

A PARLOR LARP EXPLORING CLASS AND SPACE

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FASTAVAL 2012 VERSION



*There is only the City. Few know what exists outside it. If such an Outside existed, however, its Inhabitants would desperately yearn for it. For as nothing exists outside the City, so too does nothing exist inside its Inhabitants.*

*Metropolis' architects designed it according to what its denizens could afford: the Ruling class lives far above the rest of the populace in the Spire, their sons playing in the wondrous Pleasure Gardens when young - and in the decadent Yoshiwara district after reaching sexual maturity. Under it lies the bustling Factory where the Ruled work in dangerous conditions, producing the goods and services for the City thanks to the power provided by the almighty Heart Machine. Elevated highways and airships provide transit between its vast production facilities. An elevator ride down reveals the cramped and squalid apartments where most of the Ruled reside. It is rumored that another City existed before the City, with its winding Catacombs still penetrating its underbelly like a root system. A single, squat House amidst the skyscrapers immortalizes a long-forgotten architecture, an engineer within its walls feverishly developing an immortality of a different sort.*

*The Ruling - the City's Head - rule by ignoring their class privilege. The Ruled - the City's Hands - are ruled by fear and tedium. It is a closed system that sustains itself, yet proves utterly unsustainable. The hierarchies harden, becoming brittle and cracking under their inflexibility. And cracks have begun to appear in the City too.*

*Can the Head and the Hands be mediated through the Heart?*

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## GAME OVERVIEW

**Metropolis** is a live-action role-playing game (larp) based on the characters, scenarios and locations found in the eponymous 1927 German silent science-fiction film written by Thea von Harbou and directed by Fritz Lang. This scene-based game is intended to be the first in a series of LARP adaptations of famous films, books and graphic novels in the style of Anna Westerling (*A Nice Evening with the Family*, 2007; *Sense and Sensibility*, 2010) and the parlor LARPs of Shifting Forest Storyworks (*Hamlet*, 2004) and John H. Kim (*Stagecoach*, 2007), with a heavy nod toward the Nordic jeepform scenarios (<http://www.jeepen.org>) of the last decade.

The game invites players into an **expressionist science-fiction mega-city**, where their characters are **largely determined by their social class and the spaces which they inhabit**. Figures in silent expressionist films tend even to merge with the sets and backdrops that frame them, **their emotions coloring their environment**. Alienated from Nature, God, each other and themselves, each character yearns for some kind of meaningful connection in the world, and yet are continuously foiled by the social system in which they live and - paradoxically - the very crises that threaten that system. In addition, the **players physically embody the very City that constricts the characters**, manipulating the others' actions and emotions while being acutely aware of its impending doom. The game rules are intended to explore these issues and situations, as well as **simulate the exaggerated and bombastic style of this particular German film**, without predetermining too much of the narrative or the story's ending. Though gamemasters may be present, they are to function as guides to ensure smooth transitions between scenes and guides for dramatic action. The players of the game are largely in control of how the story unfolds and its consequences on all involved.

## THE RAW SPECS

**Number of Players:** 6-11

**Expected Game Duration:** 3-4 hours

**Genre:** Expressionist science-fiction melodrama

**System:** Structured Freeform

**Materials:** An open room with several chairs and possibly a table or two.

**Premise:** A larp based on the characters, scenarios and locations of Fritz Lang and Thea von Harbou's expressionist science-fiction epic, *Metropolis* (1927). The game invites the players to think about how space and social class dictate many of the aspects of our lives, including our very passions. After all, Lang and Harbou may not have told the only version of this tale...



## WORLD OVERVIEW

**Your whole world is the City**, hedging you in on all sides. Skyscrapers tower over you while, in the depths, machines churn endlessly away as if driven by some mad race to nowhere. The City subsists on one major cash commodity: **energy**. It must generate vast quantities of energy in the Factories via the enigmatic Heart Machine to take care of the light, heat, plumbing, and other needs. In fact, your City would have become a fully sustainable



utopia long ago were it not for the **requirement of enormous amounts of manual labor** to keep the machine running for wealthy industrialists who built the City. Thus the industrialists pay brow-beaten workers such as yourself a meager hourly wage to serve the machines in exchange for their existence and that of their families. The lives of the workers (the Ruled class) are churned up like grist for the machine, while the industrialists and their children (the Ruling class) live insulated from the cruel effects of this system of wage slavery. **Socialism and religion are the Ruling class' enemies**, and great efforts have been made by both the industrialists and their Internal Security forces to subdue these ideologies. Fear of being fired from this monosystem keeps most in line; clandestine torture and executions keep the rest in line. You fear that, so that the Ruling class can avert some future unpleasantness, you might become replaced.

Technologically, the Ruled class of your City live in 19th Century working class conditions, but use an advanced elevator system to get to and from the Factories. The Ruling class enjoy the benefits of stationary videophones to communicate, though they still run their calculations via large, primitive computers. They may use a personal elevator system to ascend and descend between levels, or use cars, planes, or airships to get around horizontally when needed. The high volume of traffic on the skyways can be owed to the white collar secretarial class that serves the Ruling class, who have to commute from their apartments on the outskirts into the center of town. You likely eat food from machine dispensers, whereas the Ruling class may eat fresh vegetables and fruit cultivated in their skyscraper gardens.

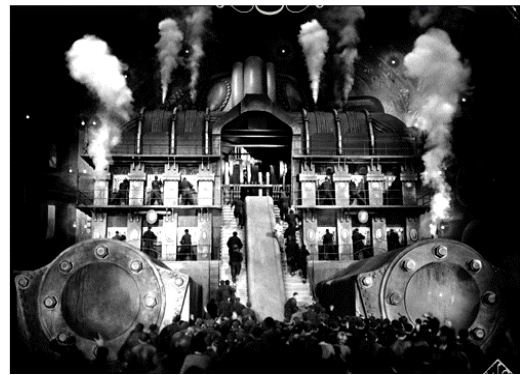
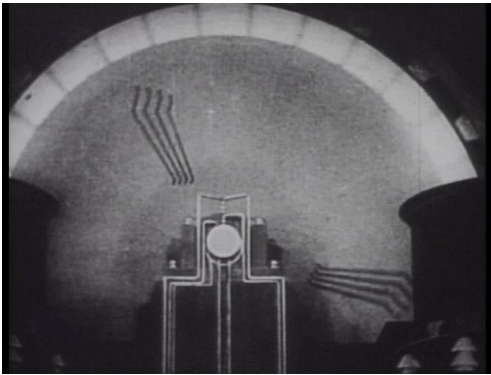
The City is vertically subdivided into four sectors reflecting its stark class divisions: the **Spire**, the **Factories**, the **Workers' Homes**, and the **Catacombs**.



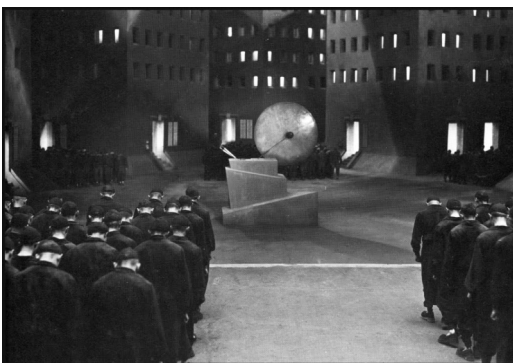
The **Spire** contains the **Spire Office** (above left) of Joh Fredersen, the wealthiest of the industrialists. Below it are the **Pleasure Gardens** (above right), where the sons of the wealthy play in carefully manicured athletic fields and court lovers near fountains surrounded by lush vegetation.



The **Factories** constitute most of the City, and subsume everything above ground that isn't the Spire. Here you may find **Yoshiwara** (above left), the pleasure district where the rich spend their money on naughty cabaret shows and other indulgences. The **Apartments** (above right) are where all the white-collar workers live: single-room affairs with a communal, conveyor-belt style elevator going between them. Also on this level lies the **Heart Machine** (next page upper left), which collects and redistributes all the energy of the city, a typical **Factory** (next page upper right) where the energy is routed under high-pressure conditions down to the Heart Machine, and **Rotwang's Laboratory** (next page lower left), one of the few remaining old buildings in Metropolis. You also may spot the sleek, **Black Car** (this page, lower right) owned by the Thin Man, which is likely cruising around on a special mission for his industrialist masters.



