



# THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

A GAME BY MIKKEL BÆKGAARD



# THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

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## SUPPLEMENTS

### **Role descriptions for the prologue**

Agnete's fear  
Agnete's loneliness  
Agnete's memories  
Agnete's reason

### **Role descriptions for the rest of the game**

Agnete's fear  
Agnete's need for comfort  
Agnete's loneliness  
Agnete's responsibility

Instructions for supporting characters

### **Overviews and pitch**

Briefing og opvarmning  
Prolog  
Rolleoverblik  
Første akt - Agnetes nye verden  
Anden akt - Alt det Kulfanden tager  
Tredje akt - Kampen mod Kulfanden  
Foramtale

### **Inspirational photos for the player**

Photos of the house and the forest



# PREFACE

*The Charcoal Devil* is a psychological horror story told from the perspective of a child, focusing on the seven-year-old girl Agnete. She has recently moved from the big city to a countryside house next to a big forest. Out here in her new surroundings, she has to find a way to handle or fight the Charcoal Devil, a horrifying figure haunting her. He might exist only in her imagination, but nevertheless, it feels like he is about to take everything from her - perhaps even her little brother who is sick from a strange coughing disease, getting worse and worse.

The game is designed for four players who will collaborate playing Agnete, the main character, while playing all the supporting characters too. At the same time, the players have to establish and build up the fear of The Charcoal Devil, who is only loosely defined when the game starts. He will instead be created as an antagonist by the players during play. Finally, the players will have a huge influence when it comes to colouring and defining the setting of the game.

Everything in the game is experienced through the eyes of seven-year-old Agnete. This makes her perception of the world the point of view of the players too. The theme of the game is primarily about how fear and loneliness affect a child. In that way, the scary Charcoal Devil becomes a symbol of everything inconceivable and uncontrollable.

What the conclusion of the story will be, and how the game will turn out, depend very much on the players. Depending on how the players make the story evolve, the game could either end as a coming-of-age story with Agnete learning how to handle her new life or as a terrible tragedy.

## THE STORY

Together with her parents and little brother, Agnete has recently moved from the city to a house at the edge of a big forest. Out here Agnete feels lonely, insecure, and very far away from the world that she is familiar and comfortable with.

The house scares her, and so does the forest next to the house. And when she becomes familiar with the mysterious legless neighbour Thorvald, who tells stories about the scary Charcoal Devil, she is even more scared

The Charcoal Devil is said to take everything from people - in the same way that he took everything from Thorvald who now lives by himself in his small house, without a family or legs. The Charcoal Devil is also said a long time ago to have built the house Agnete has moved into.

As Agnete begins to lose everything she cares about, the stories about The Charcoal Devil seem more and more real. At first, her cat dies. Then her new best friend suddenly has to move away. And when Thorvald dies in a fire in his house, Agnete is all by herself with her fear. Meanwhile, Little Brother's disease seems to worsen, forcing Agnete to consider the horrible question: Is The Charcoal Devil coming for him and the rest of her family? And if she doesn't do anything, will he come for her?

That is why Agnete must figure out if she has the courage to find and confront The Charcoal Devil before he takes everything from her.



## STRUCTURE OF THE GAME

This game is structured in a prologue followed by three acts, making the duration of play approximately 4-5 hours, including time for briefing and warm-up before starting to play.

In the prologue, Agnete lies in her bed, not able to sleep. Together the players start to define and describe her loneliness, the house, and some of the things in the dark she is afraid of.

**The first act** introduces Agnete more deeply, as well as the setting and the supporting characters. The players have an important task in defining and describing the different locations and elements that will play an important role again in the third act. Agnete and her family arrives at her new house and starts to explore the surrounding area. She meets Luna, who might become her new best friend. She also meets Thorvald, the neighbour, who can tell stories of the mysterious Charcoal Devil - and who claims to keep the Charcoal Devil's heart trapped in his woodstove.

in **the second act**, Agnete begins to lose everything, while The Charcoal Devil starts to haunt her thoughts: The cat dies, and Luna, Agnete's new friend, has to move away. Little Brother is sent to the hospital, and Mum and Dad seem more and more absent. And when Thorvald dies, Agnete is left almost to herself.

In **the third act**, Agnete is all alone. Will The Charcoal Devil come for Little Brother? And perhaps for the rest of her family? Now, it is up to the players to decide how she will confront The Charcoal Devil - and if she actually has the courage to do so. They'll co-create a climax of the story, involving some of the elements and locations introduced in the first act.

## GENRE AND MOOD OF THE GAME

This game is a psychological horror story focusing on how it feels to be seven years old in a world you can't get your head around and are not able to control.

The mood of the game is murky and dark and is set in an incomprehensible and very frightening larger-than-life-setting experienced only from a child's perspective. Grownups are weird and unpredictable. The Charcoal Devil seems very real, and when Thorvald claims to keep the heart trapped in his woodstove, then he really has it there.

The Charcoal Devil's house, who Agnete moves into, is big and mouldy, with squeaking floorboards and a dark, dirty coal cellar under it. The house is surrounded by a large, dark forest which seems very strange and alien for a city girl like Agnete. The forest is filled with strange sounds, darkness - and at the same time a weird kind of silence, very different from what she is used to in the city.

### INSPIRATION

In its genre, mood and theme *The Charcoal Devil* resembles a film like *Pan's Labyrinth*, the book *A Monster Calls* and the film *I Kill Giants* (based on the graphic novel by the same title). They are all focusing on how a child, by escaping into a fantasy world, tries to handle what she is not able to handle in the real world. In addition, this game is spiced up with inspiration from several Stephen King novels and Astrid Lindgren's darker tales.



# PLAY STYLE AND GAME MECHANICS

In this game, the players have to co-create and collaborate on filling out all the details within the framework of the game. They have a shared responsibility - guided by you as the game master - to add on to what input and subtle suggestions you and the game bring into play.

## THE TASK OF THE PLAYERS

The players have several tasks to handle during play:

- \* **Play Agnete.** The players play Agnete collaboratively, and the game gives each player a certain perspective on how to play her. One player, for instance, has to focus on her loneliness, another on her sense of responsibility.
- \* **Play supporting characters.** Each player is responsible for playing one or several supporting characters. The supporting characters are mainly presented in the player's printed role description. One single character, though, is introduced later in the game.
- \* **Describe the surroundings.** During play, it is primarily the players who describe and shape the different locations in the game. Each player does so with inspiration from the themes and player-perspectives introduced in the player's role-description. The players will get inspiration from a number of cards showing pictures of the surroundings, meant to set a specific mood in the game, as well.
- \* **Establish Agnete's fear of The Charcoal Devil.** When the stories of The Charcoal Devil have been introduced to Agnete, he starts to haunt her thoughts and fears. Now, it is an important task for the players to focus on Agnete's fear of him. They can, for instance, do so by suggesting indications of The Charcoal Devil's presence. To help the players do so, you will also be handing out notes giving the relevant players inspiration and instructions to play The Charcoal Devil's presence.
- \* **Give Agnete resistance.** In the third act, when Agnete heads to confront The Charcoal Devil, the players take turns trying to make it difficult for Agnete to solve her task. They can, for instance, do so by describing how hard it is for her to find the way through the forest or by playing a very frightening incarnation of The Charcoal Devil himself.



# YOUR TASKS AS THE GAME MASTER

As the game master, your task is to inspire the players, set the framework for the game, and ask relevant and inspiring questions to the players during play. At the same time, you have to keep the focus on what is relevant, making the game and the story move forward at a pace that is not too slow.

In a nutshell your tasks are:

- \* ***Set the mood of the game*** and introduce the setting and the concept of the game, giving the players something to work with during play. In other words, you have to inspire the players to explore and fill out all the details of the game.
- \* ***Introduce relevant characters and locations*** when necessary.
- \* ***Keep track of the time*** and the flow of the game, making the story evolve at certain pace.
- \* ***Set scenes and cut*** when necessary.
- \* ***Cut between the players describing and narrating*** and roleplaying in a more classic sense.
- \* In case of confusion or disagreements, ***decide which player plays what and who.***



# EXAMPLES OF PLAYING STYLE

To give you an idea of how this game is actually played, here's a couple of examples.

## **Opening of the game**

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The game begins with a prologue. Each player gets a short written presentation of the roles and tasks for that player during the prologue. In addition, you put a couple of photos on the table, setting the mood of the game.

You start by setting the scene: We are in the house Agnete has recently moved into. Outside, it is dark. Agnete is in her room, and she can't sleep. Now, you ask one of the players what kind of room it is. She starts to tell us about the room: It is Agnete's room, it is the first time in her life she has her own. She also describes the room, and with inspiration from one of the photos, she introduces a teddy bear lying in the corner. Now you ask another player about who Agnete is - and why she can't sleep? The third player begins to tell us about how Agnete misses her old life back in the big city.

You ask the players to tell more about the house. What kind of house is it? What kind of noise is coming from outside?

Suddenly, one of the players begins to play Little Brother in the room next door. He coughs and cries, he can't sleep either. He wants Mum and Dad. The two children realise that Mum and Dad are not around. You ask why they are not around. They are not home, a player answers. Agnete has been asked to watch Little Brother while they are gone. She totally forgot about that, the player says.

## **Agnete meets Luna for the first time**

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Agnete has just moved into the house and has now - though quite hesitantly, pressured by her enthusiastic parents - begun to explore the backyard near the edge of the forest. Now, you ask the players to describe the backyard. Again, you put a couple of photos on the table to inspire the players.

One of the players talks about the edge of the forest - how it seems solid, like a wall of branches and darkness. Another player introduces a hideout made from stout sticks.

Agnete decides to investigate the hideout but is interrupted by a voice, asking who she is. It is the player responsible for the supporting character Luna who interrupts her. Agnete spots an unfamiliar girl, standing at the edge of the forest. She introduces herself as Luna and starts right away to ask Agnete a lot of questions. One of the players now solely plays Agnete in the scene, while the other players comment on the situation by describing Agnete's thoughts: Who is this girl? What kind of girl is she? She has a strange way of talking. I wonder where she lives?

Luna asks if Agnete wants to come with her into the forest. Reluctantly Agnete joins her, and together they begin exploring the woods. Now, you hand out more photos with inspirational keywords on the table, and while the two girls start to chat and get to know each other, the players begin to describe the different parts of the forest.

## **The Charcoal Devil**

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Agnete has met Thorvald, the neighbour, who has told her about The Charcoal Devil. Even though he hasn't said much, Agnete's imagination is running wild. That is why you give one of the players a small note, giving instructions on how to play the indications of The Charcoal Devil.

Now, Agnete is lying in her bed - very much like the way she did in the prologue - and the player who got the note begins to suggest things that could be indications of The Charcoal Devil: What did Thorvald say? That Agnete is now living in The Charcoal Devils house? And what is that sound, she can hear? Could it be Him, scraping the window?



## POINT OF VIEW

Everything in this game is experienced from Agnete's point of view. The larger-than-life setting and the mood of the game is coloured by her imagination, loneliness, and fear.

You will find no objective or rational truth in this game and no explanation on what exactly is going on. This means, for instance, that the supporting characters don't have to act in a way that makes sense in a rational, naturalistic way. In that way, the mood and behaviour of, for instance, Mum and Dad can totally change from scene to scene. That also means that it is not important where a girl like Luna might actually live. From Agnete's point of view, it is not important - until it suddenly might be important, and then her world can change in a second.

In the same way, there is no explanation of who and what The Charcoal Devil is. There is no backstory or logical explanation explaining his foul nature.

## NARRATION, DESCRIPTION AND CLASSIC ROLEPLAYING

In this game the style of play shifts between the players narrating and describing and them playing a more classic kind of roleplay, acting out what Agnete does in a scene.

A quite big part of the game is played with the players describing situations, locations, and what Agnete is thinking. The players will be asked to describe the surroundings and tell about Agnete's emotions and how she perceives a certain situation or character.

During play, you as the game master, won't get to describe very much - especially not if the players do well. You might, for instance, briefly introduce a location, eg. Thorvald's house, and then let the players fill out all the details. To shape the game and get focus on specific details - and even to lead the story in the direction you want it - you might ask followup or even leading questions. You could, for instance, ask the player responsible for Thorvald about what his woodstove looks like - or about what kind of certain smell his house has to it.

In a similar way, you might ask about what Agnete feels about certain elements in the game. For instance, if Luna asks Agnete about Little Brother, you can start asking Agnete questions about her emotions: What is Little Brother's coughing like? Doesn't Agnete sometimes find it annoying? Does she feel sorry for him? How is he treated by Mum and Dad? Are they treating him differently from how they treat Agnete?

Besides all the describing and narration, the players will also get a lot of opportunities to roleplay in a more traditional way - for instance, when Agnete interacts with one of the supporting characters. In these situations one of the players will play Agnete in the same way as they might do in more traditional roleplaying games, talking and acting like her (see more details below).

## ROLE DESCRIPTIONS, PLAYER PERSPECTIVES, AND PLAYER THEMES

During the game, each player gets two printed role descriptions. Just before playing the prologue they get a short description, and after the prologue - before the first act begins - they get a longer, more detailed one.

In the role description, each player gets a perspective on Agnete's world and a specific theme to be used when describing the surroundings. A perspective could, for instance, be 'Agnete's fear' or 'Agnete's loneliness' - and a theme could be 'The forest is hard to get your head around' or 'The forest is free from expectations'. Each theme has some sort of duality in it, making, for instance, the forest both incomprehensible and tempting at the same time.

Even though each player's theme might seem to be in opposition to other players' themes, the players do not have to fight about which theme is the most present. It is not at all about winning. The different themes might be seen as different aspects of Agnete's personality, rather than absolute positions fighting for control of her. They are meant to be an inspiration for the players, not a straitjacket they have to stay in no matter what happens.

## PLAYING AGNETE

All four players collaborate on playing Agnete. In that way, all the players can play her and describe her thoughts and actions.

If you, for instance, ask about a certain situation or her emotions, one player will often quite fluently take over playing her. All players can choose to answer your questions, based on the player's specific perspective as presented in the role descriptions. In certain situations, you might ask a specific player to answer your question or to tell more about a given situation.

In the more traditional roleplaying scenes, it would normally be just one of the players who plays Agnete. One of the players will usually take the initiative and start playing her. Please note which supporting characters might be present in the scene. You don't want the same player to play both Agnete and a supporting character at the same time.

While playing the traditional roleplaying scenes, the other players not playing Agnete do not have to stay passive. They can affect the scene by speaking Agnete's thoughts out loud, describing the situation from her perspective, and even do monologues, emphasizing what is going on.

Who is playing Agnete could also change in the middle of the scene - if, for instance, Agnete suddenly gets a sudden impulse. Another player is always allowed to take over the scene just by starting to play Agnete.

