

The City of Ys Returns

The twenties of the XX century. The Global Society of Inquisitive and Investigative embraces the curious from every corner of the world. Their paradigm is the knowability of the Universe. They believe in the triumph and omnipotence of science. And now, when the Great War is over, the Society faces the challenging task to distinguish hidden from fictitious basing on the centuries-long legends.

The alarming news came a day ago: a huge city literally rose from the ocean abyss near the shore of Douarnenez (France). The exquisite high gate of the city had the name carved on it — Ys.

The walls of Ys are ascending straight from the ocean up to 40 meters, forming the whole monolith made of stone and bronze. There is little basalt platform before the gates, which only allows you to moor your boat and catch a breath just under the gates.

CHARACTER CREATION

One of the participants takes the role of Game Master (typical for tabletop role-playing games), others follow the directions:

- 1 Choose one of the **archetypes (d6)**: archeologist, journalist, scientist, militarist, doctor, diplomat.
- 2 Choose your character's **feature (d6)**: charming, cunning, determined, brave, proficient, cautious.
- 3 Choose the number from 3 to 5. The higher the value, the better your character knows the «**science**» (mechanics; calculations; cold rationality; actions requiring accuracy). The lower the value, the closer your character to the «**nature**» (intuition; magic; diplomacy; flirtation; actions driven by passion). This number is a **lucky number** of your character.
- 4 Give your character a name that is worthy to appear on the newspaper front page and in the future novels and comic strips.
- 5 Every character has durable clothes, convenient backpack with everything needed for his/her profession, provisions enough for 3 days and field equipment. Everyone also has a reliable gun and a radio. Talk about the rest with Game Master taking into account your character's archetype.
- 6 Your aim is to **investigate the island city**. Choose one of the **additional goals (d6)**: get acquainted with the research work of the City of Ys ancient civilization; find the incredible weapon; learn the mystery of the Ys city's magic; come in contact with the ancient civilization; discover the cause of the city's immersion; discover the cause of the city's rising.

GAME MASTER: SCENARIO EXAMPLE

Headed by Dahut, warrior mages of the city that rose from the ocean's abyss are going to rule the world. City dwellers surpass the rest civilizations of the Earth in magical technologies, and the humans would stand no chance if they were not for the internal conflicts pulling Ker-Ys apart. Not everyone is happy with Dahut as a governor, and some scientists and mages are about to turn against her. Heroes are to become the first terrestrial advisors for Dahut on her way to the world conquest — or those who will help the opposition dethrone the ambitious sorceress.

RULES

When your character is risking, **roll the die (d6)** to know the result. Add **another die** if the character's archetype is endowed with the skills suitable for the situation, and yet **another one** if his/her main feature helps him/her. When the dice are rolled, compare the resulting value with the character's **lucky number**.

- ↓ If you are using the **logic** (technology, science...), you need to get the value lower than the lucky number.
- ↑ If you are using the **intuition** (empathy, passion...), you need to get the value higher than the lucky number.
- 0 If no die brings the success, everything goes wrong. Game Master describes the worsening of the current situation.
- 1 If one die brings the success, your character hardly gets through. Game Master describes the complications emerged, the damage or the price that was to be paid for success.
- 2 If two dice bring the success, your character gets through. Well done!
- 3 If three dice bring the success, it is an incredible success. Game Master describes additional benefits that character draws from the situation.
- ! If you get the value equal to the character's lucky number, not only is it a success, but also something magical has happened! Unprecedented coincidence, fantastic luck or even literally **magic**. You learn something about Ker-Ys mysteries and the possible consequences of your actions. After that you can change your claim, if you wish, and roll the dice again. You don't roll the dice if you don't change the claim.

HELP: if you want to help somebody, tell Game Master how exactly your character is doing it. If Game Master finds it logical and appropriate, the one you are helping rolls an **additional die**. The number of helpers is unlimited, but the team shares all the consequences of the risk.

GAME MASTER: SCENARIO EXAMPLE

Abandoned Ys conceals hundreds of unusual mechanisms and sophisticated traps. There is a temple in the city center with a visible and almost insane Dahut's ghost (her psychoenergetic matrix) waiting inside. In the night city is flooded with crowds of dangerous ghosts — the former citizens. The only way to release them is to find in the castle dungeons the machine that holds them and to switch it off. As a result, a city will start drowning again, and the heroes will need to hurry up in order not to be swallowed by the ocean.