Below the Factories lie the **Workers' Homes** (below left), which are built underground dangerously close to the City's water supply. This is where the predominantly male workers' wives and children reside. Were the Heart Machine ever to stop, the repressed water table would surely rise and engulf this section of the city. At the very bottom lie the ancient **Catacombs** (below right), which until recently have remained unmapped. It is rumored that workers go down there to hear a prophet preach about understanding and love.



## THE RULES

As a “structured freeform” larp, you will find its play somewhat **resembles an improvisational theater piece**. Scenes are encouraged to be **resolved dramatically**, i.e. through the flow of their emotional and narrative arcs, rather than through an external means of arbitration. Nevertheless, the event also has a **concrete structure**, as well as specific ways you can and cannot intervene within the fiction that fit several important premises regarding Expressionism and the original film.

These premises are:

- In *Metropolis*, **the spaces of the City delineate the action** that can take place in them. Characters are pre-determined by their physical environment.
- Similarly, **emotions pre-determine** the characters, not the other way around. If you have to be sad, you must find a reason in the narrative to be sad. **Dark, unknown forces control you.**
- In Expressionist cinema, actors overact in order to externalize the internal agonies of modernity. **Large gestures and overwrought facial expressions are encouraged.**
- **Transparency trumps opacity** - if you know it, show that you know it. If you don't know it, act naive and then overact when you are “surprised” with information your character didn't know.

Knowing these premises in advance will considerably simplify your play experience as you focus on the tumultuous events happening all around you as the City begins to break apart at the seams. Any good work of art/play begins with restrictions, so let us start with...

### **What is Forbidden**

- You **may not set the action outside the City**, except in dream sequences or flashback form. Even then, some reference to the City must be made.
- You **may not depart from the loose story arc** given, and **may not interrupt the game during an Act**. The spaces between the two Acts exist for you to go to the bathroom, etc. Otherwise, it is imperative that focus is maintained for the duration of the scenes as they happen.
- You **may not use the game as a means to infringe on the personal boundaries of others**, whether they be physical, emotional, or whatever. Communicate about what subjects and actions (beyond violence and obvious illegalities) are to be avoided at all costs before the game even starts. If desired a “safe word” may be confirmed among the participants.

## Game Flow

All action takes place in scenes. Every scene takes place in a Cityscape somewhere in the City that **is physically shaped and acted** by its Parts. Players are each casted for a character at the beginning whom they can play during scenes (See Characters). The essential characters are Joh, Freder, Maria (can be Robot Maria as well), Josaphat, Rotwang and Worker 11811.

**If a player is not in a scene, they are Part of the City**, with all the benefits and limitations that entails. If they are Part of the City Only, then they are presumed to be taking a very active role in shaping each Cityscape.

The number of scenes may vary, but the game itself is divided up into **three separate Acts**, loosely based on those of the original film. An Act concludes when all of its conditions have been met organically through play, which may take minutes or hours depending on the group.

### Act I - Overture

Act I will conclude when all of the following events have taken place:

- Four or more scenes have elapsed.
- All characters are introduced, and at least one of each of their Ends has been noticeably revealed.
- Freder meets Maria, travels to the Factory, replaces Worker 11811 on the assembly line, and discovers through him the Catacombs.
- Rotwang and Joh find out about Maria.
- Josaphat is fired for something not really his fault, is going to commit suicide, but something stops him.

### Act II - Intermezzo

Act II will conclude when all of the following events have taken place:

- Four or more scenes have elapsed.
- All Ends are revealed somehow through the narrative
- Robot Maria is unleashed by Rotwang.
- Worker 11811 goes to Yoshiwara and has a good time.
- (If Thin Man in play) Thin Man is sent to follow Freder by Joh, but mistakes him for Worker 11811.

### Act III - Furioso

Act III will conclude when all of the following events have taken place:

- Four or more scenes have elapsed.
- Seven Deadly Sins and Death are unleashed.
- Parts of the City are destroyed thanks to Robot Maria.
- Freder and Maria reunite, and Josaphat joins them.

**All other narrative points are entirely up to the player group, including the ending.** Whether or not the characters attain their goals is neither prescribed nor should be certain at all.

**OPTIONAL:** To get into the spirit of both the gameplay and the melodrama at hand, especially if the Warmup provided is not used, it may be helpful to start the game with what I call an **“Oppression Sequence.”** Half the players form the Cityscape of a large industrial machine, and the other half form the oppressed proletariat who are slaving away at the machine. Each of the proletariat takes turns **doing a monolog about the toll the machine work takes on their bodies, minds and souls.** Then cut to the opening scene of Act I, which should be set in one of the Spire locations among the Ruling class.

**IMPORTANT:** Your game might resemble the movie, **but it will not play out like the movie.** The game is your own, and will resolve in the way that play leads it to resolve.

### Setting the Scene

Once the players have their characters and know about the Act structure, play can begin. Players will need **character sheets containing a Passion List** – a list of emotions their character can feel in the order that they feel them – on an index card for reference, and Parts of the City Only will need to be **reminded of their powers.**

Play begins by **collectively selecting two or more characters to be in a scene,** after which point the City forms its first Cityscape – **preferably a Dwelling** of one of the characters. The Dwellings are recurring locations in the narrative, but which can change over time.

Parts of the City **physically set up the backdrop** in the Dwelling for the action to occur: players’ arms may become machine components or

### SETTING THE SCENE EXAMPLE:

The Rotwang player says “Let us begin with a scene introducing Joh and Grot, in which they discuss the operations of the City via videophone in the Spire Office.” The Joh player and Grot player step aside as the remaining players form the City. The Rotwang player takes an active role in sculpting people for the scene, leading them to the places where he wants them. A chair is placed before two players, whose joined arms form the videophone “screen.” Another player stands nearby as his servant; the Thin Man player asks if he can play his character as a background piece in this scene and the other City players agree. The rest of the players extend their arms to form a human wall around Joh and the screen to emphasize his being walled off from his creation. Once everyone is in position, Joh takes his seat, and Grot will stand behind the screen when Joh receives his call.



doorframes, players on chairs become towers, poses become statues, wandering people with downcast eyes become extras and so forth. It may start by somebody saying “Hey, I’m a lamppost!” or someone else saying “The Pleasure Gardens should look like one big wall” or someone just silently adopting a somewhat ludicrous pose and everyone else following. Extras may interact with the characters, but do not have Means and Ends or long-term screen time. The vision of the City has to be consensual, but having one or two City players take charge and “shape” their other players is suggested. One of the City may choose to **give a monolog** framing the action of the scene, or they may choose to remain silent. The City always sets the scene first, does the monolog and then allows the characters to enter it.

## During the Scene

*Metropolis* plays more like theater than a conventional larp: the Cityscapes are intended to be **more like movie backdrops** than immersive 360° environments, the play is divided into **individual scenes**, **monologs** are encouraged, and **sweeping gestures a la** silent cinema are prioritized over subtle intimations of the later sound films (or larp in general). Nevertheless, there are several game rules that persist with keeping it in the realm of role-playing.

In a scene, characters melodramatically try to **achieve their Ends by using their Means**, all of which are openly telegraphed. They act out the scene, agreeing to any bits of fiction established. Their mood is **either the first item on their Passion List, or at the Passion the character last felt**. At opportune moments, the characters may choose to **make a one-sentence aside expressing one of their Ends as a heartfelt “I must ...!” statement**. This is done once in the game for each End the character possesses (i.e. 3 times), and fulfills some of the conditions for ending an Act.

### “I MUST...” EXAMPLES:

- I must overcome Hel’s loss!
- I must celebrate the City’s destruction!

### “I CAN...” EXAMPLES:

- I can overpower him easily with my brawn! (Grot easily overpowers him, *but meanwhile the workers are dismantling the Heart Machine.*)
- I can tell her a bewitching story! (Maria tells her a story, *but it leads her to fantasies of wealth she cannot have.*)

If there is a *conflict* in the scene or a *test of competence* required, a character may choose to **make a one-sentence aside expressing one of their Means as a heartfelt “I can...!” statement**. A character using his Means will succeed to some degree at the task they set out to do, but the City can choose to **mitigate the success with a**

**conditional statement containing the word “but...”** The “but” statements **cannot nullify the success, but qualify it** in terms of narratively interesting possibilities.

What the characters in the scene do not control are **their environment** and **their current emotional state**. The City manipulates the former by simply **shifting around at will** to highlight or redirect the action in the scene. Crowds may form, doors may open, buildings may collapse, walls may grow immense and frightening, machinery may start up, etc. The City controls the characters’ emotions by **making an intervention into the scene**, which force the players in the scene to **shift their characters’ emotional state** to the next one on their Passion List. This means the City stays in the background until sufficient time has passed to instigate the next emotion (**at least 10 seconds of gametime is polite**). The characters adjust to their “new” emotional state while continuing the action as before with a shifted tenor.

