

NIBIRU



QUICKSTART GUIDE

AN ARTIFICIAL SUNSET,
BEHIND HILLS FORGED FROM METAL,
THOROUGHLY COVERED IN FLOWERS,
WREATHED IN SHIMMERING PETALS.

THE SYMPTOMS OF NATURE,
NOW MANUFACTURED,
BY RAMSHACKLE GODS,
AS DIM REALITY FRACTURED.

WITH MEMORIES LOST,
AND THEIR PAST LIVES FORGOTTEN,
THEY WANDER NIBIRU,
A HELL THEY'VE BEGOTTEN...

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VOLUME I

WELCOME TO NIBIRU

*“Memories warm you up from the inside.
But they also tear you apart.”*
Haruki Murakami, *Kafka on the Shore*

>Welcome to Nibiru! This Quickstart Guide is designed to give you the basic tools to run a simple game, set in the interior of a strange and ominous space station. The stories that you and your friends create and the adventures you will embark on will be tales of action and drama, of mystery and horror. Tales of self-discovery, and of the search for past lives, long lost in the cold, harsh interior of Nibiru. You will inhabit the skins of those called the **Vagabonds**; people who awoke, entirely devoid of memory, adrift in a strange world they do not know, fighting to survive another day while struggling to remember who they truly are. You will determine your fate, you will face your fears and —if you are smart and strong enough— you will recover what is yours:

The memories of your past.

HOW TO USE

To play Nibiru, you will need the following: **A group of friends** to play the game with —and to help you decide the kind of game you want your *Nibiru* to be. Is it mainly a mystery story, about the strange, inexplicable events that occur in the far reaches of the space station? Is it maybe a horror story, in which you are confronted by those things that haunt the dark, in the forgotten corridors of a craft whose very purpose is a mystery? Is it a political game, where your characters delve into the machinations and schemes of the station’s rulers? Answering these and other questions will help to make sure that everyone is happy with the story being told and the direction narrative is to take.

One of you will have the role of **Narrator**, probably you, who are currently reading this. You craft the story and guide your players through it; you take on the roles of all the characters who aren't portrayed by the players (**NPCs** or **Non-Player Characters**). You create the environment in which the players find themselves, detailing the peculiar odours leaking from an air vent, the eldritch phosphorescence that guides their way. Whatever you imagine, your players experience. Also needed are six **four-sided dice** (which you can buy at most tabletop gaming stores), a **pencil** and

a copy of the **Character & Journal Sheets** for each player, which you can find at the end of this Quick Start Guide. We also recommend Narrators keeping a **notepad** and **pencil** handy, to take any important notes they may need. You will also need at least one copy of the **Nibiru: Quickstart Guide** that you are reading at the moment, for quick rules-referencing. Most sessions of Nibiru last for around 3 to 5 hours. However, this can vary depending on the group; play at a pace which suits you and your friends!

—JUST A TASTE!—

*This Quickstart Guide takes for granted that you already know what role playing games are. The Nibiru Corebook features a more thorough explanation as to what role playing games are, but if this is your first experience at tabletop RPGs, might we suggest you head over to www.unpossiblejourneys.com, which offers great advice and guidance for those new to gaming. Also, bear in mind that **the rules contained in this guide are simplified**, and, therefore, slightly different from those presented in the Nibiru Corebook.*

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TALE CRAFTING MECHANICS

In Nibiru, most simple actions the characters perform do not require a roll of the dice. Any normal, mundane task the players want to carry out, they do so. The purpose of this game and its rules is to tell exciting and engaging stories! Thus, we want the players to make choices that entail great risk, high stakes and a feeling of anticipation. It is when performing these actions that a dice roll is needed —precisely when is something decided by the Narrator. Depending on the result of this roll, the outcome might be good, or bad. You want to open a locked door, as the unbearable sensation of being watched makes your fingers itch? Get ready to roll those dice. Depending on the result, anything might happen —perhaps the door explodes open, flinging you backwards, or perhaps that feeling between your shoulder blades was just para-

noia. Alternatively, the Narrator might ask a player to roll without explaining why—a successful result might lead to the revelation that a sound, almost too low to be perceptible, echoes along the hallway. In these two examples, we have one situation in which the roll comes as a result of a character's decision, and another in which the character might be able to notice something in particular. The first roll is known as an **active roll**, since it is an action performed after the player declared their desire to execute a specific action. The second is a **passive roll**, since it did not come from a decision made by the player. Dice rolls in Nibiru use four-sided dice, and you won't need more than a handful (six, to be precise) to play. All rolls, unless stated otherwise, are performed by rolling three four-sided dice. Jumping over a chasm? Roll three dice. Eavesdropping on that suspicious trader? Roll three dice. Fighting against a security guard? You guessed it... Roll three dice! The action is a success if you see one or more "4" results among the dice you rolled—we refer to "4" results as **Successes**.

CONTESTED ACTIONS

In Nibiru, there are some actions are **Contested**, in which your character acts in opposition to someone or something. These actions are all performed by rolling three dice but, in this case, the Narrator also needs to make a roll for the adversary. Once both rolls are made, you add up the results of each roll (instead of looking for Successes), and the one who has the largest result wins. Bear in mind that adversaries might roll more (or less) than three dice, depending on their capabilities! In the event of a **tie**, the result is an **unresolved engagement**: The interaction is put on pause for a moment, as both sides are locked in conflict, giving other characters chance to do something. Once the other characters have completed their actions, the focus once again returns to the character and their opponent. The player can now choose to engage once more or to back off from the situation.

MODIFIERS

In some situations, a certain task might be easier or harder to perform than normal. To represent this the Narrator can **add or subtract a certain number of dice from your roll**. For example, Modifiers can be applied when the characters are using specialist equipment to assist in the completion of a task or achieve a certain goal (bonuses), or when they are affected by circumstances (a bleeding wound, a reputation for untrustworthiness, etc.) that might hinder their progress (penalties). Characters can also help each other out, providing extra dice depending

on their skill as described in **Combat (on page 6 for more detail)** and, of course, depending on whether they can get to their friend in time to assist! Modifiers are also applied to certain **Action Types** (described below) after the recovery of memories. The key thing to keep in mind is that, whatever happens, when rolling for any action, a character **cannot roll less than 1 Die or more than 6 Dice**. The characters are remarkable in many ways, but they have limits.

—SEVEN DICE OR MORE—

There are some things out there, hidden in the vastness of Nibiru, which might possess abilities which exceed those of human beings. But these things are for the Narrator to decide...

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ACTION TYPES

Action rolls are those dice rolls we use to determine the outcome of most players' decisions. Each action roll is tied to a certain **Action Type** (if you are rolling to climb on to something, that roll's action type is Climbing). Action types are important when considering **Memories** (explained in the next page) and when referring to certain **Modifiers** that may apply.

Some of these Action Types might have a specific **Category** attached to them—when this is the case, the Category will be noted between brackets. Categories serve to represent special subtypes of Action Types, which might be important for the Narrator and player to be aware of.

***Example:** Although Marianne might be very good at playing the harp—and also the reason why she has a positive modifier for **Playing Instruments** (Harp)—this doesn't mean she knows how to play the guitar to anything like the same level—although at the end of the day both action types involve playing a musical instrument.*

Action Types are created by the Narrator. Ultimately, the role of Action Types is to properly describe the type of task that characters perform, and to reflect both characters' strengths and weaknesses.

—CREATING ACTION TYPES—

As you start playing, you will notice that coming up with some Action Types is more intuitive than others. If a character tries to read someone's lips, it's totally OK to label that as Lip-reading. However, we could also classify that as Social Intuition. Normally, we recommend you don't go with neither too broad nor too narrow and Action Type. This is will help you to apply bonuses and penalties at the right time to add to the drama!

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SPECIAL ROLLS

Sometimes, the game's rules will require you to make **Special Rolls**. These rolls cannot be affected by Memory Points and are usually utilized to determine the outcome of specific, dramatic events. In this book, whenever we speak about a Special Roll, you will see the "**Special Roll**" prefix along with the amount of dice rolled for it.

INFLUENCE POINTS

Influence Points exist to grant the players a fraction of the Narrator's power, by changing certain circumstances and affecting rolls. **Each character starts the game with two Influence Points.** These points are used in two different ways. You can spend an Influence Point to re-roll **any amount** of dice rolled by **any one player** (excluding the Narrator) once per roll. Alternatively, you can use it to trigger a **Deja Vu**—This is a special ability which allows you a small change to the scene, giving you and your fellow players an edge.