## PLAYING SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Each player is responsible for playing one or more supporting characters described in their role descriptions. One of the supporting character - the doctor - is, however, not introduced before later in the game. He is presented on a small note, you hand out at the beginning of the scene in which he appears.

Several of the supporting characters have tasks they have to do during the game. It is, for instance, very important that Thorvald tells Agnete about The Charcoal Devil. If a supporting character has a task he or she has to do it is stated clearly in the role description.

## PLEASE AVOID NEGOTIATION

If the players disagree about what Agnete should do in a certain scene or situation, please avoid too much negotiation off-game. You should instead, by letting the players be different parts of her personality talking to each other, make Agnete discuss with herself.

## AN EXAMPLE OF HOW TO CHANGE PLAYER DURING A SCENE

Agnete is outside Thorvald's house, waiting for him to open his door. She is anxious and nervous. Thorvald finally opens and one of the players chooses to play Agnete, who hesitantly speaks to him. But then, in the middle of the conversation, one of the other players decide that Agnete suddenly panics and turns around, starting to run away from him. Now that player is playing Agnete.

## PLAYING A SEVEN-YEAR-OLD CHILD

For some players, it might seem challenging to play a seven-year-old child. It isn't that hard, though. Basically, they should just play her as any other role, following her own inner logic.

For a child like Agnete, the basic challenge is that she doesn't fully understand the world around her. That is why she easily misinterprets what is happening around her, loading even the smallest things with meaning. Being seven years old also means that you are afraid of a lot of things, basically because you don't understand them. And especially because you have just started going to school. You experience how your world is expanding very fast, without you being able to fully get your head around it, taking in every new impression without the skill to fully cope with it.



During play, you will also be handing out small notes with hints and instructions for the supporting characters. It could, for instance, be a note telling the Thorvald player that he has found Agnete's cat dead outside his house - or Luna who has to move and must tell it to Agnete. You will hand these notes out when necessary. In the description of the relevant scene, It is stated clearly if there are notes you need to hand out.

If the players want to introduce additional supporting characters they should feel free to do so. It could, for instance, be a bus driver, a chimney sweeper, or whoever would fit the mood of the game.

Normally, a player keeps control of the supporting characters introduced in the role description during the entire game. But it will be no problem for a player to take over control of a supporting character if it makes sense. Please note, that the player taking over hasn't read the description of the given character. If the player needs to read the description that's not a problem either - it is printed on a separate page and can easily be handed over to a new player.

As everything in this game is experienced from Agnete's point of view, the inner life of the supporting characters are not important. What they actually think and feel is not relevant. That is why the players should try to express what the supporting characters do and say, not what they think. Their actions do neither have to make sense in a logical way - from Agnete's point of view, it is, for instance, not unusual for Mum and Dad to act totally unpredictable and incomprehensible.

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## PLAYING THE ABSENCE OF THINGS

Several times during the game a player might be asked to play and describe things or characters that are not there. It could, for instance, be the absence of the parents or the cat that has gone missing. Now the player has to focus on indications of the thing that is not there. It could be the plate full of cat food that has not been eaten. Or the scent of Mum and Dad in their bed linen.

## PLAYING AND DESCRIBING THE SURROUNDINGS

An important part of the game - especially in the first act - is for the players to explore and establish the setting of the game. As Agnete experiences her new surroundings, the players have to breathe life into them and add details.

In that way, when Agnete arrives at her new house for the first time, it is primarily the players who describe the house and different rooms. They'll do so with inspiration and help from the questions you ask along the way - and with the different themes and perspectives described in their different role descriptions as an underlying basis. In that way, the surroundings become a reflection of Agnete's inner life.

To help and inspire the players to establish the surroundings you also have a deck of cards with photos picturing the house and the forest. If you want to inspire the players, you can put one or more photo cards at the table. So, when the game begins you put a couple of cards at the table and then, as Agnete gets to know her surroundings, you hand out more cards.

You'll find no set rules on when to present the photos - neither on which cards you have to present when. You should present whatever cards you find relevant and let the players use whatever grabs their attention and curiosity. The cards are meant to be an inspiration, not something that has to be used in a specific way.

Locations introduced and described by the players in the first act - for instance, rooms in the house and places in the forest - are meant to be used again in the third act. The climax of the game is thought to play out at some of the locations which were described in the first act. That means, for instance, If Agnete in the third act runs scared and frustrated into the forest in the middle of the night to seek out and confront The Charcoal Devil, she would pass the same locations while searching. But they would feel quite different, though, when she is all by herself in the middle of the night.

# THE MYSTERIOUS CHARCOAL DEVIL

For Agnete, The Charcoal Devil is the big antagonist in this game. Suggestions and stories about The Charcoal Devil make her imagination run wild, making him grow to be more and more dangerous and frightening for her.

## WHO IS THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

The stories about The Charcoal Devil are neither precise nor logically meaningful. One story often contradicts another.

Nobody knows for sure who The Charcoal Devil is. He is said to have built the big house into which Agnete's family has recently moved. The house Agnete now lives in is a former barn, rebuilt as a residential house many years ago. The main house of the old farm is not around anymore and is said to have been destroyed in a fire - a fire in which The Charcoal Devil apparently should have died.

What actually happened is not clear and there are many different opinions on that matter. Most people believe - especially Thorvald, the neighbour - that after the fire the carbonized soul of The Charcoal Devil went out to live in the woods. Perhaps he is waiting out there for the opportunity to take back his house.

And the Charcoal Devil takes. He takes and takes, people say - especially if you are afraid of him. He takes everything you care about. Thorvald, for instance, claims that The Charcoal Devil took his legs and his family. Perhaps he took even more from him. How he does so is not clear. But there is no doubt about the fact that he does so.

Thorvald also claims to keep the carbonised heart of the Charcoal Devil's trapped in his woodstove. How he got his hands on it is, however, quite unclear. Neither does it seem clear what exactly it means when Thorvald claims to keep the heart trapped. And what happens if the heart is no longer trapped in the woodstove? That is not clear either.

It could mean that if the heart is no longer trapped, that the Charcoal Devil is able to harm Agnete and her family in a real, serious way - perhaps meaning that the heart somehow has to be destroyed or once again trapped in the woodstove if you want to stop him. Or perhaps it could mean that the Charcoal Devil just really wants his heart back, so that he can rest in peace. Then he might no longer be heartless, foul, and dangerous.

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## IS THE CHARCOAL DEVIL REAL?

The question of The Charcoal Devil actually existing anywhere else than in Agnete's imagination is not relevant in this game. He seems real to her because that is how she interprets it. So, when he manifests in the third act as a tangible entity to her it is not relevant if he actually is there or not. He is dangerous and frightening because she believes he is so.



## HOW IS THE CHARCOAL DEVIL PRESENT FOR AGNETE?

The stories of The Charcoal Devil are introduced to Agnete by Thorvald. In his role description, the Thorvald-player gets a couple of directions on how to introduce The Charcoal Devil to the game. The text suggests a couple of ideas on what to tell, but from there the player is free to improvise details and stories. You might help the player with additional hints and suggestions if they find it hard.

When The Charcoal Devil has been properly introduced by the Thorvald-player it is, nevertheless, the responsibility of all the players in collaboration to develop and build on to Agnete's idea about him.

They will do so by describing Agnete's paranoid thoughts and by introducing all these different indications of The Charcoal Devil's presence that she begins to experience.

For instance, when the wind is shaking the trees in the woods, it might be the Charcoal Devil. When a branch scrapes the window, it could be him. And, of course, it is The Charcoal Devil to blame when Little Brother's condition gets worse and worse.

Everything incomprehensible can be interpreted as indications of his presence. When the cat dies or Luna has to move away, wonder who is responsible? After all, he takes and takes. And when the doctor comes by to look at Little Brother? It might be The Charcoal Devil, coming to take Little Brother away.

The players can, however, choose to play The Charcoal in a more direct way too. He might, for instance, whisper in Agnete's ear, speaking directly to her fear. He might briefly touch her neck, making her shiver. And he might even manifest himself as a human being, eg. as the doctor.

To guide the players when establishing the indications of The Charcoal Devil you'll find a number of notes with suggestions and instructions to hand out to the players when necessary. You do so whenever it makes sense - especially from the second act and throughout the rest of the game.

## HOW TO DEFEAT THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

In the end, it is up to Agnete to figure out how to defeat or confront The Charcoal Devil - if possible at all. After all, he is perhaps most of all a figment of her imagination.

That is the focus of the third act of the game in which Agnete must either try to search for and confront The Charcoal Devil or trying to hide from him - or perhaps end up being totally devoured by her fear of him.

It is the players themselves who decide in which direction the confrontation with The Charcoal Devil will go. If Agnete decides to go into the forest to seek out her enemy that is where she will finally find him. And if she decides to stay in the house, maybe trying to hide from him, that is where the confrontation will play out when the Charcoal Devil comes to get her. In both scenarios, it is up to the players to decide how it will end. They tell the story in detail and they decide if the Charcoal Devil can be defeated.

Whether Agnete, in the end, will succeed in defeating her enemy or it ends in a terrible tragedy is up to the players too - and they decide so as the third act gets close to its conclusion.

Later in this text - in the presentation of the third act - you will get more information and hints on how to help the players play out this final part of the game.

# THE CHARACTERS

## AGNETE

Agnete has lived all her life in the big city, comforted by city life, traffic noise and always having people around her. That is what has framed her life, all her experiences, and all her friends. And moving out into the big house next to the forest, everything seems new, alien, and quite scary. Out here everything seems silent. The forest is so big and Agnete doesn't know anybody at her new school. And there are lots of unanswered questions, experiences, and adventures she might not be ready to handle awaits.

At the same time, Agnete is at a hard point in her childhood: The change from being a little girl to becoming a school girl with a whole new, broader perspective on her surroundings. Agnete's world is expanding quickly and all these new impressions might be very hard for her to understand and handle.

In other words: It is very hard being seven years old - especially when Mum and Dad act strange and they, thanks to Little Brother's illness, don't have the time and energy to care for Agnete and all her worries and questions. That is why Agnete feels all by herself trying to understand and interpret everything strange and unmanageable happening around her.

## THORVALD

Thorvald is the closest neighbour, living in a ramshackle old farmhouse a bit further up the road. He is a legless old recluse living all by himself, walking around supported by two prosthetic legs and crutches. Often he is seen riding his three-wheel electric scooter, sometimes getting stuck when riding it into the forest.

Thorvald is hard to get your head around. He tells a lot of stories, often scary and quite unlikely, and it seems hard to figure out what is real and what is not. And often it seems like not even Thorvald himself knows what is the truth.

Especially when it comes to The Charcoal Devil, Thorvald has a lot of - often quite incoherent - stories to tell. He claims that it was The Charcoal Devil who took his legs and everything else from him. He also claims to keep The Charcoal Devil's heart trapped in his woodstove.

The primary task for Thorvald in this game is to introduce the concept of The Charcoal Devil for Agnete and build up her fear of him. At the end of the second act, Thorvald dies in a fire in his house - probably after messing with his ever-burning woodstove. The death of Thorvald is supposed to push Agnete's fear of The Charcoal Devil even further, leaving her all by herself.

## LUNA

In her new house, Agnete is lonely, far away from her old friends and her old school. Out here she doesn't know anybody. But in the forest, she meets Luna, a potential new best friend.

Luna is a real forest-girl, spending most of her time in the woods. Where she actually lives is quite unclear, but there is no doubt she knows the forest very well. And in her company, you won't get lost. Luna knows very well about Agnete's house, said to be the house of The Charcoal Devil. She has been playing there in the garden and she might even have built hideouts in the outhouses.

Luna's task in the game is to become Agnete's first friend in her new surroundings. She can introduce Agnete to the forest, and they can build hideouts, comforting Agnete and making her feel a bit safer in this new frightening world. Another important



task for Luna is to become someone for Agnete to lose when - in the second act she, unfortunately, has to tell Agnete that she has to move away, not being around to play in the woods anymore.

## ROXIE, THE CAT

All his life, Roxie, the family's cat, has been living as an indoor cat in the big city. Nevertheless, he is curious and adventurous and is quick to accept his new life as an outdoor cat - until he unfortunately dies.

The cat has a way of going on adventures and often he is away for a while, worrying Agnete.

The cat's function in the game is to give Agnete yet another thing to care about and to be taken away by the Charcoal Devil. At the same time, if Agnete is hard to get into the forest, the cat could be a useful tool to make her go in there looking for him.

## LITTLE BROTHER

Agnete's little brother is four years old and suffers from a strange coughing disease. When the family moves into the house he is already sick and during the game, his condition gets worse. Late in the game, he gets so bad he has to go to the hospital. Mum and Dad are, of course, very worried about protecting him - even beyond what might be good for him. At the same time, they seem to forget about Agnete's needs, letting her be more and more on her own.

What Little Brother's condition precisely is may not be important. Nevertheless, there is no doubt about it being very serious - especially from Agnete's point of view. He might even be close to dying. From Agnete's point of view, it is clearly The Charcoal Devil who is to blame for it. And that is why only Agnete is able to save Little Brother.

The question is if she is actually able to save him in the end. And if she has the courage to do so? That depends on how the third act evolves.

In the game Little Brother has several functions: He is a potential playmate who, unfortunately, most of the time is too sick to actually play with Agnete. He is someone she really can worry about. And he is someone who she can envy the attention he gets from Mum and Dad.

## MUM AND DAD

Mum and Dad are like most grownups: They are incomprehensible and unpredictable. One moment they encourage fun, games and adventure - the next they are serious, worried, and unfair.

It is Mum and Dad who have decided to move out to live in The Charcoal Devil's house. They did so for the sake of Agnete and Little Brother, they say. But, nevertheless, it seems like they forgot to ask Agnete what she actually wanted - and when they actually do ask about her opinion they seem to forget to listen to what she might answer.

In this game, Mum and Dad are reflections of the incomprehensible world of the grownups. But they are also another thing for Agnete to worry about losing.

## THE DOCTOR

A couple of times during the game the doctor stops by to take a look at Little Brother. There is, however, something strange about him: What is it, for instance, that he is doing to Little Brother?

The doctor is introduced to the players by small notes you'll be handing out when he appears - one in the first act and one in the second.





# THE HOUSE AND FOREST

At the edge of the big forest, you'll find the road where the new house is situated. The road follows the edge of the forest before turning into the woods, cutting through the trees and dividing the forest in two. From here the road winds many miles through the gloom to the school at the far side of the woods.

## THE NEW HOUSE

Agnete and her family have moved into a big house at the edge of the forest, surrounded by a huge plot of land. Some weirdly staring horses are the closest neighbours. The house is an old barn, rebuilt into a residential house many years ago.

