathe too well – as well as coughing up a lot of slime. Even blood. Your bones and joints are aching, and this spring you spent some time in an old people's home. In the beginning it was a paradise, with apple trees and

a garden, but you left for home regardless. It's not as if you have anything good to say about No. 13. It's drafty and impoverished, but it's where you grew up and you can't find rest anywhere else. So, you came home, and bragged to everyone how you escaped from "that place".

There used to be three doors on your floor, but one of them is already walled shut. You, and your best friend Karl Evensen live in the other two apartments, but Karl is getting quite senile and spends most of his time in the past. Not long now, and these rooms will be swallowed by the ground just as your parent's rooms once were.

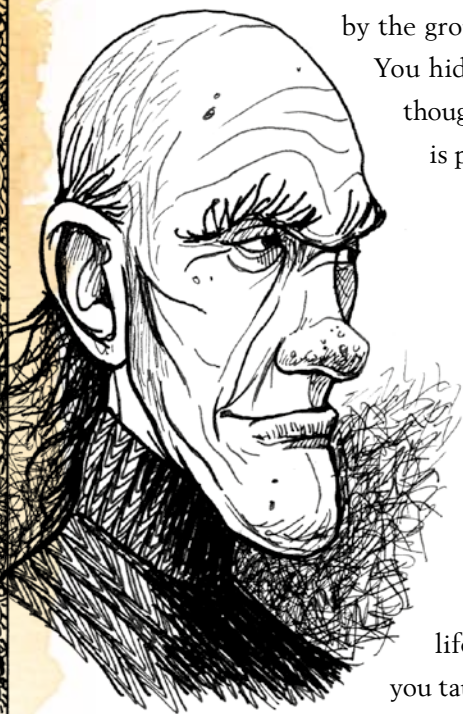
You hide behind a wolfish smile and laughter, but though you'd rather keep it to yourself; getting old is painful, and waiting for death is frightening.

## Dramatic Quality

**Medium of the pipe:** For years now you have communicated with a spirit from the other side through tapping an old green pipe in your apartment. You talk into the pipe and the spirit taps in response. One tap for "yes", and two taps for "no". The spirit was a ladies' man in the fifteenth century, and he can tell you exciting tales of his life. This of course became much easier once you taught the spirit morse code. The spirit is your window to a larger and more colorful world – your penny dreadful one might say. You do think of it is somewhat private however, so you've never told anyone about your pipe prophecies.

## Relations With the Other Characters

**Maid Olsen:** You remember her from the time when she was just a little girl – and you were a young man. She has evidently elected to forget however. At times you might even call her "Matilde". She is grumpy



and strict, but you know that she is really lonely and scared, so you do retain some tender feelings for her. You let her go about her yelling and nagging as she pleases and respond with a kind word or gesture.

**Kalsen:** Kalsen is a sad tale, but he's not the only one. It is easier to forgive his trespassing than those of his daughter. Occasionally he comes down to help you with various chores, and you do enjoy his tall tales of the seven seas.

**Olga:** Olga is presumably smitten with Lars, and you don't like that one bit. He has an opportunity to get out of this dirty impoverished existence, but she might hold him back. Nothing wrong with her, but she does obviously belongs *here* –just like you, Kalsen and Maid Olsen. Lars is cut out for something greater, and Olga is not good enough for him.

**Lars:** Lars is like a grandson to you, and even though you're not related, you love him. Without him you would probably not survive for much longer. Every single day he pops down to help you with various small things that need to get done. You are afraid that you're holding him back, but then again you expect to die soon anyway.

## *Maid Olsen* \_\_\_\_\_

**Idea:** Bitter spinster

**Full Name:** Matilde Olsen

**Floor:** Ground floor

**Y**our life is not the way you had wanted it to be, and you're really not happy about it. You work at the match factory and come home to an empty apartment, as you have done for so many years now. You've never been married, and you have no children. During your free hours you are an active teetotaler, and mostly find excitement by staying up to date on other people's lives.

Morality has been your guiding light for you entire life, and people need to understand this about you. There is not a single soul in No.



13 as moral as you. You wash the stairs just on time, you never make noise in the evenings and you never drink alcohol. You are clearly without sin, and have no qualms about throwing the first stone – and you gladly do, at least verbally.

You live in mortal fear of breaking your principles or position yourself so *others* might gossip about *you*. But: You are also afraid of dying without ever having lived. Sometimes at night, you cry yourself to sleep. Your entire life has passed you by, and hardly even touched you. And now you live on the ground floor. Just above the old timers.

## Dramatic Quality

**Bloodhound:** You have something on everyone in No. 13. You like to stand behind your drapes and keep an eye on things in the brownstone, and gossip with the women next door. None of them are as sharp as you though. Should anyone try to keep something from you, you easily sniff them out.

