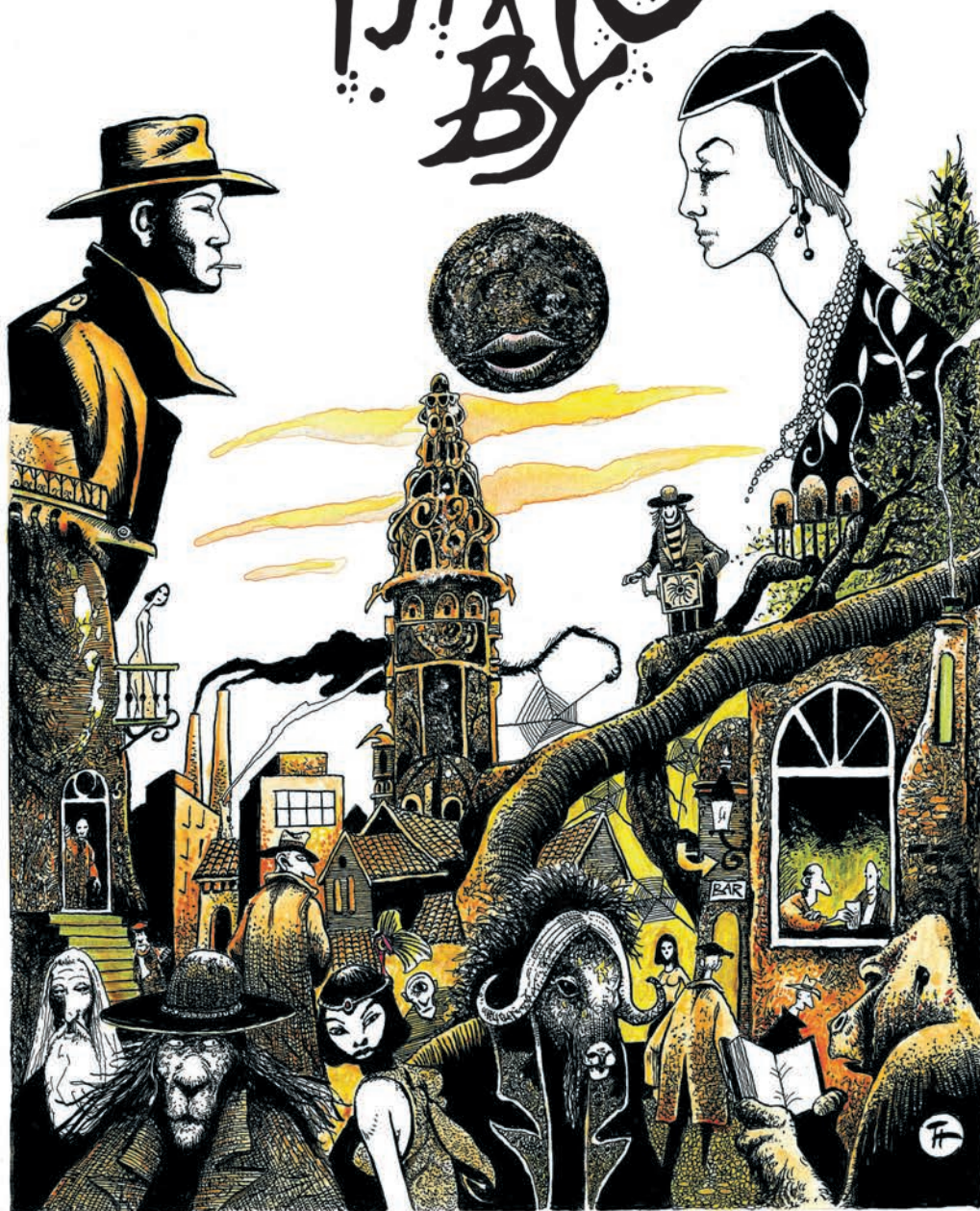


Ole Peder Giæver & Martin Bull Gudmundsen

TRAS BY




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IRAS BY

A Surreal Roleplaying Game





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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 4

Lexicon	6
The 20's and surrealism.....	6
Map: The City Districts.....	9

Part One: Itras By..... 11

Church Hill 13

The Thousand Taverns.....	14
The Churchillians	15
The Church	15
Henkel & Menkel.....	16
The Blue Dragon	16
Juliet Forbes	17
The Park of Tears	18
Pax' Antiques.....	19
A & -A Street	20
Phon.....	20
The Lighthouse	21

Black Bay 22

Jonah	24
The Black Ships	25
The Futurists	26
Back Yard Lions.....	27
Grimasques.....	28
Vanya	28
Structural Cancer	30

Mint Knoll 31

Ape Gardens	32
The Import Nobility	33
Jeremy Finkelson	34
Boulderbeast	34
The Salon of the Subduers of Darkness.....	36
Catacombs.....	37
Barbara Beauchump	38
The Ancient and Venerable Society of Wanderers.....	39

Downtown 41

The River Akeron.....	42
The Bazaar	43
The Underground.....	44
Friday St.....	47
Josephine Buckle	47
Delicatessen	48
Club Apocalypso	49
The Gollups	49
Mulholland Assorted Glass Jars Ltd.	50
The Morphiciary	50
Radio	52
The Shadow Patio	52
Nindra and the Moon Tower	54
The Judges	57
The Grey Guard	58

Grand Meadow 60

Itra's Zoo	62
The University.....	65
The Oneirotec.....	66
Domus Tempus.....	66
Mr. Mogens' Monster.....	67
Cafe Parasol.....	70
Bellevue	71
Institute of Humane Research, IHR	72

The Machine God	73
-----------------------	----

Into the Wild 76

The Ocean	77
The Black Ships	78
Mermaid Shoals.....	78
Archipelago	79
The Wilderness	81
The Estates.....	81
Dr. Kinkelbraun.....	82
Moherat's Wall	83
The Chain Clouds	84

Timeline..... 85

Part Two: The Game..... 87

The Character 88

Roleplaying..... 112

The Method 121

The Players and the Gamemaster	122
Do you make it? Draw a card!	124
How to Use the Resolution Cards.....	125
Chance cards	128

The Adventure..... 131

The Scaffolding of Adventure	133
Daily Life.....	133
The Elements	135
Supporting Characters	136
Locations	138
Other Elements	138
Adventure in one-two-three!	142

The Campaign 144

Brainstorm.....	145
The Length of a Campaign.....	145
Plan the Campaign	146
Preparations.....	147
Know When to Stop	148
With and Without Focus	149
Sample Campaign Concepts.....	150

Running the Game..... 156

Learning by Doing	157
Setting the Scene.....	157
Descriptions	158
Fairness	158
Preparations	159
Special Effects	160
Everyone's a Gamemaster	161

Itras City revisited..... 163

The Surrealism of Itras By..... 180

As in a Dream	182
Inspiration	183
Descriptions	184
Dream Elements.....	185
The Laws of Fiction	188

Part Three: Sample Scenario 191

Cast of Characters.....	205
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Part Four: Appendix..... 221



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.

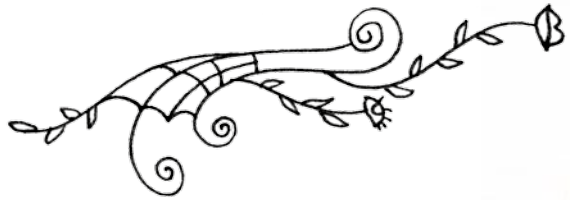
This book is the beginning of a journey away from reality as you perceive it with your everyday senses. Along for the ride are three or

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.