



The City

A steampunk drama by Frederik Jensen

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No man on is truly free, all are slaves of money or necessity. Public opinion or fear of prosecution forces each one, against his conscience, to conform.

- Euripides

A father raises his newborn high with hope. His face turns dark in disappointment. Another girl. A gift for the mountain the midwife asks.

A young woman scans for sails of a homebound ship. Her hand on her belly betrays what is on her mind. When will you come she whispers to no one.

The face of a young man pressed hard into the arena sand. Tears of pain and shame sprout from his eyes. Yield, he cries.

A mother sees the face of her son in a dream. Tomorrow the council decides. Old men sending young men to die. I deserve to be heard she mutters.

Four people about to make decisions that will define who they are for the rest of their lives.

The City is a steampunk drama about the choices we make to fit in. A tabletop roleplaying game for four players and one game master that plays in 3-4 hours. You need a bag with six white stones and six black stones to play.

Content warning: Sex, violence, dead babies (off screen).

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Thanks

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Your role as game master

Your job as game master is to help the players portray the four main characters, Pontus, Leon, Iris, and Thelma. Help the players externalise thoughts and feelings by asking questions. Make the players reflect about the choices their main character must make and make sure they know what is at stake. Then show them the consequences.

Set strong scenes together with the players. Ask plenty of questions before and during the scenes. Show what it means to live in the city.

Describe, narrate and direct scenes to make the city and the characters come alive.

Step into to a scene in the role as a supporting character. Play opponents of the main characters strongly and make it clear what the city expects and what the consequences are if they do not. Convey the norms and traditions through play.

Invite other players into a scene to play their secondary characters.

Fast forward to the juicy parts. Cut scenes on a strong line.

Keep the unfolding story engaging and fun for everyone. Push the main characters hard but check in with the players that they are ok.

Before the game

Read the entire text. Spend extra time to read the player characters and understand their situation and their relations to other characters. If you know the players, decide who will play which main character.

Prepare a bag with six white stones and six black stones. During the game you will draw stones from the bag to decide the course of the narrative.

At the table

Welcome the players. Set expectations on time, breaks, and smart phones.

Read the quote of Euripides and the character snippets. Then read or paraphrase:

“The world in the fiction we create is oppressive and harsh. There will be sex, violence and dead babies. But player characters will not die. The sum of all that happens will decide the fate of the city. Maybe it will become a better place.”

“Everyone at the table is responsible for creating a safe and pleasant play experience for all. I, as game master will take an extra responsibility to check in. At any time anyone can call a break to discuss the game. Together we decide how and whether to continue. It is just a game. Ok?”

Give each player one white stone and one black stone. Place the bag with the remaining stones on the table.

“During the game, each of you will make a choice for your main character. When you do, return one of the stones to the bag. If you do as the city expects, keep the black stone. If you break with tradition, keep the white.”

“There are no right or wrong decisions, only consequences.”

“I will help you set strong scenes in which you explore and learn how your main character thinks and feels.”

“You will also play a secondary character. Typically a trusted friend of another main character. When you play a secondary character, your task is to help the other player externalise the thoughts and feelings of their character.”

“I, the game master, play all other characters.”

Decide who will play which pair of characters and hand out player sheets. If you do not know the players, briefly introduce the characters and let the players choose.

Give players time to read their characters. While they do, place ‘Cast of characters’, ‘Locations’, and ‘The story’ on the table in front of you.

When players are done reading, go through the relationship diagram. Explain that Hector and Kato are away on a ship. Pontus and Thelma are brother and sister. Hector and Castor are Thelma’s two sons. Iris and Leon are half siblings. They both have feelings for Kato, the son of Nico the Merchant. Nico and Kato are immigrants (metics).

Use the map to give a brief overview of the city.

Then begin the story.

The city

The city of **Agonia** is an island state in the White Sea. Rich on copper, the people prosper through trade, critically dependent on imports for survival. Its many ships are protected by a citizen army in which every male serves. Rivalry with neighbouring **Antigonia** often turn violent, the two cities are always at the edge of war.

Rigid norms have evolved to keep the complex cogwheels of the city machine spinning. Think a militaristic class society like Ancient Greece or Imperial Britain. Segregated by social class and sex, everyone knows their place.

Men are warriors while women are housekeepers or priests.

Citizens are expected to marry and have kids when they reach adulthood. Once they had their first child, they can take lovers and live out their sexuality with little restrain. Male offspring is preferred, it is considered a great misfortune for a man not to have a son. It is an ancient tradition to give excess females to the mountain, a euphemism for abandoning a child to die of cold and hunger to be eaten by wild animals.

The city treasury is kept in the **temple**. Only women can become priests. Young women train at the temple, learning skills and customs as preparation for life as housewives and keepers of the house. Specially gifted — or those unlucky to not receive a proposal from a suitable man — join the ranks of the temple servants, the highest of which is the priestess who reads the will of the goddess in the guts of goats.

Young men train in the arena daily. Physical strength and endurance are the ideal, young men are expected to excel at swordplay, running and jumping. The discipline held in highest regard is wrestling (pankration) — a very violent sport with few holds barred.