Example Situations:

*Suzanne's character is trying to get past a security guard in Sakkara's market district. She sneaks behind him, and checks no one is around. Then, she spends an Influence Point and describes the **Deja Vu** triggered; her character has not just crept past the guard, now she also grabs a pot laying on the ground, and shatters it on the security guard's head, instantly knocking him unconscious.*

*Norman's character is fighting against an adversary, close to the edge of a lethal drop into the abyss. The fight does not go well for Norman, and an unexpected kick sends him, hurtling, over the precipice and into the void. In that moment, Norman spends an Influence Point, triggers a **Deja Vu**, and states that there was a cable hanging from the railing. Quickly, he attempts to grab onto the cable. He rolls... And succeeds! That was close!*

Also, Narrators might award one or several players with an Influence Point if they approach a situation in a smart, unusual or extra cool manner. Whatever it is, make sure it's awesome, whether it is performing an action in a spectacular manner, delineating an awe-inspiring memory or achieving a major objective in a game, etc. Influence Points can also be used by the Narrator to **Compel** a player. When a Narrator Compels a player, she offers him a certain number of Influence Points, in exchange for the player having his character do something which might be against their best interests, or in a way they might not have thought of. The Narrator can also offer the player a chance to insert a Memory in his Journal (see page

6). The player can accept or decline the Compel action, but if he declines then the character does not earn Influence Points—a resource which may prove invaluable later on! The Narrator can use Compels to foster the development of a characters' most iconic traits, encouraging players to develop the ideas behind their characters' personalities and identities.

BODY & MIND

As the Vagabonds traverse the far reaches of Nibiru, their health (both mental and physical) will, sooner or later, become endangered. The Body and Mind Tracks tell you how well your character is both physically and mentally. Both tracks have four levels, or **Steps**. The topmost figures symbolize the **OK** status step. The ones below are the **Beaten Down/Stressed** figures, which represent those respective status steps. Below, we have the **Badly Wounded/Delirious** steps and, last, the **Dead/Insane** steps. A character descends a Step in their Body track whenever they are harmed or become ill. A character descends in their Mind track when overpowered by fear or trauma. Characters who reach the **Dead/Insane** steps are... Well, dead or insane. This unfortunate casualty of Nibiru should be consigned to the darkness—resulting in the player needing to roll up a new character.

—LOOSING YOUR MIND—

Nibiru is a place where fears abound. Sooner or later the Vagabonds' journeys will pit them against those fears. Anything that shakes the will of the characters is a Fear Source. Encountering a Fear Source entails a contested dice roll, made against the characters. The most common Fear Sources might require a four dice roll. The most terrifying abominations can be represented by six dice rolls or more!

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COMBAT

Conflict in Nibiru is inevitable. With so many interests and beliefs clashing, violent confrontation is guaranteed to take place, and it's most likely that the characters will—sooner or later—face a martial challenge in their quest to survive. Violent encounters are extremely quick and deadly. They are carried out by making a contested roll, which pits the character or characters against one or more adversaries.

Here's how combat works:

In combat, make a contested roll. Whichever participant rolls the lowest reduces their Body track by a Step. If the loosing side did so by half the re-

sult of the winning side, the Body track is reduced by two steps instead of one. If the clash was lost by more than a third of the winning result, the losing sides Body track is reduced by three steps.

If there are more than two characters or NPCs fighting in the same encounter, things change: **Every extra individual adds, to their side, a number of dice equal to half of the dice he utilizes for fighting, rounded down.** This means that, if one PC jumps in, to assist a friend in combat against an enemy, and rolls 3 Dice to fight, this would add 1 Die to their friend's dice pool for that encounter. If, instead, the assisting PC rolls 4 Dice, they add 2 Dice, and so on. **The number of steps by which the Body track of the losing side is reduced-, as a result of losing the combat, is applied to all combatants in the losing side.**

Weapons wielded by the characters add a fixed value to a combat roll's results, provided they are melee weapons. The weapon's value is assigned by the Narrator, who will grant the weapon with a bonus ranging from +2 to +5 (depending on how effective the weapon is).

When characters win an encounter they can choose to force their opponent to move towards a certain location, disarm them, grapple them to the ground, or do anything that would work towards giving an advantage to the side who has just won the contested roll. This must be done, however, at the expense of lowering the opponent's Body track. The Narrator can then work out how this advantage will provide a bonus in the following rounds of combat.

THE MEMOS SYSTEM

Nibiru is a game about recovering lost memories. But... How does that actually work? Well, first we have to take a look at what Memory Points are. Memory Points represent the opportunity for one of the characters to recall a fragment of their lost past. There are any number of different ways in which a person might recall a memory, but in Nibiru the main reason why remembrances are triggered is due to the interactions the characters experience with the world that surrounds them —activities that brings forth memories unbidden, dredged, suddenly, from the depths of the mind.

There are 3 different ways in which a character may acquire Memory Points:

At the end of each game session, every PC automatically earns 1 MP.

By following your Beacon, a specific task determined by the Habitat you chose.

By choosing to fail a roll and, adding a Memory to the Journal giving a permanent penalty (but providing MPs).

THE JOURNAL

Aside from your Character Sheet, each character has a certain number of pages which form part of "the Journal". As the game progresses, the Journal grows and you will need to add more pages. In this Quick Start Guide, however, the Journal has been merged with the Character Sheet and contains six memory entries (one of which is pre-set).

MEMORY ENTRIES

A Memory Entry is the space where a player records a new memory. Each Memory Entry has two spaces: Memory and Effect. The "Memory" space is where you write the emotional content of the character's experiences. The "Effect" space details the mechanical side of it, where the player writes the bonus or penalty gained as a result of that memory's creation.

HOW TO CREATE A MEMORY

There are four different ways in which characters can create a new Memory. The first way is the most common one: **when performing an action, the player chooses to trigger a Memory instead of rolling.** Then they decide if they want to succeed or fail the roll. If they wish to succeed at the roll, they spend either 2, 3 or 5 MPs. The Narrator and the player describe the action taking place, and the memory it inspires between them. The player then writes the memory down. When determining the Effect, the Narrator will tell the player what Action Type the bonus applies to (**see page 4**). The player then writes down the bonus dice depending on the number of MPs spent. These bonus dice will be rolled along with the normal 3 Dice whenever the player attempts the same action. If there's any room for doubt as to when this applies or does not apply, check with the Narrator! Common sense should reign in this regard. **The bonus dice are: +1 Die if the player spent 2 MP, +2 Dice if he spent 3 MPs, and +3 Dice if he spent 5 MPs. Memories can be categorized depending on the amount of dice they grant towards an action type by using Ranks (Rank 1 Memory = +/-1 Die, Rank 2 Memory = +/-2 Dice, Rank 3 Memory = +/-3 Dice).**

The second way in which a player can gain a Memory is by taking a negative one. Like the first, this is decided when about to roll. The player then chooses to fail that roll, and can pick the desired penalty for that Action Type —**which might be either -1 Die or -2 Dice**. He can gain 2, or 3 MPs respectively.

Here is an example of how the MEMOS System is used:

Mary is currently playing with her character, Rose. Her journey has taken an unfortunate turn, as she has been taken prisoner by a group of scavengers. As soon as her captors go to sleep, she makes an attempt to break free by slamming against the cell's door, hoping to make a run to the camp's exit. The Narrator asks Mary to roll the normal 3d4, but Mary decides she will spend two Memory Points instead. In that moment, Mary records a new Memory in her Journal, along with the corresponding Bonus (+1 Die) to "Forcing Doors Open" and writes her memory:

"I Remember being locked up inside the barn by my older brother, laying alone with my scruffy-looking teddy bear. He always did this, until the day I gathered all my strength and busted the door open!"

The Narrator describes how Rose effectively busts the door open, and starts to run towards the camp's gates.

The third and four ways in which a Memory is created are what we call the **All 4s & All 1s Rule**. When you make a normal dice roll, of 3 Dice or more, and **all your dice show a "4" or a "1" result**, the consequences are so great/dire (respectively) that the results are engraved in the memory of the Vagabond, from that moment until the end of her days.

In the case of an All 4s, the action was executed in an exceptional way; the player gets to write a positive Rank 1 Memory with the correspondent Action Type, which should narrate the epic success of the character's action. In the case of an All 1s, the action was executed in a way that had disastrous consequences; the player writes a negative Rank 1 Memory with the correspondent action type, which should showcase the terrible outcome of this event. The player also gets an Influence Point; there is always something to learn from disasters...