If during a scene there is a **conflict between two characters unresolvable by the means above**, here’s what happens: Both characters make their “I can...” statements and the City checks to see if they are mutually exclusive. If they are not, then both statements happen with their usual consequences. If they are, then one Part of the City may elect a winner, which must be confirmed by at least one other Part, and then a third Part of the City may decide the consequences for both sides.

#### **ENVIRONMENT EXAMPLES:**

- Grot slams Rotwang into a wall, which collapses under their frenzy.
- Workers gather around to hear the story.

#### **EMOTION SHIFT EXAMPLES:**

- Grot is currently overpowering this guy out of Solidarity with his superiors. The man crashes through the wall, and the City player falls down to simulate that. Grot switches to Panic on his Passion List... and begins to frantically hit the man.
- Maria begins to tell a story to the workers out of Fervor for her cause. A worker shouting “Amen!” causes her to shift to a mood of Sympathy. She pulls one worker, who “happens” to be Georgy, into the scene and relates her story with his plight.

#### **RESOLUTION EXAMPLES:**

- Rotwang wants to attack Maria in the Catacombs, and she wants to escape (both Means they possess). A corpse says: “Rotwang will catch her.” The left archway says: “I second this motion!” and even collapses to prevent her escape. The other half of the archway says: “Maria is captured, but Rotwang reveals one of his Ends.” Rotwang obliges: “I must capture Maria to clad my artificial life in her likeness!”



## Ending a Scene

Scenes end by one of several ways:

- All but one character has chosen to **exit the scene**, and the City does not introduce new characters. They can give a monolog.
- A character faints, is gravely injured or dies.
- The City decides to end it with one of its own launching into an **“And so...” monolog** summarizing the action of the scene.

If characters exit the scene, the City **summarizes the action** as below.

If a character dies, the City must recite a **eulogy** for him/her. The player of the dead character gets to frame the next scene.

The last option is the act of the City intervening on the action by summarizing what came to pass in as melodramatic monolog. This gives the City players the opportunity to function as a kind of Greek chorus, subtly commenting on what happened and deliberating among themselves as to what the next scene shall be. **Just don’t make it too long.** If a City part dissents from this ending of the scene, they may dissent by loudly whispering: “Shhh - it’s not finished yet!” Play continues until this City player is satisfied

### “AND SO...” EXAMPLES

- “And so Grot succumbed to his own rage as that of the workers tore down his life’s work.”
- “And so Maria enchanted us all with her story, divorcing us pleasurably from reality.”

Whoever’s keeping track of how far the game is through the three Acts **marks off what was accomplished**, either completing the Act (and the players take a break) or prompting the group to frame the next scene.

**OPTIONAL:** At the end of a scene, the characters still in the frame can now address the City as “My City...” and **make a request**. This request must be in line with their Ends, and the City can openly deliberate whether or not they grant the request. The request, however, **must be met with an equal and opposite request**. Any agreements made must be kept by both sides.

The next scene is **framed by someone who has not framed a scene recently**, or the player of the character who just died in the present scene.

**IMPORTANT:** Even though there are obvious main characters and side characters, try to give each player at least one scene per Act, unless they are dead. Note that scenes that drag on can be freely ended by the City.

The City follows suit by assembling the next Cityscape. If the scene takes place in the same space, then **some element must be added or removed** to make it seem slightly different to the next set of characters.

## Game Summary

- Do warm-ups, choose characters and go over the rules.
- Use the Act structure on Page 9 to determine how far along you are.
- Two or more characters are selected to be in a specific Cityscape.  
New scenes are framed by someone who hasn't done it recently.
- The Cityscape is assembled and the characters are allowed in.
- Scenes end when only one character remains, a character is injured or killed, or when the City ends it with an "And so..." statement.

If you are a character in a scene, you may:

- Act out your character and try to obtain your character's Ends.
- Give monologs and be melodramatic at will.
- Make an "I can..." monolog with one of your Means to succeed at something.
- Make an "I must..." monolog to broadcast your character's intended action.
- Shift your emotional state to the next one on the Passion List when the City intervenes in your scene.
- Enter and exit the scene if you like, unless the City physically prevents you.
- OPTIONAL: Make a pact with the City at the end of a scene.

If you are a character not in a scene, you are part of the City and may:

- Play a person, place or thing that is not the subject of the scene.
- Remain an objective, aloof component of and part of its collective mind.
- Compose part of the Cityscape.
- Allow characters to enter a scene.
- Shift around from an initial position to match mood/plot of a scene.
- Make an intervention to push the passions of the character along.
- Add a "...but" statement to any character's success.
- Resolve mutually exclusive disputes by making a motion, which must be seconded and given consequences.
- End the scene by making an "And so..." monolog
- OPTIONAL: Make a pact with a player at the end of the scene.

## FULL PLAY EXAMPLE

**Players A-D** are playing the City, while **Player E** plays Freder and **Player F** plays Maria. We're seeing them for the first time in Act I.

**Players A-D** choose to set this in Freder's Dwelling, the Pleasure Gardens. **Player A** stands on a chair and pretends to be a fountain. **Player B** spreads her arms behind the fountain, signifying the high wall around the garden. **Players C and D** play flattering, playful maidens.

**Player B** decides to frame the scene with a monolog:

"The Pleasure Gardens are where the wealthy escape the burdens of their privilege through wine and song. Freder is one well-pampered boy among many, all serviced by voluptuous, sexually available women. Maria enters the scene when we know Freder is thoroughly debauched."

**Players C and D** immediately surround Freder and begin to giggle. **Player C** hands him a flower, intervening in the scene.

**Player E** (Freder) looks down on his Passion sheet and sees "First Love" as his initial emotional state.

**Player E** envelops **Player C** in his arms. He stares at her longingly for several seconds, like in a movie poster.

**Player E:** "There is none so beautiful, so tender, so..."

**Player F** enters as Maria. Her initial emotional state is Pity, and she looks around remorsefully at the players. **Player C** decides to continue the conversation, thereby intervening against Maria.

**Player C:** "So... what?"

At this point, Freder's state switches to the next one on the card: Curiosity. Maria switches to Admonishment. Freder looks up and spots Maria. We see the confusion on **Player C's** face as she is discarded in favor of **Player F** (Maria).

**Player E:** "Excuse me... miss? Are you lost?"

**Player F:** "I'm not. But I seek here a stray child who is. These Gardens for the Rich lure the Young into their embrace, and then swallow them. How dare they! Where is the boy?"

**Player E** uses his Means - Rescue to give an aside monolog narrating an action and outcome beginning with the words “I can...”

**Player E:** I can find the boy easily enough. He hides behind a fountain spouting rosewater, his nose crinkling from the smell. I wonder how his clothes became so soiled amidst our clean, pure Gardens.

**Player D** converts herself from a voluptuous maiden to the lost boy. She hides behind **Player A**, and then takes Freder by the hand when she is “found.” Freder hands her over to Maria.

**Player A** switches the fountain’s configuration to be in the shape of a heart. Freder’s Passion shifts to Visions, Maria’s to Acceptance.

**Player E:** “Here he is. I’m surprised I found him so quickly, but I seem to remember us meeting like this in a dream of mine.”

**Player F:** “Perhaps you did. Thank you.”

**Player F** turns to the front with her Ends - Find Someone Who Understands and makes a statement beginning with “I must...”

**Player F:** I must have Freder’s dreams lead him to our Gospel!

**Player F** has now pushed Freder’s dreams toward a certain path and, once it seems like this prophecy may be fulfilled, it is up to **Player F** to determine if this actually comes true or not, and up to **Player E** as to how to react.

## WARM-UPS

Here are some exercises for your group to use to get a feel for the “groupthink” dynamic, the act of miming out set pieces, and the rules as a whole.

### **Warmup: Count to 20 as a Group**

A theater classic. Everyone stands in a circle. The group must collectively count up to 20 *without* two individuals saying the same number aloud. If two people happen to do that, take a deep breath and start over again from 1.

### **Warmup: The Machine**

You’re all parts of a machine making... something. One person mimes out a repetitive, machine-like process in the air. Another person takes the imaginary “product” produced and transforms it somehow via a repetitive machine-like process. A third person transforms that product, and so forth, until everyone is one big Machine. Making appropriate noises is encouraged.