Wealthy and respectable men serve in the **council**. The council decides all matters large and small. Only men speak at the council and women are allowed only upon invitation as witnesses to resolve a dispute. Only men and widows can own property.

Lower classes such as immigrants (**metics**) and servants have little protection within the law. They cannot own property (but they can rent) or marry outside their class. Only in special cases can they be granted citizenship by the council.

On everything else, you decide.

Why steampunk?

The themes we explore through play are universal. What is my role in society? How can I live a satisfying life following my dreams within the boundaries set by the people I depend on?

Even today we do not enjoy full freedom as we also want the benefits of society and hence accept norms and laws imposed upon us.

By putting on the trappings of steampunk drama, we transport ourselves to a nondescript time and place where we can let our

imagination run free under a strict harness of norms and customs that are exaggerated yet recognisable. Oh and we get cool visuals too.

By no means do I advocate for creating a society as described here. Just in case you were wondering.

Cast of characters

Player characters

Pontus, father of girls
Leon, not a fighter
Iris, pregnant and not married
Thelma, mother of boys

Secondary characters

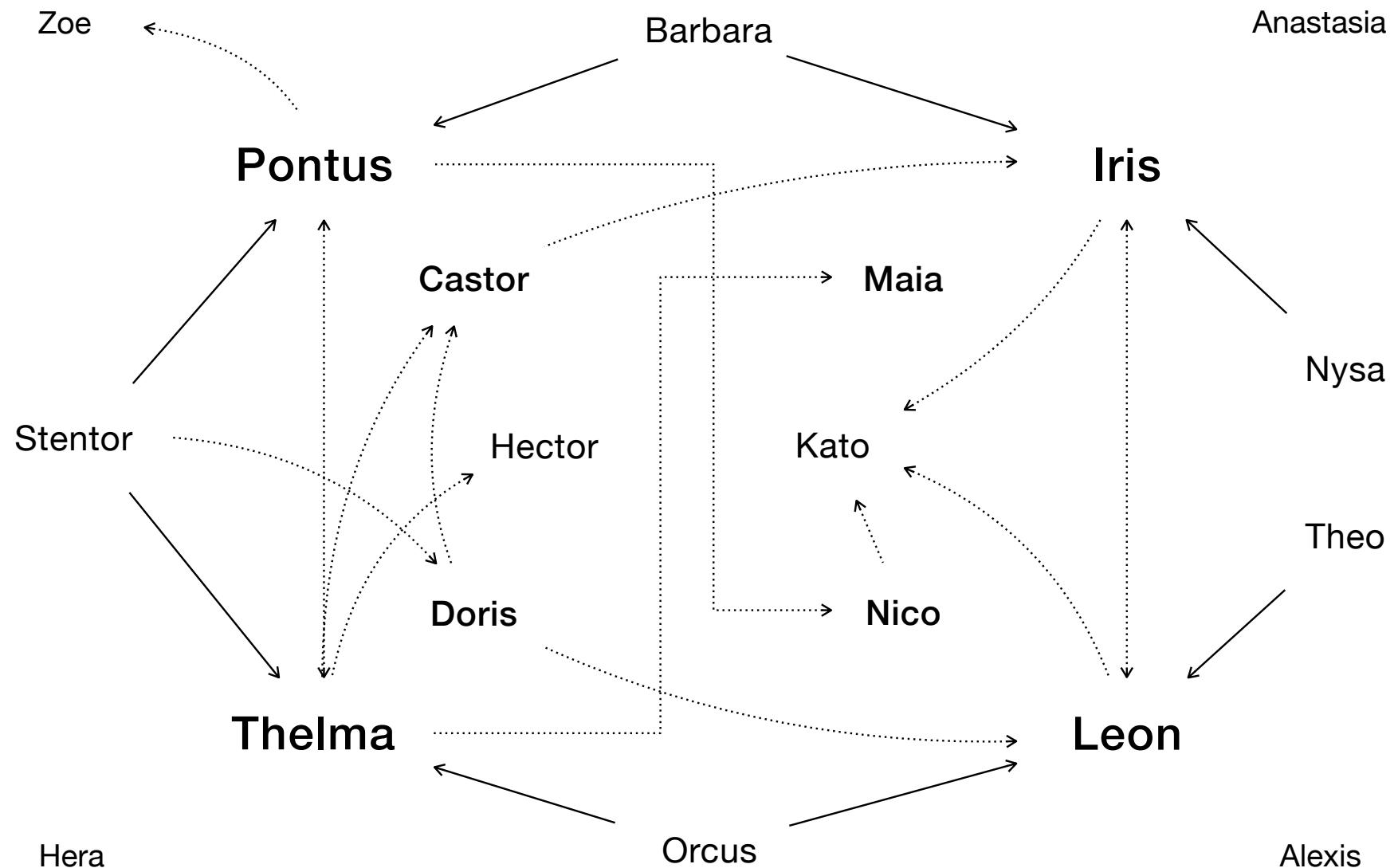
Castor the warrior
Nico the merchant
Maia the servant
Doris the obedient daughter

Opponents

Barbara the priestess
Nysa the mother of girls
Theo the father of boys
Orcus the captain of the guard
Stentor the speaker of the council

Other characters

Hector the champion
Kato the sailor
Zoe the wife
Xana the newborn girl
Anastasia the acolyte
Alexis a young man
Hera the midwife