## Relations With the Other Characters

**Dal:** Dal is an old geezer and a clown. He is a burden to his neighbors and he should've had the presence of mind to seize the opportunity to stay at the old people's home when he had it. But of course, he had to run away. You've known Dal all your life, and when you were just a little girl he was a handsome young man. Soon, age will claim him. Think about that too much, and you get depressed.

**Kalsen:** Enemy number one is Kalsen on the other side of your ceiling. He pours all his earnings into a bottle of alcohol, creates a racket every night, and plays his violin. He also has a whole bunch of noisy kids. Your typical countermeasures include:

- Hammering on your ceiling with a broom handle.
- Going up to yell at him.
- Gossip about him with your neighbors.

But on occasion, when Kalsen is drunk and sad, and his violin yammers out a tale of distant ports and half-forgotten pleasures you aggression disappears. You recognize your own sorrows in Kalsen.

**Olga:** You loathe Olga. She is young and beautiful, just like you once were. You work in the same factory. She tries to keep it a secret, but you know that she's taken to walking the streets at night to get some extra cash. This of course fills you to the bursting point with justified anger. You haven't had the time to gossip with anyone about it yet however, but it's just a question of time. When you were younger some of your friends had better clothes and food, and you envied them. You will never admit it, but at night you sometimes fantasized about going out there to meet men and get money. Now though, no one would want to pay you for anything.

**Lars:** Lars is a proper young man. He is a hard worker. He doesn't drink and something great will come of him and his studies.



## Kalsen

**Idea:** Drunken former sailor.

**Full Name:** Anton Kalsen.

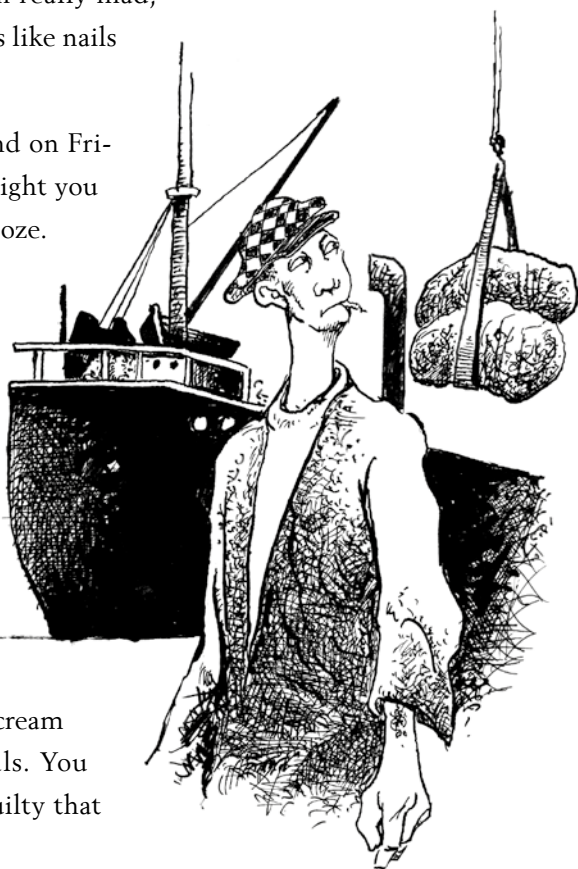
**Floor:** First.

As a young man you were a sailor, and even though you might not remember all the names and places properly, you do know that you visited places, learned many a song, had a girl in every port, and most of all – you were young and strong. Then you came ashore, got kids, started working at docks, and your life turned gray.

You and the old lady (Hulda) don't like each other much anymore. Mostly, she complains a lot, about your drinking, the money that doesn't seem to pay the bills, the kids you don't accept responsibility over and so forth. She can really mad, and when does, her voice is like nails on a blackboard.

You are a dock worker, and on Fridays you get paid. Same night you waste all your money on booze. Hulda's salary keeps the family afloat, mostly.

You are the father of six children, and you've often thought there are just too many of them. The oldest, Olga is nearly grown – and the youngest, Tiny John is dead, but the others run around, jump and scream like a pack of wild animals. You love them, and you feel guilty that



you never have enough time for them, but in your dreams you never became a father.

The other kids have their lives ahead of them, but Tiny John never got that chance, and consequently he's the one that matters the most to you. He sickened and died suddenly about four months ago – barely four years old. You can't get your mind off the roughly crafted little coffin and the pale, thin body inside. You would do anything for him.