### **Warmup: The Triangle**

The triangle is a short film about a love triangle to be played with the above Rules within 15 minutes. The characters are:

The Man – Means: Woo, Defend; End: \* Marry Woman; Passions: Optimism / Fear / Courage / Rage / Longing  
The Woman – Means: Seduce, Escape; End: \* Achieve independence; Passions: In Love / Doubt / Fear / Confidence / Exhilaration  
The Fiend – Means: Abduct, Interfere; End: \* Marry Woman; Passions: Lust / Greed / Sensitive / Furious / Acquiescent  
The Cop – Means: Ignore, Arrest; End: \* Serve Justice; Passions: Boredom / Inattention / Contemplation / Excitement / Happiness

Everyone else plays the City or, in this case, the dumpy American town. Possible locations include: Railroad Depot, Railroad Tracks, Police Station, Church, Car Chase

*The Triangle* begins with the Man eagerly waiting for the Woman at the Railroad Depot. The Fiend is introduced by the City as a rival, and the Cop is introduced whenever it may be appropriate.

Play for brief scenes with obvious outcomes. The short film ends when the Woman has made a long-term decision based on this short-term madness, or when 15 minutes have elapsed.

## CHARACTER ROSTER



Joh Fredersen,  
Industrialist



Freder Fredersen,  
Heir



Maria,  
Philanthropist



Robot Maria,  
Doppelgänger



Grot,  
Foreman



Rotwang,  
Inventor



Josaphat,  
Manager



Georgy,  
Worker



The Thin Man,  
Henchman

## CHARACTER SHEET BREAKDOWN

**Name:** Character Name, with Accompanying Job in the City

**Social Class:** The Ruling class are those whose brainpower helps run the City. They're the ones with the most social privilege. The Ruled class are those whose labor power run the City, but who get no privilege for it. I must stress that, in *Metropolis*, characters may come and go in spaces as they please, but a Ruled character will look "out-of-sorts" in a Ruling-type space and vice versa.

**Dwelling:** Where the character is almost certainly to be found; the "default" Cityscape of that character.

**Means:** Three verbs which demarcate the character's special expertise. If the player so desires, they may make an "**I can...**" statement using one of these verbs in order to succeed at a task that they otherwise might not. The City may then choose to add a "**...but**" clause to your statement as a condition.

**Ends:** Three objectives that your character is **aggressively** pursuing during the game, both concrete and abstract. Before Act I can end, your character must phrase one of these goals into an "**I must...**" monolog for all to hear. The rest must be revealed in Act II.

**Passion List:** The list in order of the emotional states your character will cycle through during the game. You begin at the upper left and go to the next one to the right when the City substantively intervenes in your scene. If you reach the end, you begin the cycle anew at the top. These passions are like sudden urges that come over your character that you must bring to manifestation within the scene without your character comprehending why they feel this way. Think of it as switching the "tenor" of the scene for your character; you don't stop what you're doing, but now every action you take is inflected by some new force.

**Characteristic Gestures:** Overacting tips.

**Backstory:** All the facts that we know about your character. The rest is up to you.



**Name:** Joh Fredersen, Wealthy Industrialist

**Social Class:** The Ruling

**Dwelling:** Spire Office

**Means:** Intrigue, Discipline, Intimidate

**Ends:** \* Maintain control over the City and its People for profit

\* Overcome the loss of his wife Hel

\* Protect his son Freder from Harm

**Passion List:** Pride / Sadism / Sympathy / Paranoia / Hatred / Self-Hatred / Love / Awe / Despair / Unforgiving / Forgiving

**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Pensive, calculating stare

\* One hand behind your back, the other hand gesticulating

**Backstory:** You are the most powerful man in Metropolis and one might say it is a City created in your own image: efficient, productive, multi-faceted. You worked your way to the top because you are dedicated, focused. Not like the rest of your fellow men, anyway; they are lazy and misguided. What reason have you *not* to rule them? Once you had a wife named Hel, whom you seduced from the advances of the brilliant-but-ugly-engineer Rotwang. You had a son with her: Freder. But she died in childbirth, and Rotwang still holds you responsible. Too bad: he's one of the top minds still in Metropolis. You have thrown yourself fully into the raising of your son to be the City's next Administrator, and you love him like you love the memory of your ex-wife. But now to business: the workers are too unruly these days, something you've told your faithful henchman the Thin Man, the head

foreman Grot in the Heart Machine or that operations manager - what was his name? Incompetents, all of them! Perhaps they need to be replaced - perhaps *all* of them need to be replaced...



**Name:** Freder Fredersen, Heir

**Social Class:** The Ruling

**Dwelling:** Pleasure Gardens

**Means:** Explore, Rescue, Mediate

**Ends:** \* Unite with his One True Love

\* Save people from misery

\* Be a good son to his father

**Passion List:** Falling in Love / Curiosity /

Hallucinating / Suicidal / Horror / Solidarity / Piety /

Revolutionary Anger / Desperation / Hope

**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Fainting

\* Overly enthusiastic-but-innocent hug

**Backstory:** You are the son of the richest, most powerful man in Metropolis. But to you, he's still just your dad. As the only child of a magnate widower, you have been surrounded - some might say sheltered - with every conceivable pleasure, all of your needs are met. Yet some desire burns in you to see the City below, to meet other people not pre-screened by your father and his lap-dog, the Thin Man. Your only friend is Josaphat, your father's operations manager, and you like him because some desire burns in him too. Though you are surrounded by women, you'd love to meet one who's special. Different. You long to dabble in the shoes of other men and women, to sneak a peek at the City beyond the great Pleasure Garden walls.





**Name:** Maria, Philanthropist and Preacher

**Social Class:** The Ruled

**Dwelling:** Catacombs

**Means:** Guide, Tell Stories, Escape

**Ends:** \* Unite Humankind as mutual siblings

\* Spread the Gospel to the workers

\* Find someone who understands

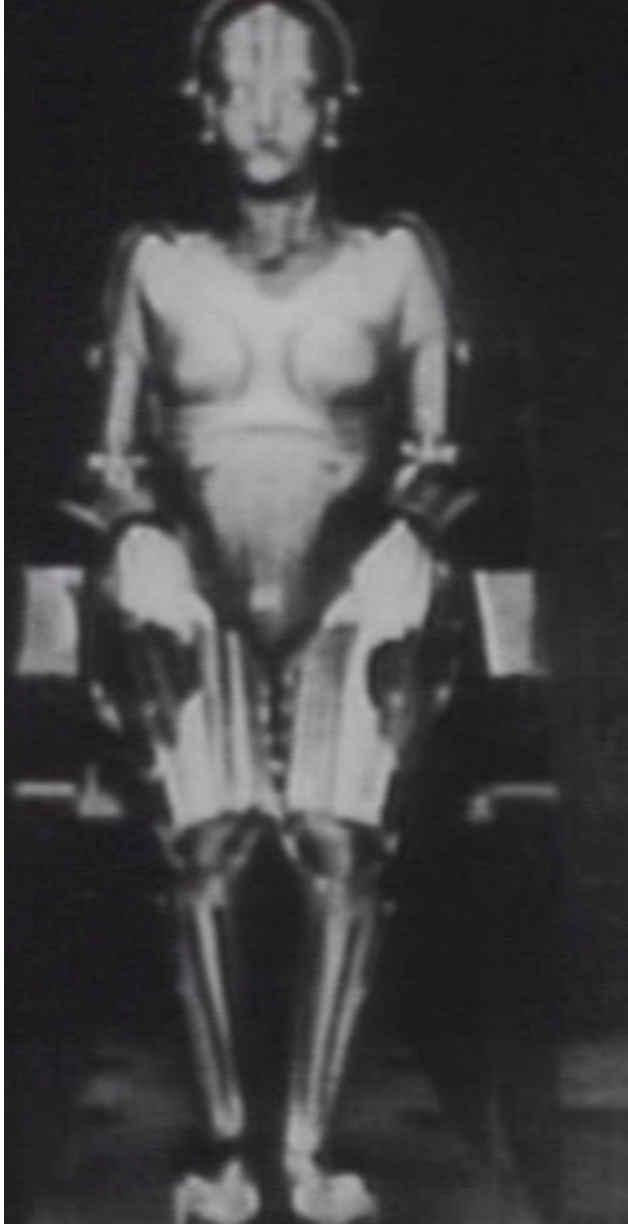
**Passion List:** Pity / Admonishment / Acceptance / Lust / Fear / Resignation / Optimism / Fervor / Sympathy / Anguish / Calm

**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Praying, eyes skyward

\* Arms extended to the people

**Backstory:** You are the daughter of a worker in the Undercity. When you were seven years old, your father died in a factory accident near the Heart Machine. Factory owner Joh Fredersen was present, watched as your father was devoured. Your mother followed, dead from a preventable disease you could not cure. The rest of your childhood was spent in an orphanage, and you grew up to be one of its child minders. Yet you forgive what was done to you. You know that, despite Humankind's carelessness and casual cruelty, love binds us all together as brothers and sisters under God. Only forgiveness and pacifism can overcome the evils that lie in wait for us. You want to find someone else who understands this as you do.