Locations

Inside the city

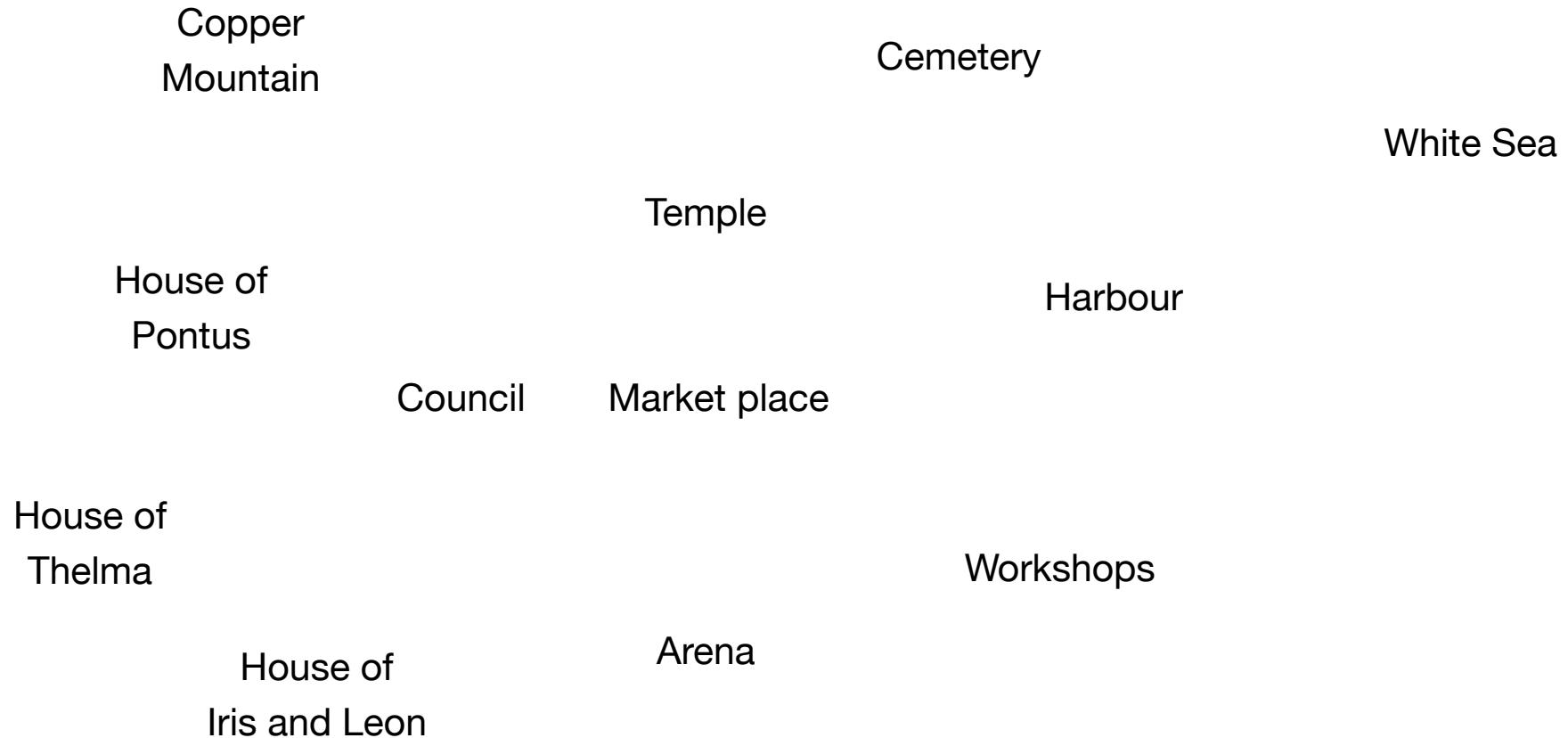
Harbour
Market place
Temple
Arena
Council
Workshop

Thelma's house
Pontus' house
House of Iris and Leon

Outside the city

Copper Mountain
Cemetery
White Sea

City of Agonia



The story

Prologue

Where we get to know the city

The ship

Where a long awaited ship arrives

The fight

Where young men compete to become the new champion

The sacrifice

Where the priestess calls upon the goddess

The council

Where the council decides on war

Epilogue

Where we learn the fate of the city

Prologue

Where we get to know the city.

Read or paraphrase:

The **City of Agonia** is a well oiled machine. Every one of its inhabitants knows their place. Like interlocking cogwheels they turn every day into busy, productive processes of growth and prosperity.

Copper from the mountain goes into steaming furnaces and noisy workshops. Out comes little machines of wonder that goes tick, tick, tick. Loaded onto iron clad ships destined for faraway markets.

A normal day in the city

Set brief scenes narrated by the players where they describe a normal day in the lives of the main characters.

Pontus

Pontus is a well renowned business man and member of the city council.

Pontus, describe a normal morning in Pontus' life as he leaves his house and goes to work in the market place.

Leon

Leon is a young man of a wealthy family. Like all unmarried men of his social class, he attends the physical training at the arena.

Leon, describe a normal morning in Leon's life from he enters the arena, till he enters the workshop.