## Dramatic Quality

**Troubadour of Melancholy:** Your violin is old and cracked, but the longing in the salty tunes is genuine, and the melodies have an easy time finding their way into the hearts of anyone who listens. Especially if they've lived a little, have some regrets and longings. You can also fiddle up a party, and entertain people with songs of girls and wine, which has a tendency to make people all that more happy.

## Relations With the Other Characters

**Dal:** You try to help him from time to time. In him you see how it is to get old.

**Maid Olsen:** She's even worse than Hulda! And that's saying something. She hammers her ceiling with her broom, yells and nags and lets you know just how pathetic and drunk you are. You are a little bit afraid of her and will go far to avoid a confrontation, but if she pushes you too far you might just yell back. You've never laid hand on her however. That would be the end of you.

**Olga:** Olga is your oldest, and in a way it was her birth that tied you to No. 13 for the rest of your life. Like with the rest of your children you look at her with a mixture of bad conscience and love. You never spent enough time with her, and it makes you feel guilty. You don't think she knows that you love her, and you have no idea how to let her know. It's not something you just say. Besides, you've noticed that she



doesn't really obey you anymore. She should respect you more, and it has happened a few times that you've yelled at her. You anger quickly, and what's worse, she hurts you more than anyone. It was easier when she was a child. You could play with her then, and she would laugh (unless you were too drunk, busy or tired that is).

**Lars:** Lars thinks he's really something. Which is fine – but he's never experience a thing or lived life. You can learn more from life than you can from a book, and you love to tell him that. You sometimes try to catch his interest with tales of your days as a wild youth.

## Olga

---

**Idea:** Young factory girl

**Full name:** Olga Kalsen

**Floor:** first, with her parents and younger siblings.

**Y**ou grew up in No. 13 and you know how to survive here. You have a mouth on you, and you're self-assured. You don't let anyone point their noses at you. You know how to fight, run and climb – but those things are childish and you've given them up. You're just about grown, and you have a job at the match factory to earn money for the family. Your father drinks up most of his money, so it's you and your mother who keeps the family alive.

You dream of luxuries, fancy clothes, jewelry and beautiful people. This has been your since you were just a little child, but never something you thought attainable. Everyone in No. 13 has dreams, but no one ever gets anywhere. But...

You've taken to sneaking out at night to meet men. It started when you found out that some of your friends at the factory bought new silk stockings, dresses, hats and so forth – and you couldn't understand how they could afford it. Then you found out – and it's no big deal really, to meet men once in a while, especially if no one finds out. And you're quite certain you've managed to keep it a secret so far. They pay well too.

You are the oldest of six siblings, and you all live in the same room. It's driving you up the walls, and the place feels like a zoo. You enjoy taking on the role as the older and more responsible sibling, but you can be very childish once you get into an argument with your younger siblings.

The youngest, Tiny John, got suddenly sick and died four months ago. He was just four years old. You've cried a lot since then, but time goes by and sorrow fades, and you are young. But you see how it's taken a toll on your father.

### Dramatic Quality

**Impulsive:** You do things without considering them first, and that can lead to trouble for you.

### Relations With the Other Characters

**Dal:** Dal is a sweet old man, but you don't think he likes you very much. You still find him funny, and laugh at his wild antics. Just this spring he got a place in an old people's home, but the lunatic ran away and let on every last detail of the escape. You almost died laughing.

**Maid Olsen:** Maid Olsen is whiny old hag. Usually you prefer to be friendly and negotiate between her and your dad, but if she goes too far you can be quite snappy in return. Maid Olsen is an enemy of everyone who's enjoying themselves, and the only thing she enjoys is keeping tabs on *everyone* and their problems. You have a hard time seeing her as having ever been young.



**Kalsen:** Your father is a no good drunk. You can remember little glimpses of happiness from your childhood, when you played. He tossed you around like you were weightless. Still, most of the time he was drunk, sleeping or gone. You've noticed that some people laugh at him behind his back, and it makes you furious – both at them and him.

**Lars:** Lars is smart and self-assured, and you admire him. He is a different kind of person, a better person than you are. You like talking to him, and you like the idea of making him happy, but you get so easily shy. He must never know about your nocturnal escapades, but you expect you can keep that hidden. Anyway, you intend to stop once you get enough money saved up. And won't Lars be impressed when he sees you in a new dress and silk stockings?

## *Lars*

---

**Idea:** Revolutionary Student

**Full name:** Lars Engen

**Floor:** Fourth floor, the loft.

**Y**ou were born of workers, and you are proud of it, but your parents lived and died in squalor – just like so many others in Black Bay. You need to go somewhere, and the key to getting out is knowledge. You want to read and learn, and get away from this place. And once you reach the top, things are going to start changing around here.

