

# INSANITY IN THE TIME OF ROME



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INSANITY IN THE TIME OF ROME

by Lauri Maijala

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<http://blog.guildredemund.net>



“TO THOSE THE FATE HAS TOUCHED:  
MANY GOOD WISHES! FIRST OF ALL I HOPE  
YOU ARE IN GOOD HEALTH AND THAT  
THINGS ARE GOING WELL FOR YOU. I THANK  
THE GODS FOR SAVING ME RIGHT OFF WHEN I  
WAS IN DANGER AT SEA BUT NOW THE  
ORACLES HAVE TOLD ME THAT I WILL PASS  
FROM THIS REALM. PLEASE ARRIVE TO ME,  
MOST TRUSTED OF GODS, FOR I WILL HOST  
ONE LAST BANQUET IN THEIR NAME, AND  
NAME MY SUCCESSOR FROM AMONGST YOU  
BEFORE I PERISH. ALL MY BEST!”

WHILE THE HORDES OF BARBARIANS  
ADVANCE TO ROME STRANGERS MEET AT THE  
STRANGEST VILLA FOR ONE FINAL GRASP  
FOR POWER. ALLIANCES - INTIMATE AND  
POLITICAL - MUST BE FORGED.

WHO EMERGE VICTORIOUS?

# ABOUT THIS GAME

**Insanity in the time of Rome** is a story game for three to six players. Each player controls one of the characters in a maddening orgy at the end of the Roman Empire. The barbarians are at the gates of the eternal city but the characters are still grasping for personal gain and power. It is most likely that not all of the characters survive this story - but is up to the players to tell that story and find out what happens.

## **Trust the players - not their characters.**

This game is about political power, insanity and Cthulhu Mythos. Most characters are willing to sacrifice almost everything to gain more power. This game however relies on the players creating a memorable story **together**. So while the character you are playing would not agree to anything you as a player should be willing to let go.

## **Taking turns**

During the game each player has their turn to create a scene. When it's your scene, your character is in the spotlight. You can expect the other to support you in narrating the scene in an interesting way. The most important players are the ones sitting next to you. The person sitting on your left is responsible of choosing the theme for your scene and advising you on it. The person on your right is responsible of your events. They choose what event happens in the location you have chosen and offer you advices if needed.

## **Learn to say “yes”**

There will be times when your character is going to face trouble. The character might not want this to happen but as a player you should go along with the flow of the story. This is not a game about winning the ultimate price but about the journey that leads there. Should your character not survive the journey it is not the end of things. It will still be a notable scene in this epic story.

**If this your first game with Archipelago** we'd like to advice you you to familiarise yourself with the nuances of the game by reading (for example) Love in the Time of Seið by **Matthijs Holter** and **Jason Morningstar**.



# THE SENATOR

*Themes: Mythos & Magic*

...some time ago (maybe it was years or merely days) your mind was opened to the great vastness of space and time and the horrible things that hungrily wait to the other side of it all. Maybe it drove you insane but in any case you know it all now. You can see that humanity is merely an insect for the Great Old Ones.

But there was a promise of power. A strange and inhumane being that whispered to you in the dark. Gave you the means to pursue a divine power. But such things come with a price... Thus you have lured the visitors to your Villa for the Ritual with empty promises of power. You know that it is time for action for the Stars Are Right for the ritual to be cast.

WHAT IS THE EVIL LURKING AT THE THRESHOLD OF REALITY?

WHAT GREAT PERSONAL SACRIFICE DO YOU NEED TO MAKE FOR THE RITUAL TO SUCCEED?

WHAT DARK PROMISE HAVE THE GREAT OLD ONES GIVEN TO YOU?

## OPINIONS:

- The Praetor: A fierce warrior of strong bloodline
- The Dictator: A madman desperate for more power
- The High Priest: The man you fear. Decisive and wise.
- The Philosopher: A man of infinite opinions and a debauchee
- The Foreign Ruler: The barbarians are attuned to the chaos of the Old Ones, maybe they could help you in your Ritual?