Iris

Iris is a young woman of a wealthy family, half sister of Leon. Like all unmarried women of her social class, she attends house keeping training at the temple school.

Iris, describe a normal morning in Iris' life. From she enters the temple, till she enjoys a moment of freedom on the cemetery grounds above the city.

Thelma

Thelma is a married woman with her own household in a wealthy neighbourhood. Pontus is her brother.

Thelma, describe a normal day in Thelma's life from her husband leaves in the morning until he returns in the evening.

The ship

Where a long awaited ship arrives.

We learn that all four main characters are strongly vested in the trade expedition that left some time ago.

We then find out if the ship arrives home safely.

Finally, Pontus makes his choice between the love of a newborn child and the tradition of the city.

Waiting for the ship

Set scenes with each of the main characters to show what the arrival of the ship means to them. Decide together with the player and then briefly describe the location, time of day and who is present. Let the conversations play out without interruptions and cut the scenes before they run out of steam.

Pontus

Pontus and Nico discuss the prospect of Nico becoming a citizen and Pontus running for speaker. Nico is polite and asks to the family. How is your wife Zoe? Will it be a boy or a girl?

Iris

Iris shares her hopes for what happens when Kato returns with her friend Doris. Doris is curious as hell and asks: Will you marry him — a

metic? Have you been fooling around (don't lie I've seen you)? Are you pregnant?

Leon

Doris is bored and teases Leon. She kisses him (making sure Castor sees it) and asks: Do you think I should marry Castor? Do you miss Kato?

Thelma

Thelma confides with Maia that she has been seeing Hector in her night dreams. Maia comforts her. How does Thelma feel about Hector being away and Castor being at home? Which one is her favourite? Which one takes more to their father?

The ship arrives

Finally the long awaited ship returns home. The returning travellers speak of conflict and strife. Homebound the ship was attacked by a ship from neighbouring city, arch enemy Antigonia.

Draw a stone from the bag for how they fared.

White stone

The ship arrives with a bountiful cargo and most of its crew. Hector has been captured. Kato is missing.

Black stone

The ship arrives with an empty cargo and only a few surviving sailors. Hector has been killed. Kato is missing.

Aftermath

Briefly describe how each main character learns of the news and what their immediate reaction is.

For Pontus, the safe return of the ship means he can aspire to become speaker. Without it, he is at a loss to maintain his cost of living. He will need a new investor to fund another expedition.

For Iris the uncertain news about Kato means that she needs to decide herself about her future and the unborn child. If the ship is lost, there is also no chance of Nico buying citizenship from the council, hence even if Kato returns, Iris will have to give up her social class to marry him.

For Leon to learn that his close friend is in trouble could inspire him to step into the role as a mighty hero that his father so desires for him. If the ship is lost, there is little hope for a career working for Nico. If the ship returns with bounty, it soon needs a new captain.

For Thelma the loss of her favourite son confronts her with the cost of goading her sons to pursue conflict and glory. Honour demands that Castor now seeks vengeance for his brother. But what if he too does not return?

A girl is born

Back in the house of Pontus, her wife Zoe gives birth to a healthy baby girl. The midwife Hera holds up the child and gives it to Pontus. As he already has three girls, tradition says to gift the child to the mountain. Which means to leave it to die.

Pontus' choice

Pontus must decide whether the child lives (Pontus keeps the white stone and returns the black stone to the bag) or dies (Pontus keeps the black stone and returns the white stone to the bag). If he accepts the child, he names her Xana.

Regardless, Zoe is weak from giving birth. She may recover but will never give birth again.

The fight

Where young men compete to become the new champion.

With Hector captured or killed, the city needs a new champion. Castor is the favourite, will Leon do as honour demands and face him in the arena? Will there be foul play?

Before the fight

Set scenes with the main characters and their opponents to show what the stakes of the tournament are.

Pontus

Stentor blames Pontus for sending Hector ill prepared into the hands of Antigonia. Pontus is not the man he once was. No sons to take his place.

What about Castor, is he a champion that the city council can get behind? Does he have what it takes? Is he ruthless, determined to do what it takes to win? Just like you were? Winning the city championship led to war, wealth, and wife.

Thelma

Orcus confronts Thelma that she has always been too protective of Castor. Now it is time for him to step up. To show what he is made of. Not only does he need to fight, but he needs to show that he is willing to do what it takes to win.

Does Thelma agree? Is that why she married Orcus? What are her words to Castor before he enters the arena?

Leon

Theo demands that Leon fight in the arena. Leon is scared not only of loosing but of the pain and risk of injury. Blows to the head, broken arms and legs. Foul play. Theo challenges him. If he is so afraid of foul play then play dirty first and win quickly. Just be sure it is not seen.

Iris

Nysa confronts Iris with being pregnant and inquires about who the father is. If only it was Castor. She demands that Iris finds someone to marry before the child is born.

In the arena

Young men show off their strength and prowess to a cheering crowd. Running, jumping, swordplay. Then finally it is time for what everyone has been waiting for: the wrestling tournament where men fight one against one. Unarmed, no eye gauging, no kicks in the groins, everything else allowed. There will be blood and the crowd loves it.