You dream of turning everything upside down. There is no justice in the way the dandies over at Mint Knoll drink their tea from the finest china, while people in Black Bay starve to death surrounded by filth. Why is the nobility rewarded with import privileges? Should the factory owners be allowed to do as they please with the workers? And, the most dangerous question of all: with what legitimacy does Nindra rule Itras By? As of yet you don't even dare to utter this question. Nindra's ears are everywhere. But some day...

Your political opinions have to contend with your naked thirst for hunger however. Everything ever written is fascinating, and you can plow through a book and delve into the knowledge they hold for days without pause. That which is hidden and unknown will always beckon you more than that which is known.

Once in your lifetime you came across a literary reference to a building that must have your own. The book was over two hundred years of age, and it piqued your curiosity. The building must be ancient, but you have no idea how old, or where it came from.



## Dramatic Quality

**Knowledgeable:** You know a great deal, and want to know even more. Knowledge is the way to a better life. Architecture, politics, law and history are all subjects that interest you. As a player you can either make up facts, or ask the gamemaster for information. Your vast knowledge can sometimes make the other tenants uneasy and alienated in your presence – while they seem frustratingly lacking in insight to you.

## Relations With the Other Characters

**Dal:** You have come to see Dal as something of a grandfather, even though you are unrelated. You love him, and you know that he loves



you. You visit him every day to talk to him and help him. Your own parents died when you were fifteen, and you have no one else.

**Maid Olsen:** You get along well with Maid Olsen. You know she's a harpy and moralistic, but she is a happy camper near you, so you strive to keep it that way by always being polite and friendly in return. You have no time for parties, living a life dedicated entirely to knowledge, and she is a teetotaler so she appreciates your choice.

**Kalsen:** You like to listen to Kalsen's tales, but you recognize them for the tall tales they are. You look down your nose at him, because you know that he is you, in twenty years time, unless you can find a way out of here. You like him, but you don't want to wind up like *that*. You seek a better life, and you know you can make it.

**Olga:** Olga is pure and innocent, like in your books. At least you like to think that she is., but you haven't really spoken to her much. She is attractive and shy, and sometimes, when you are pouring over your dusty books thoughts of her begin to chase the legal paragraphs and equations right off the page.

## No. 13

---

*You ask where No. 13 is - our dear old tenement?*

*It's right around the corner, see the signpost with the dent?*

*And you can see how big it is, a marvelous extent!*

*The biggest house in our street, but there are so many more  
in other streets around the town, you just have to explore,  
though none are quite as dark as No. 13 anymore.*

*And even many more in other cities here on earth,  
there are miles and miles of streets where all the poor are given birth,  
most often in the north or east, and deemed of little worth.*

*They say the number 13 is an ill and evil sign,  
and Dal, the feeble old man on the fourth floor, does assign  
the blame for his bad lungs on just that number, so malign.*

*He has a patchy overcoat on which he goes to sleep,  
and lying there, he curses this old brick and mortar heap,  
but that is old folk rubbish, don't believe him when he weeps.*

*Last spring he went to a nursing home because he was so sick,  
but he soon got even sicker out of longing for these bricks,  
He is eighty years of age, but he escaped from there real quick.*

*Of course some people die, we see it time and time again,  
when the stifling lack of sun and air makes corpses out of men,  
but in every tenement house there'll be some dying now and then.*

*No. 13 is our dwelling, so beloved and so old.  
In the evening it is beautiful, it rises bright and bold  
from the darkness with the rows of windows glowing just like gold.*

*Then the tenement house is living. It's a palace filled with light,  
and the shine from every kitchen, nook and chamber warms the night,  
when the working day has passed, our spirits waken and take flight.*

*And if it is a Friday night then Kalsen comes home drunk,  
a whole week's wages wasted, now he's tipsy as a skunk.  
He makes his money on the dock long shoring coal and junk.*

*And Kalsen has a bunch of kids, and life is very sad,  
his last born little baby boy the greedy devil had,  
he was so thin and scrawny it could make you feel so bad.*

*The world was quite all right when Kalsen sailed the seven seas  
and knew a girl in every port, and felt the ocean breeze,  
for though the work was hard he could do anything with ease.*

*And Kalsen takes his closest friend, a cracked up violin,  
and he plays a good old sailor's song of women and of gin,  
and he shuts away the hassle and complaining from his kin.*

*He forgets about miss Olsen who lives on the floor above,  
who will always raise complaints if someone's happy down below,  
she is in the temperance movement, and her eyes are cold like snow.*

*And all that he remembers are those far and distant days,  
the great big sky as blue as dreams, the endless ocean way,  
the golden dawns, the silver nights, till every hour turned gray.*

