

The City is as Stars

You walk alone, downhill, and the lights of the city come into view. Until today you dreamed of travelling to other worlds, other planets. Now, though, you realize that the lights of each window in each highrise in front of you is like a pinprick of light in the night sky. Each window is a story, a place, a person.

The stars have quieted themselves. The great gleaming city in the night is what calls to you now.

A one-player thoughtgame to be played while moving from place to place.

Supplies required: none.

This game should begin after your journey is well underway. Perhaps you are returning home from the store, or an hour into a solitary roadtrip, or halfway down a wooded trail on your bike. Wherever and whenever you are, lights must be visible. The more lights, the longer your game can last. Although this game is written with city lights in mind, car headlights or far-off campfires or twinkling towns below you in an airplane are also acceptable.

Pick the first light that catches your eye when you are ready to begin. Look on this light with awe and wonder, as you would a star in the sky after being told it represents a planet with alien life. How exciting and beautiful this place is, if only you could one day travel there! Who lives there? What are they like? What do they love, and fear, and worship? Imagine the room where that person is, imagine why their light is on.

Don't bind yourself to what seems reasonable or likely, and don't restrict yourself to present-day nonmagical nonfantastic boring ways of life. Think of this person as someone who lives across the galaxy, as though they are a twinkling star in the night sky. Their lamp, to you, is not a lamp. It is a

bright star, a symbol of somewhere else. It is a symbol of hope, of mystery, and longing to be somewhere else.

Look at the light, imagine the being it represents. Let your mind flow until it wanders off the topic of “who is behind that light.” Your mind will tell you when it is done. If you’re still travelling, look for another light in this, your night sky of city lights. Imagine who has the light on, and why.

Remind yourself that the people in the place you are hold just as many mysteries as the stars in the night sky. Remind yourself that to them, when you are home, you are also a light in the distance, a star to be viewed with wonder and awe. Consider how someone playing this game might imagine you when they see the light from your office or apartment or hotel room. Imagine yourself with excitement, as an alien imagining life on a far-off star.

Feel the threads connecting you to each light in your city-sky of light-stars. As you observe them, so too do they observe you. Feel your mind expand with curiosity and joy, the same joy you feel when looking at stars in the night sky and imagining the extraterrestrial life they represent.

Breathe.

Play until your mind wanders to a different topic entirely. When you return home, find a way to document how you felt. If you felt connected to all the imaginary people you envisioned behind the lights, find a way to reaffirm your connection to your real, nonimaginary community. Find a way to reaffirm that all the lights in your city-sky are real people, and not just imaginary aliens behind faraway stars.

*Written by Fen Slattery in an act of automatic writing for the [Libre Baskerville Jam](#).
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