Leon's choice

Leon must decide whether he shows up for the fight (Leon keeps the black stone and returns the white stone to the bag) or not (Leon keeps the white stone and returns the black stone to the bag).

The fight

If Leon fights, he faces Castor in the final match. If Leon does not fight, Castor's opponent is a young man called Alexis.

Draw a stone from the bag to decide the outcome of the match. Regardless, Castor is the new city champion.

Iris may wonder if marrying Castor will bring her out of her misery. Nysa seems to think so.

Leon will wonder whether he did the right thing, to avoid the fight or to fight and loose. Little glory in either. Is there a future where Castor and him will not be enemies?

White stone

If Leon fights: Castor wins with honour, Leon is physically unharmed.

If Leon does not fight: Castor wins with honour, Alexis is maimed for life.

Black stone

If Leon fights: Castor wins through foul play. Leon is maimed for life.

Eye, ear, nose. Pick one. If Leon does not fight: Castor wins dishonourably, Alexis is killed.

Aftermath

Briefly describe how each main character react when they learn who the new champion is. Do they cheer and congratulate Castor?

Thelma can be proud of raising two sons who both won in the arena. But will it mean that Castor leaves for war soon?

Pontus recognise some of himself in Castor's moment of victory. But does he have advice for his young nephew? Will he think twice before encouraging him to go to battle?

The sacrifice

Where the priestess calls upon the goddess.

It is the first full moon after the return of the trade winds. It is time for the yearly festival celebrating the goddess of the city. New acolytes are invited into the temple. The priestess interprets the will of the goddess in the guts of a goat.

But first a visibly pregnant Iris must make a decision.

Mother or acolyte

The city does not take easy on being pregnant outside marriage. But of course it happens. Tradition demands that Iris now either marry someone from her own class or join the temple acolytes.

Temple acolytes are of course virgins. For a donation, the temple can overlook that she is pregnant and help give the child away if it lives.

A marriage with Castor could be arranged. If he agrees to accept the child as his. Orcus will never agree if he knows. Will Thelma? Stentor will not easily accept for Doris not to marry the champion of the city.

Or Iris can break with tradition and her family and decide to keep the child and wait for Kato to return against all hope. Who will invite her in? She will lose her privileges as citizen. If Nico takes her in, he too will give up all hopes of citizenship.

Give Iris time to explore the options and decide.

Before the ceremony

Set scenes with Iris and the main characters to learn what the future brings according to the goddess, or at least according to Barbara the priest.

Iris

Barbara summons Iris and presents her the option of giving up her child and becoming an acolyte. No time for emotions. She makes sure that the message is understood and sets a clear deadline.

Leon

Leon and Iris talk about whether Kato is still alive, what he means to them, and if there is any hope that they will see him again.

Thelma

Thelma and Maia talk about sex, marriage and giving birth. At the same time, Doris and Iris talk about sex, marriage and giving birth. Cut between the two conversations.

Pontus

Events for Pontus have run out of hands. Another girl. Hector captured or killed. A fortune lost or won. What troubles him most? Does Pontus doubt the wisdom of the goddess?

Maybe he seeks out Barbara to speak frankly or sway her to deliver a divination to his liking. Maybe he shouts his anger into a gale on the mountain.

Iris' choice

Iris must decide whether to marry someone else than Kato or to join the servants of the temple (Iris keeps the black stone and returns the white stone to the bag) or to give up her life in comfort, give birth to her child and cling to hope of seeing Kato again (Iris keeps the white stone and returns the black stone to the bag).

Once Iris has made up her mind, continue with the ceremony.

Calling the gods

Once per year, at the first full moon after the return of the trade winds, new acolytes are accepted into the order. At this the holiest of times, the city asks for guidance and favours from the goddess. According to tradition, a goat is sacrificed and the priestess Barbara divines the future in the intestines while inhaling smoke from burning incense.

Draw a stone from the bag to learn what the goddess says.

White stone

The goddess shows favour upon the city. A city united behind a strong leader will prevail. Iris gives birth to a healthy girl.

Black stone

The goddess is silent. To start a war without the blessing of the goddess is ill advised. Iris gives birth to a healthy boy.

Aftermath

Briefly describe how each main character react when they learn the will of the goddess. Narrate what happens with Iris' child.

Thelma may get comfort from the gods to send Castor to war. Or not. Is she happy to leave the decision with the city council?

Leon may think that matters for Iris was solved as best possible. Will he leave things as they are or will he take matters in his own hands? Will he go out to search for Kato on his own?

Pontus may accept or reject the will of the goddess. Not openly without risking his position, but at least the final decision of whether to respond to the provocation from Antigonia is now left for the council. Where he has a major part to play.

Iris may need some time to find peace with her choice and new life.

The council

Where the council decides on war.

The city council convenes to decide on a response to the provocation by Antigonia. The position as speaker of the council is up for a vote too if someone challenges Stentor.

Before the council

Set scenes with Pontus and Thelma as they prepare for the council. Who do they confide in or conspire with?

Pontus

Will he be a better speaker of the council than Stentor? Why? What will he change? Does Nico still think he should run for speaker?

Thelma

Orcus loudly declares that the city must respond swiftly and with extreme violence. It has already gone too long. He will not listen to any objections from Thelma.