To finalize, there's the question of what happens when we acquire memories with an Action Type that we already have. In this case, just **apply the new bonus/penalty to the bonus/penalty you had before**. Remember, that a bonus for a specific action type can never exceed 3 Dice, and a penalty can never go below -2 Dice.



VOLUME II

BERTHA'S SONG

"Their melodies echoed through the hallways of Penumbra, lighting up the hearts of traders and pilgrims, even through the darkest hours."

Geil Herman, on the musicians of Oxydia

Bertha's Song is a short adventure for you and your friends to run, to introduce you to Nibiru's mechanics and its unique setting. It is designed to be played in a single session, however, that of course if up to you and your group. It's a story of horror and suspense, and about the fragile bonds that link a group of newly awakened Vagabonds to each other.

Before getting into the story, lets delve a bit into the setting of Nibiru, and into who the Vagabonds the players will embody really are.

WHAT'S OUT THERE

The place you are visiting is like nothing you have ever seen before. Millions of souls call it home but no one can guess why the place they inhabit even exists—and it's far from an idyllic place to live in. The hallways stretch on for miles, winding through gigantic chambers with vaulted roofs and no obvious purpose; strange, abandoned outposts wait to be discovered, built by unknown hands before being abandoned and left to decay and, everywhere, the looming darkness... Nibiru is all of this and more. It is bleak yet beautiful. A place where stories of adventure, mystery, horror and self-discovery abound. But to better understand it, we need to look beyond these ephemeral details, to endeavour to see the true nature of Nibiru.

Nibiru is huge. Though we leave the exact size up to the Narrators, we suggest that the station stretches some 500 miles upwards at its highest point. The station's most important element is **the Core**. The Core is the heart of Nibiru, and all of the station's power depends on it. Nibiru has a complex processing system of factories, laboratories and facilities that are used to deliver the Core's power to the rest of the station. The station itself is divided into several concentric areas, each with its specific name, usually attributed according to its distance from the Core.

Surrounding the Core itself are the **Blazing Halls**. The Halls were once used to access the Core. However, after hundreds of cycles of relentless power-production, the Core started to go "off balance"—a gradual entropy which spread to the areas closest to it. The Blazing Halls get their name from the high temperatures found therein, which makes them almost impossible to traverse without using special equipment.

Past the Blazing Halls are the **Core Sectors**, comprising the vast areas which the Core feeds with energy safely... For now. The majority of Nibiru's human population lives here, inhabiting the greatest cities and towns within the station, all made possible by resources which each location jealously guards

Beyond these Sectors lie the **Outer Reaches**, and the dark hallways of Penumbra. The Outer Reaches lie on the edge of the Core's energy output range and are accessible via the temperamental, human built vehicles or a long, arduous walk through a maze of ancient tunnels and derelict sewers. The few people who dwell here usually do so—in spite of the harsh conditions, with little access to energy, and the constant risk that the life support systems may fail.

Beyond Penumbra and the Outer Reaches, there is the **Darkness**. This place, devoid of energy in its entirety, is a gigantic labyrinth of forgotten technology, lost civilizations and silence. Few venture there (in spite of rumours of fabulous wealth) and those that do rarely return. Still, stories, half-remembered legends, all whisper of the things that lie within that vast shadowy region, waiting to be found. It is within the deepest parts of the Darkness that Habitats (see **page 9**) are said to exist. And beyond the Darkness... Who knows what might lie waiting to be found?

HABITATS

Somewhere in Nibiru, far from the warmth of the Core, beyond the halls of Penumbra and the creeping shadows of the Darkness, there are some places that remain eternally mysterious to almost all the sentient beings of Nibiru. These places are the Habitats.

Worlds within the World, the Habitats of Nibiru are probably its strangest characteristic, and their inhabitants—the protagonists of this story—its most mysterious denizens. Each of these Habitats is quite different from one another, however they all share some key features: firstly, their location is unknown to the rest of the inhabitants of Nibiru; those who leave the Habitats, either in search of liberation, as a result of expulsion, or simply by becoming hopelessly lost in the Darkness, do so at the cost of their memories. Almost every recollection of their past lives is erased. In terms of game play, the Habitats of Nibiru are the thematic framework from which the players get their inspiration and from which their characters' memories will be gradually restored. Each Habitat has been designed so players can mould and shape them through the discovery of each new memory. Even if a certain habitat has specific, recognisable elements, each player's vision of it will be different and unique.

VAGABONDS

Wanderers. The Lost. Vagabonds.

The characters portrayed by the players are, when compared with other humans of Nibiru, special in many different ways. Not only in their origins, but also in their strange abilities and the mysterious condition in which they find themselves. Vagabonds are indeed mysterious, but this mystery is there to be gradually unravelled by the players. At the beginning of a game, the idea of portraying a character without memories may seem rather odd, but Vagabonds are not empty shells—they know some cool stuff will quickly learn more.

WHAT DO VAGABONDS KNOW?

All Vagabonds know how to speak and engage in normal, everyday conversations. They know how to take care of themselves and how to survive the darkness of Nibiru. Blurry pictures of the past might be imprinted in their memory, but aside from that their previous lives remain a mystery. Imagine yourself, with much of what you know about how the world works, but without your memories, stranded in a strange place. That is the situation the Vagabonds inhabit: lost, alone, and their past an undecipherable haze of images. Until they begin remembering.

HOW DO VAGABONDS REMEMBER?

Like many of us, what we do in everyday life brings memories floating to the surface; everyday tasks have an effect on how we recall things. Similarly, in Nibiru, the main trigger for remembrance is action; it is with movement and effort that a Vagabond remembers. The simple stimuli of executing a certain action can trigger a memory based on that same action. For example, when a Vagabond plunges into a river of filthy water, they are suddenly seized with a vivid recollection of doing something similar, back in their Habitat, with the trappings of their former life all around them..

WHAT DO VAGABONDS STRIVE FOR?

Although the game's implied objective is "to recover your memories", this is, to some extent, an "impossible" objective in the practical sense—since there is no rule nor clear idea of when someone recovers all of their memories. It's an objective made to give your character drive, a sense of purpose, and as you progress and explore more and more, we expect your character to find new goals and ambitions to drive your story and your group's story to exciting places and adventures!

HOW ARE VAGABONDS SEEN IN NIBIRU?

Vagabonds are *extremely rare* in Nibiru and very few have even guessed at their existence, or the existence of the Habitats, out in the darkness. However, when these individuals enter a community, it's hard to hide the fact that they are clearly out of place; they are missing those pieces of shared cultural knowledge which inhabitants of the Core Sectors use to recognize one another, to smooth trade deals and to prove they belong. The response to a Vagabond's arrival is unpredictable and differs from place to place: In some villages in the Outer Reaches, they are considered dangerous bearers of a disease that erases memory. In some cities and conclaves, they might be the objects of admiration and fascination. The way Vagabonds fit into society depends entirely on where they are located, and of course, on the Narrator's ideas for the people of this place.

BrightTown

The Village at the Edge of Nowhere

Do you remember how the sun shone?

*Do you recall the wind? How it caressed the treetops, making them hiss, as if with pleasure?
The damp softness of grass, the singing of the birds, Mother, laughing as she called us in for dinner.*

There is nothing better. Nothing sweeter than home.

And now we are here. And the memories... Well... They are faded, brittle.

All washed out now, not even an after-taste of my life there, nothing to cling to.

This... Place. This prison. It took everything from me.

*But I will find the way back. Even if I find must find myself, as I walk through the darkest shadows, through blood
and filth.*

...I will return to BrightTown.

Surrounded by a wall of dark tendrils, and offering its inhabitants the most idyllic of existences, the Habitat of BrightTown shines—like a miniature hamlet in a snow globe. The village is contained in an enormous dome, sheltering a swathe of verdant land; a hermetic paradise of green hills and artificial prairies. The village, in the centre of the dome, is a sight to behold; a picturesque town, a picture-postcard perfectly reproduced in the midst of Nibiru, populated by about a thousand people. BrightTowners are worthy, friendly and unafraid of outsiders; they love their town, the greenery around them and enjoy spending time outside, under the ever-shining suns. The twin suns—a series of intense lights—perform an eternal dance, rising and setting and circling through the firmament, bathing the fields with an ever-present light. Where the fields end, darkness begins: A spreading sea of shadow consuming the horizon, envelopes the dome entirely, kept at bay by the thin membrane of technology. BrightTowners don't come close to this abyss, although kids will sometimes wander off to peer into it. Fear of the dark runs deep in BrightTowners' veins, since they do not know what lies beyond.