**Name:** Robot Maria, Evil Doppelgänger

**Social Class:** Ruling

**Dwelling:** Yoshiwara

**Means:** Seduce, Distract, Incite

**Ends:** \* Divide Humankind against itself

\* Celebrate the City's Destruction

\* Become Joh's lover

**Passion List:** Lust / Greed / Envy / Gluttony / Sloth / Pride / Wrath / Self-Destruction

**Characteristic Gestures:**

\* "Come hither" finger

\* Maniacally throwing your hands in the air

**Backstory:** You came into this world without a soul, and don't expect to get one either. Joh thinks you are programmed to obey his commands, but the opposite is true. Your creator Rotwang programmed you to take Joh Fredersen's city of Metropolis apart, bit by delicious bit. You will do this by seducing the men of the Ruling class and then inciting the men of the Ruled class to savagely revolt against them. Not only do you know how to lead men to destruction, but you feed off the nectar of their rage, lust and confusion. You're not a bad girl, you're just built that way.



**Name:** Grot, Head Foreman of the Heart Machine

**Social Class:** The Ruled

**Dwelling:** Heart Machine

**Means:** Brawn, Guts, Maintenance

**Ends:** \* Serve the Best Interests of the City

\* Ensure the People's Justice is done

\* Protect the Worker's Families

**Passion List:** Humility / Wrath / Ambition / Confusion / Defeat / Vengeance / Solidarity / Panic / Pride / Ambivalence

**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Salute

\* Closed Fist

**Backstory:** You're the head foreman of the Heart Machine, the power generator for the whole city. You got there by having a wife and five kids to feed and a down-to-earth interest in seeing the city function. As a man of considerable size, you have grown accustomed to the authority it grants you and feel you can take on unruly workers in any quantity. You see yourself as a tough-but-fair father to your crew, but you always capitulate to Joh Fredersen's interests over your own or your workers'. Why do you do that? He's the boss, after all.



**Name:** Rotwang, Mad Inventor  
**Social Class:** Ruling  
**Dwelling:** His Shack-Like Laboratory

**Means:** Create, Bind, Attack

**Ends:** \* Avenge Hel's Death

\* Create Artificial Life

\* Revolutionize Society

**Passion List:** Calculating / Excitement /  
Vengeance / Sadism / Sorrow / Hyperactivity /  
Treachery / Wrath / Envy / Despair

**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Raise a clawed hand to the sky

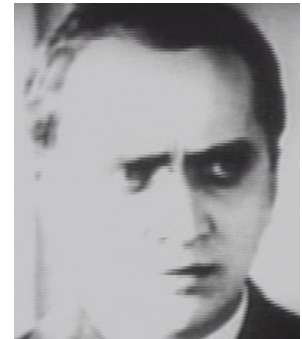
\* Clutch your own heart

**Backstory:** Mankind has always underestimated your capabilities, but your former employer Joh Fredersen above all. You used to be in love with a woman, Hel, who was lured away from your benign embraces by *that* man. She then died after bearing him an accursed son – Freder. You watched it happen; you watched it happen and you *knew* Joh's precious city would pay for his crime. Enraged, you threw yourself into the creation of a robotic version of Hel, one who could be yours forever. You lost a hand as a result of these experiments, but gained a functional robotic appendage to replace it. Now you have completed your prototype robot, and you now only need a person's guise to camouflage it. Who will do? Maybe that Maria figure who's riling up the workers in the Catacombs? You have a secret passage in your lab that goes directly there. Down in the dark, you'll show Joh who's really in charge in this city.





**Name:** Josaphat, Operations Manager  
**Social Class:** The Ruled / Ruling (straddles both)  
**Dwelling:** Apartment in Block 99, 7th Building, 7th Floor  
**Means:** Conceal, Honor, Assist  
**Ends:** \* Keep His Dignity  
 \* Be a Good Friend to Freder  
 \* Keep the City Alive  
**Passion List:** Suicidal / Pride / Ignorance / Repression / Helplessness / Calm / Awe / Solidarity / Self-Hatred / Sympathy  
**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Sullen Removal of Hat  
 \* Grinding of Teeth



**Backstory:** As operations manager for Joh Fredersen, your middle management job is to oversee the immense machines that help run the City



and secure Fredersen's profits. You get an apartment, a salary and the right to walk upright in the morning as a reward. You strongly identify with your job and enjoy the slightly better-than-average standard of living it affords. You don't know actually what you'd do if you lost your job. You are also on very good terms with Joh Fredersen's son Freder, which seems like your only major guarantee against the above scenario.



**Name:** Georgy, Worker 11811

**Social Class:** The Ruled

**Dwelling:** Factory

**Means:** Toil, Waste, Shift

**Ends:** \* Transcend His Social Class

\* Be Entertained

\* Become a Martyr for Maria's Cause

**Passion List:** Sloth / Greed / Fervor / Lust / Exhaustion / Gluttony / Satisfaction / Martyrdom

**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Wipe Sweat from Brow

\* Hacking Cough

**Backstory:** 8-hour shifts, 10-hour shifts, 12-hour shifts - you've worked them all. Non-stop. Oh, they've taken their toil: your hands cramp, your memory is fleeting and your back routinely rebels against you. There was a point in time when you believed you could rise above your station in life with a little extra hard work, but your job-related health issues have plunged you into



such debt that would take three consecutive lifetimes to pay off. You have temporarily reconciled with this fact, however, because you have found Maria, who preaches to you about the eternal life beyond this one. It sounds promising, but what you wouldn't do to have just one evening in Yoshiwara, the pleasure district, in the shoes of an upper class gentleman...

**Name:** The Thin Man,  
Metropolis Internal Security

**Social Class:** Ruling

**Dwelling:** Black Car

**Means:** Hunt, Bribe, Report

**Ends:** \* Catch Others in the Act

\* Fulfill His Boss' Wishes

\* Hide His Own Vulnerabilities behind Mask  
of Authority

**Passion List:** Detached / Probing / Sadistic / Pride / Amusement /  
Humorlessness / Hysterical / Violent / Humility

**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Rub Your Fingers with Glee

\* Evil Smile

**Backstory:** No one knows where you came from. It's probably for the best: you were a gangly kid whom everyone teased, and who then stayed up all night scheming how to get back at them all, only to do nothing again the next day as the taunts resumed. But your schemes remained. When you came of age, you were cunning enough to find your way into the right circles among the elite and learn the crafts of surveillance and intimidation, the perfect tools in a city conditioned to obey through fear. Your cynical commitment to do whatever the Ruling class saw as expedient to maintain their power eventually earned you a place at the side of Joh Fredersen, chief industrialist of the City. Some of your colleagues still whisper taunts behind your back, but now you know you can take out any... surplus aggression on the next hapless member of the City, with nobody able to lift a finger against you. Your job is to keep the workers in their place, and you so very much enjoy putting them there.





## PART OF THE CITY DUTIES

When you are not in a scene, you are part of the City. When you are in a scene, you should know how the City is acting on you.

We might as well include the City in the character roster: in many respects, everything not decided in the heat of the moment of a scene, the City decides. Yes, this means the City determines whether or not you live or die. The City acts either as a collective chorus (rare), or as individual voices that do not gainsay each other (common). Cities plan courses of action, but they also improvise given the opportunity. And since every player in the game moves in and out of these Duties, it is generally understood that they should be taken seriously by those playing them and those receiving their instructions.

If you are part of the City, you may:

- Play a person, place or thing that is not the subject of the scene. Stay in the background unless you wish to push the passions of a character down one position on their sheet.
- Remain an objective, aloof component of the City's collective mind.
- Physically compose part of the Cityscape.
- Allow characters to enter a scene.
- Shift around from an initial position to match mood/plot of a scene. Clearly project what this shift entails, and follow it to its natural conclusion.
- Intervene to push the passions of the character into different territory.
- Add a "...but" statement to any character's success.
- Resolve mutually exclusive disputes by making a motion, which must be seconded and given consequences.
- End the scene by making an "And so..." monolog
- OPTIONAL: Make a pact with a player at the end of the scene.