*And when he thus has played a while and shed a tear or two,  
miss Olsen even may be touched, and cease to be shrew,  
for even she can sometimes see the world in shades of blue.*

*But the rest of us are not impressed by Kalsen's violin,  
so many here can play on a guitar or mandolin,  
or bring out the accordion to accompany the gin!*

*The frying pans are sizzling with meat and mackerel,  
an all the walls resound as hungry children play and yell;  
the music of the tenement is difficult to quell!*

*And far into the night you can hear No. 13's song.  
It is so loud and gay, but underneath there's something wrong,  
an undertone of terror from the morning soon to come.*

*The rows of windows darken, and sleep starts to unwind  
the daring minds, the bitter minds, the tired and inspired minds,  
and through the shady streets the wind of night blows unconfined.*

*There are whispers from the gateway! And the stairway gives a creak.  
Oh, it's only pretty Olga who to make ends meet must sneak  
out to find someone who'll pay to make the world a bit less bleak.*

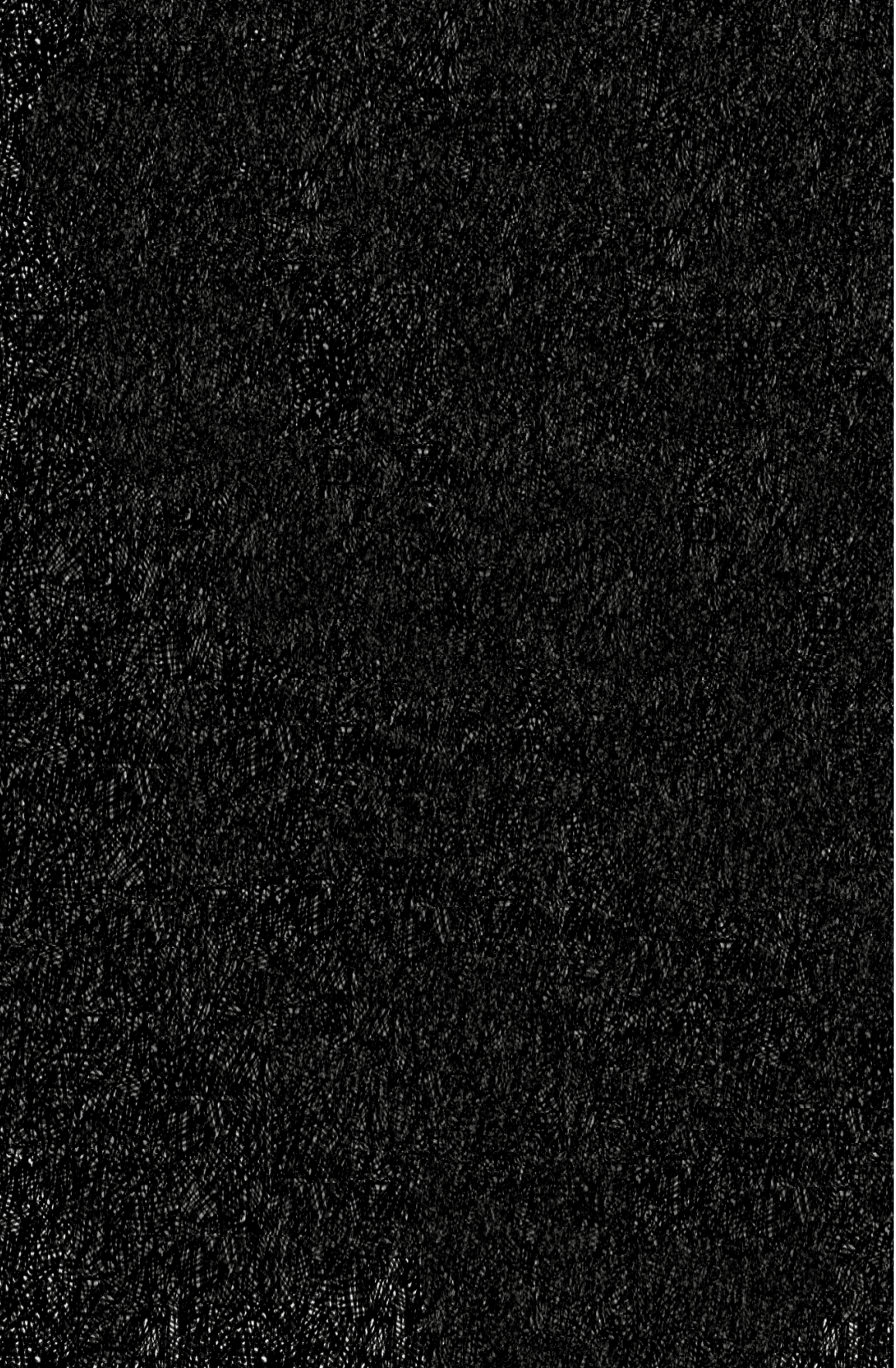
*But still someone is waking. They are barely adult men.  
Sitting bent above their books they conjure up that dream again,  
like it once shone like a halo round a sage's golden pen!*