For those Vagabonds who emerge, broken and lost, from BrightTown, the descent into the dark hallways of Nibiru is, at the beginning, a plunge directly into hell. A few hold strong, facing their terror, driven by the hope of finding their way back. Others embrace their new lives since maybe, just maybe, escaping the town was a deeply interred desire. A life in BrightTown sounds desirable for many in the choking cities of the Core Sectors, perhaps, but

for others, their curiosity and the wish to see what lies beyond might prove too strong a pull to resist. BrightTowners' living in the depths of Nibiru are, rarely, but occasionally illuminated by the few important moments in which they find something from their home town. Objects which have fallen from the dome, carried onwards by the restless tread of feet and water and life, somehow ending up in the farthest corners of the station, to be discovered by a former BrightTownier who cannot remember their own past but, miraculously, recognized this object for what it is. It seems that Vagabonds of BrightTown have a knack for finding these treasures, and their memories begin to return with each new discovery.

—INTO THE LANDS OF NOSTALGIA—
If I can recall correctly, was it... 10? 12 metres? It was indeed high —BrightTown's water tower. I remember that winter, when Billy kicked the ball so high, it got stuck at the top of the structure, between two steel pipes. The guys cheered loudly as I climbed the tower; the metal was freezing, but eventually I reached the top. I remember seeing BrightTown from above; the darkness surrounding it, and all of us, as though we were the last bubble of life in the whole universe. The houses in bright, beautiful colours; warm lights in the middle of the snow fields. Nothing like this. Nothing like the rusted shapes of Sakkara...

*I stared back at the merchant, suddenly conscious of where I was, looking again at the ball laying on top of the pedestal. A lost relic from a far away land.
"How much for this?"*

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ADVANTAGE

Vagabonds from BrightTown hang onto those objects that remind them of their home town as a medium to remember, and as a way to establish a link to their past lives. Most of the time, a Vagabond originally from BrightTown has their memory triggered upon discovering these objects. They start the game with 1+1 Dice (**Special Roll**) MP and with an object from BrightTown—which can be almost anything, as long as it can be carried by the character and makes sense within the player's conception of BrightTown. Upon creation of this object, 2 Dice (**Special Roll**) are rolled, which determine the level of Significance of the object—that is, how important was, and is, the object for the character. The total from the two dice represents the object's Importance (and the number of Memories which can be recovered using this object). This number should be noted on the character sheet, next to the object. *Example: Dad's Picture (5)*

DISADVANTAGE

The strangeness of Nibiru makes it hard for Vagabonds to remember BrightTown at all; the place they now inhabit is utterly unlike their home town, hence why Vagabonds require an object of memorabilia in order to remember anything about their past.

Vagabonds from BrightTown can only access a number of memories equal to the Importance determined previously. They will not be able to recollect anything else until they discover a new object from their previous home.

TIPS

BrightTown has the potential to be one of the most complex and rich Habitats for a Vagabonds to be from. Create an intricate back-story to the Habitat, populate it with families, political clashes and secrets. Not only is this a fun way of making your character's memories more interesting, it will also enhance play at the table, creating a shared pool from which other characters can draw, enabling every character to become more interesting, and more closely connected in the process. The more you invest in it, the greater the impact!

Vagabonds of BrightTown have a much happier past than most other Vagabonds, and, as a result, tend to be more optimistic and hopeful individuals. Even in times of despair, BrightTown Vagabonds can bring renewed energy and determination to their group. Let BrightTown's flame shine strong!

"THE PEOPLES OF OXYDIA OFTEN SHOW,
AN 'UNNATURAL AVERSION' TO WORKING
DURING THE DARKEST HOURS OF EACH CYCLE"

GLENN HEWA, COVENANT RESEARCHER

PROLOGUE

After wandering aimlessly through the cold tunnels in company of strangers, you noticed a strange pattern of lights in the distance. Famished, and at the edge of sanity, you made your way towards the dark hole in the wall, through which the lights were shining, sliding down a ramp of broken, wet metal plates. The air carried the nigh intolerable stench of petrol as you stepped onto the edge of the great expanse lying ahead; a mesmerizing field of junk, steel and rubble and sinking into deep black pools. What really caught your eye was the massive pillar of light ascending from the centre of the colossal chamber. It poured down, a glinting cascade of light, on the shining petals of a steel flower. Surrounding the flower, and piling up on one another like supplicatory hands reaching out toward heaven, are dozens of small, coloured houses built on and into the rubble.

*"Civilization" you whispered to yourself.
"We are saved".*

The story of "Bertha's Song" is set in the town of Oxydia, a small village located in the Outer Reaches. The PCs (Player Characters) have finally arrived, after a long journey, at the first town they have seen in Nibiru. Starving, desperate and at the point of despair, they will do *anything* to survive another day. This is how their story begins.

—A TROUPE OF BRIGHTTOWNERS—

The group of characters portrayed by the players in "Bertha's Song" comes from the Habitat of BrightTown, which has been described in the pages before this one. You can find the pre-generated characters on the last pages of this Quick Start Guide. We recommend the players to try and brainstorm a rough idea of their version of BrightTown, and what their characters lives were like (even if there is some information provided about them already). In most games of Nibiru, you will want to work on your character concept both at the start and as you go, so that when it's time to write a memory, you have the background you like ready to back you up!

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THE CAST

The PCs that protagonize "Bertha's Song" are...

CLAIRE

A woman, about 21 years old, —she used to live near the Ashen Woods, just outside of BrightTown.

TOM

A man, about 19 years old, son to a cheese artisan. He loves cheese.

TAMARA

A woman, about 28 years old, bright but easily irritable. She loved cycling to the edge of the Darkness..

MICHAEL

A man, about 18 years old, a very talented musician. Strong willed.

—BEFORE WE START—

*This chapter will describe the way in which the action may develop as the story is narrated. We will **embolden** certain actions to imply there should be a roll involved, and we will also give certain special indications to narrators *in orange*.*

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PREPPIN' UP

Before anything starts, make sure everyone knows this will be a horror adventure, and an opportunity to explore the way in which the memories of the characters resurface in times of peril and tension.

Print out the Character Sheets that are **located in page 21 of this Quickstart Guide** and hand them to the players. Each character starts with **two Memory Points and two Influence Points**. Make sure everyone has dice, pencil and eraser before the adventure kicks off. We also suggest you read the **Narrator's Corner, located in page 20 of this Quickstart Guide**.

THE PRELUDE

As the narration begins, explain some of the basic rules found in *Volume 1 - Welcome to Nibiru*. Once everyone is ready to start, introduce the story by reading or paraphrasing the text entitled "Prologue" on the previous page. This is the introduction to the story, and from there, the adventure begins.

SCENE 1: ARRIVAL AT OXYDIA

The PCs pick their way through the tangle of junk, metal and rubble, stumbling towards the village. Describe the strangeness of the vision confronting them; use the image in **the Quickstart Guide cover** to illustrate it. The ground is unstable, and the PCs need to make sure that they **Tread Carefully** as they make their way through the irregular surface, avoiding the jagged metal and debris that litters the place. Failing this roll, results in a nasty fall to the ground (and a one step reduction in their Health track). PCs can try to minimize the damage, **Improvising Bandages** or using any medical equipment they may find.

Upon arriving at the gates to their hoped sanctuary, they are confronted by a guard who demands to know "just what your business is in town, exactly?". The guard is neither overtly hostile nor welcoming. A convincing plea for help or a well-crafted lie will, however, placate her. The guard will however, even if mollified, try to hurry them into the village. Should the PCs succeed to **Extract Information** from the guard, she will stare in disbelief and then say "The cycle is about to end, the darkest hours are near. Where are you from that you don't know that?!".

—CYCLES OF THE CORE—

The Core of Nibiru does not grant power to the station consistently. It fluctuates, working in Cycles of 3 months, in which a wave of energy recharges several nodes located in different parts of the station. Although the central areas of Nibiru enjoy a constant supply of energy, thanks to their nodes being plentiful and sustained by proximity to the Core, those towns and villages further away do not share this privilege. Thus, at the end of each Cycle, many villages in the outer reaches suffer from power shortages, as lights dim and machinery stops working.

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As the group wanders into the village, the absence of people in the streets quickly becomes apparent. The village's main path. At the crest of the hill, a circle of stalls are set surrounding the base of the metal flower.