THE PERSON ON YOUR LEFT...	THE PERSON ON YOUR RIGHT...
...owns your <b>Themes</b> . He chooses the themes in your scenes.	...owns your <b>Events</b> . When you pick a location, they choose what event takes place there.

THE PRAETOR <b>Warfare and Ambition</b>	THE DICTATOR <b>Insanity and Roman way</b>	THE SENATOR <b>Mythos and Magic</b>	THE HIGH PRIEST <b>Religion and Ancestors</b>	THE PHILOSOPHER <b>Freedom and Entertainment</b>
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# THE PRAETOR

*Theme: Warfare & Ambition*

...is an esteemed commander in the service of the Army of Rome. You are skilled in the art of combat and warfare and experienced (to a point of exhaustion) in the schemes and politics of the City.

You have seen war on the barbarian on campaigns of war to the foreign lands. On such a campaign you were cursed by a barbarian witch after a battle where crows drank deep with the blood of the fallen. Since then you have been seeking remedy from the Gods and are afraid of what will wait you in the After-Life.

WHAT KIND OF CURSE WAS CAST UPON YOU?

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN CAST OUT FROM THE ARMY?

HOW CAN YOU STILL SERVE THE EMPIRE?

## OPINIONS:

- The Senator: Old and senile aristocrat that still wants to have his way
- The Dictator: A madman desperate for more power
- The High Priest: The man you fear. Decisive and wise
- The Philosopher: Useless old fart that has not served the Empire
- The Foreign King: A worthy opponent; even if a barbarian

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THE PRAETOR <b>Warfare and Ambition</b>	THE DICTATOR <b>Insanity and Roman way</b>	THE SENATOR <b>Mythos and Magic</b>	THE HIGH PRIEST <b>Religion and Ancestors</b>	THE PHILOSOPHER <b>Freedom and Entertainment</b>
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# THE DICTATOR

*Themes: Insanity & Roman way*

...is the ruler of the Roman Empire. Hailing from a long line of dictators you see yourself equal to the gods and are afraid to lose your power if the barbarian invaders sack Rome. You have sent countless of plotters to their gory deaths and watched the might gladiators clash on the sands of Colosseum. It is quite likely your rule will earn you an unflattering nickname after you pass...

Even though you might not see it, the long years as the living god have not been kind to you. Something shook your sanity and made you tremble. It is something that no-one must know for it would most likely be your doom.

WHAT DROVE YOU INSANE?

WHAT ARE YOU WILLING TO DO TO STAY IN POWER?

HOW CAN YOU MAKE THOSE AROUND YOU SUFFER?

## OPINIONS:

- The Senator: Old and senile aristocrat that still wants to have his way
- The Dictator: A madman desperate for more power
- The High Priest: The man you fear. Decisive and wise.
- The Foreign King: Barbarian savage that could help you to crush the tyranny of the High Priest.

THE PERSON ON YOUR LEFT...	THE PERSON ON YOUR RIGHT...
...owns your <b>Themes</b> . He chooses the themes in your scenes.	...owns your <b>Events</b> . When you pick a location, they choose what event takes place there.

THE PRAETOR <b>Warfare and Ambition</b>	THE DICTATOR <b>Insanity and Roman way</b>	THE SENATOR <b>Mythos and Magic</b>	THE HIGH PRIEST <b>Religion and Ancestors</b>	THE PHILOSOPHER <b>Freedom and Entertainment</b>
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# THE HIGH PRIEST

*Themes: Religion & Ancestors*

...is the thriving force behind influential and sanctioned religion. You have climbed the social ladder from rags to wealth. Schemed, bribed and done unspeakable things for your position. This new banquet or the barbarians closing in to Rome will not be your undoing.

In the darkness of nights you have questioned the power you serve. Is it actually the mightiest of forces there are? Is your lifetime dedication to them going to be rewarded in the afterlife? Or could there be something, a stronger god maybe, that could grant you even greater boon? Though you have seen men and women burn for such heretical thought you cannot help but to wonder it...

WHAT KIND OF A FORCE DO YOU SERVE?