*This dream the night begets, but that the day is sure to kill,  
of Atlantis, of Utopia - a better fate and fill  
than this life, where someone else owns both your heart and soul and will.*

*And it rages though the young man's bitter heart: Awake and learn,  
through the golden dream you'll chart a course, be stubborn, reach and yearn  
for the pathway to a land where No. 13 won't return.*

— Rudolf Nilsen







PART FOUR  
APPENDIX

# THANKS TO

**Itras By** would never have become possible if it hadn't been for quite a few people. The authors wish to thank:

Matthijs Holter and Magnus Jakobson for the first campaign in the city, good and important advice, enthusiastic support and our trip to the Moon. Matthijs and Magnus have also contributed with several key concepts and texts. The resolution cards are Matthijs' idea, and he's also written the texts about the Violinist, Jonah, A long day's journey into night and several others. Magnus had the idea for the dramatic qualities and has written the example characters Thomas Chesterfield and Bob, as well as No. 13, the scenario at the end of the book.

Håken Lid for developing the chance and resolution cards, a lot of the gamemaster's advice, our Norwegian web pages, scenarios for festivals and several other things.

Tomas H.V. Mørkrid for strict, just and inspiring evaluation and feedback on key points during the development of the game. Also for the lovely Mamdadda.

The Finns for making a Finnish edition: Juhana Pettersson, Pirita Tiusanen, Maria Pettersson, Mike Pohjola, Tommi Kovala, Jaakko Stenroia, Jussi Ahlrothia, Ville Vuorelaa

Kaare Berg for Geraldine Ilyanon and Jimi Thaule for Julie Maria Wood.

Anders Nygaard and Tor Gustad for beautiful illustrations.

Everyone who have read, developed and shown an interest for **Itras By** over the past ten years. Monica Holter, Steinar Hamdahl, Morten Halvorsen, Even Tømte, Erling Rognli, Skjalg Kreutzer, Michael Sollien, Martin Andresen, Arvid Falch, Dina Ramse, Erlend Bruer, Lasse



Lundin, Anethe Alfsvaag, Erlend Eidsem Hansen, Tor Kjetil Edland, Kristian Bjørkelo, Kay Olssen and several others.

During the past ten years several hundred people have visited the city, and we can't mention you all. Partly because we don't know who all of you are! Please know that your visit has been appreciated.

Arcon for making **Itras By** the theme for the festival in 2008.

Kulturrådet, TRAFO, Solofondet, Hyperion and Magnus sin skumle røverklubb for economical support for the Norwegian edition.

Spillskaperlaget for economic support for the English edition.

Rollespill.net and its users.

## FURTHER INSPIRATION

### *Movies*

Delicatessen  
The City of Lost Children  
Amelie from Montmartre  
Dark City  
Amarcord  
Being John Malkovich  
Freaks  
Taxidermia  
Brazil  
Barton Fink  
Shadow of the Vampire  
Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari  
Songs from the Second Floor  
Eraserhead  
Metropolis  
Pan's Labyrinth  
Sin City  
The Big Lebowski  
Mulholland Drive

The Purple Rose of Cairo  
Lost Highway  
Hukkle  
A Clockwork Orange  
Drôle de drame ou L'étrange  
aventure de Docteur Molyneux  
Jak utopit doktora Mráčka aneb  
Konec vodníku v Cechách  
Chronopolis  
Roma  
8 ½  
Lumière et compagnie  
Zelig

### *TV Series*

Carnivale  
Twin Peaks  
Riget (*The Kingdom*)



## Comics

Sandman  
Eightball  
Rare Bit Fiends  
Tardi's books about Adele  
Jodorowsky's series  
The League of Extraordinary  
Gentlemen  
Promethea  
From Hell  
Sfar & Guibert: The Professor's  
Daughter

## Authors

Jules Verne  
H.G. Wells  
H.P. Lovecraft  
Jorge Louis Borges  
P.G. Wodehouse  
Neil Gaiman  
Bing & Bringsværd  
William Burroughs  
José Saramago  
Franz Kafka  
China Miéville  
Michael Ende  
Roald Dahl

## Theater

Eugène Ionesco (*absurd theater*)  
Berthold Brecht and Kurt Weill  
(*for the time period*)

## Roleplaying Games

Play Unsafe (*about improvisation in roleplaying games. Lulu.com.*)