The old main house has long been gone - perhaps because it burned down many years ago. If you look closely at the fields surrounding the house, you might be able to find some remains of the old house - and maybe even some scorched wooden planks in the ground.

The house has been empty for quite a while and if you look inside some of the outbuildings next to the house you might find indications of someone who has been building hideouts here. You will also find lots of useless old stuff here. And bags filled with charcoal too.

The house itself is old, leaky and a bit too cold. The wind howls in the window, often too big and without any curtains to shut out the darkness. The walls are often damp and especially the ground floor has a cold, cave-like atmosphere to it.

The first floor is all made of wood, with large windows overlooking the forest and the fields. It is a view praised by Mum and Dad but for a seven-year-old girl, the windows are way too big - especially at night when it is pitch black outside.

The house also has a basement. The steps leading down to it squeak when you step on them - and you can't really tell what hides behind the steps. The basement hides an old charcoal cellar and a big furnace, long abandoned. The furnace makes weird noises like it is begging to be heated up again.



## THE FOREST

At the back of the house, the forest begins. When you first look at it the forest looks almost like an impenetrable wall of trees and heavy thicket. Nevertheless, a small path leads from the house past the horse field and then finally into the forest. In the forest, you'll find tall trees; oak and beech at first, then spruce and fir, a coniferous forest that seems to soften all sound. In here you'll find ponds, bogs and mud holes. And there are hills, gaps and birds suddenly fluttering or crying out loud.

The forest has some pathways - small ones as well as big ones. Anyway, it is still easy to get lost. An old stone fence shows the way home, but only if you are able to find it.

In the forest, you might find hideouts too. They might have been built by Luna, Agnete's potential new friend. Besides the hideouts, you might find old ruins, huge boulders and perhaps even an old burial mound.

Deep in the forest, the charcoal burning site awaits. This is where the charcoal burners used to burn wood into charcoal - and sometimes still do. They did so by making huge piles of wood, putting it on fire and covering it with soil, making the wood slowly burn for days, making the smoke look like it comes from the ground itself.

Out here you cough. The ground is hot, burning and the smoke is thick as the darkest thunder cloud. People who get out here, quickly get dirty from smoke and charcoal dust, turning coughing and phlegm almost black.

## THE NEIGHBOURING HOUSE

The house of Thorvald is situated just a bit up the road. It is an old ramshackle farmhouse with a thatched roof, looking almost abandoned if it wasn't for the black smoke constantly pumping out the chimney. The house is situated very close to the road, making the house rumble every time a truck or a big car passes by.

Inside the house, it is messy, with a very particular smell to it. Most remarkably is the extreme heat coming from the ever intensely burning woodstove in the kitchen - a woodstove Thorvald claims to keep the scorched heart of The Charcoal Devil trapped in.

## THE SCHOOL

Agnete's new school is situated on the other side of the forest. It is only reachable by letting Mum and Dad drive you or by taking the rattling bus in which you might often be the only passenger. The school is a small, worn-out countryside school with a small, often surprisingly empty, schoolyard. The long, often echoing, corridors inside the school are remarkably empty too.

The pupils at the school - like the teacher - seem weirdly alien and not very accommodating when it comes to welcoming a new girl from the big city. During the breaks, the kids are not exactly lining up to find out who that new girl Agnete might be.

# BRIEFING AND WARM-UP

Before starting to play you should thoroughly brief the players on how to play the game and how they handle their different roles and tasks. It might also be a good idea to practice the style of play by playing a small warm-up-scene.

## BRIEFING

### **The basic concept of the game**

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- \* The game is a psychological horror story, experienced through the eyes of a seven-year-old.
- \* The story is about Agnete who has recently moved from the big city to a house at the edge of a big forest. She has to live out here with Mum, Dad and Little Brother, who coughs way too much.
- \* Agnete is lonely and scared and she misses her previous life back in the city with all her friends.
- \* The players collaborate on establishing Agnete's fear of the mysterious Charcoal Devil, who is the big antagonist in the game.
- \* The players collaborate on playing Agnete, and in addition, each player has one or more supporting characters to play during the game.
- \* The players also participate in describing and defining the surroundings.
- \* Everything in the game is experienced from Agnete's point of view. That is why things around her do not necessarily make sense in a logical way. A supporting character, for instance, could act very differently from scene to scene.
- \* There is no objective or rational truth about how things are. Nor a logical explanation of who and what The Charcoal Devil is.
- \* Depending on the choices and decisions of the players, the game can have a happy ending or end as a horrible tragedy.

### **Setting and mood of the game**

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- \* The game is set in the countryside. The road winds along the edge of a big forest with houses scattered around, all with direct access to the forest. At the other side of the woods, you will, by following the road, get to the small school.
- \* The family's new house is an old barn, rebuilt as a residential house many years ago. The old main house is long gone.
- \* The mood of the game is dark and 'larger than life'. The colour palette is quite desaturated with plenty of shadows and a heavy grey sky.
- \* Grownups act weird and often as caricatures. For a seven-year-old, it seems hard to figure out who to trust.



## Style of play

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- \* Shifts between the players narrating and describing and a more traditional style of roleplay.
- \* The gamemaster sets the pace and the flow of the game, asking questions about the current situation and Agnete's emotions.
- \* In the role descriptions for the players, they each get different themes and perspectives introduced. It could, for instance, be to represent Agnete's fear or her loneliness - and, for instance, "The forest as hard to get your head around" or "The forest as compelling and beautiful".
- \* Themes and perspectives are meant as an inspiration for the players - not as something set in stone, meant to fight the other perspectives.
- \* Each player plays one or more supporting characters, introduced in each player's role description and in small notes handed out by you during play. As a rule of thumb, a player keeps a supporting character throughout the entire game - but if necessary they can switch player during the game.
- \* The players participate in describing and shaping the surroundings - inspired by, among other things, photo cards handed out by you during play.
- \* The players might also be asked to play the absence of a thing - for instance, the absence of Mum and Dad. Then they might focus on the indications of what is not there and how it affects Agnete.

## Playing Agnete

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- \* Playing Agnete is a shared task for the players. The focus for the players is to collaborate on creating her character and anxiety, not to pull her in four different directions.
- \* All players can suggest thoughts and observations for Agnete - and players can act out a sort of inner dialogue with their different perspectives discussion with each other.
- \* Normally, in the traditional roleplaying scenes, one player plays Agnete. The other players might comment on the situation as inner voices of Agnete. In the middle of a scene, a player can choose to take over playing her.
- \* Playing a child means that the world is incomprehensible and everything is interpreted in a way that makes sense to her. She does not act unpredictably.

## Playing The Charcoal Devil

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- \* The big antagonist in this game is The Charcoal Devil, who the players will establish and define during play.
- \* There is no objective truth about who or what The Charcoal Devil is.
- \* It is the responsibility of the players through the supporting characters to introduce The Charcoal Devil to the story - and afterwards to create Agnete's interpretation of him.
- \* Once introduced, The Charcoal Devil comes to seem more and more present for Agnete. In the beginning, he might just be a brief thought or some tiny indications - but during the game, he seems more and more tangible for her.
- \* The Charcoal Devil might seem present in many ways. As small indications in nature, as scratching on the window, or as a whisper in the wind. Even incarnated as one of the supporting characters.
- \* To inspire and help the players to play The Charcoal Devil, during play you will hand out small instructional notes.
- \* It is up to players to decide - if possible at all - how The Charcoal Devil might be confronted and perhaps defeated by Agnete.

## WARM-UP

To help the players feel comfortable about the playing style of the game, it might be an idea to play a small warm-up scene. In that way, you and the players can practice the concept of the game and you can get an impression on the different players might, helping you decide which player should play what.

### The schoolyard

The players collaborate on playing a seven-year-old boy in the schoolyard of his school. Each player represents a perspective of the boy's personality and is responsible for different supporting characters.

The roles are:

- \* ***The boys urge to hang out with the cool boys***  
The girl he is in love with
- \* ***The boy's shyness***  
The big boys
- \* ***The boy's self-esteem***  
His only friend, the silent, nerdy type
- \* ***The boy's urge to get away***  
The teacher on playground duty

The break has just started and everybody runs out into the schoolyard. The boy stands in the doorway figuring out what to do during the break.

Ask the players to describe the schoolyard and ask about details. Be sure to get the different groups of kids and the supporting characters in the schoolyard introduced. Ask the players to tell about them as boy sees them.

His friend approaches. Play a scene with the two of them. Make sure to get the cool boys introduced as well as the girl and the teacher on playground duty. The teacher can even threaten to call for the PRINCIPAL. You might also let the players try to shift who is playing the boy in the roleplaying scenes.

Ask about the principal. Who is he? What is said about him? What happens at his office?

### Escaping the principal's office

Play another scene with the boy trying to escape detention in the principal's office.

Play out a couple of situations with one player playing the boy while the other players try to make it hard for him - acting as resistance to him. Ask one player to tell in detail what he does to get away and let the other players try to make hard for him by telling how it might go wrong. One player could, for instance, describe how the boy is trying to hide under the table. Now, the other players can suggest why it is about to go wrong - for instance because he by accidents happens to touch some paper making noise perhaps heard by the principal.

## CASTING

When deciding which player to be given which role description you might primarily focus on who will be playing which supporting character. You should especially pay attention to who will be playing Thorvald. You might let a player play Thorvald who is able to manage the responsibility of being in charge of presenting important information to the other players in an interesting way.

If a player is a parent in the real world it could be fun for him or her to play Mum and Dad. Luna should be given to a player who is capable of taking initiative. And Little brother should be played by someone who is capable of making the others care for him and at the same time knows how to poke the other players' consciences.

You might wait to decide the casting until after the prologue. That would give you a better impression of the playing style of the different players. How you cast for the prologue and how you cast for the rest of the game does not necessarily have to be the same.



# PROLOGUE - AGNETE CAN'T SLEEP

## Opening

Start the game with a prologue, introducing Agnete, her fear, the house, and Little Brother. She can't sleep and instead she lies in her bed listening to the silence of the house and the weird noises outside.

Playing time is appr. 15 minutes.

## AGNETE CAN'T SLEEP

Start the game by setting the scene: It is nighttime, pitch-black outside the big windows. Agnete is in her bed, wide awake, unable to sleep. Everything seems so silent and yet not silent at all.

Ask the player who plays the *house* (**Agnete's reason**) to describe the room. What kind of room is it? What does she see? You might introduce a couple of objects in the room for the players and hand out a couple of photos from the house.

Then ask, for instance, **Agnete's loneliness** what Agnete is thinking about. You might ask **Agnete's memories** the same question. Let them tell about what she misses.

Ask Agnete's Fear the same question, and ask the *Outside-the-window-player* (**Agnete's loneliness**) to suggest what is outside. Ask about sounds coming from the forest and about something scraping the window.

Ask the *house-player* (**Agnete's Reason**) and the player in charge of the *absence of the parents* (**Agnete's memories**) to tell more about the house. What kind of house is it? What are the noises here?

Let **Agnete's Reason** comfort Agnete.

## ROLE DESCRIPTIONS FOR THE PROLOGUE

Hand out the short role descriptions for the prologue to the players. They are:

- \* **Agnete's fear**  
Little Brother, coughing
  - \* **Agnete's loneliness**  
Whatever is outside the window
  - \* **Agnete's memories**  
Mum and Dad who are not there
  - \* **Agnete's reason**  
The house that is new - and yet so very old
- 

## LITTLE BROTHER IS COUGHING, MUM AND DAD IS NOT AROUND

You might also get *Little Brother* (**Agnete's Fear**) on stage. Ask the player to describe how he is constantly coughing. He awakes and calls for Agnete - or for Mum and Dad.

Let Agnete realise that Mum and Dad is not there. They don't answer when she calls. The house seems weirdly silent.

Continue the scene as long as it makes sense. Make sure to set a dense, uncanny atmosphere and a feeling of abandonment. Cut the scene when necessary. There should be no conclusion on the scene. Just let all the unanswered questions fill the air.



# THE FIRST ACT - AGNETE'S NEW WORLD

## *Set-up and exposition*

The first act of the game is all about establishing Agnete's new world with the house and woods - and at the same time introduce the different supporting characters. During the act, you should establish the different locations, ready to return to in the third act. At the same time, the act is about establishing Agnete's relationships with all the things she begins to lose in the second act. Finally, The Charcoal Devil has to be introduced.

The scenes suggested in this chapter are presented in a thematic order, not necessarily in the order they are meant to be played.

You might start the act with the family arriving with their load of household goods and finish it when all the important elements and characters have been introduced.

The playing time should be appr. 1,5 hour.

## HANDOUT ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

Before starting to play the act, hand out role descriptions to the players. Allow time for the players to read them thoroughly. The roles are:

- \* ***Agnete's fear***  
The forest is hard to get your head around ... and compelling  
Supporting character: Thorvald
  - \* ***Agnete's need for comfort***  
The forest is unpredictable ... and compelling and beautiful  
Supporting characters: Roxie the cat, Mum and Dad
  - \* ***Agnete's loneliness***  
The forest is a place for loneliness without demands  
Supporting character: Luna
  - \* ***Agnete's responsibility***  
The forest is freedom from expectations  
Supporting character: Little Brother
- 

## MOST IMPORTANT IN THE FIRST ACT

- \* Introduce Agnete's new surroundings, the house and the forest.
- \* Introduce Mum, Dad, and Roxie the cat - and establish Agnete's relationship with them.
- \* Let Agnete meet Luna and let them become friends.
- \* Ask the players to describe the house and the woods - and let them establish important locations.
- \* Let Agnete meet Thorvald and let him introduce The Charcoal Devil.
- \* Establish Agnete's relationship with Little Brother - and introduce his illness.



# THE NEW HOUSE AND THE NEW LIFE

## **The family is moving in**

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Start the act with Agnete and her family arriving at the house with all their household goods. It's late autumn and for both Agnete and Little Brother it's the first time they get to see the house.

Put a couple of photos on the table showing the house and the nearest surroundings.

You might start the scene inside the car, approaching the new house. Ask the players tell what is to be seen outside the car window. What is Agnete's first impression of the area and the forest? You might also let Mum and Dad praise the new house, excitedly telling Agnete about it.

When the car passes Thorvald's house, you might introduce the old ramshackle house and Thorvald sitting outside on his electrical scooter, watching the car passing by. Get the Thorvald player to describe what Agnete sees.

Set a classic roleplaying scene with the family arriving. Hand out a couple more photos showing the closest surroundings. What happens at the courtyard when the car arrives and everybody is ready to step out?

You might once or twice get back to small glimpses of Thorvald who is still to be seen sitting outside watching the newly arrived neighbours. Perhaps he even comes over to say hello.