How does Thelma feel about old men sending young men to war? Would it be different if mothers decided? Why?

What about her dreams of Hector. Are they still the same or have they changed? Can Maia give any advice?

Thelma's choice

Thelma decides if she will speak at the council, perhaps disguised, perhaps invited. If Pontus is elected speaker, he can allow her to speak but it will still be a break from tradition for a woman to speak on matters of war.

Return the white stone to the bag if she keeps quiet. Return the black stone if she speaks up.

The council adjourns

Set the scene as the council adjourns. Stentor sets the agenda. First if there is a challenger for speaker. If Pontus runs for speaker and he has a black stone in front of him, he is elected. Otherwise Stentor is re-elected speaker.

Next the city's response to the aggression by Antigonia. Orcus makes a fiery speech advocating a strong, armed response led by the city champion, receiving wide applause.

Let Pontus and Thelma speak if they want.

Stentor will speak last and oppose whatever Pontus and Thelma have suggested. He may offer a more careful and prudent approach or he may put Pontus on the spot to go himself or to at least sponsor the endeavour. He will ridicule Thelma for anything she has said.

Then draw a stone to determine what decision the council reaches.

White stone

If Thelma speaks, the council will vote to follow her on whether to go to war with Antigonia. Otherwise, the council will send out someone to parlay with Antigonia. Offering a gift from the city for the safe return of prisoners. Sponsored by Pontus if possible.

Black stone

The council decides to go to war against Antigonia. If Stentor is the speaker: With a new strong mandate, he moves to expel any who did not follow the rules of the city (has a white stone in front of them).

Aftermath

Briefly describe the aftermath as news of the council spread in the city. Does Thelma think she made the right choice? Does Pontus? Will Leon join the war party or lead a parlay mission? Does Iris care?

Kato returns / Zoe

Whatever the decision by the council, some time after the city has sent out their response, Kato returns. On foot, alone.

Set scenes with Leon and Iris as they rejoin with their old friend. What has changed? Will they build a future together? Can they stay in Agonia? Do they want to?

Draw one stone to decide if Kato accepts the child as his (white) or rejects it (black) and if Pontus' wife Zoe recovers (white) or dies (black).

The conflict with Antigonia

Draw one stone to see if Hector is released (if captured) or avenged (if dead).

White stone

If the council decided to go to war, the war is brutal, bloody and prolonged but in the end successful. Hector is rescued or avenged, Castor returns as a great warlord with a fleet rich in spoils of war.

If the council decided to parlay, a satisfying negotiated outcome is reached. Hector is released or his death compensated. The Antigonia crew who took to piracy is exiled and their leaders hung.

Black stone

If the council decided to go to war, the war is brutal, bloody and prolonged and a disaster for Agonia. Hector and Castor both dead, many ships sunk, many men enslaved. A setback that will be felt for generations.

If the council decided to parlay, negotiations end in bloodshed. Hector dead, Castor returns home but maimed and dishonoured. The City is divided in turmoil as leaders navigate to place the blame on someone else.

Epilogue

Where we learn the fate of the city.

Reveal the remaining two stones from the bag to learn the fate of the city.

Two white stones

The city prospers through trade and war but then at some point progress slows. Things get stuck in the past. New ideas are rejected. Stories of old are told and retold and upheld as eternal truths. Change becomes impossible. Even when the world around no longer needs finely crafted copper marvels that go tick, tick, tick.

One white stone, one black stone

The city and its inhabitants prosper and evolve in an ever delicate dance between the norms of the past and the needs of the future. Always at the brink of disaster, always facing an imminent crisis, somehow the city manages to meet every challenge and find a place for everyone to become the best version of themselves. And every day life in the city goes tick, tick, tick.

Two black stones

Chaos and unrest engulfs the city. Everyone pursues their own happiness and the city fails to unite against the constant threats from Antigonia. When the world one day no longer needs finely crafted copper marvels that go tick, tick, tick, the city falls into ruins. Herds of goats graze the crumbling remains of the past. Only stories remain.

Conclude the story with an epilogue for each of the four main characters. A short, narrated scene that shows how they live out the rest of their life.

How will the city remember them? How has the city changed because of them?

After the game

Give players an opportunity to share what they feel about the story you created together. What moments stand out? Help each other answer any questions and tie up loose ends.

Player characters

Each of the four main characters has a mirror, a friend, and two opponents:

A mirror is someone who lives the life that society expects of them or that they could have or had in the past. Played by themselves. Mirrors are also called secondary characters.

A friend with whom they can speak freely in confidence. Played by another player.

An opponent who will speak what the city wants them do to, challenge them hard to do it and punish them for not doing it. Played by the game master.

Pontus, father of girls

Pontus is a respected citizen and member of the city council. Your wealth comes from a copper mine operated by slaves that you captured in a war with Antigonia a decade ago. Back then you were the city champion. Your reputation as a great warrior and successful business man means that you can sway the hearts and minds of men in the council.

Your opponents — played by the game master — are **Stentor the speaker of the council** and **Barbara the priestess**. They will seek that you do not break traditions and punish you if you do. You went to war with **Theo the father of boys**.

Your secondary character is **Castor the warrior**, son of your sister **Thelma**.