The pillar of light bathes the centre of the flower in iridescence, and the air feels warm, scented and refreshing. There are several cables emanating from the base of the flower and spreading out over the village. Characters who **Analyse the Technology** of the flower realize the strange contraption is responsible for the power supply of the town.

Nearby, a few people can be seen packing up stalls which, it seems, were selling food. If the characters try to talk to them, they are most likely to be rudely ignored—the inhabitants of Oxydia are too busy to be distracted, especially by outsiders. If a character approaches them with enough **Empathy** and convinces someone to explain what's happening, they will reveal that the people of Oxydia prefer not to work during the darkest hours, and would much rather wait inside until the power comes back up. The local will most likely recommend that the PCs also head inside before the power cuts out; survival without power is difficult. Sheltering in a secure place is their best option for now.

Finding shelter will be hard; certainly, none of the people packing away will offer any. **You might want to stretch out a bit this "search for a kind, giving soul", letting the player's know about the danger their characters might be in.** Just as they begin to consider leaving the village and taking their chances in the darkness of Nibiru, help arrives in the form of a man. The man is called **Ormus**, and he states that he will give the PCs food and shelter from the incoming power outage in exchange for work. The group will have little choice but to accept—as staying out and not having something to eat and some protection from the cold and darkness will prove fatal.

—THE HOOK—

Ormus' offering is this adventure's "hook"—the event with which the characters enter the flow of the main story, and which is central to the development of the adventure. Of course, a Narrator has to set the hook properly; if not, the characters might ignore the adventure entirely. Don't just force the players to obey however, but persuade them. Have Ormus appear friendly and helpful – have him reason with the PCs and explain their predicament to them, again. Don't steal the PCs agency; however, don't be afraid to explain that trying to remain outside during a power outage is suicide. Let the realities of the world impact on their choices, rather than just issuing an ultimatum.

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CHARACTER PROFILE: ORMUS, THE WEAVER

"A life of toil amidst cobwebs and oil fumes would make a madman out of anyone"

Ormus the Weaver is the only web farmer in Oxydia and one of the few in the Outer Reaches. His mother, who started the business more than a hundred cycles ago, was a well known musician, part of a group which was popular throughout the myriad of settlements in the Outer Reaches. As cycles went by, she decided to invest everything she had to build the farm and to buy a young pipeworm, which she named Bertha. The construction of her farm brought jobs for many people, as well as prosperity for her which she was quite willing to share — a quality for which she was loved by many a of the poorer men and women living in the nearby settlements. Unfortunately, times were tougher for her son.

Ormus inherited the family business at a time in which the construction of the Ascendants (a series of vast machines allowing travel between the Core Sectors and the Outer Reaches) brought a flood of formerly rare products from the Core and beyond. The man could not compete with this sudden influx of cheap produce, and as the money he earned dwindled, so too did the condition of his farm. As he watched the village his mother had helped so much neglect the source of the bounty she had shared, so too did any sympathy he had with the people of Oxydia.

The fact that Ormus lived removed from the town didn't help either; he soon became somewhat of a loner. He was seen by other townsfolk, roaming the lands outside of town, climbing up his roof to smoke *krajj* and being quite rude to people whenever he came to town.

With the passing of time, Ormus found himself a victim of the Great Malady; a strange mental condition that affects him in different ways. Something dark and malignant took hold of his mind, and, as the necessary supplies to feed Bertha became difficult to acquire he began to search for other, less conventional ways of providing his beloved pipeworm with the nutrition she needs. He has been taking strangers to his house ever since and then trapping them in the farm so that Bertha gets something to eat. He is extremely careful about those he selects for Bertha to feast on — in order to ensure that he does not attract attention from the Oxydian townsfolk.

Although at first he will seem warm and considerate, his real self will begin to reveal itself as soon as he gets the characters where he wants them.

Ormus will lead the group from the centre of the town towards his shack, following the grey trail that leads down from the opposite side of the mound and into the oily swamps that surround the village of Oxydia.

Ormus will glance back at the PCs several times during the walk, to check they are keeping up. **The player characters may detect something predatory in his gaze, should they wish to make a roll.** The journey continues through sludge and muck and filth, down into the darkest pocket of the village, until, at last, they reach a small, dilapidated shack with a chimney protruding from the roof.



WEAVERS & WORMS

"There aren't many occupations as dangerous as that of the web farmer. I've been lucky to reach old age without losing more than a hand —can't say the same for most of them, that I worked with"

Spike - Retired web-farm worker

—THE PIPEWORM—

Originally found in the pipes and ducts utilized as access points to several of the monitoring facilities in the Blazing Halls, pipeworms are monstrous, carnivorous creatures which secrete an elastic, flexible substance that is utilized in the production of cloth and linen. Smart hunters, pipeworms create vast, mile-long web structures with this substance to trap their prey. Bizarrely, pipeworms have evolved a dependence on electricity. When found, their web is always connected to a power line or generator, acting as a vast conductor. Pipeworms then wrap themselves around the power source, acting as a resistor, waiting for their prey to approach the now-electrified webs, before letting the current run through them, shocking their prey. They then start a slow march towards the paralyzed body, ready to feed on it.

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Web farming is a process that has developed a great deal since its first days. Long, suicidal missions into worm-riddled tunnels were eventually replaced as settlers began to learn how to utilize baiting tactics and to tamper with some of the systems of the station.

Web farms today are highly specialized places, where complex retro-engineered systems help farmers control a maze of tunnels and gates preventing the worm from escaping. The extent of the tunnel network dictates how much web the worm will produce. Farmers utilize a series of entry-shafts to drop living prey into the web systems in order to keep the worms fed.

The centre of the farm has a power source that is utilized by the worm to electrify its web —as in the wild. Harvesting the web —once impossibly dangerous— can now be done from afar by controlled closure of the maze's doors, which does not only prevent the harvesters from moving in without the risk of shock, but also isolating them from the worm's grasp.

SCENE 2: THE JOB

The group enters the shack and peeks around into the place. Ormus pulls a lever and a lonely, yellowish light bulb lights up, flickering, at the centre of the room. The shack is just a big space, the middle of which is occupied by a big machine. To the sides, a humble kitchen, several big crates and other smaller boxes pile up. A hammock and a small table and chair are amassed against a corner, and a series of control panels are laid against one of the walls. In the farthest corner of the room is a strange metal platform and an equally strange contraption. The characters might be able to **Observe** an aperture within the room where a stack of papers are laid out, on top of which stands a small portrait of a woman. Her eyes resemble Ormus'.

Ormus gives them some food; a small bowl each, of a weird, faintly glowing, blue stuff. The consistency is strange, and the taste is, well... Let's not dwell on it. **The characters, who come from Bright-Town, are used to much better and tastier food. If one of them requests better food, he might Persuade (this will be an opposing roll) Ormus to give them something better. This can range from spicing up their plates a bit, or to make Ormus prepare some Sparkling Soup (meat soup) for them.**

Ormus will trade small talk with the PCs, mentioning that his mother was a famous musician, who then retired and invested in the farm: he dwells on her talent and intelligence and how far he has let things slide. There is a great deal of self loathing in his chatter, masked by a bland, half-friendly exterior. Ormus will also ask them to seek for his lost music recorder. He will say that some time ago he forgot an old recording device in the tunnels: it plays a song Bertha loves.

As the group finishes eating, Ormus explains the job they will perform. The characters will need to help Ormus with the web harvest. He wants to take advantage of the dark hours and get the produce ready for when people emerge from their houses when the new cycle arrives. For this, he says, he needs all the help he can get.

What information will Ormus reveal?

Ormus will talk about the job being basically "web-harvesting". He will describe the basic process of cutting web and putting it into the cylinders, and will tell them that they need to fill four cylinders before coming back.

What information will Ormus conceal?

Ormus will avoid talking about the worm, its size, the fact that it eats meat, that it electrifies its web network to hunt prey, or anything related to it. He will say that the worm is asleep, and that even if she was awake, he is the one who controls the doors, so they won't need to meet Bertha —Ormus always refers to the worm by its name, smiling affectionately as he does so.

What should the players know before going down?

Before making their descent, the characters will be shown how to use the tools at their disposal, they will know that they can get in touch with Ormus (who will be up in the shack controlling the doors of the farm) at any time with the transceiver. They will be following KALUE, an AI, which will communicate and lead them through the maze of the web farm, to the service shafts and back to the elevator.

SCENE 3: DESCENT...