WHAT STRICTLY FORBIDDEN YOU HAVE DONE TO REACH YOUR STATUS?

HOW WILL YOU OUTSHINE YOUR RIVALS FOR SENATOR'S GIFT?

## OPINIONS:

- The Senator: A dangerous political force that has learn eldritch secrets better left untouched
- The Dictator: A deranged lunatic and the last in the line of inbred fools
- The Praetor: A simpleton but still an usable tool for taking control of the city
- The Philosopher: Intelligent but old with cultured opinions and a way with the crowd
- The Foreign Ruler:

THE PERSON ON YOUR LEFT...	THE PERSON ON YOUR RIGHT...
...owns your <b>Themes</b> . He chooses the themes in your scenes.	...owns your <b>Events</b> . When you pick a location, they choose what event takes place there.

THE PRAETOR <b>Warfare and Ambition</b>	THE DICTATOR <b>Insanity and Roman way</b>	THE SENATOR <b>Mythos and Magic</b>	THE HIGH PRIEST <b>Religion and Ancestors</b>	THE PHILOSOPHER <b>Freedom and Entertainment</b>
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# THE PHILOSOPHER

*Themes: Freedom & Entertainment*

...is the oldest person here. You have been training your intellect and reason for more years that most soldiers even live and have written plays that will be performed for generations to come. You might not have that much interest of what the Senator is going to offer but you have judged this meeting as an important event to witness.

In your long years you have written plays and poetry that will survive, what? A couple of generations? Are you content on that? Or is there still time for you to be elevated to the company of Plato and Sokrates? If there is a chance like that would you take it? And what would you do for it? Or should your life's work be about guiding those younger than you so that they would make right choices and leave a better world for their offspring? Such question... and the orgy to take your mind off them...

WHAT WILL YOU DO FOR MORE FAME?

HOW DO YOU TEACH THE OTHERS A VALUABLE LESSON?

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT THE DICTATOR AND PRAETOR OF GAINING MORE POWER?

## OPINIONS:

- The Senator: Passionate and entertaining. More about the joys of flesh than of spiritual growth.
- The Praetor: A child in a adult's body trying to desperately prove a pointless point
- The Dictator: A necessary evil whose behaviour helps to keep your lectures interesting
- The High Priest: Perhaps your rival in intellectual sense. Trusts gods too much.
- The Foreign King: Hails from a race of barbarians with no real sense of poetry or intellect.

THE PERSON ON YOUR LEFT...	THE PERSON ON YOUR RIGHT...
...owns your <b>Themes</b> . He chooses the themes in your scenes.	...owns your <b>Events</b> . When you pick a location, they choose what event takes place there.

THE PRAETOR <b>Warfare and Ambition</b>	THE DICTATOR <b>Insanity and Roman way</b>	THE SENATOR <b>Mythos and Magic</b>	THE HIGH PRIEST <b>Religion and Ancestors</b>	THE PHILOSOPHER <b>Freedom and Entertainment</b>
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# THE FOREIGN RULER

*Themes: Barbarian hordes & Honor*

...is the leader of vast barbarian hordes enclosing the Roman capitol. You were not born to lead but gained your position by your actions. Serving strong leaders taught you how to lead. Fighting powerful enemies taught you how to handle your fear. Conquering the lands of the neighbouring tribes taught you to forge a nation. And now? Now the Romans have something to teach to you.

Now you have come to the wolf's den to see if Rome could be made to bow down before you without losing your soldiers. And from what you have witnessed this evening might just do the trick...

WHAT SKILLS DO YOU PRETEND TO POSSESS?

HOW DID YOU BECOME THE RULER OF BARBARIANS?

WHY DID YOU DARE TO COME WHEN INVITED?

## OPINIONS:

- The Senator: Could grant you the power to enslave all humankind
- The High Priest: A servant a fading power is still a servant of some strange god
- The Praetor: A warrior to your liking that under a different circumstance you would like to call your brother
- The Dictator: Unfit to rule anyone

THE PERSON ON YOUR LEFT...	THE PERSON ON YOUR RIGHT...
...owns your <b>Themes</b> . He chooses the themes in your scenes.	...owns your <b>Events</b> . When you pick a location, they choose what event takes place there.