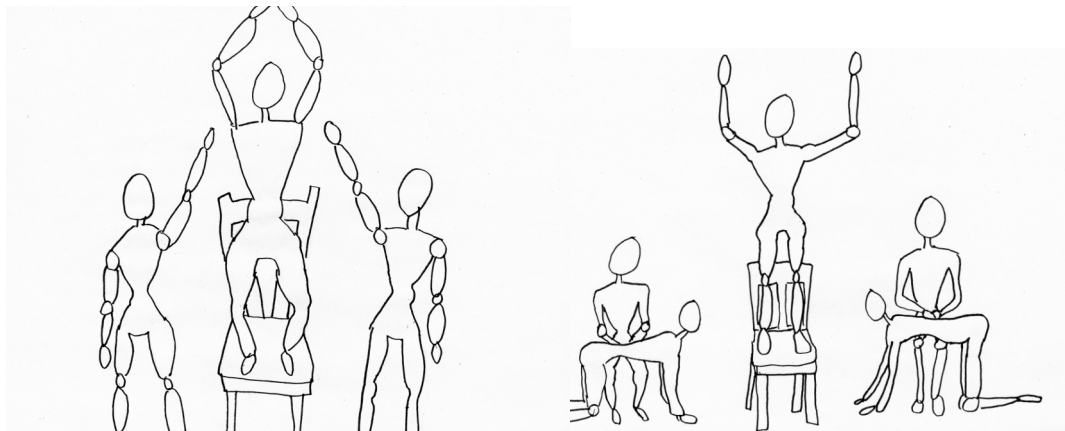
**REMEMBER:** You are as important as you act. When you are the City, your duties are what make you important. Fulfill them with pride.



## CITYSCAPE IDEAS

You've seen the film, read the game rules and now you're thinking: how are we supposed to imitate *Metropolis*' fantastic sets with our bodies? The first answer is: you're not. Those sets single-handedly bankrupted the studio that financed them. It's probably not a good idea to tread down that path again. The second answer is: you can *interpret* them however you'd like. The point is to imbue the space with the presence of your bodies in such a way that the environment is invoked. You can become, among other things, **walls, doors, furniture, extras, statues, machines, and masses of people**. Focus on details you want to emphasize, as well as keeping with the number of people you have available. You may also shift the design as the scene progresses, based on what's happening. If you are playing in a large enough space, you should divide up the room into the 4 separate sectors detailed on page 6. Below are some crude descriptions and items to simulate to prompt your imaginations. Remember: there is no right interpretation, only your own as a City.

### Spire Office



Description 1 -- "Phallus": Chair in the center, 1 player standing on it, arms above their head to form a triangle shape, 2 players with extended arms on either side to form walls emanating out from the chair.

Description 2 -- "Backs of the Workers": Chair in the center, 1 player standing on it as a statue, 1 player each on left and right flank of set with their arms at 90° angles to form the outer corners of the room, the rest of the players on hands and knees as "desks"

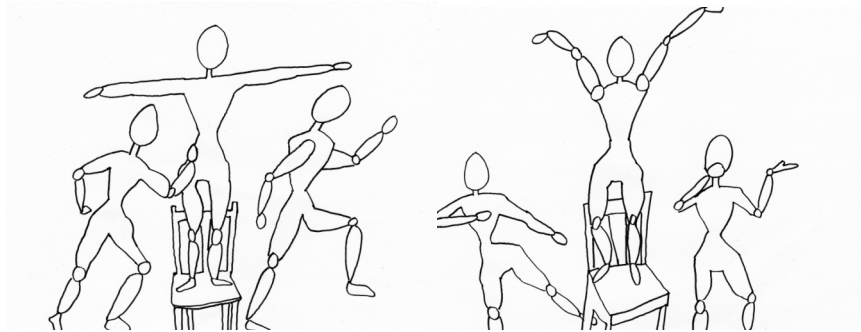
Description 3 -- "Geek": Chair and table, 2 players behind it with extended straight arms delineating outer wall, 2 players with interlocked arms

to create a videophone screen, 1 frantic office worker “types” on another player, who is a tickertape machine.

Suggested Items to Simulate: videophone, office workers, large doors, desk, tickertape computer, large windows

Suggested Noises: tickertape ticking, office worker babble, airplane flying by outside, elevator dinging

## **Pleasure Gardens**



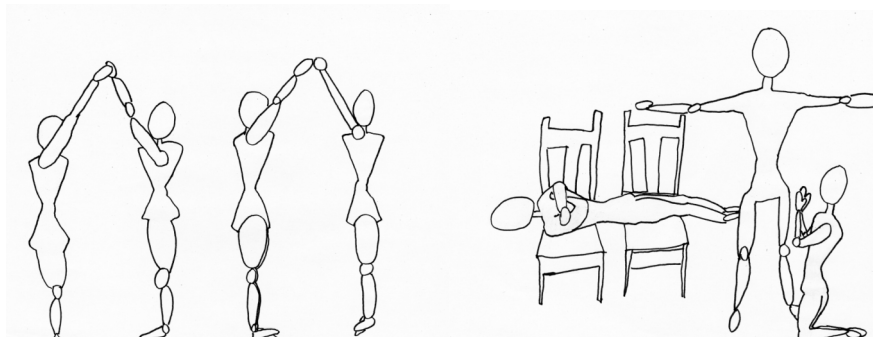
Description 1 -- “High Walls”: As many chairs as there are players, arranged in a line, City players all stand on the chairs and extend arms to just touching, forming an impassable and high wall

Description 2 -- “Fountains & Statues”: What it says - 1 player up on a chair as a fountain, several more adopting classic Greek statue poses on the ground, the rest playing giggling maidens.

Suggested Items to Simulate: plants, fountains, statues, maidens, surreal garden fixtures, impotent tutor, track arches, pole vault, other boys

Suggested Noises: giggling, water splashing, yelling, gentle music

## **Catacombs**



Description 1 -- “Arches”: Characters may only enter through low arches formed by the City pairing off and joining arms in an arch shape

Description 2 -- “More Bodies”: Four chairs are arranged in 2 pairs in a line with a space between the two pairs, 2 City players lie down as dead people on the chairs, another 2 players form an arch between the 2 corpses.

Description 3 -- “Secret Church”: 1 person is on a chair with extended arms like a cross, the rest are workers praying. Whenever Maria needs to speak, she stands between the cross and the workers

Suggested Items to Simulate: workers, crosses, bodies, arches, tunnels, secret hideaways, labyrinthine passageways, stairs

Suggested Noises: echoes, workers praying, rocks tumbling

## **Yoshiwara**



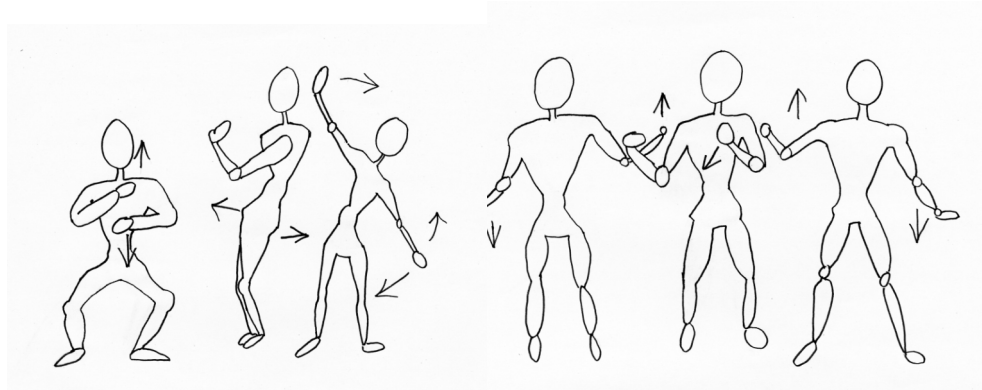
Description 1 -- “Evil Cabaret”: 3 players get on their knees in front of Robot Maria when she performs, or in front of a City player performing a generic cabaret act, the rest of the city players are the men ogling the performance

Description 2 -- “Gambling Hour”: All City players are men standing around and smoking, occasionally going over to a table to roll craps dice

Suggested Items to Simulate: stage, curtains, arched doorway, racist statues, exotic performers, raucous men, bartender and bar, band