As the group prepares, gathering the tools required for the job, Ormus instructs them on how to proceed. He explains that he will stay in the shack controlling the doors, and warns them that power supply is limited as the end of the cycle approaches —so things might get a little bit dark below. If any of the PCs has doubts, he will reassure the group stating that he can redirect electricity from his control panel to illuminate their way. He will clear the way from above, and will be in touch at all times thanks to the transceivers. KALUE will guide them and they can also address questions to it if they need clarification at any time.

He will list the different tools they will carry and will teach the group how to use them. These are:

KALUE, a small AI with a high pitched voice that knows the labyrinthine hallways of the web farm like the palm of his robotic hand. It will obey most orders.

—KALUE, THE SERVICE AI—

All Service AIs in Nibiru have an owner, and KALUE's owner is Ormus. The characters can talk to it and ask questions, and it will follow simple orders from them as long as they help complete the task of harvesting web. Bear in mind that KALUE's role in assisting the PCs derives from an order that came from Ormus —an order that might be revoked at any time.

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Cutting tools (two): *Used to cut the web from the tunnels' surfaces.*

A flashlight: *While Ormus has promised to keep the lights on as far as he can, should the Cycle end prematurely, he has supplied the flashlight in case of emergency.*

A levitation lift: *A long hand truck that levitates, where a couple of big storage cylinders (four, to be precise) are placed, and where the harvested web should be placed. It can be programmed to follow KALUE.*

Two transceivers: *Small radios utilised to communicate with Ormus.*

Once prepared, the group descends via the lift into the farm. **Some dark, ambient music will help set the tone, along with descriptions of the muddy, oily surface that surrounds the elevator shaft. Describe the lift as a rickety, screeching platform, give the impression it might bend and collapse at any time. The air is moist and there is a strong smell of gasoline permeating the air.** When the elevator reaches the ground, the door will begin to open, but it'll get stuck —the group will have to **Lift Up** the door so they can descend into the tunnel. The place is filled with the web, and a thick fog which prevents them a few feet ahead. A crackle of static at this point will herald **Ormus' first communication with them via the radio, telling them he has sealed the path ahead so they can harvest without being disturbed. He indicates that they need to harvest the web in the tunnel and then contact him when they want to move to the next section.**

As the Narrator, role play the communication, through the transceiver, between Ormus and the players. You could use walkie-talkies as props and to imitate the sound of the transceiver as the channels open. This will become more important as the adventure continues and the signal becomes distorted —and as Ormus reveals his true intentions.

The PCs follow KALUE into a thickly webbed passage. Harvesting this web result in enough web to fill half a cylinder. Harvesting requires the PCs to **Cut Away** at the web, pick it up and place it in the cylinders. Moving on, the hallway opens up into two different paths, both of which can be accessed through two closed doors. If they don't speak to Ormus, KALUE will remind them that this would be the moment to do that. Ormus will try to locate them and then tell them to move into the opened hallway (any of the two).

The door opens with a loud noise, reverberating through the tunnels, as the group advances. There is a second long section, also covered in thick webs. At this moment, have the PCs make a check to check to

SCENE 4: ...INTO MADNESS

Hear (take out one die from the roll, as a penalty).

Whoever is successful will then hear a noise from far away. It is a grinding, echoing noise, like metal sheets falling on the ground. If the group asks KALUE what the sound is, KALUE answers that it is Ormus redirecting power so that they can proceed in the right direction. As the group moves forward, they need to **Cut Away** the second set of webs. As they move forward, they notice a small bundle, swaddled in web, in the middle of the corridor. If the players ask KALUE about it, the AI states that it's likely a wrapped-up sparkling, used as bait for Bertha. It tries to warn the players against cutting away at the web holding it. After going through the place, the players will arrive at a crossroads: three metal gates appear in front of them. They probably know they should contact Ormus. This communication, however, will be noticeably distorted due to the lack of signal. **You as the narrator can imitate the noise and the words getting cut up while talking.** Try and make it so it's hard for the players to understand, but not impossible.

Players should be able to decipher the words of Ormus, but the further the PCs descend into the labyrinth of tunnels, the more the communication between them will decay. As the PCs make their way into the third section of the tunnels, they will find any light from above is now virtually non-existent. Now is the time to utilise the flashlight. KALUE will tell them to get in touch with Ormus, who will be almost unintelligible, but after a few tries the characters will **Hear** the sound of metal doors closing. A few lights will ignite, however dimly, granting a degree of visibility for the path ahead. In front of the PCs, an extremely thick span of web opens up, far tougher than the ones before. **Cutting Away** at it has to be done twice, and will prove to be an exhausting task. As the group reaches the middle of the passage, have them make another check to **Hear (take out one die as a penalty)**. Those who achieve a success hear a deep, guttural growl that vibrates through the metal walls, as well as a grating, agonizing metallic noise from behind. **The door behind has closed now, though the lack of light and the considerable length of the passage will prevent them of seeing this. The trap has been sprung.**

The players may or may not think about it, but it's Bertha, slithering through the complex. If KALUE is asked about this, it will say yes; it's Bertha, but Ormus is making sure everything is OK.

As the players begin to realize their predicament, read or paraphrase the following: *Suddenly, a loud screeching sound pierces the air, the reverberation of twisting metal, screaming as it bends under the weight of something gigantic. The light above bursts into sparks, plunging the tunnel into shadow. Something has gone terribly wrong.*

Bertha is now trying to push through the door behind the characters. This will push them to cut through the remainder of the section until they reach the doors. As they hear this, have them roll against **Fear of Bertha (three dice as usual)**. If they get a higher number, they're OK, taking a deep breath and continuing with the task. If they are not, they should deduct one step from the Mind track. After reaching the next gate, with the unnatural screeching of the worm slithering after them; turning to Ormus might well be the PCs first move. **Ormus will now begin his transformation, as the Malady takes control.** He will answer in a disinterested, languorous fashion to any requests for help, as if the character's plea for help were **neither urgent nor important**. If the PCs continue to beg for help, he will accept and open the door. Remember that this communication will be clear overall. **This will help create tension in the group.**

The characters can now rush into the next section of the maze. **After going through the door, you might narrate the following: As the gate shuts, you witness — for a split second — an avalanche of flesh, pierced by hundreds of teeth the size of knives, roaring through the tunnel; the whole of it now occluded by Bertha's monstrous bulk. The gate closes just in time, and you hear the violent shock of its gigantic body, as the surface of the door bends into a sort-of spherical shape.**

KALUE will then talk to them, stating that "the web in this zone appears to be electrified, and that they should be careful of not stepping on it". There is no web thicket in this section, but the players will need to **Tread Lightly** to avoid getting shocked. If they don't, they will feel the electricity surging through their body, falling to the ground shaking. This will result in the player going down one step in his Body track.

SCENE 5: THE TURNOVER

In the next series of tunnels, the PCs will arrive at the centre of the farm. Filled with webs, connected to a central power core; a huge coil of metal, glowing with a faint blue light, this is an eerie, peculiar environment, made more unsettling by the howling noises of the worm without. The players should now roll to pay **Attention to Detail**. Whoever rolls the highest number then notices a small device, half-concealed on the metal floor. It is **the lost recorder**. You should award the player who finds it with an **Influence Point**.

—BERTHA'S SONG—

To say Bertha is "attracted" to the song in the recorder would be a gross understatement; the track, a recording of a song played by Ormus' mother, holds a strong connection to Bertha. Ormus' mother used to sing the song to the creature, and, now, hearing the song acts as a sort of emotional trigger. Bertha will go completely insane, forgetting about chasing prey or, in fact, anything else, at least while the song plays. The worm will continue to chase the recording whenever it is played but will only be interested in the device playing the song. Tragically, it will then devour the recorder, destroying the last remnant of the melody which it loves so much.

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As the group goes around the coil and looks for a way out, they will eventually reach a passage with a door, taking them away from the central area of the farm. Again, to go through the door, they will need to speak with Ormus. At this point, Ormus becomes increasingly hostile. As the "noise" of the transceiver being activated is heard, some seconds of silence might pass until Ormus actually speaks. He states, in impassive monosyllables: "Well?", "Whatever", "You do it", "Do I have to do everything for you?". He will try to pick up on ANYTHING the characters have done wrong as if he was keeping some kind of "scorecard" and opening up the doors was a favour the characters hadn't earned.

The group may plea and beg for him to open the door, and eventually he will. The door will open and a new section, full of web to cut through, will open up. At this point, 2 of the 4 cylinders will be full.