THE PRAETOR <b>Warfare and Treachery</b>	THE DICTATOR <b>Insanity and Roman way</b>	THE SENATOR <b>Mythos and Magic</b>	THE HIGH PRIEST <b>Religion and Ancestors</b>	THE FOREIGN RULER <b>Barbarian hordes and Honor</b>
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# THE HIDDEN PASSAGE

THIS PLACE CRAVES FOR BETRAYAL

CHOOSE ONE:

Vermin infested sewers where green and mouldy water slowly carries the excrement, and waste out of the villa through decaying tunnels covered in obscene graffiti.

OR

A seemingly endless steps quarried through solid rock apparently from the bottom to up and ground by thousand years of use.

OR

A smuggler's tunnel built leading from the well-stocked wine cellar to the sheltered cove where an unusually high number of seagulls nest.

PEOPLE WHO MIGHT BE HERE:

- **Gratianus**, the skilled assassin coming to finish a job
- A shapeless protoplasmic monstrosity, cast aside as a failed experiment
- **Sordes**, an escaped and vengeful slave

EVENTS: WHERE THE TREACHEROUS NATURE OF MEN AND WOMEN RAISES ITS HEAD

First Visit: Reflecting one of the character's Themes, someone reveals a plot against the Old Senator.

Any time: Character must make a choice between their hopes and their loyalty.

Any time: Someone dies, without a warning.

Any time: Incriminating evidence of treachery is found.

Any time: A slave begs the character to save them for the horrible choices they have made.

# THE FIELD OF TRAINING

THIS PLACE CRAVES FOR HUMILIATION

CHOOSE ONE:

A roughly hewn collection of cells with bolt-able doors, where the gladiators rest while not training on the sun-beaten courtyard.

OR

A chalked room with several small wooden benches for the young boys and girls that come here for school each day at morning.

OR

A grass field just outside the villa bordered by a juniper wall, where lushly green grass grows and games of leisure are played.

PEOPLE WHO MIGHT BE HERE:

- **Flavius**, the oiled doctore
- **Ovidus**, the bloated teacher
- **Luigsech**, the Gaelic slave girl

EVENTS: WHERE CHARACTERS ARE HUMILIATED AND WITNESS HUMILIATION

First Visit: The character learns that a teacher has abused his position to humiliate someone in a way related to one of the character's Themes.

Any time: The character is forcefully taught a lesson about one of his own Themes.

Any time: The character discovers a slave that has secrets connected to one of his Themes to share.

Any time: Character is expected to not show mercy.

Any time: The character develops the fear of humiliation.

# THE SCRYING POOL

THIS PLACE CRAVES FOR REVELATION OF SECRETS

CHOOSE ONE:

A deep and moist cave at the sea level ranking of dead fish, sea salt and something decaying, haunted by the whispers of some unseen force.

OR

A marble room with a golden chalice on onyx pillar under the villa lined with precious tapestries where foreign incenses are constantly burning and making the air hard to breath.

OR

A cold watered pool lined by strange and heady smelling flowers hidden at the end of a winding path that leads trough a shadowy wood.

THINGS AND PEOPLE YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER HERE:

- **Rúna**, a Scandinavian slave tasked to maintain the location
- **Vita**, an ancient matriarch with tainted bloodline
- Remains of an oracle and a *Mi-Go* posing as its voice

EVENTS: WHERE SECRETS ARE REVEALED AND FORTUNES ARE TOLD

First Visit: One of the character's Themes compels them to share a secret.

Any time: The character gets a divination of their own death - how can they handle it?

Any time: The character learns a secret about his ancestry.

Any time: A secret is revealed to the character - but we know it is a lie.

Any time: The character understand they are in mortal danger from something not in this scene.

# THE GREAT FALL

THIS PLACE CRAVES FOR EXERCISE OF POWER

## CHOOSE ONE:

Rising high above the city the villa stands at the edge of this imposing and lethal precipice looking over the city.