A man should have a son

You love your wife, **Zoe**. She has given you three wonderful girls. It will drain your coffers to marry them well, but they bring you so much joy.

But life in the city is harsh. This time her pregnancy is more painful. You had to send for a doctor in the middle of the night. Your wife is weak, she may not live through childbirth. Keep her warm. Give her all the rest she can. Pray.

You went to sit with her one evening after returning from the temple. "I so much want to give you a son," she said. "Then you will be proud." "I know, my love. Now sleep."

A gift for the mountain

In 'The ship' decide whether your newborn baby girl will be gifted to the mountain as is the custom (abandoned and left to die) or if you will feed her and raise her as your daughter.

A business venture

Earlier this year, you invested in a business venture suggested by your friend **Nico the merchant**. Nico is an immigrant (metic), but you have learned to trust his instincts and his business ideas. A ship full of copper produce destined for a far away trading port to cut out the middle man. You persuaded your **nephew Hector** to lead the venture.

Leon's player plays your friend Nico the merchant.

A bid for the gavel

When the ship returns, you will be truly a wealthy man and will run for speaker of the council. You are certain that you can defeat the arrogant and scheming Stentor who currently serves as speaker of the council.

Castor the warrior

Full of self confidence you want to prove that you are no less of a man than your **older brother Hector**. Your brother is champion of the city and leading a trading venture together with **Kato the sailor, Nico the merchant**'s son. They are due to return any day now.

Leon

Ruthlessly trained by your **father Orcus**, you excel at all things physical especially wrestling. Orcus wants you to **crush Leon** at the upcoming tournament.

You sense that your **mother Thelma** somehow prefers Hector.

Iris

You know that you will probably marry **Doris**, the daughter of **Stentor the speaker of the council**, but you nevertheless **chase Iris** just to prove that you can win any woman in town.

Thelma's player plays Doris.

Your role as player

When you play your main character, explore and show how the city restrains you from doing what your heart wants you to do but also how the city takes care of you.

At some point during the story you will make a choice for your main character. When you do, return one of the two stones to the bag. Keep the black stone if you do what the city expects you to do. Keep the white stone if you break with norms and tradition.

There are no right or wrong decisions, only consequences.

When you play your secondary character, help the other player externalise the thoughts and feelings of their main character. Secondary characters accept and follow the norms of the city.

Leon, not a fighter

Leon is a young man who does not enjoy competing for the top of the podium in the arena. You much rather spend time in the workshops of **Nico the merchant** whose son **Kato** you admire and perhaps secretly loves.

Your opponents — played by the game master — are **Theo your father** and **Orcus the captain of the guard**. They will seek that you do not break traditions and punish you if you do.

Your secondary character is **Nico the merchant**, the father of your friend **Kato**.

The ship

Kato is currently away on a business venture organised by **Pontus** and **Nico**. You helped build the machines that are on the ship. The workshop feels empty without **Kato** and you look forward to see him again.

Your half-sister **Iris** also eagerly awaits the return of the ship.

A man is a warrior

Your father **Theo** wants you to train as a warrior and show your prowess in the arena. He dislikes your friendship with **Kato** who is an immigrant (metic).

You are young and strong and your body responds well to the training commanded by **Orcus**. But you don't like wrestling, the discipline held in highest regard in the city. It is much too dangerous. You compete with **Castor** for the top of the podium now when his older brother **Hector** is away.

Alexis, a young athlete whose affection you desired for a while, he got hurt real bad. It was just training but **Castor** didn't hold back. Maybe he didn't want to lose, maybe he didn't know his strength. Maybe he did it to get to you.

Castor is played by **Pontus'** player.

To fight or not to fight

In 'The fight' you must decide whether to face **Castor** in the arena and wrestle to become the new champion of the city.

A man should marry

Doris your close friend since childhood is now a charming young lady. The daughter of **Stentor the speaker of the council**, your stepmother **Nysa** thinks you should impress her so you can marry her. You think **Stentor** is hollow and false.

Thelma's player plays your friend **Doris**.

Nico the merchant

Nico is an immigrant (metic) and does not enjoy the full privilege of citizenship in spite of his successful business. Your greatest wish is for you and your family to be granted citizenship status. You hope that that dream will soon come true.

Pontus

With your trusted friend and business partner **Pontus** you have sent out a daring business venture to cut out the middle man. A ship with local goods destined for a faraway market. Led by Pontus' nephew **Hector** and with your son **Kato** who speaks many languages, you expect to make a good profit. After a donation to the temple, Pontus can become speaker of the council and ask the council to grant you citizenship.

Pontus's wife **Zoe** is to give birth very soon. Pontus so far has only daughters and you know how important it is for a man in this city to have a son.

You know that **Iris** and Kato have been seeing each other. You hope that doesn't bring trouble. It was one extra reason to send Kato away.

Your role as player

When you play your main character, explore and show how the city restrains you from doing what your heart wants you to do but also how the city takes care of you.

At some point during the story you will make a choice for your main character. When you do, return one of the two stones to the bag. Keep the black stone if you do what the city expects you to do. Keep the white stone if you break with norms and tradition.

There are no right or wrong decisions, only consequences.