## **Exploring the house**

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Let the players describe Agnete's first impression of the house. How do Mum and Dad introduce it to Agnete and Little Brother? Make sure to get Little Brother into play too - and be sure to introduce his coughs and how he seems weak.

Let the players describe the inside of the house too. What rooms does Agnete find when exploring, and how does she perceive her new home?

Make sure to introduce the basement and furnace down there. Does Agnete dare to go down there at all? Does she explore the garden and does she approach the forest? In the back yard, she will find a ramshackle swing set and from the field next to the house, a couple of horses are silently watching. Is she scared or curious?

Please introduce the cat too. How does he approach his new home? Does he hide right away or does he go out exploring? Does he run away? Is Agnete worried about him?

## **How was life back in the city**

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Ask about what kind of life Agnete has now moved away from. How was her life back in the city? - compared to her new life by the woods? What does she miss?

What does she think about going to live out here by the forest? Perhaps she will never ever get back to the city?

A couple of times during this act, you might get back to ask questions about Agnete's former life. Set up a sad feeling of loss. Help the players present the big city as heaven on earth, now forever lost.

## **The first couple of nights in the house**

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After moving in, Agnete has a couple of days to get familiar with her new surroundings before everyday life takes over and she has to begin in her new school.

But how are the first couple of nights in the house? Does Agnete accept it? And what about when she tries to sleep? What kind of noises does she hear? What is she thinking when she is in her new room? How does she feel about actually having her own room? She didn't have her own room back in the city. Does she miss sleeping together with Little Brother? Or does it feel like a relief that she no longer has to listen to him coughing in the lower bunk?

## **First day at school**

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A couple of days after moving in, it is time to go to school. The semester is already halfway through. Play a scene with the family gathered for breakfast. What do Mum and Dad say about the new school and the fact that Agnete has to start there all by herself? What does she say?

Ask the players to describe the drive to the school leading through the deep forest. What does Agnete see from the car window?

How does the school day go? What kind of kids attend her class? How do they receive this new girl, starting in the middle of the semester? And how does Agnete take to her new school? Does she speak to anybody? Does she play with anybody?

And what about Luna? Is she to be seen at the school?

# LUNA AND THE FOREST

## **Luna - a new friend?**

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In the forest, Luna, a girl at the same age as Agnete plays. She knows the forest as her own back yard and doesn't seem to be scared of anything. She wants to become Agnete's friend.

Let the players decide how Luna and Agnete meet. Does Agnete watch Luna standing at the edge of the forest? Or does Agnete meet her while exploring the forest - perhaps after Agnete has been lost? Maybe Luna comes to the house to find out who has moved into the house where she used to build hideouts and play.

Make room for the two girls to approach each other.

## **Exploring the forest - alone and with Luna**

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Make Agnete explore the forest - on her own and together with Luna. With inspiration from the photos, let the players describe locations in the forest. Make sure to establish some interesting places for the players to return to in the third act.

How does Agnete perceive the forest? Is it just scary and alien? Or is it tempting too? Does it feel different with Luna around, compared to when Agnete is by herself?

## **Alone in the forest**

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Set a scene with Agnete by herself and lost in the woods. What does she do and what does she think of? How does she find her way home without Luna's help?

## **Roxie in woods**

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If it is hard to get Agnete to explore the forest, use Roxie, the cat. In his new surroundings, he will soon get adventurous and move towards the forest. Perhaps Agnete is afraid that he will run away and tries to follow him.

Use the cat to drag Agnete further into the forest.



## The charcoal burning site

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Deep in the forest, you will find the charcoal burning site - a place back in the days used to burn wood into charcoal. The site is still used now and then. Out here you will find huge piles of dirt and charcoal, smelling intensely burned. It is a scary and exciting place at the same time.

The charcoal burning site is a good location to get introduced. Perhaps it is shown to Agnete by Luna. Perhaps Luna is too afraid to actually go there? Does Agnete dare to explore it?

## LITTLE BROTHER'S ILLNESS

Getting Agnete's relationship with Little Brother established is very important. Set a couple of scenes with Agnete and Little Brother. Perhaps they are playing together in the garden - or perhaps even in the woods. Maybe he has a hard time keeping up with her and stops to cough all the time. He might easily lose his breath too.

You might also focus on how Little Brother - at least from Agnete's point of view, and because he is ill - gets special treatment and all the attention from Mum and Dad. Is he allowed to do things Agnete is not?

Make sure to establish some tenderness between the siblings. Perhaps Agnete has to take care of Little Brother or help him get home because he is feeling bad. Or perhaps he is scared and wants to be comforted by his sister.

## The doctor comes by

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**Supporting character: Hand out the note 'The doctor comes by' (no. 1)**

The doctor gets by to take a look at Little Brother and listen to his chest. Play the scene with the doctor arriving. Hand out the small note introducing the doctor to one of the players. The doctor is not able to tell what is wrong with Little Brother. But something bothers him: It seems like there is charcoal dust in Little Brother's lungs.

What does Agnete think of the doctor? And what does she think of what he is telling about Little Brother's condition? Does she have to feel worried? Is she scared of him?

# THORVALD AND THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

Most important in this first act is to get Thorvald, and thereby the stories of The Charcoal Devil, introduced. It might take a couple of scenes to establish Thorvald as a character and it might take a while before Agnete feels ready to talk to the mysterious neighbour - after all, he might seem quite scary for a seven-year-old the first time around. Nevertheless, make sure there will be some sort of bond between the two of them - if not before, then at least during the second act.

## Thorvald is stuck in the forest - first real encounter

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Agnete's first real encounter with Thorvald takes place deep in the forest. Perhaps Luna is with her. If they, for instance, have been following the cat, it takes them to Thorvald. It seems oddly attracted to the mysterious man, trying to slink around him.

Thorvald is stuck in the mud sitting on his electrical three-wheeled scooter. He has been collecting a lot of sticks in the woods - and perhaps he carries a bag filled with charcoal from the burning site on his scooter too. He is in a hurry to get home. He is afraid that the fire in the woodstove will burn out. He needs help to get loose and get home.

Does Agnete dare to approach him? And does she dare speak to him? Or help him? Will she guide him home or does she run away?

Take your time to let the scene play out. Preferably Thorvald tells about The Charcoal Devil - but ideally, he does not tell too much already.

If Agnete does not help Thorvald to get loose he will end up crawling through the woods without his scooter.

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### IF AGNETE IS SCARED OF THORVALD

It might be quite possible that Agnete is scared of Thorvald and doesn't want to approach him. That could lead to some interesting roleplay. You might, nevertheless, make sure that they somehow get a chance to meet, for instance by the parents sending Agnete to his house to offer him some food or a present. It might also happen by Thorvald looking for Agnete insisting to speak to her - he has something important to tell her, he might say.

## Visiting Thorvald's house - a deeper introduction to The Charcoal Devil

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Make sure to set a scene with Agnete visiting Thorvald's house. Perhaps he has invited her over after she has helped him getting back home. Perhaps she and Luna try to sneak up to the house and are spotted by Thorvald. Or perhaps Mum and Dad send Agnete to Thorvald's house because they are worried for the mysterious neighbour.

Let Agnete slowly experience Thorvald's house. Ask the players to describe it slowly. How does it look like from the outside? In the hallway? And in the kitchen with the woodstove burning with almost excessive heat.

Will Agnete enter the house on her own free will or does she need to be convinced?

Make sure that Thorvald tells more about The Charcoal Devil. Make him tell about the woodstove and what he is hiding in there.

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## PLAYTEST EXAMPLE - AGNETE AND THORVALD

Even though he asked, begged, and even threatened her trying to get her help, Agnete did not dare to approach Thorvald in the woods. Finally, she went home to her parents and asked Dad to go out to help Thorvald while she stayed in the house.

Later on, Mum - who was worried about Thorvald - send Agnete to Thorvald's house to offer him some food. Agnete wasn't very fond of the situation, but she, nevertheless, did what she was told by the grownups - she also did so when Thorvald insisted for her to come inside to be his guest. Slowly confidence between the two of them started to grow as Thorvald seemed less and less frightening and more and friendly.





# THE SECOND ACT

## - WHAT THE CHARCOAL DEVIL TAKES

*Conflict escalation and point of no return*

In the second act of the game, things turn more frightening and severe. Agnete starts to lose her few anchor points in her new life and the fear of The Charcoal Devil starts to haunt her.

This act is all about building and escalating Agnete's experience of everything being taken from her. The players will, for instance, be playing indications of The Charcoal Devil's presence.

As in the first act, the scenes in this act don't necessarily have to be played in the same order as they are introduced in this text. Pay attention to the mood and flow of the game and set scenes that fit the story evolving as the game goes on.

You might start the act by setting a scene with Agnete not able to sleep. Continue with the morning scene in which Agnete can't find the cat while the family is in a hurry getting ready for school and work. Finish the act with the fire in Thorvald's house.

Playing time should be 1-1,5 hours.

### MOST IMPORTANT IN THE SECOND ACT

- \* Elaborate the stories of The Charcoal Devil. Establish and escalate Agnete's fear of him - by Thorvald telling stories and by playing indications of The Charcoal Devil's presence.
- \* One by one, Agnete loses her few anchor points.
- \* The cat is found dead.
- \* Luna has to move away.
- \* Little Brother's condition gets worse and he gets hospitalised
- \* Thorvald dies in a fire.

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### NOTES WITH INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

To help the players set the direction for the game and to get relevant information into play you might hand out small notes with instructions to the supporting characters during play. In the description of each scene, it will be clearly noted if you have to handout notes. Each note is marked by a number making it easy to find the right one.

During the act, you might start to hand out instructions on playing The Charcoal Devil too. As opposed to the instructions for the supporting characters, these are not in the same way bound to specific scenes. Hand out instructions for The Charcoal Devil when you want to inspire and nudge the players.

# EVERYDAY LIFE - THE OPENING OF THE FIRST ACT

## **Agnete can't sleep**

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**Notes for supporting characters: Roxie, the cat - who is not there (no. 2). You might also hand out the first note regarding the Charcoal Devil (no. 11).**

Start the act with a sort of repetition of the prologue - now with The Charcoal Devil haunting Agnete's imagination.

Agnete is in her bed, not able to sleep. Sounds come from the forest and the house. Little Brother is coughing. And Agnete mind is haunted by what Thorvald has been telling about The Charcoal Devil.

Roxie, by the way, is not here. He is usually lying at the foot of the bed, but not tonight. When was the last time Agnete actually saw him?

## **Busy morning, the cat is gone**

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**Notes for supporting characters: Mum and Dad (no. 3)**

Cut to a busy morning. Mum and Dad call for Agnete who is not yet out of bed. They keep rushing. They need to leave soon. They will all be late.

Agnete can't find Roxie who hasn't been eating his food. Usually, it is Agnete's responsibility to feed him

## **Drive through the forest towards the school**

---

You might cut directly from the stressful morning and the missing cat to the drive to school. Perhaps Mum or Dad drives her or maybe she takes the bus, perhaps even on her own. They pass Thorvald's house and drive into the woods.

What does Agnete see this morning? What kind of ride is it? Does she look for Roxie while driving? And now, as she has been getting to know the forest a little better, you might ask her to tell more about the forest: What kind of forest is it? When she is by herself? And when she is with Luna?

If it makes sense, you might ask about the day in school too.

# THORVALD

Make sure for Thorvald and Agnete to get a closer connection in this act. It is important that she feels a loss when he dies at the end of the act. If necessary, make sure he tells more about the Charcoal Devil.

## **The fire is about to burn out - Thorvald needs help**

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**Notes for supporting characters: Thorvald - two different variations of the note (no. 4 and no. 55, depending on how dramatic you want the situation to be).**

Thorvald needs help, the fire in is woodstove is about to burn out. Perhaps it has already died out. He seems scared and worried. If he has not already told about the Charcoal Devil's heart, now is a good time to do so.

Agnete could help him collecting firewood in the forest - perhaps together with Lua - or she could help him by lighting the fire and keeping it alive while he collects firewood. Then Agnete is suddenly alone in Thorvald's house. How is that like?

## **A smokeless chimney**

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A variation of the scene above could be Agnete discovering that no smoke is coming from Thorvald's chimney. She gets worried and wants to help him. He is not home and she now has an opportunity to enter his house alone, maybe trying to save the fire in the woodstove. Perhaps it is close to going wrong.



## LUNA AND THE FOREST

If you think there is a need for getting the forest or Agnete's relationship with Luna established further, set an extra scene in the forest - perhaps with the two of them looking for the cat.

### **Luna has to move away**

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**Notes for supporting characters: Luna has to move away (no. 6)**

Even though Luna seems like a free spirit and a real forest girl she has a real everyday life too. And suddenly one day she has to tell Agnete she has to move far away. And that is why she can't play anymore.

How does Luna manage to tell Agnete? Is it hard for her to do? And how does Agnete react?

You might hand out the instructional note to the Luna player earlier in the act. Then it is up to the player to decide when she comes by to tell Agnete the bad news.

## THE CAT IS GONE

You might give a couple of hints about the cat. You might also get the player playing the cat to hint it, presenting indications of the missing cat. Perhaps it might for a minute look like Roxie sneaking around the edge of the forest - but it isn't. Perhaps Agnete goes looking for him.

### **The cat is dead - lies near Thorvald's house**

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**Notes for supporting characters: Thorvald (no. 7) and Roxie (no. 8)**

Unfortunately, Roxie is dead. He is found by Thorvald, outside his house.

How does he tell Agnete? Where exactly is Roxie's dead body lying? What does the dead cat look like?

You might hand out the notes to the Roxie and Thorvald players earlier in the act. Then they can help to set the scene in which Thorvald has to tell Agnete this horrible news.

## AGNETE'S LONELINESS

As the second act unfolds, and as she loses what she cares about, Agnete is more on her own. Ask about her thoughts and feelings - and remind her of her former life in the city.

### **Nobody is home**

---

If you want to emphasize Agnete feeling lonely and abandoned, you might set a scene with Agnete coming home and nobody, neither Mum, Dad or Little Brother, is there. Where could they be? What does she do?

Shortly after they return. Ask the players where they have been? Does it calm down Agnete?

If you want an alternative version of the scene, Little Brother is home, sleeping, but Mum and Dad are not around. What does Agnete do when she realises they are not there?

## LITTLE BROTHER'S ILLNESS

As his coughing worsens, Little Brother gets more and more ill. You might hand out note number 9 (Little Brother - Wants Agnete) when necessary.

### **Little Brother's condition gets worse - wants Agnete's pledge**

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*Notes for supporting characters: Little Brother wants Agnete (no. 9)*

If you need to establish a tighter bond between Agnete and Little Brother, set a scene with Little Brother's condition getting worse - perhaps even while they are home alone for a while.