OR

A steep and slimy cliff that rises from the dark and restless ocean that constantly beats the jagged rocks with the sound of thunder.

OR

All around the the villa grows a rebarbative, gloomy forest that can be perceived from the high balcony.

## THINGS AND PEOPLE YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER HERE:

- **Servilia**, the mother of the murdered Dictator, demanding to be heard
- An animal with human characteristics
- A drunken gladiator, singing

## EVENTS: WHERE SECRETS ARE REVEALED AND FORTUNES ARE TOLD

- First Visit: The barbarian horde can be seen in the horizon.
- Any time: The servants of the villa know a secret linked to one of the character's Themes.
- Any time: Character receives a augury - who granted it?
- Any time: Character is forced to make a show force according to one of the character's Themes.
- Any time: Someone is pushed over the edge.

# ENCLOSED COURTYARD

THIS PLACE CRAVES FOR VISITING THE PAST

CHOOSE ONE:

Closed with golden gates the well-kept orchard with paths of alabaster tiles is decorated with the statues of past ancestors.

OR

The agonised screams of various tortured beasts, monsters and slaves can be heard over the high chalked brick wall.

OR

Great megalith of countless age, speckled with dried blood stands in the middle of a decayed yard.

PEOPLE WHO MIGHT BE HERE:

- **Numerius Tullius Eudimius**, the esteemed but drunk Senator
- **Flavius Durus**, a noted but disgraced military officer
- A number of hungry slaves working in unnatural silence

EVENTS: WHERE PAST YET LIVES

First Visit: The character witnesses something relating to a Theme, which evokes a memory forgotten for a reason.

Any time: Character is revealed to have had influence in someone else's past.

Any time: One of the character's Theme is extinguished in their heart forever.

Any time: Something that should stay buried is accidentally discovered.

Any time: The sins of the fathers will be paid for by their sons.

# THE BATHS

THIS PLACE CRAVES FOR SHARING OF AMBITIONS

CHOOSE ONE:

Hot steam room and a large lukewarm pool, with luxurious mosaics on the walls depicting obscure and otherworldly gods.

OR

A stinking and oily bath hall connected to the slave quarters.

OR

A series of small springs around an obscure idol of a forest deity just outside the walls of the villa.

THINGS AND PEOPLE YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER HERE:

- **Septimus**, a nude and randy elderly noble
- Two youth, in a loving embrace
- **Flamma**, the Unbeaten Syrian, most famous of gladiators

EVENTS: WHERE DREAMS ARE SHARED AND ALLIANCES FORMED

First Visit: Exposed by one of their Themes, a character reveals the most inconvenient truth.

Any time: Relaxed by the waters someone hold a long speech that reflect the character's Themes.

Any time: Someone expects character to take the lead.

Any time: A friendship is formed and sealed.

Any time: Someone trusts the character with a scheme against another character.



# THE ATRIUM

## THIS PLACE CRAVES FOR DEBAUCHERY

### CHOOSE ONE:

Lushly decorated magnificent hall of lavish wealth and taste that even extends to the altar of the family gods.

OR

Sultry marble hall where the marble walls are covered lewd murals of the most scrupulous detail.

OR

A long hall flanked with pillars of strange, unnaturally warm stone encircle a raised pedestal with an ivory curule seat.

### THINGS AND PEOPLE YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER HERE:

- Slaves performing uninhibited sexual performance
- **Laelia**, an maiden of unearthly beauty and appetite
- **Lucius** and **Livius**, the two sons of the Senator
- Dark skinned Egyptian noble that lurks in the shadows

### EVENTS: WHERE THE LAVISH FEAST IS SET FOR THE ORGY

First Visit: One of the character's Themes compels them to state their blunt, simple even degenerate urges.

Any time: The character is exposed to something they cannot live without.

Any time: The character has sex to prove a point.

Any time: The character is followed here by someone who desires them due to one of their Themes.

Any time: Someone offers to state the character's current need - for a terrible price.