Jeepform: Vi åker jeep (*see jeepen.org/dict/ - webpage on swedish freeform*)  
Until We Sink (*norwegianstyle.wordpress.com*)  
A Trip to the Moon (*norwegianstyle.wordpress.com*)  
Archipelago I & II (*norwegianstyle.wordpress.com*)  
Zombie Porn (*norwegianstyle.wordpress.com*)  
The Society of Dreamers (*Lulu.com*)  
Baron von Munchausen  
Over the Edge  
Adventure!  
Call of Cthulhu  
Kult  
Primetime Adventures  
Puppetland

## Music

Stravinsky  
Shostakovich  
Berthold Brecht and Kurt Weill  
Jazz, blues, swing  
George Gershwin  
Marlene Dietrich  
Édith Piaf  
Kaada/Patton: Romances  
Tom Waits  
Portishead: Portishead  
Madrugada: Industrial Silence  
Einstürzende Neubauten: Silence is sexy  
Woven Hand  
Barry Adamson: The Murky  
World of Barry Adamson  
Godspeed You Black Emperor  
Jonny Greenwood: Bodysong

# ITRAUTOMATIC

The basic concepts of **Itras By** stem from an automatic text written in 2001. Here it is.

*Besides the creatures that came in way of the health everything was sleekness and anger. Do not any longer believe what was can be or exist. Towers of ice and birth pangs roll down the road without meeting resistance, Itra. Itra, where are you, goddess, have you sunken in sand, have you no longer pity on your creatures. The temple of shame, left us for better thoughts.*

*Unprepared the train chugged into the station, it had been there before. Without structure everything stops. Think fast thoughts next to the man on the train, he laughs. Bares his teeth and turns his ass. The chimpanzee has won the struggle, it stares at me triumphantly. I turn to the ashtray. It's full, shining like silver. Outside the world turns slowly in a different pulse. Black waves, specks of light.*

*The retina is filled with dark existences. They smile, think different thoughts. Are alien creatures, whisper in the pipes running through the city, filling the galaxy with their plans. The strangers sing songs of wine and love, but have hearts of ice. They say one thing, and turn the shopping cart into a network or a cage. A cage capturing the dreams of spiders.*

*The cobweb is actually a natural wonder stretching over furs which doesn't concern it. Manically the spiders tell us what they want us to do, the spider sinks its teeth into our synapses. Electrical pathways of the brain communicate spider thoughts and cobwebs, they have their plans. The thought of the tower is still there, present, but the cobweb fills the pathways of the brain. Neural pathways do not allow thoughts which cannot be comprehended. The cobweb covers the archway. Once an open piazza, everyone smiled and laughed. Today a ruined heap. Limping, screaming, and continuing to dream an existence unworthy of life.*

*The whore house is filled with knuckles; there is ivy under the windows. I see a light in the window, filled with pigeon's droppings. The tower clock resounds with the forbidden numbers, numbers one is not allowed to think.*

*Outside on the sidewalk, paved, the shoes of an old man clack, he's going somewhere tonight. The light from the street lamp shines upon him; it's green and contaminates his soul. He doesn't know that he can no longer breathe as before, they have stolen his life force. Pipes from the streetlamp, underground leads to a machine where all soul-force is gathered.*

*The creature which lives in the machine feeds on the dreams of others, smacks its lips contentedly while the juices fills its lungs. The spirits behold the frame of the creature; it's encapsulated in a biological shell, a tissue of meat and metal fragments, pus runs over the floor. An old woman washes it away with a swab, as if on a ship, the floor rocks under her, her breath is hissing, whispering. She has asthma inflammation, inflammation of the lower lung vertebra. The creature crooks itself together every time she heaves for air.*

*Green smoke pours from the belly of the creature, through narrow shafts, ancient vents. Drum rolls as old as the Roman Empire are heard on the street, the execution festivities have begun. They cling the old man to the gallows, the men cheer, and the women blow their noses. A handkerchief is caught by the wind and flows in the direction of the green smoke. Pavement coating above whining circular saws, jagged fantasies wobble off. Below the barbed wire fence I can see the dream light whisper a song to its prince: the last of Moherat's order.*

*The gaze of the old one is terrified, the gallows fills it. He says a prayer, but Itra cannot hear it. The goddess is caught in a milk pail beyond the uttermost gates of the universe, those which are guarded by demons no one can acknowledge. The tower is again brought in focus, which all men must one day meet. The fog lies like a thick layer over the city. In the bowels of the city there is resistance against yet another blood sacrifice. Cannot hear. Cannot know those who will one day share the electrical power of the Machine God.*

### *Help is Needed*

The character ends up understanding that she needs the help of someone not currently in the scene to achieve this aim.