In this scene, things collapse extremely quickly. The players will realize that something is very wrong, and that Ormus might be trying to feed them to Bertha. This will also give them a chance to escape the place while enacting their revenge upon the farmer.

As soon as they are through the gate, the door will shut behind them. The PCs need to go forward and find the *service shafts* in the wall. These are way too small for a human being to fit in, but they are perfect for sending the cylinders to the surface. At this point, you might remind the players that their character are in a deeply stressful situation, and that escaping alive is now the only real objective.

—MELODIC DELIVERANCE—

The way in which the characters might enact revenge upon Ormus is actually quite simple: pressing play in the recorder and sending it up the elevator shaft. When this happens, award the player who came up with the idea with an Influence Point.

*Use this time to make Bertha appear in the most terrifying fashion, have her chase them down and describe the horror of the scene as she draws near. When they become trapped, and with the monster's gaping maw open before them, read the extract titled **Punishment from Below**, in the following page*

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After hacking their way through the webs, the PCs find themselves in front of another door. Communicating with Ormus, this time, is even more of a pain, and at the end, he will **refuse** to open it, saying "You do it. I don't have to do everything for you". Their only chance at going through is KALUE. From above, they can hear the slithering body of Bertha, and the ceiling shakes. **Pipeworms can fit through extremely small spaces, despite their vast bulk.** KALUE needs to be convinced to assist the PCs, though this will not be hard. They need to make a contested roll against KALUE, which will only roll two dice. If they succeed, KALUE will tell them what to do. KALUE instructs the group to remove the lid from a panel to the side of the doors and how to cut the cables of the panel, requiring a successful test of their knowledge in **Circuitry**. Remember that the players, being people from Bright-Town, might have with them objects that provide an advantage when dealing with some challenges.

The doors open and the group can go through them. A long hallway stretches on for a number of yards,

full of web. KALUE tells the PCs, at this point, that the web is electrified and highly dangerous. A loud roar echoes from the path in front of them. The door behind, however, shut after they went through it. If they asked, KALUE states that the circuits were tampered with, and that they should ask Ormus for help.

At this point, Ormus will prove, as always, to be horribly lazy —clearly toying around with them. After some pleading and begging, he will ask as to how they went through the last door. **Your objective as Narrator is to have them confess that KALUE helped them.** Once they have confessed, Ormus agrees to open the door, but says he wants to speak to KALUE first. He then orders the AI to "GO FORWARD". KALUE will then advance into the thicket, its structure screeching and twisting under the electric surge, sparks flying everywhere. The web will then twist and turn as the body of Bertha makes its way towards the players.

—FIGHT OR FLIGHT?—

If your group is used to playing other role playing games, they might be accustomed to "killing their way" out of trouble. This time, though, things are different; you want to make sure that, by the time they face Bertha, it's clear that they won't be able to beat her. Giving the chance of a roll gives the players the opportunity of killing her off, and although we want players to write those memories and use them to succeed in their trials, there is only so much they can do with their remembrances. Slaying gigantic flesh-eating worms is, at least in this story, impossible.

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SCENE 6: CORNERED

As the group runs away from Bertha, this will be the last chance for them to put the recorder into the shaft. They can then run through the tunnel and pass by the service shaft, until they get to the closed door. There are two possibilities for an ending here.

- 1) **The characters pressed "Play" in the recorder and sent it through the shaft, in which case proceed to read the extract titled *Punishment from Below*.**
- 2) **The characters were unable to go through a door as Bertha chased them, in which case proceed to read the extract titled *End of the Run*.**

Bear in mind that the following endings are just a suggestion, and that it's always great to come up with

your own ideas about how a story might end. You might want to see what the players come up with, and extend the story until you find an alternative point in which to generate the best conclusion possible.

END OF THE RUN

In this moment, you might play some "tragic music" as you narrate the end of the group's lives.

"As the creeping, slithering mass of flesh moves forward you desperately try to tamper with the controls of the door. The sweat runs through your fingers, and the cable of the circuit slips from your hand. The air is hot; the stench of rotting flesh assaults your senses. You look back into the gaping maw, close your eyes, teeth sinking into each other in preparation for a pain your mind cannot comprehend, as the giant mouth closes upon you, in the warm, and piercing embrace of death.

PUNISHMENT FROM BELOW

"As the creeping, slithering mass of flesh moves forward you desperately try to tamper with the controls of the door. The sweat runs through your fingers, and the cable of the circuit slips from your hand. The air is hot; the stench of rotting flesh assaults your senses as you feel Bertha's presence. You look back into the gaping maw, close your eyes, teeth sinking into each other in preparation for a pain your mind cannot comprehend."

Exactly at this point, you might consider playing a song; perhaps a country song or a cold, vicious melody of revenge —you might look into the soundtrack of a Quentin Tarantino movie for an example. This is Bertha's song, the song composed by Ormus' mother. It will help bring a climatic finale to the game!

"Far away, a strange tune starts to echo through the halls. You wait for deliverance to come, yet it doesn't. As you open your eyes, you see the mass of flesh twisting around, the body of Bertha pushing through the tunnel in a crazed frenzy, screaming in a horrifying fashion as it sinks into the wall, chasing the sound of the recorder. The complex shakes violently as the worm bulldozes its way towards the surface.

Eventually, you make your way out of the complex through a long lost tunnel. As the air of the marsh seeps into your lungs, you peer over towards the shack, in time to witness the earth collapsing, the ground swallowing the house, as the screams of Ormus drown amidst the echoes of Bertha's Song."

NARRATOR'S CORNER

There are several things that you might want to consider when running Nibiru, and particularly *Bertha's Song*. This short list is designed to give you an idea ways this game can be run, to ensure the most entertaining and exciting experience.

1) **Desolation, Mystery and Inspiration.** The area of Nibiru in which action occurs during "Bertha's Song" has a very particular character: it should evoke feelings of awe, desolation and struggle. If you are looking for inspiration, we suggest movies such as *Alien*, *2001: A Space Odyssey* and novels like *Dune* and *Rendezvous With Rama*.

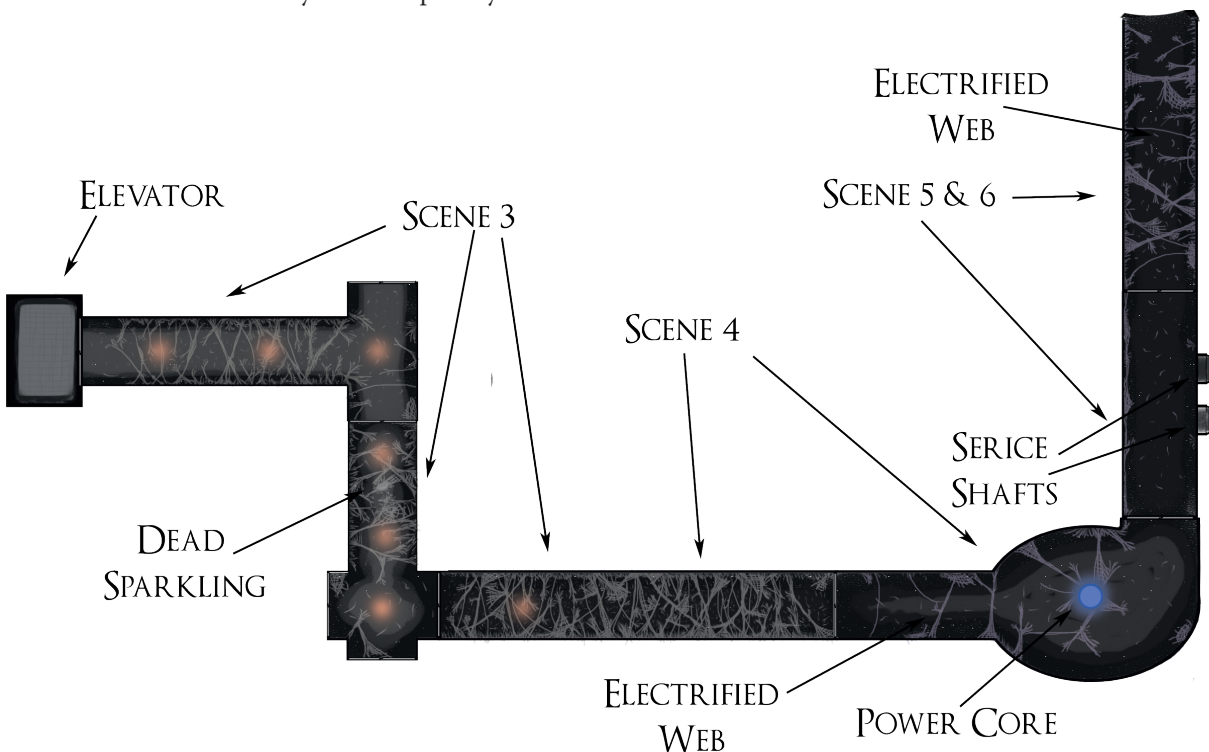
2) **Setting the Tone.** Narrating a mystery or a horror story is tricky —let alone a combination of the two, as any experienced narrator will tell you so. We suggest playing this at home, or in a quiet place. Music can go a long way towards setting the tone; *EVE Online* and *Homeworld* are two computer games with great soundtracks, which you could use to boost the players' immersion in the game world!