# THE IMPIOUS ALTAR

THIS PLACE CRAVES FOR DEATH AND WASTE

## CHOOSE ONE:

A room of dark basalt with a horrific stone idol saturating the this inner sanctum with ravenous energy.

OR

An antediluvian stone circle in the middle of the grim forest next to the villa.

OR

A well-light study with limitless collection of esoteric writings on pergaments, stone tablets and sea turtle shells as well as other obscure and arcane artefacts.

## THINGS AND PEOPLE YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER HERE:

- **Viburnia**, the mother of beasts
- A nameless but important eunuch
- The shambling and most awful *Dark Young*

## EVENTS: WHERE THE THINGS LURK AT THE DOORSTEPS OF REALITY

First Visit: The Great Old Ones speak through the the character's Themes, pointing the way to release them from their eternal slumber.

Any time: Remains of the blood sacrifice can be found - who left them here?

Any time: The Great Old Ones speak again, demanding a sacrifice of blood.

Any time: Something dreadful stirs and awakens.

Any time: One of the character's Themes is extinguished in their heart forever.

# THE DESECRATED TEMPLE

THIS PLACE CRAVES FOR TERROR AND FEAR

## CHOOSE ONE:

A weather-beaten shrine of Neptune built at the end of a natural breakwater where scattered remains of sacrificed bulls can still be seen.

OR

A hidden sanctuary of Christians in the endless tunnel under the villa.

OR

The *alae* of the villa where the ancestral death masks are put on display.

## THINGS AND PEOPLE YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER HERE:

- **Varistos**, the mute servant
- A lost commoner, bent in prayer
- **Carnifex**, the old crone who performs the sacrifices

## EVENTS: WHERE HORROR REIGNS

First Visit: Someone how has reason to the fear the character meets them here.

Any time: The character encounters someone unexpected communicating with the forces beyond.

Any time: Character finds good reason to make another very afraid.

Any time: Character finds an unexpected object in a hidden place within the temple.

Any time: One of the character's Theme the physically threatens the structure of the villa.

# APPENDIX

## Glossary of terms

This simple glossary was added to reduce the amount of googling during the game.

*Alae* - Open rooms

*Atrium* - A large open space within a building.

*Apodyterium* - The changing rooms in a thermae. Includes cubicles for privacy.

*Caldarium* - The hottest baths in a thermae, usually the first room in a sequence of bathrooms.

*Campania* - A region in Italy around Naples

*Cooper* - A barrel-maker

*Dark Young* - Bestial monster that resembles a huge tree

*Doctore* - The lead trainer of gladiators. Usually a slave and a former gladiator.

*Etruscans* - A civilization in Italy, that predated the Romans.

*Fascinus* - The divine phallus, or a dildo.

*Forum* - An open public space, often used as a marketplace

*Frigidarium* - The cold baths in a thermae. The final room in the sequence of bathrooms.

*Genius* - The divine element in a person, thing or place

*Gladius* - A roman short sword, typically a couple of feet long.

*Horreum* - A public warehouse used mostly for storing grain.

*Ludus* - School, here referring to ludus gladiatorius, a gladiator training camp

*Mars* - God of War

*Mi-Go* - alien being from Yuggoth (Pluto)

*Minerva* - Goddess of Wisdom

*Neptune* - God of the Sea

*Orgy* - Not quite what you think. It doesn't have to be sexual in nature, just excessively indulgent.

*Praetor* - Either a commander of an army, or an elected magistrate.

*Satyr* - One of the companions of Dionysus (god of Wine), a humanoid creature with horselike features

*Sudatorium* - The sweat-room in a thermae.

*Tablinum* - The office for the head of the house, who could receive clients here

*Tepidarium* - The warm baths and the great central hall in the thermae. The second room in a sequence of bathrooms.

*Thermae* - A large public bath complex.

*Triclinium* - A room for formal meals

*Via Appia* - The Appian Way, a strategically important road from Rome

*Vomitorium* - The exits in the arena, designed for minimal delays.