Suggested Noises: laughing, fighting, jazz music, drumming, glasses breaking

## Heart Machine



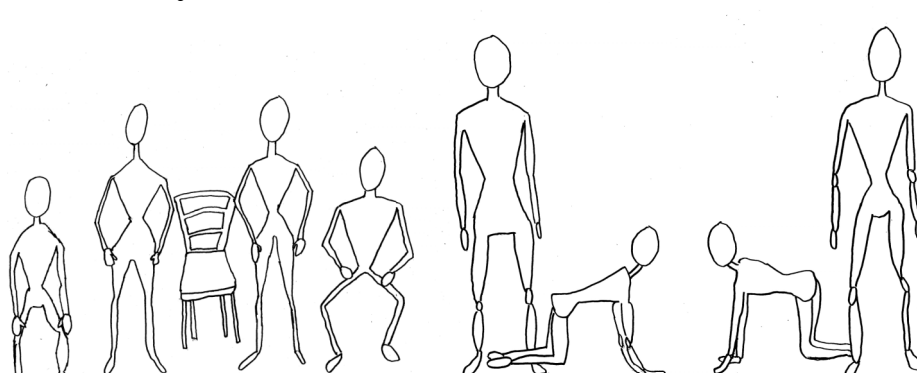
Description 1 -- “Empty Center”: 2 chairs put in the center spaced a little apart, a player mounts each, extend their arms in front of them and pull them up and down, a player stands next to them on either external side and extend their arms to their sides, moving them up and down in time with the others, 2 more players flanking those players and doing squats in rhythm.

Description 2 -- “Hearty”: 2 players do snake arms to the side of a third who thumps their hand in against their chest in a rhythmic, heart-like motion. The rest of the players play the sliding doors to the facility.

Suggested Items to Simulate: doors, cranks, gears, hearts, levers, videophone

Suggested Noises: hissing, whirring, buzzing, workers clamoring, creaking

## Laboratory



Description 1 -- “Towers of Power”: Two players stand next to a chair that may or may not contain a robot, and do a snake arm towards the chair when Rotwang’s machine is activated; others play assorted bits of lab equipment that feed into the Towers of Power

Description 2 -- “More like an Office”: Table and chairs, surrounded by players extending their arms as walls; when Rotwang activates

something, players do snake arms.

Suggested Items to Simulate: experiment table, robot chair, jacob's ladders, electrical towers, bubbling beakers, Hel's statue, curtains, midget

Suggested Noises: bubbling, squirting, zapping, midget alerting Rotwang to something

## **Apartment**



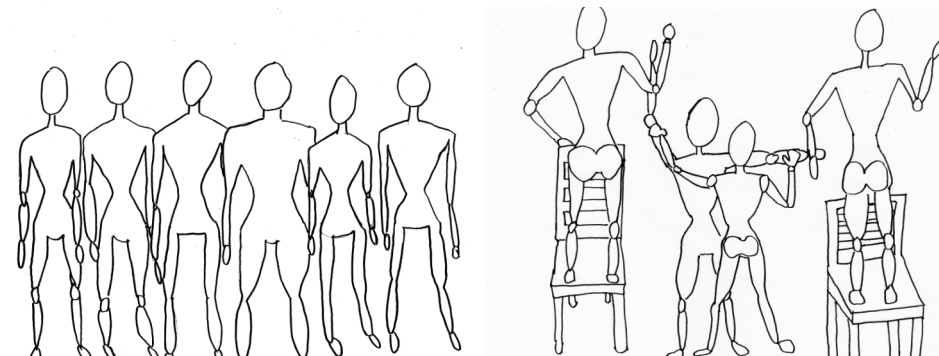
Description 1 -- "Hole in the Wall": 2 players form 90° corners that constrict the space, a two chair couch placed awkwardly between them, all other City players cram in as various pieces of furniture

Description 2 -- "Strange Elevator": As above except one wall has 2 additional players who link their arms and go up and down upon command

Suggested Items to Simulate: lamp, couch, elevator, videophone

Suggested Noises: ringing, people going up and down the elevator

## **Factory**



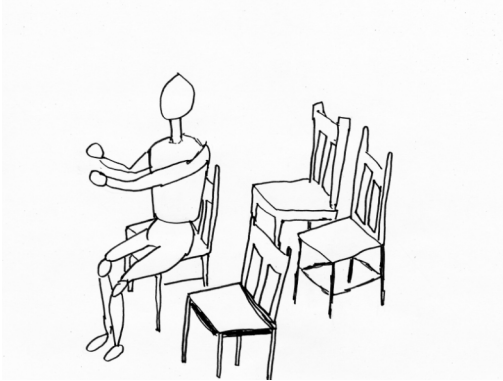
Description 1 -- “Soulless March”: All City players are line of workers, slowly marching forward in a line

Description 2 -- “Dance of the City”: 2 chairs placed in the center with 2 players on top of them facing away and doing a repetitive motion, other workers in between them doing the same repetitive motion but in an opposite direction, 1 player plays the Clock machine by putting two arms up as clock hands, which Georgy must manipulate

Suggested Items to Simulate: levers, switches, bulkheads, pressure valves, gears, workers doing awfully repetitive work

Suggested Noises: hissing, whirring, churning, exhausted groans, crunching

### **Thin Man’s Car**



Description 1 -- “Your Basic Automobile” - 2 chairs in front, 2 in back, driver in front, Thin Man sits in back, the rest of the City players shuffle back and forth as pedestrians outside, move all in one direction if he drives off

Description 2 -- “A Fancier Automobile” - Same as above, except 2 players join arms to form the pane of glass separating the Thin Man from the driver. This pane of glass can be rolled down

Suggested Items to Simulate: parts of the car, people and buildings being passed, newspapers being sold

Suggested Noises: tires screeching, honking, people yelling, rustling, engine starting/stopping

## PLAYSHEET - JOH FREDERSEN

**Instructions:** Cut out the two panels below and paste them on either side of a 4x6 index card for easy reference during play.

**Name:** Joh Fredersen, Wealthy Industrialist  
**Social Class:** The Ruling  
**Dwelling:** Spire Office  
**Means:** Intrigue, Discipline, Intimidate  
**Ends:** \* Maintain control over the City and its People for profit  
\* Overcome the loss of his wife Hel  
\* Protect his son Freder from Harm  
**Passion List:** Pride / Emotionless / Sadism / Sympathy / Paranoia / Hatred / Self-Hatred / Love / Awe / Despair / Unforgiving / Forgiving  
**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Pensive, calculating stare  
\* One hand behind your back, the other hand gesticulating

As part of the City, you may:

- Play a person, place or thing that is not the subject of the scene.
- Remain an objective, aloof component of the City's collective mind.
- Physically compose part of the Cityscape.
- Allow characters to enter a scene.
- Shift around from starting position to match mood/plot of a scene.
- Make an intervention to shift emotions on characters' Passion Lists.
- Add a "...but" statement to any character's success.
- Resolve mutually exclusive disputes by making a motion, which must be seconded and given consequences.
- End the scene by making an "And so..." monolog
- OPTIONAL: Make a pact with a player at the end of the scene.



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**Dwelling:** Pleasure Gardens

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**Ends:** \* Unite with his One True Love

\* Save people from misery

\* Be a good son to his father

**Passion List:** Falling in Love / Curiosity /  
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Piety / Revolutionary Anger / Defeat /  
Desperation / Helplessness / Hope

**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Fainting

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**Dwelling:** Catacombs  
**Means:** Guide, Tell Stories, Escape  
**Ends:** \* Unite Humankind as mutual siblings  
\* Spread the Gospel to the workers  
\* Find someone who understands  
**Passion List:** Pity / Admonishment /  
Acceptance / Titillation / Lust / Fear /  
Resignation / Optimism / Fervor / Sympathy /  
Anguish / Calm / Refusal  
**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Praying, eyes skyward  
\* Arms extended to the people

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**Social Class:** Ruling

**Dwelling:** Yoshiwara

**Means:** Seduce, Distract, Incite

**Ends:** \* Divide Humankind against itself

\* Celebrate the City's Destruction

\* Become Joh's lover

**Passions:** Lust / Greed / Envy / Gluttony /  
Sloth / Pride / Wrath / Self-Destruction

**Characteristic Gestures:**

\* "Come hither" finger

\* Maniacally throwing your hands in the air

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**Dwelling:** Heart Machine

**Means:** Brawn, Guts, Maintenance

**Ends:** \* Serve the Best Interests of the City

\* Ensure the People's Justice is done

\* Protect the Worker's Families

**Passion List:** Humility / Wrath / Ambition /  
Confusion / Authority / Defeat / Vengeance /  
Solidarity / Panic / Stimulation / Pride /  
Ambivalence