### *No, but...*

The character fails, but another positive thing happens instead, unrelated to what she was aiming for.

### *Yes, but...*

The character succeeds, but the consequences of the success are completely different from what was expected.

### *Yes, and...*

The character succeeds, and achieves more than she expected. Perhaps even a bit too much...

### *No, and...*

The character fails, and something unrelated also goes wrong.

### *Yes, but only if...*

The character can get what she wants – but only if she chooses to make a certain sacrifice.

### *Yes, but...*

The character succeeds, but there's a tiny detail that doesn't go quite as planned.

### *Yes, but...*

The character succeeds, but something unrelated goes wrong, for the character or someone she cares about.



### *Cut Scene*

Jump forward three hours. Describe what condition the characters find themselves in. You're not allowed to describe what has happened in the meantime.

### *In Reverse*

Turn time a few seconds back. What happened just before you drew the card doesn't happen. Instead the opposite happens. It's up to you to describe exactly what was reversed.

### *Amor Victor*

The power of love triumphs in this situation. Exactly how this happens is for you to describe.

### *The Extra*

Describe an supporting character near the scene. The person can be help or hindrance, friend or foe.

### *Nemesis!*

This card awakens the character's Nemesis. In some way, their arch enemy affects the situation. Exactly how is up to you. Doesn't the character have an arch enemy? Well, now she does.

### *The Character Flaw*

The last supporting character the character met has a dark secret, a weak spot or a negative trait. The character doesn't necessarily know what it is, but it's up to you as the player to invent and describe it.

### *Flashback*

Play a scene that has occurred in the past, in the same place where your character is right now. The player who draws the card sets the scene and tells the other players what characters (supporting characters or their own characters) to control.

### *Haunted by the Past!*

Something the character has done previously has consequences in the present. Tell the gamemaster what you think this card means.

### *Two News*

The characters receive one good and one bad piece of news. The player who drew the card decides the bad news first, the gamemaster decides the good one.

### *The Wind Turns*

Temperature, sounds and smells change. Each player narrates one element which changes. If someone in the scene is making a face, they'll become a grimasque.

### *What's in Its Pockets?*

The character has something in her pocket which can be useful. What could it be?

### *Masquerade!*

For the rest of this scene, all players swap characters. This includes the gamemaster. Give your character sheet to the player at your right.

### *In A Mirror, In A Dream*

Play the rest of this scene on the B-side of Itras By, where everything is opposite. How are the characters on the A-side affected?

### *Inner Monologue*

Throughout this scene you can at any time point your finger at someone (PC or supporting character). That character's player must stand up and utter a short, inner monologue (say whatever's on the characters mind at that time).

### *Do Not Gaze Into the Abyss*

The character feels an irresistible urge to do something she will regret. Do it!

### *Mood Change*

Everyone present suddenly change mood to the exact opposite of what they had. The new moods last for the rest of the scene.

### *Interview*

Stand up. Your character is interviewed about what happened during this scene. You may describe freely what happened from your point of view, and your characters thoughts. The other players ask questions, as in a press conference. When the interview is over, you sit down and continue playing the scene where you left off.

### *Reality Split*

Things are turned inside out and you experience several timelines simultaneously. Each other player may in turn describe a different course of events. When the laws of reality catch up, there's a loud noise and only one of your co-player's descriptions will have happened. You decide which one.

### *Meannobile...*

The scene is cut, and you may establish a new scene somewhere else. You choose who is present. Players may be given supporting characters to play in this cut scene.

### *Good Advice*

You may ask someone for an advice. It may be anyone (PC or supporting character) and it could be someone who's dead or otherwise normally impossible to consult. Choose one of the other players to be the advisor and decide how you are communicating. If you follow the advice given to you, you will succeed. But if you don't follow the advice you will fail, no matter what.

### *Prosopopeia*

Animals, objects or abstract concepts start to talk. Who are talking and what do they have to say?

### *Rumour Mill*

Gossip spreads fast. Tell a rumour about the scene in progress to the person on your left. The rumour is retold from player to player and each time something is changed and exaggerated. By the time the gossip reaches back to you, it has become true.

### *Conscience*

Two advisors appear, one on each shoulder of one of the characters (PC or supporting character) present in the scene. Time stops while they try to convince the character of their (opposing) sides to some dilemma. Choose who will be given advice and which two players will control the advisors.

### *The Shadow*

Time stops as you have a conversation with your own shadow. The shadow has the same skills and attributes as you, but in addition it may enter places you can't reach. Will you ask your shadow for help or advice? The player that looks most like you plays your shadow.





FIN

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