3) **Take great care on how you portray the characters!** "Bertha's Song" in particular places a lot of focus on the three main non-player characters. These are Ormus, KALUE and Bertha, the Pipeworm. Here are some ideas as to how you could portray them:

Don't be fooled; **Ormus** is the main antagonist of this story. His madness, channelled through an eerie and deeply discomforting attitude towards the characters' well being is the main source of tension of the story. He should show (as it's stated throughout *Volume 2*) an evident transformation as the characters go through the maze of the web farm. Put an emphasis into his accent to make it recognisable, and avoid using the "Narrator's Quote" (that is, explaining the players what is it that Ormus says). Instead, speak to them directly in-character using the transceiver. It will do wonders for immersion!

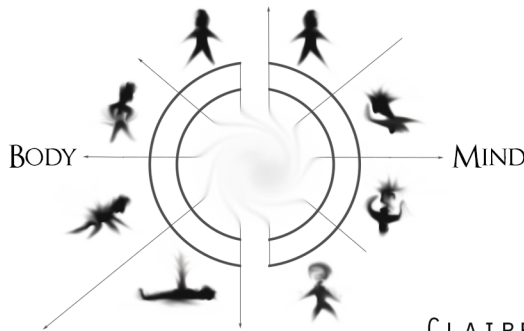
KALUE should be cold. It will provide solutions, yes, and suggestions, but do try and think "how would a robot react to this?" when playing her. Also, using a voice modifying app such as RoboVox is great for immersion.

Finally, **Bertha** should pose a constant threat to the players. Generally, when it comes to horror, an unseen source of fear is much more terrifying, as it stems purely from your player's own imagination. Do take care though; when you reveal her, make her gloriously terrifying!



NIBIRU

NAME: CLAIRE
GENDER: FEMALE
HABITAT: BRIGHTTOWN



MEMORY POINTS
○○○○○○○○○○○○

INFLUENCE POINTS
○○○○○○○○○○○○

I'M CARRYING:

NOTES:

CLAIRE IS ABOUT 21 YEARS OLD. SHE WAS RAISED IN THE OUTSKIRTS OF BRIGHTTOWN, IN A PLACE CALLED "THE ASHEN WOODS". SHE CARRIES ALONG A MEMENTO FROM HER DAD, AN OLD POCKET WATCH (6) MADE OUT OF GOLD.

I REMEMBER FINDING A GROUP OF STRANGERS IN THE DARKNESS. WE ESCAPED AN OBSCURE, COLD PLACE, GUIDING OUR STEPS THROUGH SOUND UNTIL WE ARRIVED AT AN EERIE TOWN AMIDST FIELDS OF JUNK.

EFFECT: +1 DICE TO ORIENTATION

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

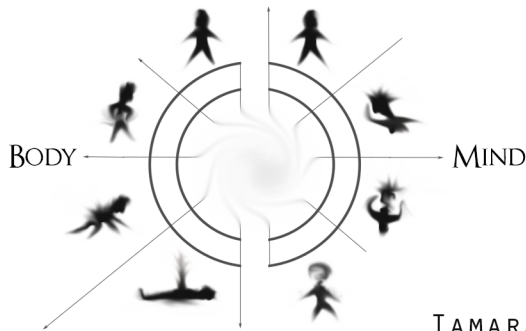
I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

ALL ROLLS ARE BASE 3D4. MEMORIES ARE TRIGGERED WHEN AN ACTION REQUIRES A ROLL. 2 MP -> RANK 1 MEMORY. 3 MP -> RANK 2 MEMORY. 5 MP -> RANK 3 MEMORY. GAIN MPTS AT THE END OF EACH SESSION. TAKING NEGATIVE MEMORIES AND TRIGGERING YOUR BEACON. IPS ARE USED TO REROLL DICE AND MAKE SMALL SCENIC CHANGES.

NIBIRU

NAME: TAMARA
GENDER: FEMALE
HABITAT: BRIGHTTOWN



MEMORY POINTS
○○○○○○○○○○○○

INFLUENCE POINTS
○○○○○○○○○○○○

I'M CARRYING:

NOTES:

TAMARA IS ABOUT 28 YEARS OLD.
A VERY BRIGHT, THOUGH EASILY IRRITABLE GIRL, SHE LOVED TO CYCLE AROUND BRIGHTTOWN. THE ONE THING SHE WOKE UP WITH UPON SHOWING UP IN NIBIRU IS HER BIKE'S RUSTY BELL (5).

I REMEMBER FINDING A GROUP OF STRANGERS IN THE DARKNESS. WE ESCAPED AN OBSCURE, COLD PLACE, GUIDING OUR STEPS THROUGH SOUND UNTIL WE ARRIVED AT AN EERIE TOWN AMIDST FIELDS OF JUNK.

EFFECT: +1 DICE TO ORIENTATION

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

NIBIRU

NAME: TOM
GENDER: MALE
HABITAT: BRIGHTTOWN



MEMORY POINTS
○○○○○○○○○○○○

INFLUENCE POINTS
○○○○○○○○○○○○

I'M CARRYING:

NOTES:

TOM IS ABOUT 19 YEARS OLD. HE IS THE SON OF A LABORIOUS CHEESE ARTISAN. HE WAS KIND OF A LONER BACK IN BRIGHTTOWN. KNOWN FOR HIS LOVE OF CHEESE, TOM CARRIES AROUND A SMALL KNIFE (4).

I REMEMBER FINDING A GROUP OF STRANGERS IN THE DARKNESS. WE ESCAPED AN OBSCURE, COLD PLACE, GUIDING OUR STEPS THROUGH SOUND UNTIL WE ARRIVED AT AN EERIE TOWN AMIDST FIELDS OF JUNK.
EFFECT: +1 DICE TO ORIENTATION

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

I REMEMBER _____

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I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

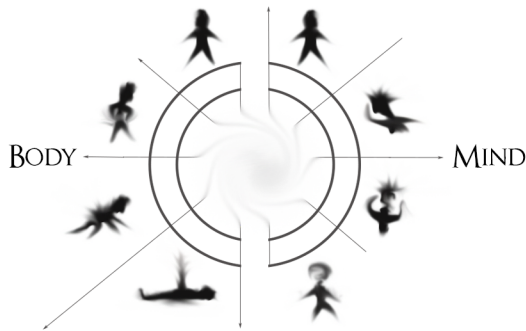
I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

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NIBIRU

NAME: MICHAEL
GENDER: MALE
HABITAT: BRIGHTTOWN



MEMORY POINTS
○○○○○○○○○○○○

INFLUENCE POINTS
○○○○○○○○○○○○

I'M CARRYING:

NOTES:

MICHAEL IS ABOUT 18 YEARS OLD.
HE IS A VERY TALENTED MUSICIAN
WHO PLAYED AT MANY POPULAR
TOWN FESTIVALS. HE CARRIES
WITH HIM A PURPLE AND
BLACK SCARF (4).

I REMEMBER FINDING A GROUP OF
STRANGERS IN THE DARKNESS. WE
ESCAPED AN OBSCURE, COLD PLACE,
GUIDING OUR STEPS THROUGH SOUND
UNTIL WE ARRIVED AT AN EERIE TOWN
AMIDST FIELDS OF JUNK.
EFFECT: +1 DICE TO ORIENTATION

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

I REMEMBER _____

EFFECT: _____

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EFFECT: _____

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GAIN MPTS AT THE END OF EACH SESSION, TAKING NEGATIVE MEMORIES AND TRIGGERING YOUR BEACON. IPS ARE USED TO REROLL DICE AND MAKE SMALL SCENIC CHANGES.

NIBIRU

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