He wants to be comforted by Agnete. Mum and Dad are not good enough for him. He wants her to tell what is going to happen - both with her and with him. He asks if she is scared? If she promises to protect him? Forever?

### **The doctor wants to hospitalise Little Brother**

---

*Notes for supporting characters: The doctor (no. 10)*

The doctor comes by again. He is very worried about Little Brother and wants to send him to the hospital immediately.

How does Agnete react to the doctor this time? Does she oppose the doctor coming into the house? - and the fact that he wants to hospitalise Little Brother and take him with him? Does she believe the doctor to be The Charcoal Devil? Do Mum and Dad go with Little Brother, and what about Agnete? Is she left behind on her own?

If Agnete goes with them to the hospital, you might ask the players to describe the drive with Agnete looking out the window. They pass Thorvald's house and go through the forest. Does she spot anything in particular during the drive? What is the forest like?

## **Little Brother in the hospital**

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Mum and Dad take Agnete to visit Little Brother in the hospital. He lies in a bed, very weak. He might even be in a respirator, perhaps even put in isolation.

Ask the players to describe the hospital with all its people dressed in white and with a worried look in their eyes. Ask them to describe Little Brother too. What are Agnete's thoughts? Does she do anything? How does she react to the doctors, the porters and the nurses? Does she see any indications of the presence of The Charcoal Devil?

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## THORVALD DIES - END OF THE SECOND ACT

The second act reaches a dramatic high point - and the game its point of no return - when Thorvald dies in a fire in his house. This means that Agnete is now almost totally on her own.

## FIRE AT THORVALD'S

Agnete, Mum and Dad are on their way home from the hospital when they pass Thorvald's house. Outside they can see police cars, fire trucks, and an ambulance. Policemen are putting yellow police tape around the house. A couple of paramedics are trying to manoeuvre a stretcher out the front door.

There has been a fire in the house and Thorvald is dead. From the outside, though, there is no damage from the fire to be seen. That means it must have been the smoke killing Thorvald - perhaps caused by him messing with the woodstove. The police can't tell much more at the moment.

You might play the scene from inside the car passing by - if Agnete doesn't run out to see what is happening. Perhaps Mum or Dad steps out of the car.

How does Agnete react? What does she do? What does she imagine has happened? Does she in any way feel responsible for Thorvald's death? And now, with Thorvald gone and the fire in his woodstove burned out, what about the Charcoal Devil? Is the heart still in there or did it escape?

What is The Charcoal Devil coming for next?



# THE THIRD ACT

## - CONFRONTING THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

*Desperation, climax and ending*

The third act is the climax of the game with Agnete's fear of The Charcoal Devil escalating, leading up to some sort of confrontation.

The act can lead up to either a happy ending or a tragic one. Happy, if Agnete somehow manages to overcome her enemy. Tragic, if she ends up being devoured by her fear.

Playing time is appr. 1 hour

### MOST IMPORTANT IN THE THIRD ACT

- \* Escalate the fear of The Charcoal all the way to complete desperation.
- \* Agnete tries to find the Charcoal Devil - or he tries to find her.
- \* The players act as resistance to Agnete's efforts, making them hard to achieve.
- \* A dramatic confrontation with The Charcoal Devil.
- \* A recapitulation showing what happens with Agnete and her family? Has she learnt anything from the confrontation with her terrifying opponent?

### STRUCTURE OF THE ACT

This act is more loosely structured than the previous ones, with the course of the act very much depending on what the players choose to focus on during play - and on how Agnete reacts to Thorvald's death and her fear of The Charcoal Devil.

Basically the story can move on one of two tracks: With Agnete trying to find and fight The Charcoal Devil or with Agnete trying to hide and escape him.

How it all ends is very much depending on the inputs from the players and how the story evolves.

Nevertheless, the act is split into four minor parts:

- \* **Impotence.** With Thorvald dead Agnete is scared and sad. What does all this mean for her? And for Little Brother, Mum, and Dad? The Charcoal Devil is definitely out there somewhere, every sign and indication says so - and he is getting closer and closer.
- \* **Desperation.** Agnete rushes into the forest trying to locate The Charcoal Devil. Or she hides in the house, waiting for him - if she is not trying to hide from him as he comes for her.
- \* **Climax.** Agnete stands face to face with The Charcoal Devil, whatever he might look like. How does she try to defeat him? And does she succeed?
- \* **Recapitulation.** What happens after the confrontation with The Charcoal Devil? Is Little Brother suddenly better? Is everything back to normal? Does Agnete survive the confrontation of her enemy?

## GAME MECHANIC: LET THE PLAYERS CREATE THE RESISTANCE FOR AGNETE

It might be a good idea to split the act in a number of specific scenes in which Agnete has a certain task she needs to overcome. It could, for instance, be to get through a soggy bog or to avoid being discovered by The Charcoal Devil while she hides in a closet. Let the players take turns setting up resistance for Agnete's task to succeed. It could be both inner resistance, eg. her fear or lack of courage, or outer resistance in the form of specific obstacles she needs to overcome.

Ask a player to tell what Agnete is trying to do, while another player sets up obstacles, making it hard to succeed. Ask why it is hard and why it is about to go wrong. To help the opponent you might ask relevant questions to guide and inspire her - for instance, 'why it is hard for Agnete to get past the mudhole?' or 'why is The Charcoal Devil close to spotting Agnete while she is hiding?'.

Focus on details when Agnete tries to get past the different obstacles. If she, for instance, tries to get through the pitch-black forest ask about the details: Why is it hard to get past a couple of tree trunks? What does she need to do to get past them? And why is it hard for her? Does a branch break when she steps on it? Does she hurt her leg, making it harder for her to walk?

And the same way around if she, for instance, tries to hide in closet because she is sure The Charcoal Devil has entered the house. Ask a player to describe the closet and how Agnete tries to stand totally still. How is it like to hold her breath for so long? Her leg is itching. How will she manage to scratch it without making a sound? And what happens when she no longer can hold her breath? Ask the players to come up with other obstacles, making it hard for her to complete her task.



## A COUPLE OF OBVIOUS SCENARIOS FOR THE THIRD ACT

This third act can go in many different directions. Here is a couple of scenarios for how it could evolve:

- \* ***Agnete finds the way to The Charcoal Devil in the woods.*** Agnete decides to go to the forest, trying to locate The Charcoal Devil. After a long, dramatic way through the forest she finally confronts a scary figure in the dark - a figure with a glowing piece of charcoal in its chest. She is terrified, but in the end, she finds the courage to spear the glowing heart with a poker, now running through the forest chased by the now heartless Charcoal Devil. Finally, she manages to place the heart in the old furnace in the basement, once again keeping it trapped the same way as Thorvald did. The next morning, Mum and Dad return from the hospital, telling her that Little Brother is now better.
- \* ***Agnete gives The Charcoal Devil his heart.*** Agnete decides to try giving "The Charcoal Devil back his heart. Perhaps he is foul and takes things from people because he has no heart - and thereby it is actually Thorvald who is responsible for the evil of The Charcoal Devil. She sneaks into Thorvald's house, still encircled by police cordons, picking up a large piece of charcoal from the innermost part of the woodstove. Now, an intense tour through the forest unfolds with The Charcoal Devil one moment trying to hide from Agnete, the other trying to scare the guts out of her. In the end, she manages to find him and calms down his anger enough to be able to offer him his heart back. That removes all his anger and fury, and when Agnete returns home Mum and Dad have been very worried about her. Luckily, Little Brother feels much better.

- \* ***Agnete hides in the house.*** Totally scared of the Charcoal Devil who is out there somewhere, Agnete entrenches herself in the house, trying to keep him from entering. Propelled by her frustrations and during her fight with the monster she ends up setting the house on fire, hoping it will destroy him. Perhaps she dies in flames. Or maybe she miraculously survives and Mum and Dad find her unconscious on the basement floor next to the furnace.
- \* ***The Charcoal Devil is not real.*** After a dramatic, fatiguing tour into the forest, looking for a remarkably silent Charcoal Devil, Agnete must finally realise he is not real. In tears, she accepts that she can't blame him for everything that has happened to her. Totally exhausted, she falls to the forest ground where Mum and Dad find her cold and asleep the next morning. Perhaps Little Brother is getting better. Or perhaps she must accept the fact that there is nothing she can do to help him - and that it is not her responsibility to do so.

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES FOR THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

If you haven't already been handing out notes with instructions on playing The Charcoal Devil (no. 11-20), now is a good time to do so. Don't hand out all notes at once. Hand out notes when you want to escalate the presence of The Charcoal Devil.

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## POWERLESSNESS: BACK IN THE HOUSE

After Thorvald's death, Agnete is back in the house. She is all alone. Maybe she is in her room and once again unable to sleep. Perhaps she is alone because Mum and Dad have gone back to the hospital.

Ask the players to tell about her thoughts and frustration? What is she scared of? What is she planning to do? - if anything at all?

The Charcoal Devil has been taking and taking from her - and he is not satisfied yet. He wants more. But what does he want next? Little Brother? Mum and Dad? Or perhaps Agnete?

Focus on Agnete's fright getting worse and worse. Hand out notes with instructions on how to play The Charcoal Devil and ask the players about indications of his presence, getting more and more evident. Maybe he calls for her. Or maybe she can hear him thunder out there somewhere. Perhaps there is an intense smell of charcoal smoke around.

## DESPERATION: CLOSER TO THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

Make sure Agnete's sense of powerlessness turns into desperation.

Ask what she wants to do? She can try to find the Charcoal Devil to confront him. She can wait for him in the house. Or she can try to hide from him, while he is searching for her.

Set a couple of scenes and ask the players what Agnete decides to do. Ask them to describe how she is searching for The Charcoal Devil - for instance, in the woods. Does she call for him? Does she sneak around, trying not to be seen? Remember, to let the other players act as opposition to whatever Agnete is trying to do.

Use locations established in the first act. Use the forest and the house, and focus on how everything seems different when Agnete is shaking with fear and all by herself. Does she have a plan at all? How will she, for instance, manage to get through a tight thicket in the forest? Is she able to find a way through the bog? Or is she close to drowning? What does she need to fight the Charcoal Devil? And does she carry it with her?

All the time, The Charcoal Devil seems close. Continue to ask the players to describe the indications of him: His sounds, his smoky smell, his calls for Agnete. Alternately, the players could choose to emphasize how remarkably silent it seems - how The Charcoal Devil is not at all to be heard or to be sensed, even though she is totally sure he is out there somewhere.



# CLIMAX: CONFRONTATION

Finally - after either a hard and frustrating tour through the forest or a frightening wait in the house - it is time for the confrontation with The Charcoal Devil.

Ask the players to in details describe the situation and split the climax into a couple of specific scenes. What does the Charcoal Devil look like? - if he at all is manifested into a physical shape? Is she able to see him in full figure or is he only some kind of shadow? Spend some time establishing The Charcoal Devil as a character - or to build up Agnete's imagination of what he might look like.

Ask about how Agnete thinks she will confront him. And what she is trying to achieve by doing so. Does she cry out for him wanting to challenge him face to face? Or does she try to sneak up on him?

You might also ask the players to describe what the Charcoal Devil does. How does he react to Agnete? Will he physically attack her? Does he speak to her? Is he someone with whom she can negotiate? Or does she simply have to defeat him?

If Agnete tries to hide from The Charcoal Devil, ask the players how he is searching for her? Let them describe how he comes closer and closer. What does he smell like? How hot is it close to him?

## SPLIT THE CONFRONTATION INTO SEVERAL PARTS

It might be an idea to split the confrontation with The Charcoal Devil in several parts. Perhaps she finds him in the woods and manages to catch his heart. This is followed by a scene with Agnete fleeing with the heart through the forest, chased by The Charcoal Devil. And finally, a third part of the confrontation could take place in Agnete's - or perhaps Thorvald's - house where she tries to put the heart in the furnace to trap it once again.

## How to defeat The Charcoal Devil

It is important to let the players themselves establish an idea of how Agnete could defeat The Charcoal Devil. He might be defeated in many different ways, depending on what kind of story the game has been telling until now. Help the players by asking relevant questions, making everything fit together thematically.

A couple of scenarios could be:

- \* **Stop being scared of him.** The Charcoal Devil is said to take everything from people who are scared of him. In that way, he can only harm those who are afraid of him. So, if Agnete realises she is not scared of him - maybe by accepting he is not real - she might be able to confront him without any risk.
- \* **Catch or destroy the Charcoal Devil's heart.** The coal-black heart, until recently kept by Thorvald in his woodstove, might be the key to defeat the Charcoal Devil - either by trapping it once again or by destroying it. How to defeat it is, nevertheless, hard to say. And if it caught once again? - what will happen if it escapes one more time?
- \* **Give The Charcoal Devil back his heart.** Perhaps all the evil and foulness of The Charcoal Devil is due to his lack of heart, taken away by Thorvald. If he gets his heart back, he might finally be appeased and find peace with himself.
- \* **Find her courage.** Being brave is questions of confronting the enemy even though you are shaking with fear. And perhaps that is what the climax is about: For Agnete to find her courage to stand up against the enemy, face to face. And if she can handle that, what wouldn't she be able to handle in the real world? Perhaps she might even handle her new life and Little Brother's disease, even though it might never get better?
- \* **Sacrifice herself.** By being totally determined to save Little Brother, Agnete finally finds the courage to stand face to face with The Charcoal Devil in the woods, offering him to take her instead of Little Brother. He accepts and Agnete dies in the woods.



## RECAPITULATION: WHAT NOW?

After the big climax, it is important to set a couple of scenes showing what happens afterwards. What happens to Agnete and her family? Did Agnete learn anything from her confrontation with The Charcoal Devil that could help her handle whatever is difficult in her new life?

### **If Agnete survives**

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Set a scene where Mum and Dad find Agnete or return from the hospital. What kind of girl do they find? Did they worry about her and did they perhaps go out looking for her? Or are they totally surprised about what has happened?

And how is Little Brother doing? Is he getting better? Will he make it? Or is all hope lost for him?

You might perhaps set a scene at the hospital with Agnete visiting Little Brother.

### **If Agnete dies**

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If Agnete dies in her confrontation with The Charcoal Devil - if, for instance, she chooses to sacrifice herself - there are two possible recapitulations.

You can stick strictly to Agnete's point of view and cut the scene and the scenario in the same moment as everything turns dark for Agnete.

Or you can choose to zoom out a bit, showing what is happening from a wider point of view. The next morning, for instance, Mum and Dad find Agnete dead at the charcoal burning site, killed by smoke inhalation from the smouldering piles of charcoal. Or perhaps they never find her. What does her death do to the family? Does it somehow help Little Brother? Or is he still as sick as before, showing how cynical the world might be? Is he even dying?