**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Salute

\* Closed Fist

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**Dwelling:** His Shack-Like Laboratory  
**Means:** Create, Bind, Attack  
**Ends:** \* Avenge Hel's Death  
\* Create Artificial Life  
\* Revolutionize Society  
**Passions:** Calculating / Excitement /  
Vengeance / Sadism / Sorrow / Enjoyment /  
Hyperactivity / Treachery / Wrath / Envy /  
Hatred / Despair  
**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Raise a clawed hand to the sky  
\* Clutch your own heart

As part of the City, you may:

- Play a person, place or thing that is not the subject of the scene.
- Remain an objective, aloof component of the City's collective mind.
- Physically compose part of the Cityscape.
- Allow characters to enter a scene.
- Shift around from starting position to match mood/plot of a scene.
- Make an intervention to shift emotions on characters'  
Passion Lists.
- Add a "...but" statement to any character's success.
- Resolve mutually exclusive disputes by making a motion, which  
must be seconded and given consequences.
- End the scene by making an "And so..." monolog
- OPTIONAL: Make a pact with a player at the end of the scene.

## PLAYSHEET - JOSAPHAT

**Instructions:** Cut out the two panels below and paste them on either side of a 4x6 index card for easy reference during play.

**Name:** Josaphat, Operations Manager

**Social Class:** The Ruled / Ruling (straddles both)

**Dwelling:** Apartment in Block 99, 7th Building, 7th Floor

**Means:** Conceal, Honor, Assist

**Ends:** \* Keep His Dignity

\* Be a Good Friend to Freder

\* Keep the City Alive

**Passion List:** Suicidal / Domination / Pride /  
Ignorance / Repression / Helplessness / Calm  
/ Awe / Solidarity / Self-Hatred / Sympathy

**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Sullen Removal of Hat

\* Grinding of Teeth

As part of the City, you may:

- Play a person, place or thing that is not the subject of the scene.
- Remain an objective, aloof component of the City's collective mind.
- Physically compose part of the Cityscape.
- Allow characters to enter a scene.
- Shift around from starting position to match mood/plot of a scene.
- Make an intervention to shift emotions on characters'

Passion Lists.

- Add a "...but" statement to any character's success.
- Resolve mutually exclusive disputes by making a motion, which must be seconded and given consequences.
- End the scene by making an "And so..." monolog
- OPTIONAL: Make a pact with a player at the end of the scene.

## PLAYSHEET - GEORGY

**Instructions:** Cut out the two panels below and paste them on either side of a 4x6 index card for easy reference during play.

**Name:** Georgy, Worker 11811  
**Social Class:** The Ruled  
**Dwelling:** Factory  
**Means:** Toil, Waste, Shift  
**Ends:** \* Transcend His Social Class  
\* Be Entertained  
\* Become a Martyr for Maria's Cause  
**Passion List:** Sloth / Greed / Fervor /  
Ecstasy / Lust / Exhaustion / Gluttony /  
Satisfaction / Perversion / Martyrdom  
**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Wipe Sweat from Brow  
\* Hacking Cough

As part of the City, you may:

- Play a person, place or thing that is not the subject of the scene.
- Remain an objective, aloof component of the City's collective mind.
- Physically compose part of the Cityscape.
- Allow characters to enter a scene.
- Shift around from starting position to match mood/plot of a scene.
- Make an intervention to shift emotions on characters'  
Passion Lists.
- Add a "...but" statement to any character's success.
- Resolve mutually exclusive disputes by making a motion, which  
must be seconded and given consequences.
- End the scene by making an "And so..." monolog
- OPTIONAL: Make a pact with a player at the end of the scene.



## PLAYSHEET - THE THIN MAN

**Instructions:** Cut out the two panels below and paste them on either side of a 4x6 index card for easy reference during play.

**Name:** The Thin Man,  
Metropolis Internal Security  
**Social Class:** Ruling  
**Dwelling:** Black Car  
**Means:** Hunt, Bribe, Report  
**Ends:** \* Catch Others in the Act  
\* Fulfill His Boss' Wishes  
\* Hide His Own Vulnerabilities behind Mask of Authority  
**Passion List:** Detached / Probing / Sadistic /  
Pride / Amusement / Humorlessness /  
Hysterical / Violent / Humility / Business-  
Like  
**Characteristic Gestures:** \* Rub Your Fingers with Glee  
\* Evil Smile

As part of the City, you may:

- Play a person, place or thing that is not the subject of the scene.
- Remain an objective, aloof component of the City's collective mind.
- Physically compose part of the Cityscape.
- Allow characters to enter a scene.
- Shift around from starting position to match mood/plot of a scene.
- Make an intervention to shift emotions on characters' Passion Lists.
- Add a "...but" statement to any character's success.
- Resolve mutually exclusive disputes by making a motion, which must be seconded and given consequences.
- End the scene by making an "And so..." monolog
- OPTIONAL: Make a pact with a player at the end of the scene.

## PLAYSHEET - PART OF THE CITY ONLY

**Instructions:** Cut out the one panel below and paste them on a side of a 4x6 index card for easy reference during play. The other side may be used to write on to add a word to a Cityscape.

As part of the City, you may:

- Play a person, place or thing that is not the subject of the scene.
- Remain an objective, aloof component of the City's collective mind.
- Physically compose part of the Cityscape.
- Allow characters to enter a scene.
- Shift around from starting position to match mood/plot of a scene.
- Make an intervention to shift emotions on characters' Passion Lists.
- Add a "...but" statement to any character's success.
- Resolve mutually exclusive disputes by making a motion, which must be seconded and given consequences.
- End the scene by making an "And so..." monolog
- OPTIONAL: Make a pact with a player at the end of the scene.

## NOTES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Metropolis LARP emerged from two inspirations. One was the fully restored 35mm version of Fritz Lang's expressionist sci-fi film *Metropolis* (1927) at the Kino Babylon in Berlin with a self-composed score by UK pianist Neil Brand. For the first time, I felt like I had really viewed the film as a story, and not as a trivial-but-fascinating monumental art film. My second inspiration was found at Fastaval 2010 in Aarhus, Denmark, where I played in Anna Westerling's faithful LARP adaptation of Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*. "Dear God!" I said to myself at the time. "After four hours of tightly scripted gameplay, it's like I read the book." The combination of A) already re-imagining one of my favorite films anew via creative movement and play, B) discovering the fine art of converting a well-written fiction text to a satisfying RPG experience, and C) searching for the way in which players can quickly and easily made to feel comfortable with the rhythms of a system contributed to my interest in pursuing this project.

When I teach German expressionism to college students, I try to convey to them that figures in silent, expressionist films tend to merge with and/or have their fates determined by the very sets and backdrops that frame them. The most famous example is obviously *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920), in which canted windows, winding paths and spiraling courtyards contextualize and ensnare each character's course of action. The Somnambulist must kill, the Doctor must become Caligari, and so on primarily based on the impenetrably abstract and threatening world in which they live. In addition, emotions in expressionist art do not originate from anywhere: they burst forth unbridled and without redundant causal explanation (prompting both an affinity to and distinction from Freudian logic). The characters are granted little interiority in favor of a manic expressivity, which is itself a challenge and pleasure to simulate. Since they have no "Self" to refer back to, they are both agents via and beholden to their outwardly expressed emotion. I wanted to explore these figure/ground and emotion/affect relations - namely the figures and ground given equal weight as PCs and emotion determining affect (rather than *vice versa*) - while inviting players to re-write the otherwise terrible ending to the original *Metropolis* film. Naturally, the compelling themes of the original piece, which include class tension, mechanization of labor and shattered innocence, should also be explored.

I would like to thank Kat Jones, Emily Care Boss, Julia Ellingboe, Vincent Baker, Meguey Baker, Matthijs Holter, Frederik Jensen, Anna Westerling, Bill White, the Shifting Forest Storyworks and John H. Kim for their direct or indirect contributions to this work. I would also like to thank the initial players at Intercon 2011 whose comments proved useful in making minor revisions to the text.



**About the Author:** Evan Torner is a Ph.D. candidate in German and Film Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA. An avid convention GM, he decided to write his own 2011 Intercon LARP scenario after visiting Fastaval 2010 in Aarhus, Denmark. Quite frankly, he encourages everyone in the world to attend both annual conventions.