When you play your secondary character, help the other player externalise the thoughts and feelings of their main character. Secondary characters accept and follow the norms of the city.

Iris, pregnant and not married

Iris is a young woman who is pregnant with the child of **Kato the sailor**. They are not married and Kato is the son of an immigrant (metic).

Your opponents — played by the game master — are **your mother Nysa** and **Barbara the priestess**. They will seek that you do not break traditions and punish you if you do.

Your secondary character is **Maia**, the trusted servant in the house of **Thelma**. If your mother hadn't married **Theo**, you could have been a servant too.

The ship

Kato is away on a voyage to a distant land on a ship owned by Kato's father **Nico the merchant** and led by **Hector the city champion**.

You hope that when the ship returns, Nico can make a donation to the temple and become a citizen so that you and Kato can marry.

A woman should marry well

Your mother **Nysa** thinks she knows what is best for you. She does not approve of your relation with a metic. You don't think she knows that you are pregnant. Your mother married Theo and that is how you ended up with a half brother, **Leon**.

Castor chases you across town especially now when Kato is away. You are secretly flattered by the attention of the most attractive unmarried young man next after Hector.

Castor is played by Pontus' player.

A young woman attends temple school

Your best friend is **Doris** with whom you can share almost anything. You both attend the school at the temple led by **Anastasia the acolyte**. Anastasia always tells you how dangerous giving birth is for both mother and child and how important it is to seek the blessing of the goddess.

Thelma's player plays your friend Doris.

The sacrifice

In 'The sacrifice' you must decide either to marry someone else than Kato, give up the child and join the temple, or to break with your family and your social class and raise the child alone.

Maia the servant

Maia is a maid in the house of **Thelma**. You have served Thelma for a long time and the two of you have a close relationship.

While Thelma has the wealth and the status that comes with her social class, she rarely goes out. As a servant you can move around in the city freely. It is not always safe. But you enjoy the protection of an influential family. **Orcus**, Thelma's husband, is the captain of the guard. He mostly treats you well. Luckily you can no longer have children of your own, that is one problem less.

Other than that, you and Thelma share everything that happens in your lives. Thelma loves hearing the stories you bring back from your many errands in the city.

Even the more colourful ones about **Barbara** and **Stentor**. **Hera the midwife** doesn't carry rumours but you have seen her often enough exciting the temple through the back door to understand what that means.

Your role as player

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Thelma, mother of sons

Thelma is a proud mother of sons **Hector** and **Castor**. You have raised them as strong warriors in the tradition of the city and kept your household as befits a woman of your social class. On matters relating to the city, you have never raised your voice, this you have left to your **husband Orcus**. You and Orcus no longer share the same bed.

Your opponents — played by the game master — are **Stentor the speaker of the council** and **Orcus the captain of the guard**. They will seek that you do not break traditions and punish you if you do.

Your secondary character is **Doris the daughter of Stentor**.

A mother raises strong boys

“Another warrior my lady,” the midwife said as she handed you your newborn. The blood in your veins froze as she continued. “He has the curse of the raven! He will bring sorrow to the city!” You paid for her silence and promised to have her whipped and expelled from the city if she broke the oath she swore. Midwives should keep their superstitions for themselves.

These days Castor trains frenetically in the arena to beat Hector one day. He takes too much to his father’s worst sides.

Castor is played by Pontus’ player.

Women does not speak in public

Except for priests, women do not speak in public. At home, however, you speak freely. **Your maid Maia** is your best friend with whom you trust many secrets.

Iris’ player plays your friend Maia.

You know very well that **Nysa’s daughter Iris** is in trouble with that lad **Kato**. And that **your brother Pontus** donated a fortune to the temple for his next child to be a son.

To speak or not to speak

In ‘The council’ you must decide whether to speak in the council when they decide whether to go to war with Antigonia. You have raised two sons as warriors in the proud tradition of the city. Will you let old men send young men to die?

The ship

Your oldest son **Hector** is the champion of the city. He now leads a promising business venture for your brother. **Pontus** is a respected business man and member of the council. A ship owned by **Nico the merchant** is heading for a distant city.

Sometimes you see the face of **Hector** in a dream. He speaks to you but you cannot hear what he is saying.

Leon’s player plays **Nico**.

Doris the obedient daughter

Doris is a young woman and daughter of **Stentor the speaker of the council**. You enjoy all the privileges and freedom of your social class. You can move around to and from temple school and within the city during the day as long as you stay away from the harbour and the workshops. At night the city is not safe unless you are in the company of men and then only those trusted by your parents.

Leon

Your friend since childhood and now trusted guardian is **Leon**. You are probably going to marry **Castor** though. Leon and Castor are the best fighters in the town. You sometimes watch them compete in the arena. You want to ask Leon if he thinks you should marry Castor.

Iris

You and **Iris** attend temple school together. You are best friends and can talk about everything. Girly things that Leon doesn't understand or care about. Iris is the half-sister of Leon.

You think Iris has more freedom at home. She is allowed to follow Leon to the workshop. You think maybe she has been seeing **Kato**. Kato has been away for a while and Iris has been sad. You want to ask Iris if she has been doing it with Kato.

Your role as player

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Pontus

Leon

Iris

Thelma

Castor

Nico

Maia

Doris