# ROLES FOR THE PROLOGUE

## AGNETE'S FEAR

You can't sleep. It's so dark.

Something is waiting outside the window, you're sure - outside the big window, the way too big windows, without curtains. Outside the window that seems like a huge, dark frame.

It's also chilly here, as it always is.

Besides the sounds that are always here, the house seems so silent. The sounds of the house itself, the sounds of the wind and the forest. Sometimes it seems like all the sounds are coming from the forest - even the sounds inside the house. They all come from the forest. Or maybe it is where the sounds are heading.

*You are Agnete. You must focus on her anxiety and fear. You are a seven-year-old girl, lying in her room. You are a seven-year-old girl who doesn't feel safe.*

## **Little Brother, coughing**

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Besides playing Agnete you also play Little Brother. He is asleep, but soon he will wake up. You are four years old and cough way too much all the time. Your chest hurts. You are upset. You want Agnete to comfort you. You want Mum or Dad.



## AGNETE'S LONELINESS

You can't sleep. It's too dark. Everything seems too quiet.

Lying here in the dark, you feel so alone. Mum and Dad are far away. Are they upstairs somewhere? Little Brother is quiet too. I wonder if he is in his bed?

If only someone were here with you. If only someone sat in the chair, watching over you. If only someone sang you a little song. Or told a story. Or if only you could hear the sound of someone breathing.

But that is not how it is out here in the new house in your new surroundings.

Out here everything is so different from how it was back in the city.

*You are Agnete. You must focus on her loneliness. You are a seven-year-old girl who is alone in her room. You are a girl who is about to be left alone, soon to feel abandoned.*

### **Whatever is outside the window**

---

You'll also be playing what is outside the window. You are the wind in the treetops. You are the branches catching the window. You are strange sounds, whispering to get Agnete's attention. You are whatever is out there. You want to get in.

## AGNETE'S MEMORIES

You can't sleep. It is so dark. It is so quiet - and still you hear too many strange sounds.

It wasn't like this in the big city. Back there it was never completely dark. Back then a hint of light from the street outside was always shining through the window. Back then, lights and cars and people were always there - always sounds to hear.

Now you lie here, so far from all that used to be your life. Now it's all so different. But how it is now, that is your new life - your new life far from everything you know well.

You think a lot about it all - about everything you miss, about everybody you don't see anymore, about everyone who was taken from you. All because you now have to live out here instead.

*You are Agnete. You are her memories of how it used to be. You are a seven-year-old girl who is alone in her room, far from all that used to comfort her. You miss it all so much.*

### **Mum and Dad who are not there**

---

You are also playing the concept of Mum and Dad who are not here. They are gone - why they are gone is not clear. You are the indications showing that they were just around - duvets without Mum and Dad in them, coffee cups on the table. You are Mum and Dad, who don't reply when Agnete calls for them. You are Mum and Dad who are somewhere else this night.



## AGNETE'S REASON

You can't sleep. It is too dark. Outside the window, it is dark too.

But there isn't anything out there. Of course, you know that. It's just the woods, the wind and the trees playing tricks on you. There is nothing. Not a thing. No Body.

You are a big girl - the big sister in the family, who should know better than to be afraid. You are the big girl who should stay awake to take care of Little Brother. You are the one who is supposed to listen to him sleeping, making sure he is all right - you should notice him coughing. Mum and Dad are too far away in the house to listen to him.

Right now everything is silent - in the other room too.

*You are Agnete. You must focus on her reason, the voice of sense clearly speaking out loud that there is nothing to be afraid of. You are a seven-year-old girl who is totally aware of how ridiculous it is to lie here listening to all the sounds coming from the house and the forest.*

### **The house that is new - and still so very old**

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You are also playing the house Agnete just recently moved into. You are the walls, the windows, the sounds. You are everything that is not outside. You are the house which is new to Agnete but also an old house. The house can scare Agnete even more ... or it might actually somehow protect her.

ROLES FOR THE  
REST OF THE GAME





# AGNETE'S FEAR

**The forest is hard to get your head around ... and compelling**

**Supporting character: Thorvald**

In this game, you'll play several roles, switching between them. First of all, your task is to focus on Agnete's inexplicable fear. At the same time, you are responsible for describing the forest as both an incomprehensible and compelling place.

You will also be playing Thorvald, the neighbour. He is a mysterious man missing his legs who can tell stories of The Charcoal Devil.

When playing Thorvald, it is very important that you introduce Agnete to the stories of The Charcoal Devil.

## KEYWORDS

### **Agnete**

Afraid of all the new things in her life. Can't explain why. Something is out there. It's almost like it talks to her.

The forest is alien and scary - but also, despite its dangers, somehow compelling.

Keep her out of the forest, but you might also try to drag her in by its temptations.

### **Thorvald**

A mysterious man without legs.

Tells stories about The Charcoal Devil.

Keeps The Charcoal Devil's heart in his wood stove. Thorvald is afraid of HIM, but doesn't want to lose HIM either.



# AGNETE

## **The inexplicable fear**

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Everything is so very new and unfamiliar. In this new life, there is so much you don't understand. The forest is dark, the windows in the house are almost black. You shouldn't be afraid - you know that - but still you are. When asked why you cannot answer.

Something is hiding out there for sure. It speaks to you. It whispers, and sometimes it almost seems like something is crying out for you.

You really don't like it here - neither in the house nor in the forest. When you are inside the house, you want to get out - go somewhere else. And when you are outside, you want to get in - into the house, back to what seems familiar and yet totally alien.

Most of all, you want to go home. Get away from here. Go back to the big city, back to everybody you know and miss so much.

## **The forest is hard to get your head around ... and compelling**

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The forest is a dangerous place. It's so dark, so impenetrable. You can't see what's in there - neither can you get your head around what hides in there. This is what makes the forest so disturbing to you - that's what scares you and makes you sweat with fear.

This is also what makes you hesitant and afraid - even while you're playing and supposed to have fun. But it is also what compels you.

The forest is unknown, new territory. It's horror and the danger waiting behind every tree, around every corner. It's the same with the new house - it might be scary too. It's a new house that is actually very old.

## **Hints for the player**

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In this game, you represent the forest as unknowable. You should tell about what's dark, scary and unknown.

While playing Agnete you should focus on her inexplicable fear of the unknown. You might also describe the forest as she sees it from your perspective: what's the forest like? What does she see in there?

You might paint the forest as played in a minor key; as a dark place, full of shadows. Try to keep Agnete out of the forest. But you should also try to drag her in there, making the darkness surround her while a feeling of horror threatens to take over. At the same time, you might poke her curiosity making the phantoms become alive in her imagination.

## THORVALD

From a distance you watch them arrive on the first day, moving into the house. You watch them from your small ramshackle house a few hundred yards up the road. From your life without legs. From your life full of stories, anecdotes and crazy lies. From your life with HIM, with The Charcoal Devil. With HIM who build their house and lived in it back then, long ago. With HIM, the heartless one, who now lives in the forest, so very, very cold.

With HIM, whose heart you took and keep trapped in your wood stove.

HE takes. That is what HE does. HE takes everything from people who are afraid of him. Like HE took everything from you. Like you were afraid of HIM. That is why you had to take HIS dark heart, to keep it in your wood stove forcing you to maintain the fire - that is what keeps the heart from getting out, keeping HIM from devouring and taking everything.

In there it must not die out - then you have nothing.

You are Thorvald, the mysterious neighbour, living in a small, ramshackle house. You have no legs and moves around on your three-wheeled electric scooter. You also use crutches and prosthetic legs sometimes. When asked about how you lost your legs, it varies what story you tell. You often tell a crazy one, no one believes in what you say anyway. Only rarely do you tell that you once had a wife and kids who all died an accident. And even more rarely do you tell why neither they nor the accident is mentioned anywhere in official documents.

You are Thorvald and you are lonely, very lonely - like the new girl in The Charcoal Devil's house. You really would like to have a friend. You would love to tell her all the stories - especially those about The Charcoal Devil, HE who has taken everything.

Well, it is HE who took your legs, wasn't it? He, who took THEM from you. And HE who even took what you have never had.

You want to warn her. You don't want her to take HIM away from you .... and HE should not take more away from you.

## Hints for the player

---

When playing Thorvald you have a very important task. You have to introduce the other players and Agnete to The Charcoal Devil. You have to tell them about his heart, which you say you keep in your wood stove - keeping the fire burning to keep the heart in there. You can't allow the fire to burn out. Every time you leave the house, you are afraid that the fire might burn out.

You might introduce Thorvald as soon as in the first scene of the game. He's watching the new neighbours arriving. Perhaps you'll come by briefly to welcome them - but the first time you'll be introduced to Agnete for real will be in the forest. You have been foraging firewood - perhaps you have even been collecting charcoal from the charcoal stead in the woods, a place where wood is traditionally burned into charcoal. Your electrical scooter is stuck in the mud but you have to go home. You are in a hurry - if you don't go back home in time, the fire will burn out.

As a player, you don't know very much about The Charcoal Devil. Don't worry about that. You just have to use your imagination to add on to what's been introduced in this text. You'll have to improvise, suggest stuff for the other players. Don't tell too much about him. Let Agnete's imagination work. It is a shared task for all of you players to establish the concept of The Charcoal Devil.

***You must: Tell Agnete about The Charcoal Devil.***





# AGNETE'S NEED FOR COMFORT

**The forest is unpredictable  
... and compelling and beautiful**  
**Supporting characters: Roxie the cat,  
Mum and Dad,**

In this game you'll play several roles, switching between them. First of all, you'll play Agnete and her need for comfort. At the same time, you are responsible for describing the forest as both unpredictable and compelling - as a sort of opposition to the conformity Agnete so desperately needs after leaving her before so well-known surroundings.

You'll also be playing Roxie, the family's cat who is his own master and easily disappears in the woods following his instinct and curiosity.

Finally, you'll play both Mum and Dad - the parents who are as parents always are: Unpredictable, parent-like, and whose moods and temper change all the time in unpredictable ways. One moment they encourage adventure and freedom, the next they are way too controlling and overprotective.

## KEYWORDS

### **Agnete**

Feels insecure in her new surroundings.

Has a need for comfort and what is well-known - but she also dreams of putting away her fear to feel curious and inquisitive instead.

The forest is an unknown place - insecure - but also beautiful and compelling. The forest pulls her towards it - even though she isn't comfortable with it.

### **Roxie the cat**

His own master. Curious and adventurous. Something calls for him from the dark of the forest.

### **Mum and Dad**

Are ready for adventure, want to show Agnete everything. Are both very enthusiastic and the totally opposite depending on the situation.

Unpredictable and worried. Change in mood and stances all the time.



# AGNETE

## **The need for comfort**

---

Everything is so new to you, and you have no idea about where it's all leading to. What is this new world? What kind of house is it - what kind of forest and people await out here?

You hate all this new stuff - and yet, at least in brief glimpses, it's a bit exciting too. Sometimes, if you really try, you could be able to put away your fear and just head out for an adventure. Or at least, you wish you could. If only you were able to be that kind of girl who is curious, cheeky and outspoken. If only you had the courage to just do stuff without thinking too much about it beforehand.

But you can do it, you know that. You could be able to throw away anxiety, being proactive without being scared. But, on the other hand, it's not as easy as it might sound.

## **The forest is unpredictable ... and compelling and beautiful**

---

The forest is a beautiful place, an exciting place.

Even though it's hard to see what's in the forest - hard to understand what hides in there - it's also what makes it beautiful. It is the beauty of the unknown and new - the beauty of adventures waiting behind every tree, around every corner. It is the compelling beauty of everything that is not what it seems like at first glimpse - everything that is changing all the time.

## **To the player**

---

In this game, you represent Agnete when she's anxious and scared of everything new. You are Agnete seeking safety and comfort - and you are Agnete who prefers everything predictable. You want to stay where everything is familiar, near Mum and Dad, near Little Brother.

But at the same time, you are also Agnete who would like it all to be different. You also represent the compelling aspects of Agnete's new surroundings - an almost secret and forbidden world. Tell about beauty and adventure. Paint the forest in beautiful colours, but also in somewhat chaotic and maybe even frightening colours. Push and pull Agnete into the forest. Poke her curiosity, even though she might be scared of following it.

## SUPPORTING CHARACTER

### ROXIE, THE CAT

You are Roxie, Agnete's cat. Or to be more specific: You are your own master. Nobody is in charge of you. You snuggle close to people and objects, you purr and meow when you need to. Otherwise, you don't care. Most of the time you stray and go on adventures in the woods - you run away whenever you want. You are your own master, a real outdoor forest cat.

You used to be lazy, just lying in the apartment window in the big city all day. But now, you are safe, close to the forest and an endless stream of mice. And close to everything that calls you from inside the darkness of the forest.

### **To the player**

---

You are the cat who often disappears or are on your way into the forest. When Agnete tries to follow or catch you, you seem determined where you are going. Out here in your new surroundings, you seem unpredictable - one moment you seem curious and cuddly, the next you are about to run away and perhaps even act aggressive and hissy.

While playing Roxie the Cat you have one very important task: You have to aim for the forest, perhaps even try to let Agnete follow you - especially if she is hesitant in exploring her new surroundings.



## SUPPORTING CHARACTER

# MUM AND DAD

An old house filled with stories and with room for adventure. And filled with risk.

A forest filled with darkness, light and even more adventure. A compelling tale of something that once was out here - about The Charcoal Devil who built the house. You love stories - and you always have. Mostly because stories are just stories.

First of all, it was time for a change. Time for air, light and a forest nearby. It would be good for you - especially for Little Brother who really needs fresh air. Good for his coughing.

And at the moment, everything is about Little Brother. That's how it is - at least when it's not all about you.

You are anxious, worried, encouraging, annoying, supercilious, absent, grumpy, nice, angry, and often way too quiet. You are all that at the same time. That's how it is with parents.

You are ready to explore, to examine everything exciting and new. When you are like that there is absolutely no voice of reason from you. You just want Agnete to settle in, to discover it all. At least when you are not acting the total opposite way around.

## To the player

---

In this game, at one moment Mum and Dad are up for adventure, the next they are too clingy and worried. Like all grownups, they are totally unpredictable and make no sense at all.

Perhaps they are way too much? Maybe they pick and fuss too much? Perhaps they are way too pushy when it comes to encouraging Agnete to take these new, alien surroundings in possession - and also way too clingy and worried for Agnete not to get injured or dirty. They might also seem very worried about Agnete being able to take care of herself and Little Brother.