GAME MASTER: SCENARIO

Game Master rolls the dice several times (not showing the results to players) and determines the secrets that are to be revealed and the obstacles that characters will face.

IN THE CITY OF YS YOU WILL FIND:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| 1. assertive magicians/scientists. | 4. citizens still living in the V century environment. |
| 2. fleshless spirits. | 5. the lonely insane magician/scientist. |
| 3. the dead in the rich clothes. | 6. deep ones/morgens/sirens. |

THE ENEMY OF THE SOCIETY:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1. machinery/magic of the city. | 4. monsters from the Abyss. |
| 2. city's inhabitants. | 5. intelligence of the neighboring countries. |
| 3. the relentless time only. | 6. the powerful scientist/magician. |

ENEMY'S GOAL:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. to take revenge upon the king and his descendants. | 4. to destroy the City of Ys. |
| 2. to take revenge upon Dahut and her assistants. | 5. to occupy the neighboring countries. |
| 3. to immerse the city back into the ocean's abyss. | 6. to reverse the curse/switch off the mechanisms. |

GAME MASTER: THE LEGEND OF KER-Ys

Gradlon the Great, the son of Conan, was a friend of the last high priest of the druids, who showed the mighty warrior king a way to the Lands of the North. There Gradlon found a young wife, having got the victory over her senile husband, the King of the North. It was Malgven — the younger sister of Saint Patrick, red-headed powerful sorceress. During the same campaign the King got the magical horse Morvarc'h («the fire-breathing black stallion, who could run on water faster than any ship») and other magical things.

There are legends that tell that Malgven died in childbirth; others tell that she had to return to her home Lands of the North right after the birth of her daughter. Widowed Gradlon has built Ker-Ys (the City of Ys) for his daughter Dahut, which took all magical things that he still had in possession. It was the most beautiful man-made city ever. It was so magnificent that even gods, as legends have it, were envious of those who lived there. The King entitled Ker-Ys the capital of Armorica (present-day Brittany) and made his daughter the city's governor.

The powerful sorceress Dahut ruled over Ys, but she was not good at it, because she paid more attention to the magical studies than to the city affairs. The capital of Armorica was sinking in the abyss of passions and sins. Saint Gwénnolé (the founder and the head of the first Bretonian abbacy Landévennec; famous for the ability to part the waters of the sea) even tried to convince King Gradlon to dethrone his daughter. Betrayed by someone, whose name and personality sank into oblivion (Devil, knight, sorcerer, fairy, Saint Gwénnolé...), Dahut stole from her father the key to the gate and opened it for the ocean. The city went into the sea. No one knows if the island inhabitants survived under the water, saved by their magic or technology, or died, and their souls are now chained to the ruins.

Gradlon escaped the city on the magical horse Morvarc'h. He tried to save his daughter, but Saint Gwénnolé who appeared to him accused her of the betrayal, and Dahut was thrown into the water either by the King or by Saint Gwénnolé himself. Dahut is said to have become a mermaid, siren or morgen, or to have returned to Ker-Ys for a fair governance and teaching the citizens magic. It is unknown what happened to Dahut later, although legends say she was seen in the King Arthur's times (she was the one to curse King Mark). The capital of Armorica was moved to Corisopitum (Quimper). They say that the bells of Ys churches can still be heard in the night during the storm (or windless calm).

Later the golden key of Ker-Ys was worn by King of Franks Childebert, but how he acquired this relic and where it disappeared after his death is a secret. The capital of his lands was named after Ys — «Ys-like», «Par-Ys». Or simply «Paris».

GAME MASTER: POINTS FOR REFLECTION

- Is Dahut or her descendants alive?
- Who deceived her? Is she an innocent victim or a villain?
- Is there a chance for inhabitants of the city to take the curse off?
- What is the attitude of the Eldritch Ones, who live in the ocean abyss, towards the City of Ys?
- Can the heroes also become the prisoners of Ys?
- Is the City of Ys dangerous for people of land? In which way?
- What is the strength of Ys? Science or magic, or both?
- Did the city continue living under water or did the time stand still until raising from the abyss?
- Who can help the team of heroes?
- Was another expedition headed to the City of Ys?
- Does any of the heroes (or all of them) have a secret heritage that is awakening while they explore the city?
- Is there a prophecy about the heroes that foretells the City of Ys to be reborn in its full splendor?
- Is there a secret cult (or another organization) that facilitated raising of Ys from the ocean abyss?