When playing Mum and Dad you are supposed to be way over the top - please be too enthusiastic about the new place to live. You act like parents do as seen from a child's point of view: Completely unpredictable and not to be trusted at all. You are unconcerned and want Agnete to embrace the adventure of living next to the woods, the trees and all these old stories that wait around here. It seems almost like you are more concerned about fulfilling our own dreams and needs - and not about fulfilling Agnete's.



# AGNETE'S LONELINESS

**The forest is a place for loneliness  
without expectations**

**Supporting character: Luna**

In this game you'll be playing several roles, switching between them during play. First of all, you play Agnete and her feelings of loss and loneliness. At the same time, you are responsible for describing the forest as a lonely place - but also as a place to be alone, without expectations. In that way, you'll play both sides of loneliness, as both a positive and a negative thing.

You'll be playing Luna too, a girl at the same age as Agnete, who is hanging out in the woods and who might be Agnete's new best friend. She is some sort of the antithesis of loneliness - she is someone who can show Agnete her new world. But further on in the game, she can cause loneliness too if Agnete loses her again.

## KEYWORDS

### **Agnete**

Misses her old life.

She doesn't want to cry - not at all.

Wishes that it all could change to the better.

In the forest, one can get lost, be forgotten, become even more lonely.

In the forest, one can be alone without expectations.

### **Luna**

A girl in the woods - knows it as her own backyard.

Isn't scared of anything - at least hardly anything.

Can show Agnete the woods.



# AGNETE

## **The loss of what once was there**

---

You miss it all, all that you once had - what you now have left behind. Now, you are alone. You have been pulled away from all your bonds. Now, you are just Agnete, a lonesome seven-year-old girl - a girl at her most lonely age.

You really don't want to cry over it. You really, really will not. When you are seven years old, you don't cry. At least not when anyone is watching.

But at night in your new house and in the forest it might be another thing.

You really wish it all could change - that you could be happy once again. Happy as you once were, sometime long ago - before your life was taken from you. Unfortunately, you just don't know how it could all be different. Somebody has to help you.

## **The forest is a place for loneliness without expectations**

---

In the forest, you can be alone, away from everything you already know. Out there you can disappear, and nobody can find you. It is silent. Your cries drown in the forest. Your duties disappear too. Out here, you find no expectations, nobody who needs anything from you.

Walking in the woods is like leaving everybody you know behind - everybody you love. But when you are alone, it doesn't seem to matter. Then you can just let yourself sink down into the forest floor. Then you can be totally free.

## **To the player**

---

In this game, you represent the past and Agnete's loss. You are her loneliness, her fear of being abandoned and forgotten. You are afraid of the forest, of getting lost, not being seen again if you go too far away. But you play also her urge to disappear into everything that is new, never looking back.

You might paint the forest in shades of grey and loneliness - but also in a few colours of hope for everything to change. Perhaps the forest is both oblivion and the entry to a new life.

You might focus on Agnete's fear of abandonment and at the same time on her urge to get away.

## SUPPORTING CHARACTER

# LUNA

You are Luna, a girl who could be Agnete's new best friend - and perhaps her only friend. At least for a short while.

Of course, you don't know that when a new girl one day shows up to live in Charcoal Devil's house. Because nobody lived there, that is the house where you used to build hideouts and shelters.

Maybe you live on the other side of the forest, past the bogs. Where it is exactly is not important. Wherever your home is, you aren't happy about anyone visiting you - if you have a home at all. You prefer it in the woods. Or in the house that the new girl has now moved it into. That is where you belong.

You are strangers, but you might be attracted to each other right away. Or maybe you are doubtful, cautious and shy. After all, in the beginning, you don't know that you are determined to become best friends - and neither do you know that soon after, you will have to part again. Maybe you dislike her because she has taken your house - or because she has entered your forest.

You are cheeky, jaunty and answer back. You know your way around the trees and in the clearings. Nobody harms you. After all, you've been living out here near the woods as far as you can remember. You have been building hideouts and been lost many times. You might be able to take care of Agnete. When you are in the woods, you are everything she isn't.

You aren't afraid of anything - not even The Charcoal Devil. At least that is what you always say. But to be honest, you might be scared of one thing, and one thing only. That one thing you don't want to think of - and even less to talk about.

## To the player

---

While playing Luna you have an important task: You have to reach out for Agnete, give her a glimpse of hope in all her loneliness. You could very well fully embrace her, drag her into that kind of stormy friendship only seven-year-old girls have.

Shed more and more light into Agnetes life, making everything brighter. The more intense the friendship becomes, the worse it can go later on.



# AGNETE'S RESPONSIBILITY

The forest is free from expectations

Supporting character: Little Brother

In this game you'll be playing several roles, switching between them during play. First of all, your task is to play out Agnete's responsibility, her urge to make Mum, Dad, and Little Brother happy and safe. But you'll also be focusing on her frustration about not knowing what her responsibility actually is anymore. What is her role, now she has moved into the new house? What is her responsibility for Little Brother?

You also have an important task in describing the forest as unfamiliar, yet as a place away from responsibility and worries too. It might be a place of freedom.

You'll be playing Little Brother too - a little four-year-old boy who is sick and coughs too much, getting worse and worse. You might focus on his need for comfort and care and his urge to hear about Agnete's experiences in the forest. Getting him and Agnete to bond tightly is an important task of you

## STIKORD

### Agnete

What actually is your responsibility?

What is expected of you?

The forest is alien and scary - but also a sanctuary from all expectations.

### Little Brother

4 years old, sick

Want Agnete's comfort and care - wants to hear about her adventures.

Make sure that Agnete has a close bond with him.



# AGNETE

## **Responsibility is hard**

---

It all used to be so simple, so close-knit and predictable. So it was back in the city, but now it isn't like that anymore. Now, it is all new and changed. And what does that mean to you? To who you are? To what you are supposed to do?

How does it all work out, out here? Are you a big girl now? And how does one behave like a big girl when everything around you has totally changed, all of a sudden? What are you supposed to do? What are you supposed to say? What do Mum and Dad expect you to do? What is the best way to take care of them? And of Little Brother? There is so much you want to do - so much you are expected to understand.

But now, all of a sudden, it's your own task to figure it all out? Once it was easy to figure it all out - but not anymore. Finding your role and your place is suddenly your own responsibility.

## **The forest is free from expectations**

---

The forest is such an alien place. Like the house is too. Like your new life is out here next to the forest.

You hate everything new and strange. What is alien is what you don't understand. As the expectations and demands, you don't know how to handle, and no one has told you about.

But the forest might also be a place to do whatever you want. Where nothing is expected of you. Where you can be Agnete, just the way you want to - where it's not all about Mum and Dad and Little Brother and all their expectations on how Agnete is supposed to be. Where they don't tell her what to play, how to behave, and how to go on adventures.

## **To the player**

---

While playing Agnete you represent her responsibility - and the heavy weight of it. The burden of not knowing what your responsibility really is. What role are you supposed to play out here in your new surroundings?

You also play the forest: The forest as a place where everything is new and without expectations. As a place, you alone are to define. The forest is dark, alien, and thick - and like an empty canvas, not yet painted on. But it's also a place of neglect - by going there you'll neglect your responsibilities. It's a place to seek out when you don't care about other people.



## SUPPORTING CHARACTER

# LITTLE BROTHER

You come outside so rarely. You can't stand it, you cough too much. Sometimes you cough up some black stuff. You especially do so after moving into the new house.

You stick mainly to the house. It feels almost like something's keeping you there by force. You just want Agnete to be near you. She has to take care of you, not go playing in the woods.

But you also want to listen to her stories. Hear about her playing. Hear about all the things you are not able to do. Hear about the forest and everything new out there - even though she, by experiencing it all, will be away from you. And that makes you sad and even more scared.

You are four years old, dreaming of Adventures. You are like Rusky, dreaming of his Jonathan. You can't do much. You are weak and sick and trapped in the house.

### **To the player**

---

While playing Little Brother, you have a very important task: You have to establish Agnete's relationship with him - make sure he gets a role to play and some space. You have to make her worry and care about him, to feel responsibility which she has such a hard time figuring out how to handle.

You might play him as a little boy who at one side is fascinated by all what he can't experience by himself. And on the other side as a boy totally afraid of it. You might push Agnete on adventures and at the same time try to drag her home to take care of you instead. You might try to make her feel guilty over abandoning you - and try to make her stay at home to take care of you and protect you from whatever is out there.

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUPPORTING CHARACTERS



# INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUPPORTING CHARACTERS - THE FIRST ACT

## *Cut out*

### **1 The doctor comes by**

---

You are the doctor, serious and cold. You have to take a look at Little Brother, listen to him coughing. You are not a man full of games, not playful at all. You are not funny, and there is no room for fun and games - especially not when you find charcoal dust in the boy's lungs.

# INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUPPORTING CHARACTERS - THE SECOND ACT

## **2 Roxie, the cat - who is not there**

---

You are Roxie, the cat, who hasn't returned home. Nobody knows where you are. You'll play the signs of the cat who is not there. In the house, what signs remind the family of him? How is it normally when he is around?

### **Thorvald**

## **4 - The fire is about to die**

---

The fire is about to die out. The firewood is gone, burned to ashes in the wood stove, and the basket is empty. No more charcoal, no more wood. You are in a hurry. Maybe she can help you.

## **6 Luna - Has to move away**

---

It's over. Unfortunately. You can't be Agnete's friend anymore. You have to move far away, abandoning the forest and Agnete. You have to tell her. But are you sad about it? Or are you looking forward to new experiences and a change of scenery? It is hard to tell her, no matter what.

## **8 Roxie, the cat - is dead**

---

You are Roxie, the cat. You are dead, lying close to Thorvald's house. But where exactly are you? How do you look? Please, suggest where you are, more than telling it directly. You are, after all, dead and therefore quite passive - and the dead can't speak up directly.

## **10 The doctor - Wants to hospitalize Little Brother**

---

You are the doctor who listens to the black, dirty lungs. You have to measure the dust, the charcoal dust. The dust that blackens his coughing. Wait a minute, doesn't it seem like some of the dust is also scattered from you? Could it be you who brings the dust into the house?

## **3 Mum and Dad - a busy morning**

---

"Come on Agnete, get out of bed now! We're saying it for the third time. NOW! You'll be late for school!"

You are everything but an adventurous version of Mum and Dad. No room for fun and games. No time for adventure. You are an efficient version of Mum and Dad.

"Come on, let's go! NOOOOW!"

## **5 Thorvald - The fire is dead**

---

The fire is dead, now it's so cold. Maybe the heart will escape. That is so terrible. She has to help you.

## **7 Thorvald - The cat is dead**

---

You have to show Agnete something. Just outside her house, there is something you, unfortunately, have to show her. It's her cat, it's dead. What has happened to it? It HIS fault, you're certain - HE, who takes everything. It all got worse because the fire died and the heart escaped, back to HIM in the woods.

## **9 Little Brother - Wants Agnete**

---

Your condition is getting worse. You are scared and sick and weak. You want Agnete, not Mum and Dad - not this time. You want her with you, to listen to her stories. You want her to tell you that everything will be alright. What is going to happen? You want her to tell you. She has to promise to take care of you, protect you. Forever?



# INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

*Cut out - hand out when necessary from the second act - most in the third act.*

## **11 The Charcoal Devil- haunting Agnete's imagination**

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You are The Charcoal Devil, he who haunts Agnete's imagination. How does he show up? What does she imagine?

## **13 The Charcoal Devil - his whispers**

---

You are The Charcoal Devil, a quiet voice in the wind. You whisper in tones of smoke and dust - but just a bit, only a hint for Agnete to almost hear - like she's not hearing it when she tries to listen closely.

## **15 The Charcoal Devil - omens in charcoal and smoke**

---

You are The Charcoal Devil, he who has a heart of the blackest charcoal. You are the omens, the indication of him, drawn by charcoal, fire and smoke.

## **17 The Charcoal Devil - He who is out there**

---

You are The Charcoal Devil, who is in the woods. Who is in the bogs, in the trees, in the ground. He who is out there somewhere, if only you search long enough.

## **19 The Charcoal Devil - is manifesting**

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You are The Charcoal Devil, he who stands before you. He who is a figure. But how does he look? What is he able to do?

## **12 The Charcoal Devil - Some subtle hints**

---

You are The Charcoal Devil, he who is out there somewhere. You are just very subtle suggestions. Some rattle in the wind or a hint of smoke in the air.

## **14 The Charcoal Devil - he who takes**

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You are The Charcoal Devil, he who takes and takes. But what is he taking? And what did he already take? Was it he who, by calling, took you away from the big city?

## **16 The Charcoal Devil - He who is on his way**

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You are The Charcoal Devil, he who is coming. He who creaks in the woods, who thunders and rumbles. He who tears down everything.

## **18 The Charcoal Devil - wants his house**

---

You are The Charcoal Devil - he who wants to get in. He who shakes, tears, and yells and screams. He, who pounds and rips.

## **20 The Charcoal Devil - wants his heart**

---

You are The Charcoal Devil, he who wants his heart back. You are the one without a heart, the heartless.

# OVERVIEWS



# BRIEFING AND WARM-UP

## BASIC CONCEPT

- \* A psychological horror story from a child's point of view
- \* Seven-year-old Agnete has moved from the city to a house at the edge of the forest. With Mum, Dad, and Little Brother who coughs.
- \* Agnete is lonely and scared. Misses her life in the city.
- \* The players establish and build up the fear of The Charcoal Devil, the big antagonist.
- \* The players play Agnete in collaboration. They play the supporting characters too.
- \* The players describe and define the surroundings.
- \* Everything is experienced from Agnete's point of view.
- \* No objective truth, neither when it comes to The Charcoal Devil
- \* Can have a happy end or end as a tragedy.

## MOOD AND SETTING

- \* The house is situated at a road next to the forest. Scattered houses. The school is on the other side of the woods.
- \* The house is an old barn. The main house is gone.
- \* The mood of the game is dark and larger-than-life.
- \* Grownups are weird and act like a caricature. Hard to decide who to be trusted.

## STYLE OF PLAY

- \* Fluently changing between the players narrating and describing and a more traditional form of roleplaying.
- \* You will set the pace and the flow of the game, and ask questions about situations and emotions.
- \* Themes and perspectives for each player are introduced in the role descriptions. For instance, representing 'The story as hard to get your head around' or 'compelling and beautiful'.
- \* Themes and perspectives are meant as an inspiration - not as something rock solid.
- \* Instructions for supporting characters will be handed out on notes. As a rule of thumbs, the players stick to a certain supporting character throughout the game - but they can change player if needed to.
- \* The players help to describe the surroundings - with inspiration from a photo card handed out by you.
- \* It is also possible to play the absence of certain things.

## PLAYING AGNETE

- \* A shared task for the players to establish her character and fears - not to drag her in different directions.
- \* All players can suggest thoughts and observations - and act out inner dialogues between her different perspectives.
- \* In traditional role-playing scenes she is played by one of the players. The others can comment. It is possible to switch the player in the middle of a scene.
- \* Playing a child means the world is incomprehensible. Everything is interpreted in a certain way making sense to her. Is not acting unpredictably.

## PLAYING THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

- \* The Charcoal Devil is the antagonist build-up by the players.
- \* There is no objective truth about The Charcoal Devil.
- \* It is the task of the players to introduce the stories about The Charcoal Devil for the Agnete.
- \* The Charcoal Devil gets more and more tangible.
- \* The Charcoal Devil can seem present in many ways. As indications in nature, as a knock on the window or a whisper in the wind. Even incarnated as some of the supporting characters.
- \* You will hand out notes with instructions and inspiration during the game.
- \* How Agnete can confront the Charcoal Devil - if possible at all - is established by the players.

---

## WARM-UP

The schoolyard. A seven-year-old boy having his break. The roles are:

- \* ***The boys urge to hang out with the cool boys***  
Supporting character: The girl he is in love with
- \* ***The boy's shyness***  
Supporting characters: The big boys
- \* ***The boy's self-esteem***  
Supporting character: His only friend, the silent, nerdy type
- \* ***The boy's urge to get away***  
Supporting character: The teacher on playground duty

Everybody runs out to the schoolyard. Ask about the schoolyard and details. Introduce different groups. Use the perspective of the players.

A scene with the friends, the cool boys, the girl and the teacher on playground duty. Use the PRINCIPLE as a threat. Ask about him: What is said about him? Try changing player during the scenes.

Escaping the principle's office. The other players set up resistance and obstacles.

# PROLOGUE

**Appr. 15 min**

***Agnete can't sleep. Introduce the room, the house and Little Brother. Mum and Dad are not around.***

## ROLES IN THE PROLOGUE

- \* ***Agnete's fear***  
Little Brother, coughing
- \* ***Agnete's loneliness***  
Whatever is outside the window
- \* ***Agnete's memories***  
Mum and Dad who are not there
- \* ***Agnete's reason***  
The house that is new - and yet so very old

## AGNETE CAN'T SLEEP

Short description: Night, pitch-black outside the windows. Agnete is in her bed, wide awake, can't sleep. It's all silent and yet not silent at all.

What kind of room is it? Hand out a couple of photos.

What is Agnete thinking about? Ask about what she misses.

What is outside the window? Sounds from the woods, branches scraping the window?

Ask more about the house. What kind of house? What kind of noises?

## LITTLE BROTHER IS COUGHING, MUM AND DAD IS NOT THERE

Describe Little Brother's coughing. He awakes, calls for Agnete or Mum and Dad.

Mum and Dad are not around. Don't come when you call. Weirdly quiet in the house.



# ROLE OVERVIEW

***Hand out role descriptions after the prologe,  
before playing the first act,***

## AGNETE'S FEAR

***The inexplicable fear***

***The forest is hard to get your head around ... and compelling.***

***Supporting Character: Thorvald***

### **Agnete**

- \* Hates everything new. Can't explain why. There is something out there, almost speaking to her.
- \* The forest is alien and scary - but also tempting in all its danger. Try to keep Agnete of the forest, but also try to drag her in.

### **Thorvald**

- \* Weird, legless man. Has to tell about The Charcoal Devil.
- \* Keeps the Charcoal Devil's heart in his woodstove. He is scared of HIM but doesn't want to lose HIM either.
- \* Drives a three-wheeled electrical scooter.
- \* Short introduction when the family moves in.
- \* First real meeting is in the woods. He is stuck in the mud.

## AGNETE'S NEED FOR COMFORT

***The need for comfort***

***The forest is unpredictable ... and compelling and beautiful***

***Supporting characters: Roxie, the Cat. Mum and Dad.***

### **Agnete**

- \* Insecure about her new world.
- \* A need for comfort and the well-known. Dreams of putting away her fear, being curious and investigative instead.
- \* The forest a new place - insecure - but also beautiful and compelling. The forest drags her.

### **Roxie, the cat**

- \* His own master. Curious, adventurous. Something calls in the dark.

### **Mum and Dad**

- \* Eager for adventure, showing Agnete everything. Are enthusiastic at one moment, the next totally opposite.
- \* Unpredictable and worried. Shift mood and attitude all the time.

## AGNETE'S LONELINESS

***The loss of what once was there***

***The forest is a place for loneliness without expectations***

***Supporting character: Luna***

### **Agnete**

- \* Misses her former life.
- \* Doesn't want to cry - really not.
- \* Hopes for everything to change.
- \* In the forest, she can get lost, be forgotten, become even more lonely.
- \* In the forest, she can also be alone, without expectation.

### **Luna**

- \* Girl in the woods - knows it very well
- \* Isn't scared of anything - almost anything.
- \* She can show Agnete the woods.

## AGNETE'S RESPONSIBILITY

***Responsibility is hard***

***The forest is free from expectations***

***Supporting character: Little Brother***

### **Agnete**

- \* What is her responsibility anyway?
- \* What is expected of her?
- \* The forest is alien and scary - but a place for freedom too, away from expectations.

### **Little Brother**

- \* 4 year old, ill
- \* Wants Agnete's comfort - wants to hear about her adventures too.
- \* Let Agnete and him form a close bond.

# THE FIRST ACT - AGNETE'S NEW WORLD

**Appr. 1,5 hours. Set-up and exposition.**

## MOST IMPORTANT IN THE FIRST ACT

- \* Agnete's new surroundings, the house and the forest.
- \* Mum, Dad, and Roxy the cat - Agnete's relationship with them.
- \* Let Agnete meet Luna and let them become friends.
- \* Describe the house and the woods - establish important locations.
- \* Agnete meets Thorvald. He introduces The Charcoal Devil.
- \* Agnete's relationship with Little Brother - introduce his illness.

## THE NEW HOUSE AND THE NEW LIFE

### The family is moving in

---

Arrives by car. First impressions. Thorvald keeps an eye on them - perhaps he comes by.

### Exploring the house

---

Explore the house. The rooms. Basement with a furnace and charcoal. The garden.

### How was life back in the city

---

Memories from Agnete's former life. Her old friends.

### The first couple of nights in the house

---

Will Agnete accept the house? Is she able to sleep? Is she scared?

Sleeping without Little Brother in the room.

### First day at school

---

A scene at the breakfast table. Busy. Drive through the forest - what is to be seen? Ask about the forest.

How is the day in school?

## LUNA AND THE FOREST

### Luna - a new friend?

---

How do they meet? Let the player decide.

### Exploring the forest - alone and with Luna

---

Describe places in the forest, inspiration from photos. Establish locations to be used again in the third act.

### Alone in the forest

---

Perhaps she is lost. What is the forest like without Luna around?

### Roxie in woods

---

Roxie goes on adventures. Perhaps Agnete is following. He can drag her into the forest.

### The charcoal burning site

---

In the middle of the forest there is smoke and piles of dirt and charcoal is burning. Do they dare to approach?

## LITTLE BROTHER'S ILLNESS

### The doctor comes by

---

**Note for supporting character: 'The The doctor comes by' (no. 1)**

The doctor attends Little Brother, charcoal dust in his lungs. What does Agnete think of him?

## THORVALD AND THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

### Thorvald is stuck in the forest

---

First real encounter with Thorvald. Is stuck in the mud far inside the forest. Needs help.

### Visiting Thorvald's house - a deeper introduction to The Charcoal Devil

---

Slowly experiencing Thorvald's home. Burning hot from the woodstove. He can tell about The Charcoal Devil.



# THE SECOND ACT - WHAT THE CHARCOAL DEVIL TAKES

**1-1,5 hour. Conflict escalation and point of no return.**

## MOST IMPORTANT IN THE SECOND ACT

- \* Elaborate the stories of The Charcoal Devil. Establish and escalate Agnete's fear - by Thorvald's stories and by playing indications of his presence.
- \* Agnete loses her few anchor points.
- \* The cat is dead.
- \* Luna has to move away.
- \* Little Brother's condition gets worse and he gets hospitalised.
- \* Thorvald dies in a fire.

## EVERYDAY LIFE - THE OPENING OF THE FIRST ACT

### **Agnete can't sleep**

---

**Hand out notes: Roxie, who is not there (no. 2). You might also hand out the first note for The Charcoal Devil (no. 11).**

Agnete is in her bed. Repetition of the prologue, with thoughts of The Charcoal Devil added.

### **Busy morning, the cat is gone**

---

**Notes: Mum and Dad (no. 3)**

Agnete needs to get up. Can't find Roxie. Mum and Dad are in a hurry.

### **Drive through the forest towards the school**

---

By car or by bus. What is the forest like? Is the cat to be seen?

## THORVALD

### **The fire is about to burn out - Thorvald needs help**

---

**Notes: Thorvald - to versions of the note (no. 4 and no. 5)**

Perhaps helping Thorvald collecting firewood. Thorvald is worried,

### **A smokeless chimney**

---

Where is Thorvald? Perhaps entering the house to save the fire.

## LUNA AND THE FOREST

### **Luna has to move away**

---

**Notes: Luna has to move away (no. 6)**

Let perhaps the player decide when Luna tells the bad news.

## THE CAT IS GONE

### **The cat is dead - lies near Thorvald's house**

---

**Notes: Thorvald (no. 7) and Roxie (no. 8)**

Where is Roxie's body situated? How does Thorvald manage to tell? Describe the cat.

## AGNETE'S LONELINESS

### **Nobody is home**

---

Agnete comes home to an empty house. Where is everyone? Perhaps Little brother is sleeping in his room.

## LITTLE BROTHER'S ILLNESS

### **Little Brother's condition gets worse - wants Agnete's pledge**

---

**Note: Little Brother wants Agnete (no. 9)**

Mum and dad are not good enough. Wants Agnete to tell what will happen. She must promise to protect him. Forever?

### **The doctor wants to hospitalise Little Brother**

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**Notes: The doctor (no. 10)**

He wants to take Little Brother with him. What does Agnete do? Does she see the doctor as The Charcoal Devil?

### **Little Brother in the hospital**

---

White coats. Describe the hospital and Little Brother in bed, perhaps in a respirator.

## THORVALD DIES - END OF THE SECOND ACT

### **Fire at Thorvald's**

---

Drives past Thorvald's house. Police, yellow tape, ambulance, stretcher. Thorvald is dead because of the smoke. No visible fire damage on the house.

# THE THIRD ACT - CONFRONTING THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

**1 hour. Desperation, climax and ending.**

## MOST IMPORTANT IN THE THIRD ACT

- \* Escalate the fear of The Charcoal - to complete desperation.
- \* Agnete tries to find the Charcoal Devil - or he tries to find her.
- \* The players act as resistance to Agnete's efforts..
- \* A dramatic confrontation.
- \* A recapitulation showing what happens afterwards.

## GAME MECHANIC:

### LET THE PLAYERS CREATE THE RESISTANCE FOR AGNETE

Specific scenes with Agnete trying to accomplish something to continue - eg. to get past the bog or hide in the closet.

A player explains why it's hard to achieve, establishes resistance. What is about to wrong? Is something going wrong?

## INSTRUCTIONAL NOTES FOR THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

Hand out notes for the Charcoal Devil (No. 11-20) - not everyone at once, though. Use them to escalate the situation.

## HOW TO DEFEAT THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

- \* Stop being scared of him
- \* Catch or destroy the heart
- \* Give him back his heart
- \* Find one's courage
- \* Sacrifice oneself

## POWERLESSNESS: BACK IN THE HOUSE

Fear and frustration What to do? Does she dare to anything? All by herself.

From powerlessness to desperation

## DESPERATION: CLOSER TO THE CHARCOAL DEVIL

Trying to find and confront The Charcoal Devil? Or perhaps wait for him? Or try to hide?

Split the confrontation into a number of scenes. Set up resistance, making it hard to achieve.

The Charcoal Devil seems near most of the time.

## CLIMAX: CONFRONTATION

Finally, face to face to face with The Charcoal Devil - or perhaps he is hiding.

What does he look like? What does she do? What does he do? Counterattack? Running away?

Remember to set up resistance.

Split the climax into several scenes - perhaps escaping with his heart chased by the Charcoal Devil.

How does he smell? Is it hot?

## RECAPITULATION: WHAT NOW?

### **If Agnete survives**

---

What happens afterwards? With Agnete? And with Little Brother, Mum, and Dad. Is Little Brother getting better?

### **If Agnete dies**

---

Cut when things turn black for her.

Or zoom out from Agnete's point of view. Mum and dad find her, maybe dead in the forest, suffocated by the smoke at the charcoal burning site. Or perhaps they never find her.

# PITCH

## SHORT PITCH

The charcoal devil takes everything from you. It is true, because the neighbour says so. And when you're seven years old, stuff like that seems very real - especially when your little brother is ill, you're lonely, afraid and has recently moved into a rural house next to a large forest.

## KULFANDEN PÅ TINGHUSEVEJ

The house is situated just next to the big dark forest. It is the Charcoal Devil's house and seven year old Agnete and her parents has just moved in to it. Little Brother too, who coughs way too much. This is a place for adventure, at least if you ask Mum and Dad.

But for Agnete it's no adventure. Out here it seems way too scary, too alien for her, too much something the grownups don't understand. And when the mysterious neighbour begins to tell stories about The Charcoal Devil, things get worse. He takes everything from you, he says - the same way he took everything from the neighbour.

The Charcoal Devil is a psychological horror story told from a child's point of view. Agnete is the main character who is played by all four players in collaboration. The players also play all the supporting characters, and together they explore and build on to the scary world Agnete lives in. In that way the game is intended for players who like to add on to and co-create within the framework the scenario brings. The game is at the same time both very open and very tight - and don't worry about keeping focus as a player, the game master's main task is to keep the game focused on what's important and what's not.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mikkel Bækgaard is a Danish scenario writing veteran who has written games since 1997. In this game he brings a dark story inspired by the very same forest and house he quite recently has moved in to. A place his own seven year old daughter doesn't appreciate as much as he does.

## KORT INFO

Key words: Childish horror, loneliness, co-creatio

Number of players: 4 players + 1 game master

Playing time: App. 4-5 hours.





The house at Tinghusevej



The house at Tinghusevej





The house at Tinghusevej



The house at Tinghusevej





The house at Tinghusevej



The house at Tinghusevej





The house at Tinghusevej



Near the house





The path leading from the house



The forest





The forest



The forest





The forest



The forest





The forest



The forest





The forest



The forest





The forest



The forest





The forest



The school





Thorvald's house



Thorvald's house